

SUBJECT DROPPED

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Chapter 1

It was a cold November night. The streets of New York City were still bustling with life, just as they always are. It was past midnight, maybe even close to one o'clock. On 7th street, a woman cursed her luck as a taxi she was trying to catch wizzed past her and drove through a puddle, throwing water all over her new trench coat.

"Those cab drivers are real ill mannered sometimes, aren't they miss?" The woman spun around only to find a red-coated piccolo behind her.

"Yes, yes they really can be. But, what can one do, right? I'll just have to catch the next one. There's always another cab in New York City, isn't there?" Her voice was sharp and clear, jumping along the words as if she were singing.

"Yes, you're right miss. Good night." The doorman returned to his outpost at the entrance of the Hotel Statler to wait for yet another fancy car to arrive and enable him to make a few nickels in tips.

Frank Olson lay in his bed sleeping in room 1018a on the thirteenth floor of Hotel Statler. His colleague, Robert Lashbrook, lay in a bed beside him, his eyes open, waiting. Quietly, he pulled his arm out from underneath the covers and held his hand near the window of the room so that he could see what time it was. He had just purchased a new watch, and for a moment he forgot his mission and felt the soft leather strap around his wrist. It really was an awfully nice watch. He squinted in order to read it correctly. 12:31. He could hear voices nearing the room out in the corridor.

"That must be them," he thought to himself, his heart pumping harder now. As the voices drew closer, they lowered to a faint whisper. Suddenly, the door flung open and two men rushed into the room. In a moment of disorientation, they stood in the middle of the room, unsure what to do.

"It's not me you idiots, it's him!" Robert hissed angrily, pointing at his colleague.

One of them, the one that had entered the room first, quietly walked over to the bed opposite of Robert's and, without a trace of hesitation, hit Frank in the head with what looked like a hammer. Groans were heard from underneath his relentless pounding, but he showed no signs of stopping.

"You're not supposed to kill him with that thing, just throw him out the goddamn window!" Robert instructed once again.

The unoccupied man ran to his colleague's assistance, and together they lifted Frank out of his bed. He appeared to have passed out, his body lay limp in the hands of his attackers. At first, they tried heaving his body against the window, a method that was bound to fail since the window was only three feet wide and Frank's body was 6 feet long. Robert looked in awe at the failings of these supposed assassins.

"Give me that thing," he said and ripped the hammer out of the hand of one of them. With a loud crash, he smashed the window completely and then motioned for the two men to push

Frank out. They put Frank's upper body on the window sill, gave Lashbrook one last look, and then pushed him out into the cold New York air.

"Well done guys," Robert said sarcastically, "now get out of my fucking sight."

On the street below, Frank's body lay completely motionless. Only one man stood by his side: the red-clad piccolo. From a deep gash in his forehead, dark red blood streamed out and formed a small puddle on the damp pavement. Frank gasped, as if trying to say something, but it was too late.

"Sir, please, sir! God, let me call an ambulance," the piccolo said desperately. But he knew that it was too late, he had heard the deafening smash of Frank's body hitting the pavement.

Three minutes later, a call was made from room 1018a. The switchboard operator, who under no circumstances is allowed to listen to calls, was having a boring night and wanted to make sure that the call went through. However, the call was so short that she heard everything that was said.

"He's gone," said the man calling.

"That's too bad," replied a deep voice on the other end. They both hung up.

Fifteen minutes later police stormed into the little room on the thirteenth floor. The room was dark, all they could make out were the curtains flapping in the broken window and a thin ray of light beneath the bathroom door. One of the police officers slowly opened the door to the tiny bathroom where they found Robert Lashbrook sitting with his face in his hands.

"I just heard a crash, and then I saw that he wasn't in his bed," he said with a trembling voice.

"Are you a Mr. Robert Lashbrook?" one of the officers inquired.

"Yes I am. Please, just leave me alone, I need to be alone," he cried.

"Well son, we're going to have to take you down to the station for questioning no matter what," one of the officers said while taking out his handcuffs. Robert was back at the hotel 20 minutes later after identifying himself as a CIA agent.

Nine year old Eric Olson lay in his bed sleeping when his mother Alice suddenly stormed into his room.

"Eric, you have to get up! There is a man here who wants to see us. He says he has something very important to tell us."

Eric looked sleepily at his mother, but quickly understood that she was serious and so he started crawling out of bed.

When he finally walked into the living room he immediately recognized the man. It was his father's boss. He politely nodded towards him and then proceeded to sit down beside his little brother Nils.

“There has been a terrible accident,” the man started. “Your father, Frank Olson, has thrown himself out the window of his hotel in New York.” His eyes were aimed directly at Eric as his words pierced through the silent room.

Eric looked at the man, not quite understanding the words coming out of his mouth.

“We knew this last year had been tough on him, that’s why we took him to see the psychologist in New York. What we didn’t know was that he contemplated committing suicide. I am terribly sorry,” he said in a voice full of empathy.

“Is dad going to be OK?” Eric asked, now looking uncertainly at his mother. Tears started gathering in his eyes, but he still had trouble understanding what had happened. His mother sat down between the boys and hugged them hard, but it didn’t matter. The boys had lost their father.

Chapter 2

I was always a thoughtful boy, or, let me rephrase that. I became, as I recall it, a thoughtful boy around my twelfth birthday or so. I mean, I probably had thoughts before I turned twelve, otherwise I would have been what is known as a late bloomer, I just wouldn't describe myself as becoming a thoughtful person until I turned twelve. On a side note, my dad was in fact a late bloomer, I'm pretty sure he didn't start having thoughts until he turned 25.

I sometimes wonder if I am also what is known as a troubled boy. I think about things, sure, I think about lots of things, but I'm not quite sure whether I'm troubled by them or not. I think I actually observe and analyse more than I actually think. I observe the people around me and try to come to terms with exactly what they are doing and why they're doing it. There is a fine distinction to be made between observing and analysing, and being troubled. People often say that you shouldn't think too much and that people who think excessively are weirdos. I always thought that the people who say such things are the people who think too little.

I sometimes enjoy sitting quietly at my desk in the classroom of my high school, just looking at people going about their daily business. Why was the class clown so unbelievably predictable in his comments? What was it that the big sport jocks found so comforting about picking on the little defenceless guy in the back of the classroom? How come, on every single Monday morning, the girls just could not stop giggling about their past weekend activities?

The trouble with observing people and trying to figure out why people act like they do, and if in fact you yourself are as predictable as they are, is that there is no possible way of knowing what other people think. Maybe their act in school is just a façade for their true selves. Perhaps they go home after school, sit down at their desks, and think to themselves,

“ why do I act like I do in school? Why do I pick on that kid? God, I really need to turn myself around.”

Perhaps, and I was prepared to give them the benefit of the doubt. You kind of had to, going to Walthers Gymnasium in a suburb south east of Stockholm, because otherwise you would lose faith in humanity. This was the kind of stuff I spent my days thinking about, and even though I had spent months, even years, doing it, I had come no closer to an absolute truth. For all I knew, I was just as bad, or maybe even worse.

Like most teenagers, I don't know much of anything.

Precisely as usual, I was late for school. As I climbed the stairs up onto the platform of the Skanstull metro station in southern Stockholm the clock boldly informed me that if I were in fact standing inside my classroom right now, I would be on time. Unfortunately, I wasn't.

My luck didn't seem to be turning either. The first train that rolled into the station was jam packed. I forced my tall and lanky body onto the train together with two other gentlemen. I realized that I had to hold onto something as the little lady standing next to me didn't look as if she could offer much support in case this turned out to be a rough ride. I grabbed one of the bright yellow bars located right above the little lady's head. This meant that her face ended up right in my armpit which hadn't been washed in the last 24 hours. I cursed my unsmoothlyness and hoped that she wouldn't take notice. I thought that maybe this happened to her all the time. Short people's faces are regularly in the close proximity of all sorts of foul odours, or at least more so than a tall person's face which is far away from farts, burps, dog poo and sweat, so maybe they get used to it. I decided that I'd have to inquire with one of my short friends at a later point.

I'm going to spare you a description of my school for now, but let's just say that it's a perfect environment for the Crème de la Crème of Stockholm's sports jocks to thrive in. Fortunately, depending on how you see it, I don't count myself as one of them. Neither does my friend and classmate Vincent.

"So, like, how do you think the people in our class see us?" I asked him later that day as we were making our way home from school. "They probably think we're gay or something, don't you think?"

He laughed, "Nah, I bet they think we're two mysterious and cool guys."

"Yeah, that's probably right. At least the girls do, I'm sure of it. And they wouldn't be mistaken either since that's exactly what we are," I declared.

This is how it always went. We both really believed we were the two greatest guys ever to put our feet on planet earth, we just couldn't figure out why everyone else didn't agree. We had both chosen a school which was about as far as you could get from our personal interests. "Combine school with sports", that's how the school tried to niche itself. What brought me and Vincent together was the fact that our number one enemies in the world were sport jocks, and more specifically hockey players. We created what we thought of as a small island, an oasis, in the midst of an ocean of hockey sticks, sports bags, and mass amounts of hair gel.

As I sat down by the computer that evening after getting home from work, I realized how tired I really was. The summer vacation would really be a God send. I saw that dad was logged on msn, and thought that it would be a good idea to talk to him since we hadn't spoken for a few weeks. For the first time in years, we hadn't yet decided whether or not I was going to fly to the US to see him during the summer.

Stephan says:

Hey dad!

Eric Olson says:

Hej sotnas, what's up?

Stephan says:

Nothin', just doing some homework, I just got back from work...

Eric Olson says:

Oh yeah? How many did you sell today?

Da Vince säger:

Hey a-hole, when was that religion assignment due in?

Stephan säger:

I don't know man, Monday maybe. Are you done yet?

Da Vince:

Oh shit, are you kidding me? I haven't even started.

Stephan:

Me neither, but stop harassing me, I'm talking to my dad.

Eric Olson says:

HELLLOOOOOOOO Earth calling Stephan.

Stephan says:

Oh, sorry

Stephan says:

24 or something like that, but it was sooo boring.

Eric Olson says:

Yeah, I can understand that, but I'm proud of ya for working this hard!

Eric Olson says:

I was going to ask you – do you want me to book the ticket now so you can come over here?

Stephan says:

Haha, yeah, sure. I mean summer vacation starts in like two weeks so the tickets are going to be really expensive, right?

Eric Olson says:

Yeah, I know, but what can you do? I can't stand the thought of not seeing you this entire summer. But money is going to be real tight this time, we're kind of on the edge.

Stephan Says:

That doesn't matter; I just want to see you. Book 'em!

Eric Olson says:

All rightie, I'll talk to you later then!

Stephan says:

Yeah, see ya later

Eric Olson says:

Love **YOU**!!!

Stephan says:

Love **YOU**!!!

I lay down on my bed. My new job, telemarketing, was tough. The monotony of sitting for four straight hours reiterating the exact same phrase over and over again was immense. The company sold razors, socks and women's underwear. Over the phone. It was a strange job to say the least, but it gave me some much needed cash flow and that was all that mattered.

Travelling to America had sort of become like commuting to me, it wasn't exciting or scary anymore. Seeing dad was always fun, but the travelling itself was really more of a chore nowadays. I closed down MSN and sat staring at my desktop which consisted of probably 40 icons on top of a picture of me riding my mountain bike in the French alps last summer. The sun reflected off of one of the adjacent buildings sending a ray of light straight into my room. It was a nice sunny evening, but I didn't want to go outside, the combination of school and work had become so tiring these days that all I wanted to do when I got home was to go to sleep. I felt like seeing dad *now*, not in two weeks. I scrolled through my videos until the pointer landed on a video labelled "Codename Artichoke". I clicked on it, and immediately the opening scene of the documentary concerning my grandfather's death started playing before me. I fast forwarded past images of drugged American soldiers, an old New York hotel manager, and the current vice president, Dick Cheney, to get to the interview with my dad.

"What I had not realised, or excuse me, had not *wanted* to realise," he began, "was the extent of this all. What we're talking about here is not just the murder of one U.S. citizen, as horrible as that incident alone may be. No, we're talking about hundreds, maybe even thousands, of events, none of which will ever be acknowledged by the government. The murder of my father was just a symptom of what was going on during the fifties." He went silent, as if he himself had to take in the seriousness of what he had just said, before the screen went black and the film ended.

I had replayed this very episode of the movie at least 50 times during the last few months, not so much because I had trouble understanding what had happened to my grandfather, but because I enjoyed hearing my own father talk. That deep, very concerned voice that only he could muster was so comforting to listen to, however gloomy the words it carried with it may be. He somehow had the ability to tell you that the country was about to go to hell, but still make you feel like everything was going to be OK.

Chapter 3

Frank stood with a big bright smile on his face as he watched his youngest son Nils trying to learn how to ride a bicycle in the backyard of their house. Gravity was merciless to him, Nils fell again and again, but every time he just laughed and got back on his bike. Finally, Frank decided to go inside the house and find a broom.

“Where are you going dad? Look, I bet I can do it now,” Nils shrieked when he saw his father going inside the house.

“Wait son, I’ll be right back.”

Nils wasn’t used to the presence of his father. During his five year long life, Frank had been at work almost constantly. Late nights and early mornings had taken their toll on Frank as well; his face looked thin and drained as he walked out the door of the house with a broom in his hands. Nils watched, his eyes full of anticipation, as his father carefully attached the broom to the rear of his new, shiny bike.

“Why is there a broom on the back of my bike, dad? Nils asked when his father was done.

“I’ll show you, hop on your bike.” Nils looked at his father with sceptical eyes, but finally got on the bike. “Now start pedalling as fast as you can!” Nils slowly started pedalling and steered out onto the drive way, his father running behind him with one hand on the broom.

“Look dad, I can do it! I can ride my bike!” Nils shouted at the top of his voice. Frank gradually let go of the broom until finally he wasn’t holding on to it at all. He stopped running, Nils kept pedalling. Suddenly, the little front wheel of the bike veered to the left while Nils kept going straight. He flew over the bars and landed on the hard pavement in front of him. Frank rushed towards him, but all he could hear was his son’s muffled laughter. Nils stood up by himself and looked at his father.

”I think I can do it by myself now, you can take the broom off.” His face shone with bliss at finally being able to ride his bike.

Fifty feet away from them Frank’s eldest son, nine year old Eric, stood under one of the big oak trees, leaning against its trunk, watching his younger brother. He too, was not accustomed to spending time with his father. As he watched his brother giggling in Frank’s arms, a pain set its claws in Eric’s stomach. It wasn’t a physical pain, it was mental. He didn’t like seeing his younger brother stealing precious time away from him and his father.

Solemn, he walked back across the yard to yet another oak tree where his dog Prince lay basking in the sun.

”Hey boy, I can always trust you, can’t I?”

The dog lifted his head and looked up at the young boy.

“Yeah, I knew I could count on you,” Eric said and hugged the dog lovingly.

Later that night, as Eric lay in his bed trying to go to sleep, he heard his parents discussing something in the kitchen.

“Alice, I need to get out of this program. You..you don’t know what I’ve created. It’s horrible. I want to have a normal job. A normal life for God’s sake!”

“You have to tell me what it is that you’ve done in order for me to understand. I don’t know what you’re talking about, I have no idea what you’ve created,” Alice said.

“I can’t. I just can’t. I could lose my army pension forever if this information came out.” Eric got out of his bed and silently walked into the living room so that he could hear what they were saying. He didn’t understand everything, but he knew it was serious.

“Now they want me to go Germany too,” he sighed. “I’m screwed, don’t you understand? I’m stuck with this now, they’ll never let me go if I get in that deep.

Frank sat in one of the kitchen chairs with his elbows on the table and his now slightly balding scalp resting in his hands. Alice leaned against the refrigerator and looked at her husband. It seemed as though she didn’t know what to say, she didn’t know what words would comfort her husband. How could she? During the last few years of their marriage, Frank had completely stopped talking about his work. All she knew was that he worked at Fort Detrick, the army base close to downtown Frederick. Eric’s mind spun faster than it ever had before. Why was his dad so upset? Was he going to die?

“Let’s just go to bed, I’m sure you’ll feel better about all this in the morning, you’re just tired right now,” Alice said, massaging her husband’s shoulders lightly.

”You’re probably right, let’s get to bed,” he said and kissed Alice lightly on the cheek.

Eric lay sleepless that night trying to figure out what he had heard that evening.

Chapter 4

It was the night before I left for America, the last two weeks of school had flown by and I really felt ready to leave the country for a while. Though I did have mixed feelings about the trip, the thought that we would be on a very tight budget wasn't exactly delightful, but nonetheless it would be fun to see dad. I was sitting on the bus on my way to the suburbs of Stockholm reading Neil Strauss' rather unengaging *The Game: everything you need to know about picking up women*. I couldn't understand why the book I was holding in my hands had sold millions of copies world wide, but I thought that every single guy on the planet who'd read this book had probably thought the exact same thing. The bus made frequent stops on its way to Vincent's home in Skarpnäck, where I'd promised to reveal the inner thoughts of every woman to him. The only real tip the book had given was that you should, according to Strauss, "Walk with your legs far apart and your feet pointing outwards in order to give the impression that you have a large member obstructing the path of your legs". I was mildly impressed by Strauss' rather cavemanesque advice, but apparently he'd picked up Paris Hilton using this technique, so it was worth a shot.

The bus finally reached my stop, so I got off and quickly started walking through the chilly evening air. Skarpnäck wasn't exactly one's dream place to live, in the last few years it had become a bit notorious for crime and unemployment. My mother always made a point of telling me that she wanted me to stay overnight at Vincent's rather than walking to the bus stop by myself. I had always mocked her for it. Perhaps I had been wrong.

The evening proceeded nicely. I shared what little information I had exerted out of the 350-page book, and Vincent then, visibly disappointed by this meagre catch, suggested we play video games and eat chips the rest of the night. As his alarm clock inched closer and closer to showing 2:30 am, I decided it was time to leave. For some reason, as I got out of my chair, I clearly thought to myself that it wasn't a smart move to leave this late. But I did. Running towards the bus stop I was in a way glad that I was a bit late for the bus, there wouldn't be much time to stand by myself waiting. I passed two people sitting on the steps of their apartment building smoking. I stopped running and shot them a nervous glance, they looked at me and then smiled eerily at each other. I couldn't help but look back over my shoulder 40 feet later to see if they'd gotten up to follow me. Thank God. Maybe I was just being paranoid, a city kid out of his natural habitat. I checked my watch: 2:17, the bus would be there in five minutes, but I really didn't want to miss it, so I started running again. Two minutes later I reached the deserted bus stop. A car passed. I wheeled around to see if it stopped suddenly or made a U-turn. I was calming down a bit now, the bus would be here any minute. Behind me was a huge open field with a few houses at the far end. Not a sign of human activity anywhere.

A black old car passed me and made a left hand turn onto the road from where I'd just come and then came to a stop. Across the corner of the field I could see two guys jumping out and then speaking to each other loudly. One of them pointed at a nearby construction site towards

which they then began walking. One of them jumped over the small gate and started looking for something. I remember smiling naively and thinking to myself that maybe those two guys were just the same as Vincent and I, always exploring new things. Ten seconds later I saw the guy jumping back over the gate with a big wooden plank in his hand. Shit. Now beginning to sweat heavily, I gazed down the long straightaway from where my bus would come. In the distance I could see the lights of the big, warm, safe bus coming towards me, but it had one more stop to make before mine.

Turning my eyes back to the two men, I now saw them walking quickly in my direction across the corner of the field with scarves covering their faces and one guy holding the plank in his hand. I stood stiff. Running was not an option, I had nowhere to hide in the open space and if they caught me they'd kill me. I just waited and prayed to God.

The bus would be here in 55 seconds, they'd be here in ten.

"Give us all your stuff!" the taller one of them shouted, the plank erect in his hand and ready to strike. After this moment, I don't remember much except emptying my pockets onto the ground in front of me and my heart beating so quickly I thought I was having a heart attack.

"Hi Stephan, what's up?" the shorter one of them said suddenly. I do remember hoping that this was all a joke my friends were pulling on me. I looked at him and realized that he was holding my ID-card in his left hand and that his right hand was inviting me to a humiliating hand shake. I took his hand in mine, in what has to be the most absurd moment of my life.

"We'll kill you if you call the cops," the tall one said as the short one let go of my hand. I turned my head away as if I'd just been slapped and realized that behind me the bus was waiting with the front door open.

"As you can probably tell, I've just been robbed, so I can't give you any money for the bus ride," I said to the bus driver in a voice of complete shock, still standing on the side walk. In what is likely the second most absurd moment of my life, his response was:

"I'm sorry, I can't let you on then." The door closed in front of me, and I panicked. I didn't even want to think about what these two thugs would do to me if the bus left me here. Bouncing my fists feverishly off the door, just as he was revving the engine I finally got him to open it again for me.

"Please, just let me on. I don't know what to do otherwise," I cried dramatically. He eyed me up closely, evaluating the truth in my words. This guy took his job too seriously.

"OK, get on," he said finally. "But I don't like this."

"Neither do I," I said, and climbed aboard

When my alarm clock rang the next morning my head was making itself heard in a big way. As I opened my eyes ever so slightly to peek at my clock, a headache stronger than anything I'd ever felt before emerged. The clock showed 07:45, my plane was to leave in just over 3

hours. I felt my stomach ache as well, I hadn't eaten since an hour before the robbery, and I'd stayed up until 4 o'clock talking to the police.

I put my feet down on the cold hardwood floor, I still felt a bit shaky and nervous since the night before. I could hear my mom rattling some pans in the kitchen, then the sound of hot water being poured into a cup. She immediately turned towards me as I entered the room, her eyebrows curled into a concerned frown.

"How do you feel sweetie? Did you get any sleep?"

"I'm fine," I said as if nothing had happened. "I'm just hungry."

"Oh, don't give me that! You've just been robbed, you're not fine. I'll make you some breakfast before we leave."

"There are people who have got it worse than me you know?"

"That's no excuse for not accepting your true emotions."

"Whatever, I'm going to take a shower," I said, a trace of unwanted arrogance in my voice. I knew she was right, that I shouldn't just brush this off as if it hadn't happened.

An hour later we pulled into the parking lot at Arlanda airport, just in time to meet the requirement of checking in two hours early.

"Are you sure you want to go? You've been through a lot in the last 24 hours and you look very tired. Maybe we should rebook the flight," mom said, still with that concerned look glued to her face.

"Mom, please, I'm OK! I actually just want to get away from this place." She didn't look content, but there wasn't much she could do but accept my decision.

"Alright, let's go inside and get this over with"

"How many will be travelling with us today?" a cross eyed woman at the check in counter asked. I couldn't be quite sure if she was looking at me or mom, perhaps it was both.

"Just me, I said. I wasn't in a talkative mood. I handed over my freshly made American passport and the ticket.

"Give the lady your Swedish passport as well honey, she might need it." Mom said caringly.

"This is my 43rd trip, I know the rules, just relax please."

"Yes, I only need the one passport actually," the check-in lady said. I shot a weak smile towards mom.

"Let's get going," I said as the cross eyed lady handed me my documents. Leaving mom was tough every time, so getting our goodbyes over with quickly was essential. After giving her one last hug I turned around and walked towards the security check point. Finally I was on my own, if only for 12 hours.

Walking towards those automatic sliding doors at Washington Dulles airport was, as always, a nerve racking experience. Not seeing your dad for six months or more just makes you want to leave that stupid luggage cart and charge through those doors at full speed, but nevertheless you want to make the moment last forever. Knowing that you have six weeks to spend in the land of the free together with your beloved father is not for the faint of heart. As the doors finally swung open I could see an ocean of bobbing heads in front of me, paired in two, the bodies attached to the heads embracing each other in warm hugs. I nervously looked around me, searching for my dad's blackish grey hair. I spun around to examine the people behind the glass walls to my left and right, but all I could see were the relatives, friends and spouses of my fellow travellers, dad was nowhere to be found. As I pushed my cart through the masses of people blocking my way I suddenly got a glimpse of his white worn out t-shirt which read "Jazz train". He soon saw my lanky body and walked in his slow, controlled stride towards me.

"Nej men ar du har?" he said in the awful Swedish that only I could understand. He gave me a big long hug, one of those hugs where you're not really sure if your fellow hugger is ever going to let go or not.

"Yeah pops, I'm here now", I said, Smiling.

"Gosh, look at you! You're probably a full foot taller than last time I saw you. Now I can't call you shortstack any longer, you've become a tall drink of water!"

His face looked a bit tired, and perhaps a little bit older than last Christmas. The past six months had not been kind to him.

"Come on, let's get out of here, this place is way too crowded and I need something to eat." With his heavy arm around my shoulders I started pushing people out of my way using my cart in the same way that Americans use their SUVs on the streets.

Sitting in the old Volvo making our way down the blossoming route 15 from Washington to Frederick, the small town that my dad lives in, I often felt a sort of hopelessness. The contrast between America and Sweden just seemed unimaginable during that car ride. The extreme heat Maryland encountered during July combined with all the enormous trucks and SUV:s spewing out carbon dioxide into the atmosphere really got to me for some reason. The heat symbolized the growing problem of excessive amounts of carbon floating around in the air, while the drivers of the SUVs and trucks embodied the cause. And it wasn't just the cars, it was the people in the cars that really ticked me off. There was something so egotistical about sitting by yourself in a car three times as big as a normal one. They were probably listening to country music as well, those bastards, and eating Kentucky Fried Chicken.

24 hours later, we were seated in our usual lounge chairs by dad's swimming pool. Just sitting around the pool is undoubtedly dad's favourite summer pastime. Getting him to get out of his chair on one of those perfect summer days is virtually impossible, even getting him to walk up to the house to get a coke or some sandwiches is a major operation. He likes to call himself one of the country's biggest inaction heroes, but as a matter of fact, sitting by the pool is one of the few places where his sometimes brilliant mind really springs into action. It's where he does most of his writing and big chunks of his thinking.

On this particular June afternoon he was sunk in deep thought about the relation between the mind and pictures. As I leisurely flipped through the latest issue of *mountain biking UK*, he found a paragraph in his book to be so intensely mystifying that he had to move his already professor-like glasses to the point at which they almost fell off the tip of his nose. His eyes squinted as he tried to take in this new information.

“Man, this is turning out to be a scorcher, isn’t it?” I said, trying to pry his mind from psychology and move his attention to me.

He reluctantly lifted his head and looked at me with lazy eyes. “Yeah, it’s a hot one; you want to take a dip in the pool?”

Dad never took more than a “dip” in the pool. He wasn’t one for swimming around for hours in there, despite having to pay thousands of dollars to get it up and running every year. He just liked sitting around looking at the crystal clear blue water for hours and hours each day.

“No pops, let’s do something else. I’m tired of sitting by the pool all day, every day. You want to go into Washington and take the ol’ Urban Walk?” The urban walk was our only break from being in a place like Frederick, Maryland, a godforsaken little town an hour outside of Washington D.C. The urban Walk consisted of driving to Shady Grove, the last metro stop on the red line, taking the train from there to Dupont circle and then walking from there, through some nice neighbourhoods, to Georgetown, a very hip area of Washington.

“Maybe that’d be a good idea, are you really ready for your first urban walk of the summer?” he said with a smile.

“Yeah, I think I can handle it. Anything but just sitting around this place, I can handle.” We both laughed and went inside the house to get dressed.

As the car slowly started working its way up the old and battered Holter Vista Drive I felt, as I always did when we set out for Washington D.C., a sense of freedom. At last we were going somewhere. The last few weeks of stress had really taken its toll on both of us, especially my dad. We were now rolling at a steady pace down 270, signs pointing us towards Baltimore and Walkersville blurring past my window. I liked to watch my father drive the old Volvo, imagining what kind of complex thoughts were going through his brain and how he felt about the latest piece of bad news he had received.

“I can’t believe that this asshole Harry didn’t call me”, dad said in his typical angry but tired voice. “I told him I really need to know what’s happening at all times, but what does he care? The guy really doesn’t give a damn.”

“Yeah, I’m not sure what to say, I have no idea why he hasn’t called you, but I’m sure it’s nothing serious.” I replied in an equally dreary manner.

“Well, a damn lawyer should keep you updated whatever is happening, and I’ve told him that so many times. Anyhow, discussing this is about as rewarding as trying resolve world poverty.”

Dad was an expert at having 10 balls in the air at all times. Harry was his lawyer, a man who he hated to no end. The need for a lawyer had become apparent during the last few years since dad was dead set on suing the American government for the murder of his father. At the same time, dad was writing a book and trying to get a movie produced, all on the same subject. In addition to that, he was always looking for a way of starting up a practice in his original profession: psychology. He was, as I often pointed out, one of the country's great visionaries.

As we pulled into the parking lot in Georgetown his mood had improved somewhat, but we both knew that the only way for him to get out of this state of mind was the "urban walk", our own trademark stroll through the quiet and peaceful neighbourhoods between Georgetown and Dupont Circle.

Chapter 5

Frank never enjoyed leaving his family, but this time it was even worse. Travelling to Europe was completely new to him, and plus, something just didn't feel right about this particular business trip. The whole family was gathered in the driveway of their newly built home as the sun was setting on this brisk Monday evening. Frank was dressed in Khakis and a blue shirt, his hair was still wet from the shower he had just taken.

"You be good to your mother now, and do your homework while I'm gone", Frank said in his typical fatherly voice.

"We will dad, and I know I'll be able to ride my bike when you get back", Eric proudly declared in his equally typical boyish tone.

He gave each of the children a long hug. "I'll be back before you know I'm gone, don't worry." He kissed his wife Alice good bye before he got into the back seat of the big black Buick Roadmaster and closed the door. As the car slowly moved down the lane he rolled down his window and waved.

His chauffeur was not the talkative type, Frank moved from his seat right behind the driver's seat to the right side of the car so he could get a better look at him. Frank could see the eyes of his driver darting into the rear view mirror in order to see what he was doing.

"You OK back there Mr. Olson?" he asked in a stiff bland tone with a touch of a southern accent.

"Dr. Olson, if you would. And yes, yes I'm fine, I just don't like sitting in direct sun light."

"Oh, I'm sorry about that Dr., my head's not on my shoulders this morning."

"How long have you been working for us, son?" Frank asked to get a change of pace.

"Uhh, 'bout two years or so."

"You like the job?"

"Well, I always liked driving, so I guess it's all good, but my father was a dentist back in Jacksonville and that's what I'd like to end up doing as well," he replied in a dreamy voice. The car was now smoothly swaying along Route 355, corn fields lining the road on both sides. Maybe dentistry wouldn't be such a bad profession after all. He could get out of this mess he'd gotten into and start a completely new life, far far away from chemical weapons and animal testing.

As soon as he walked through the modern sliding doors at National airport in Washington D.C. Frank spotted his two colleagues and travel mates for the trip; Francis Winfield and Stanley Royce. They stood leaning against one of the big pillars chatting up two Pan American flight attendants. The girls giggled as the boys were obviously turning on their charm. Suddenly a tall and handsome man in a pilot's hat and suit emerged from behind the pillar, without even looking at Stanley and Francis he put his arms around the two beautiful

women and calmly walked away with them. As soon as they had disappeared out of sight Frank walked up to greet his colleagues.

“Guess guys like us stand no chance against pilots huh?” Frank said jokingly.

“Nah, I could tell they wanted us, they were probably just late for a flight or something,” Stanley said thoughtfully. Stanley was a real ladies man who couldn’t take no for an answer. Of course that was true not only with the ladies but also with his work.

Frank was a bit hesitant to travel with these two, as he recalled them, rather unreliable guys. Last time he had met them was during a conference in Minneapolis, and the only memory that still resided in Frank’s brain of Stanley and Francis was not a fond one. He often replayed that conversation he had overheard through the door of room 159 at the Blue Streak Motel in Minneapolis.

“I’m not saying I support the Nazis,” Francis had begun, “but I do think it’s good that they’re clearing out a few of those greedy damn jews.” Then the muffled sound of two whiskey glasses cheering accompanied by laughter. This had all happened a few years ago, and Frank was glad that they all worked in different parts of Maryland so he didn’t have to spend time with them since he still felt chills of anger as he recalled what he’d heard.

As he stood there at National Airport quietly observing his so-called colleagues Frank couldn’t let go of the notion that they were very different from him. He promised himself not to trust them during this journey.

“So, you wanna get this show on the road or what?” he said. Both Stanley and Frank nodded and the trio started walking towards the gate.

“Ladies and gentlemen, we will now begin our descent towards our final destination of Munich Riem Airport. Please fasten your seatbelts and you should be safely on the ground within 30 minutes. The crew and I would like to...” Frank looked over to his left where Stanley and Francis were both asleep. As he turned to his right he was reminded of what a hellish flight it had been. He’d ended up sitting next to an unbelievably fat and obnoxious woman from, as she herself put it, “the very beautiful and developed” capital of North Dakota: Bismarck. From what he’d heard, it would more accurately be described as one of the most boring cities in the world. The woman had gone into a long harangue about how much she wanted “my little Dwighty Dwighty” to win the approaching presidential election against Stevenson. Frank had avoided looking at her, shaking his head or making any other signs of listening of hope that she would eventually stop. Despite his efforts, this woman, who also failed to introduce herself, had kept on talking about Dwighty-Dwighty, the wonderful climate of Bismarck, and her thoughts about thin women not having as much to offer men as she did. Frank quietly thought to himself that the probability of her name not being Candy was slim to none.

Frank wasn't entirely sure what to expect as he walked out into the main hall of the airport. Would the city still bear scars of World War II bombings? Were the Germans still pissed off at the Americans? He didn't have much time to think about this as he could see Stanley, whom he had lost while getting off the plane, standing at the opposite end of the hall waving. Walking up to Stanley with Francis in tow he could see that he stood next to a tall and rather stiff looking man holding a sign which read "Winfield, Royce, Olson". Frank held out his hand to greet the man, but he simply nodded his head at an exit and started walking. Retracting his hand, Frank looked uncertainly at his colleagues who exchanged glances, snickered and set off after what Frank presumed was their socially dysfunctional driver. The first thing he noticed as they walked out under the German sky was the air. It felt so fresh and crisp, a bit like it feels right after a big Maryland thunderstorm. The four of them walked in silence until Jürgen, as Frank's vivid imagination had decided to call the driver, stopped beside a sleek looking and oh so stereotypical black Mercedes. He unlocked the doors and got in the driver's seat while Francis was quick to grab the passenger side front seat Frank had barely closed his door before they were off into the German country side.

The further they travelled, the more dramatic the landscape became. At first they had driven past green pastures with cows and horses, now the clouds were gathering as the car gained altitude. They were headed for the mountains.

"How long before we're there?" Stanley inquired. Jürgen gave him a long nasty look taking his eyes off the winding road for more than five seconds. Finally he held up four fingers on his left hand and one on his right, letting go of the wheel completely.

"What the hell is that supposed to mean?" Francis shouted angrily from the back seat. "1 hour and 40 minutes, 4 hours and 1 minute, 5 hours? We've been in this car forever!" Stanley nodded, clearly agreeing with Francis. They had obviously missed the fact that the driver had just exhibited a rather ungainly feature: his left hand only had four fingers.

After another five minutes of climbing up roads not much wider than the car itself the driver made a sudden left turn up onto a well hidden gravel road. Stanley nervously glanced over his shoulder at the two back seat passengers. Metal fences lined the road which was completely straight, there were no turns whatsoever. After ten minutes of absolute silence, tension started to gain in the car. Ahead of them was a small hill which covered whatever lay in front of them.

"Aalmoost deer," Jürgen exclaimed with a smug smile on his face. Francis leaned out his window and extended his neck in order to see above the top of the hill.

"Holy shit..." he whispered, his head still outside of the car.

"What, what is it," Frank said.

"It's the biggest damn building you're ever going to see. That's what it is." Stanley replied, his head now also hanging out the window.

As soon as the car reached the top of hill, the three of them gasped in awe. In front of them lay a building easily twice the size of the pentagon.

“It’s big, yes?”

“It’s enormous,” Frank muttered. The building was divided into five smaller what appeared to be completely square sections.

The car slowly pulled up to a structure marked with the letter D. It was the first complete stop the car had made since it left the airport.

“Get out,” the driver said in his broken English.

“Boy, these German chaps sure know how to treat their guests, don’t they?” Stanley laughed sarcastically. Frank fantasized about how it must feel to be a POW in Germany if this was how they treated visitors.

“OK, it’s been a long trip, but let’s settle in for an hour or so, and then we have to get to work,” Stanley ordered. Frank was astounded at his self discipline. Who would have thought that a guy like Stanley would want to get straight to work after a 15 hour trip? He looked at his watch and discovered that it was 6 o’clock. The sun stood high in the sky, way too high to be 6 o’clock.

“What time is it?” he asked Francis who still stood in complete awe looking at the buildings.

“Uh, I think they’re six hours behind overseas, so it must be 12 o’clock noon,” he said.

Frank cursed himself for not remembering such a simple thing like that on his own. He set his watch to the correct time and then went to collect his baggage from the big Mercedes. Together with Stanley and Francis he then followed Jürgen across a small patch of grass that separated what looked like laboratories from the housing blocks. He led the group to a lower building with only two floors that actually looked a bit nicer and more hospitable than the other buildings.

“This is where you will stay during your visit in Germany,” Jürgen said, as if they didn’t know which country they were in.

His colleagues immediately flung open the big wooden front door and rushed inside in order to get first pick on the rooms. Before Frank had even gotten a chance to step inside the house, Stanley and Francis came rushing down a flight of stairs shouting, like teenagers, about their room.

“All right boys, all right, settle down. Is there a room for me up there or what?” Frank demanded.

“Yeah Frank, sure, you can have which ever one you want, this whole place is completely empty except for us!”

Frank slowly lugged his big suitcase up the two flights of stairs that led to the floor where the rooms were located. The staircase ended in a big alpine lodge-style living room, with two hallways leading off in either direction. Frank thought that the rooms were probably all the same, and so he picked the first one he could find. He barely had time to put his suitcase down before he heard steps in the hallway.

”Frank!” someone shouted.

“Yeah, in here,” he shouted back.

“Ah, there you are, I’ve been looking all over for you,” a small, rather stocky character with grey hair and eye-glasses said as he stepped inside the room. “My name is Dr. Meyer and I’ll be looking after you while you’re with us here in Germany. Now let’s go have lunch with the rest of the team.”

Lunch consisted of two sausages, sauerkraut and mustard, much to the apparent satisfaction of Dr. Meyer who happily put away everything on his plate in less than five minutes. Next to him, Frank sat in amazement watching the others eat this food which to him seemed unworthy of the human mouth. Suddenly, one of the men across the table from Frank stood up, and the rest of the table immediately quieted down.

“This,” he said in a loud voice, “is a day of glory. We will make history during these next few days. We will make bonds between these two countries after years of antagonism. Cheers!” he exclaimed, and they all raised their beer glasses.

Lunch ended, and Frank decided together with Francis and Stanley that resting a few minutes before getting to work would be a good idea. Frank didn’t feel like sleeping, so he went outside and started walking around the area. Except for a few security guards, it was completely deserted. Frank tried to figure out how to get out of this maze of buildings, it seemed as though there was no way to get out. Wherever he went, he found a dead end consisting of a fence to keep intruders out and visitors in. Finally he grew tired of walking around without finding anything, so he decided to go back inside the main building. In the lobby he found a big model of the whole area made out of some sort of clay. At first, he didn’t realize what exactly he was looking at. It looked more like a relic left over from the Nazis than a map of the area. The buildings were laid out in such a way that they precisely formed a swastika. Frank couldn’t believe his eyes. During this whole time, he had sincerely believed that the people they were visiting had cut all their ties to the Nazis, but in reality they had been eating lunch inside a huge swastika.

“Frank! Come on, we’re supposed to be in the lab in five minutes.”

Frank turned around, still feeling dizzied by his discovery. Francis stood behind him, clad in a white lab coat.

“Yeah, I’m coming, I’ll be right there,” Frank said.

As Frank ten minutes later walked into one of the most modern laboratories he’d ever seen, he had the eyes of fifteen men glued to him.

”Gentlemen, sorry I’m late,” he said politely.

“That’s quite all right,” Dr. Meyer said.

The men stood in a large circle around a big square object which was covered by a blue piece of fabric. Frank stood beside Francis and Stanley, and eagerly watched.

“What I am about to show you will change the way we see interrogation,” Dr. Meyer began.

“From now on, we will in fact be able to extract whatever information we want, out of anyone

who has that information. I present to you: Aleksei Nikitin,” Meyer declared while pulling the fabric off.

“Oh God...” Francis said while covering his mouth with his hands.

Before them sat a Russian looking young man in his Soviet uniform, barricaded inside a thin steel cage, his hands tied to the chair on which he sat.

“Aleksei was captured by us in January 1943, and he is the only POW we still have left. During the ten years since we captured him, he has refused to tell us anything but his name. One month ago we hit a breakthrough using a new drug called LSD, and that is why we brought you here today,” Dr. Meyer said.

Frank couldn't believe his ears. He stood in awe watching the poor Soviet soldier who had been held captive during the last ten years. He sat stiff in his chair, apparently totally unaware of what was going on around him. Frank thought to himself that this man more resembled a robot than a human being.

“Now listen to this. Aleksei, Who won the Second World War?”

“Germany sir. Germany won the Second World War.”

”I can get this man, who one month ago was as cold as a stone wall, to say anything I like. We have, in effect, reprogrammed him.”

Frank couldn't take this any longer. He turned around, pushed two German biologists out of his way, and rushed out of the room. He quickly walked the whole way back to his room, sat down on his bed, and started crying. He didn't know why exactly, he hadn't cried in 20 years, but right then and there, he cried his eyes out. It was as if all his worst fears were coming true: the Nazis were still alive and breathing, and the Americans were cooperating with them on a project to find new horrible interrogation techniques. What was Frank even doing there? His job was to create biological weapons, not forcing people to talk. The rest of the night, he stayed in his room without talking to any of the other scientists.

Over the course of the next few days, Frank loudly expressed his discontent with what was going on, though he did attend all of the demonstrations in order to get a feel for what was really going on. Every night, he sat down at the desk in his room and wrote down all of his thoughts about what he was seeing, and by the end of the visit he had written 20 pages of notes.

During the whole flight home, Frank sat in complete apathy. Next to him, his colleagues were in precisely the same joking mood as they always were. Did he want something to drink, a flight attendant asked. No, but an ice cold shower would be nice, he thought, without even answering the question. Was he OK, the nice lady across the aisle asked when she realized he'd been staring at the exact same spot in the ceiling for almost an hour now. Francis tried to make Frank laugh by sticking pieces of lettuce up his nose, but Frank remained quiet and indifferent. He was stunned actually, completely stunned. He wasn't hungry, he wasn't tired, he wasn't anything. He wished vomiting and going to sleep was going to solve this, as if he were drunk and imagining things. This wasn't going to go away. This was real.

The next morning Frank, still in the same apathic mood as the day before, got in his car 30 minutes earlier than usual to drive to work. Most mornings there would be a little bit of traffic on the way into town, but on this particular early August morning, things were quiet and still. Frank felt, in the midst of his indifference, rather calm, and he let the car roll smoothly down the long hill leading towards Frederick. Upon arrival at the main gate of Ft. Detrick, Frank showed the security guard his name tag, and continued rolling into the parking lot.

“You trying to catch the early bird special today Dr. Olson?” said George Anderson, a rather distant colleague of Frank, as they walked side by side into the main building.

“Yep, lots of things to do you know, lots of things,” Frank replied without even looking at George. He quickly made a left turn into the bio-chemist quarter of Detrick. Frank walked quickly and resolutely past his own office, past Dr. Lashbrook’s office and past Norman Cournoyer’s office, until he finally reached the office of Sidney Gottlieb, his boss. Without knocking, Frank quietly opened the office door and stepped inside. Surprised by this early unannounced visitor, Gottlieb, sitting at his desk reading, quickly looked up.

“Frank! How are you? I want to know everything about the trip, I guess that’s why you’re here. We have a debriefing meeting in half an hour, so hold your horses until then, will you?”

“Here, I have something to give you,” Frank said, his voice stern.

“Ah, you got me a gift? You didn’t have to do that old boy!”

“It’s not a gift Sidney,” Frank replied while pulling a single piece of paper out of his briefcase. He quickly handed the paper over, closed his briefcase, and started to walk towards the door.

“Stop!” Sidney shouted. “You know that that’s not how it works around here, Frank. You don’t just quit.”

“I quit! That’s all there is to it. I’m not in on this anymore, I’m not doing it.”

”It was the trip, wasn’t it? I knew we shouldn’t have put you on that Goddamn plane.”

”It wasn’t the trip,” Frank lied. “I’m going to clean out my office now. It’s been a nice time, but I need to spend time with my family, watch my sons grow up, you know?”

Sidney nodded, but Frank had a feeling he had no idea what he meant.

Half an hour later, Frank walked out a free man. All he brought with him was a cardboard box of personal things. He was ecstatic. This was far beyond anything he had ever felt before; the feeling of being truly free.

“Frank!” he stopped dead in his tracks and turned around. He knew who’s voice it was, and he’d been hoping not to meet the owner of it until later. A few feet behind him, Norman Cournoyer had just stepped out of his car.

“Where are you going old friend? What’s with the box?” he asked, obviously realizing the answer to his questions.

“I’m out Norm. I can’t do it any longer, I’m sorry.”

“But... but you can’t just quit Frank. For God’s sake, we were working on things, weren’t we?” Norman said desperately.

“I know, but they’ll find someone else to do my job, don’t worry,” Frank said reassuringly.

Norman looked at him quietly, then took a step closer as if he was about to tell Frank a secret.

“You know, they don’t just let people like you and me go like that. They won’t let you go without a struggle. You know too much.”

“Well, what can I do, Norm? I can’t stay here forever. What are they going to do, kill me?” They both laughed uneasily, Norman clearly not comfortable with colleagues leaving him behind.

“Well, I guess that’s it then,” Norman said. “You want me to help you with that box?”

“No, I’m fine,” Frank said. “Here, give me a hug.”

An hour later Frank backed his car into the drive way. He quickly got out and almost ran to the door, he couldn’t wait to tell Alice the news. As he walked past the kitchen window he could see his wife putting what looked like a Brandy bottle back in the liquor cupboard. Thoughts immediately started twirling in Frank’s head. He was after all taking Alice by surprise, he hadn’t been home before 5 o’clock in 10 years. Did she have a visitor over that Frank didn’t know about? He quickly decided to find out, and so he unlocked the door and stormed in.

“Alice! I’ve got great news for you, where are you?” he shouted.

His wife immediately appeared in the living room, visibly taken aback by his sudden appearance.

“Oh, Frank, you surprised me. Why are you home so early?” she said, her voice trembling a little bit.

“I quit my job! I just quit, I’m free Alice, we’re free!” he said. At first she didn’t react to what he was saying, she stood completely still, her mind analysing his words carefully.

“You don’t work at Ft. Detrick any longer? You qui...?”

“Alice, have you been drinking? I can smell it from a mile away,” he interrupted her.

“What? No, absolutely not. Why would you say such a thing, Frank?”

“I saw you Alice, through the window. How long has this been going on?”

Slowly, she backed into the kitchen, her eyes still fixated on Frank.

“Anyhow,” Frank said, “I quit. I don’t know what you’ve been doing, but I quit today.”

”I’m happy for you,” she said coldly.

Chapter 7

“Yeah, well, how the hell do you think I feel about it? Did you stop for one millisecond to think about that?”

I lay in my bed half sleeping and half trying to figure out to whom my dad was speaking on the phone.

“Yes Eric, I understand that you don’t have access to all of this near unlimited money, but that is completely irrelevant,” he continued.

He was obviously speaking to the producer of the upcoming film, a guy dad liked to refer to as “the monster”. I wasn’t in on all the details, but from what I had gathered Eric was playing some serious hardball with my dad on the money issue, just like everyone before him had done. I could hear dad sighing in the living room.

“I gotta go,” he said and quickly hung up.

I wondered if he had simply hung up on the guy or just given him a quick good bye. Either we were heading for good times or they would become mortal enemies within the next few weeks. I wasn’t hopeful.

I stood up in the now brightly sunlit room and put on some shorts and a t-shirt. As I walked into the kitchen dad was making breakfast.

“He must be giving you one hell of a deal,” I said ironically.

“I don’t even know if you could call what he’s giving me a deal, it’s more of a hostile take over of my life rights,” he said. “And now, on top of that, he’s threatening to scrap the whole projects if I try to negotiate the deal. I don’t think this is going to work out, he’ll pull the plug any second, I can feel it.”

“So, I take it you don’t like the guy any more now than you did before?”

“Nope, he’s a real piece of work that guy. I can’t believe that it always ends like this, it’s like as soon as these producers, lawyers or journalists come close to what this story is really about, they back out. No one wants to touch this story with a ten foot pole, they’re just too scared of it. Anyhow, let’s eat breakfast, the pancakes are getting cold.”

We both sat down in our usual chairs and started eating. Dad was vigorously attacking the pancakes with his fork, a sign that he was both hungry and a tad bit irritated. He closely resembled a woodpecker trying to peck its way clean through a huge oak tree – his fork fiercely stabbing the pancake multiple times before quickly manoeuvring a small piece of it into his mouth. Upon opening his mouth to receive this wholly unhealthy piece of food his

jaw always cracked for some reason, a detail that irritates me beyond belief. Pulling the fork out of his mouth he does not, like most people, keep the food from flying back out again by enclosing the fork with his lips. No, he drags the metal fork between his fake porcelain teeth creating one of the worst sounds of friction known to man. The sequence then restarts with him pecking his pancakes with the fork. Therefore, eating breakfast with my dad is not one of the more pleasing experiences for a guy allergic to people making sounds when they eat. The whole procedure sounds something like this: CLINK-CLINK-CLINK-SNAP-SCREETCH-SMACK-SMACK.

“I want to write this guy an e-mail,” I interrupted him amidst this orgy of sounds.

Dad looked like a question mark with its mouth filled with pancakes.

“I want to write Eric Abraham an e-mail,” I clarified.

“You want to write Eric “The Monster” Abraham an e-mail? He won’t even respond to my essay-long letters, so don’t expect anything,” dad explained patronizingly.

“I think he might respond to mine just because I am after all your son, he might soften a bit towards me.”

“What will you tell him?”

“I’ll just explain the situation we’re in and that all he has given us so far are more problems.”

“All right, give it a shot, I guess it can’t hurt.”

To think that I would be allowed entry into the inner sanctum of adulthood – business - was exciting. Could I really make a difference? I didn’t know, but the thought was exhilarating. After breakfast I immediately settled down in front of my laptop which was situated atop a small wooden table next to the huge now slightly mold infested windows facing the yard. It was looking to become a rather pale day, the sunlight that had earlier flowed into my bedroom was now being exchanged for weak rays of light barely able to penetrate the dark clouds.

Dear Eric I started, but quickly erased the *Dear* part, I wanted this guy to sweat it out a little. Two and a half hours of deep concentration later I was done. This was unlike anything I’d ever written before; straight, distinct and no fuss. I thought about showing dad before sending it, but quickly decided that these were to be my words and not his.

Here is what I wrote:

Eric

To: Eric Abraham

Subject: Does this end in status quo?

I should probably introduce myself to begin with, my name is Stephan Kimbel Olson and I'm

the son of Eric Olson.

I'm writing to you as a response to the series of extremely unfortunate events that have occurred within the last few days.

I just can't explain the kind of relief my father and I felt the day we received the call explaining that you were going to "finance this movie 100 %". It took the weight of a thousand pounds off my shoulders to think that the mess we've been in for the last thirteen years might actually work itself out.

The years of severe misfortune that we've been going through are beyond me to even explain, I frankly can't understand how my father, who has to go through every day of it, is still standing upright. Given your history, I definitely thought you would be one of the few people to understand what these years have been like for us. Over these last couple of days though, this notion has been challenged by your way of handling this.

It's not only the fact that you've apparently decided to scrap the whole movie, it's the erratic behaviour that you've been displaying which we've seen on countless occasions concerning this case. At first it's always the classic "oh, we're so excited about this project Eric, aren't you?", then you get to the "oh, yeah, we can only give you this much money, sorry". Now if you've gotten this far luck has obviously been on your side, but then the inevitable "stonewall" springs into action. As soon as things begin to look good, the people you're dealing with just seem to vanish off the face of this planet and poof! We're back to square one.

The problem, Mr. Abraham, is that Square One keeps deteriorating. My father does by no means have unlimited money, and it is psychologically frustrating to say the least to have zero stability in life. While I can always just fly back to jolly old Stockholm, Sweden and rest up from all this, my dad cannot.

Despite our bitter history, we really thought this one was it. Now it's all just turning into one long Deja Vu.

I do understand that business and the art of negotiation are way beyond my pay grade and that I therefore shouldn't be commenting on those aspects of the deal. What I do ask, however, is that you at the very least give my father an honest explanation as to why you are behaving like this. He does not deserve to be treated like this after the months of working and waiting for things to happen.

The argument that this film would have a hard time finding a distributor in America sounds to me, a guy who is a complete novice in the ins and outs of the movie industry, like a complete whitewash. Here you have the chance of a lifetime to attack the American government, and you choose not to take it? If a movie like this gets made well, which I am sure it would under your supervision, it would explode on all markets. Sometimes you just have to take your shot and not think too much.

*Sincerely,
Stephan Kimbel Olson*

The next morning I was awoken by the phone's harsh signal. I didn't move since I expected dad would pick it up, but the phone just kept ringing and I couldn't hear his heavy steps running towards the phone as they usually did. I wearily got out of bed, not excited to have to put my feet down on the cold wooden floor. As I was running towards the phone I looked out the kitchen window into our drive way, dad's car was gone. I picked up.

"Hello?"

"Hey son, I have great news!" dad said excitedly on the other end.

"Where are you?" I demanded.

"I'm in the CIA library in Washington, I found the smoking gun! I found what's going to win us the case!" he almost shouted into the receiver. My heart started beating faster.

"What do you mean? What is it you've found?"

"I don't have time to talk now, and I'm at a pay phone so I can't talk here. I'll be home in an hour."

As I hung up, thoughts were flying through my head. What had he found that was so important? Why couldn't he talk about this on a pay phone? I didn't have much time to ponder upon this as the phone again started ringing.

"Hello?"

"I want to talk to your dad, where is he?" It was dad's ex-girlfriend, Mei Rong. Her voice had the hoarseness that you'd imagine a crow would have if they could speak.

"He isn't here right now, may I take a message?" I said in my most impersonal and office-like voice.

"No, I want to speak to him in person," she croaked. "I'm coming over."

Eating dinner that night dad was in a terrific mood. After first applauding himself for making such great pork chops, and admittedly, he does make good pork chops, he started telling me why this afternoon's discoveries would be so important in the struggle to convict the CIA of murdering his father.

"Oh man, this is so great that I don't know where to begin exactly," he started. "What I found today is what they refer to as the smoking gun, the piece of evidence that brings the opponent down. You ready for this?"

"Yeah, yeah, I'm ready for it. What is it?"

"Wow these are great pork chops, just delicious. And don't get me started on the pota..."

"Dad, come on, show me the stuff!"

"Oh, sorry. Here it is." He started looking for something in his backpack. After a few seconds of almost panicked searching he finally put a folder triumphantly in front of me.

“Is this it?” I said, almost disappointed, as I had in fact been expecting an actual gun.

“Yes, open it.”

I slowly opened the folder to find only one paper in there. It was yellowish and looked old. On top was the American seal. I started reading.

“What is this?” I said after a moment, failing to see the importance of this exact document.

“Look at the bottom! Look who signed it!” he said excitedly.

“What? I can’t see a signa...”

“What the heck, whose car is that?” I immediately looked up and saw that dad was pointing into our dimly lit driveway. Next to dad’s old Volvo a black Honda Accord was parked with its lights still on. I knew instantly whose car it was.

“Shit. Dad, it’s Mei Rong. She called earlier today, I forgot to tell you. I’m sorry.” He looked at me, not angry, just with a concerned look on his face.

“Damn, I wonder what she wants. Did she say on the phone?”

“No.”

Together we walked out into the driveway. The car stood completely still with its engine still on and the head lights, which appeared to be in high beam, aimed directly at us. The strong light prevented us from seeing the driver’s seat.

“Hey dad, I don’t like this. You know how she is.”

“Don’t worry, she’s not going to do anything, she’s just upset about something,” dad said in a calm voice. “Mei Rong, do you have something you want to discuss?” He shouted across the driveway. No response.

“This is really weird,” I said, my eyes blinded by the headlights of the car. “What do you want to do?” I looked at my father. In the strong, cold light, his face appeared pale and colourless. It was obvious that he wasn’t amused by this situation. All of a sudden, the door on the driver’s side of the black car flew open and dad’s Chinese ex-girlfriend stepped out. If dad looked pale, it was nothing compared to her white and washed out face. Her eyes were red and bulged out of their sockets; she was not a pretty sight.

“Eric!” she shouted. Her eyes looked wet, but she didn’t cry.

“Yeah, I’m listening,” dad said calmly.

“I want you to bring out all the gifts I’ve ever given you. Everything!” Her eyes gleamed with anger, she actually looked completely insane. In my mind, I started getting flashbacks from last summer when we had taken a trip to the beach in South Carolina with Mei Rong and her 5 year old son Preston, a trip that ended with her throwing us out of our room, not giving us our luggage back so that we could leave, and ultimately Mei Rong having one Tequila too many in a Tiki bar and screaming and shouting at her table before passing out on top of it. I could tell that my dad was thinking roughly the same thing.

“Good God, what did you do to this woman, dad?” I said, looking up at him with a smile.

“I don’t know, she’s mentally ill somehow, do you think I should get the stuff for her?” I shrugged at him, I didn’t really want to get involved, the whole thing freaked me out a bit.

“Mei Rong, just wait here with Stephan, I’ll be right back with all your stuff. OK?” Mei Rong nodded at him while I watched helplessly as he walked inside. Not exactly a dream situation. Lunatic girlfriend is forced to wait together with her ex-boyfriends son whom she knows thinks she’s completely out of her mind.

“So, Mei Rong, How ya holdin’ up these days?” I said and shot her a pathetic smile.

“I’m fine,” she finally said after ignoring my question for what seemed like 5 minutes.

“That’s good, glad to hear it,” I lied. “And Preston?”

“He is also fine.”

“Awesome,” I said, nervously glancing at the front door of the house to see if I’d be relieved of this awkward situation any time soon.

At last, dad appeared in the doorframe holding a pile of clothing in his arms. It looked as though his whole wardrobe had been given to him by Mei Rong.

“OK, what do you want me to do with the stuff?”

“Hand it over to me,” she snapped. Dad slowly walked up to her and put the clothes in a pile in front of her. Quickly, she pulled a pair of scissors from the pocket of her trousers and began cutting all the clothing into small pieces. Dad leaned closer to me and said: “she really is a nutjob this one, isn’t she?”

She was like a machine: jeans, socks, ties, shirts. Everything was cut into small tiny pieces and spread out on the driveway. We just stared at her, not really knowing what to say. After a few minutes of fast cutting, she was done. What had been expensive ties and good jeans was now relegated to useless pieces of fabric. Without saying goodbye she quickly walked to her car, slammed the door, and drove off. Dad and I stood in the driveway completely speechless, looking out into the warm summer night.

“Well, at least she didn’t get these. She would have had to kill me to get to these babies,” dad said and pointed to the leather sandals strapped to his feet. We both laughed. We laughed at his joke, the ludicrousness of what just happened, and first and foremost, we laughed at the never ending absurdity of things in general.

“So, what does that document say, dad?” I said.

“It’s one of the 20 pages that your grandfather wrote while he was in Germany the summer he died. It’s a document that explicitly gives us the details about how the Americans were collaborating with the Nazis after the Second World War.”

Most people would react to hearing a thing like that with pure amazement, but having Eric Olson as your father you become used to hearing things so unbelievable that you couldn’t even make it up yourself. For the first time in a while, dad actually looked happy. I could tell this meant a lot to him.

“I’m glad for you, dad,” I said.

”Thanks, I’m glad too.”

We walked inside the house again, trying to calm down a little bit. We both sat down by our laptops. I had received an e-mail from my mother reminding me to collect the money she had lent dad for the plane ticket.

“Dad?” I said reluctantly.

“What’s up?”

“Mom just reminded me that you owe her money for the trip. She wants me to collect before I leave”

His eyes turned dark, I could tell he wasn’t happy about this.

“God damnit, I need to spend money on myself, we can’t go on like this. I can’t afford it, I just can’t afford it Stephan,” he said as he stood up to go get the money.

“Here, take this”, he said, and handed me the money.

”Oh, and then you’re a little behind on the child support,” I said. “That’s another \$300.”

“Jesus Christ. This is just too much,” he said angrily.

I didn’t flinch from the borders of my computer screen. I didn’t want to hear it. I sat as if carved in stone, trying to get him to understand that I didn’t want to listen.

“Dad, it’s not my fault, it really isn’t. Why are you telling me this?” I said finally, my voice brittle.

“I don’t know, I don’t know anymore,” he almost whispered, hopelessness in his voice.

He sat by his computer, appearing to be just staring at his screen for lack of anything else to do. I wished to God at that moment that he’d have something to work on. Why didn’t he have anything to work on? He always had *something* to do, some project to finish! Throughout the years I had gotten used to him having some project, some important thing to do. Either it was suing the government for the murder of his father or it was writing the book about the struggle to sue the government for murdering his father.

“What are you going to do when I leave?”

“I don’t know,” he repeated. “I have nothing specific to do right now.”

I wanted him to say he had a master plan which he had been honing over the last few weeks and that he had found a way out of this stalemate. I wanted him to have a normal job, be the normal dad. The kind of dad that wears sailing shoes with no socks in the summer and comes home from work at 5:30 every evening. The kind of dad who drives a Chevy Tahoe and talks to his friends about where to invest his money. Or did I? Did I really want him to be the kind of dad who votes republican every four years and could not cite some obscure French philosopher at any given moment? Did I not enjoy the fact that I had a father who’d written enough books for three academic careers, though none of them published, and at age 63 still was convinced that he would revolutionize psychoanalysis with his method?

“I love you, dad.”

He looked up from his computer screen, visibly surprised. “I love you too, Stephano. Don’t worry kid, we’ll get through this rough patch, the road is just a bit bumpy right now,” he said. “Let’s go to Washington, this house gets us down.” He got up from his chair and started putting his jacket on. I got out of my chair and started putting my jacket on. He opened the front door and walked out. I walked out and closed the front door. He got in the car and closed his door. I got in the car and closed my door. We set sail for Washington.

I didn’t want a 9-5 dad.

Chapter 8

Frank awoke with a dart. Suddenly he was wide awake. Had someone just rung the doorbell? He turned his bedside lamp on and looked at his alarm clock. It gleamed back at him like a big white eye staring back at him. 3:56 AM. His eyes were struggling to adjust to the sudden light. He listened for sounds at the door which was just 15 feet away from him. It was quiet.

“What’s the matter honey?” Alice asked sleepily.

“I thought I heard someone at the door.”

“At this hour? It was probably just a squirrel, go back to sleep. You have a long day ahead of you,” Alice said rather unconvincingly.

Frank’s heart was still pounding hard, he was almost sure he had heard it. He looked out the front window, but all he could see was his own reflection. He turned the light back off and sat down on the bed, unable to relax.

The doorbell immediately rang again.

“Shit, there’s someone here,” he said. “Stay here, I’ll be right back.”

He quickly walked down the hallway leading to the front door, turned the outdoor light on and slowly pulled the door open. Outside stood two men in black raincoats with their backs turned to him.

“Can I help you gentlemen?” Frank asked uncertainly.

Both men turned around to face him.

“Are you Dr. Frank Olson? The bigger one of them replied rather arrogantly.

“Yes,” he muttered reluctantly.

“Good, you’re going to have to come with us,” the more sharp looking of the two said.

“What the hell are you talking about?” Frank asked, now growing irritated.

“Frank, just do as you’re told. Put some clothes on and let’s go.”

Frank’s whole body yanked as those words were spoken. He didn’t know who that voice belonged to; it wasn’t one of the two men in front of him. He took one step to the side in order to see the drive way. There, in the darkness somewhere, he could see the outline of two things. One was the Lincoln Continental that the bosses at Ft. Detrick drove. The other was what looked to be a man leaning against one of the big oak trees in the yard. Frank faintly recognized the voice, but he couldn’t quite connect it with a face.

“What’s going on sweetie?” Frank could feel Alice’s thin hand on his shoulder.

“It’s nothing. Go back to bed, I’ll be right there.” Frank said without taking his eyes off the man in his yard. Did you have to wake me and my whole family up in the middle of the night, what’s the God damned hurry?” Frank hissed, realizing that this must have something to do with his job.

“Calm down, Frank,” the man beneath the tree said. “The hurry is that we’re a bit worried about you and want to take you to one of the best psychologists in the country. He’s located in New York and can only see you tomorrow morning.” As he said this, the man stepped out of the shadows and into the weak light provided by the outdoor lamp.

It was Sidney Gottlieb, his boss. Frank couldn’t believe that he hadn’t recognized the voice of a man he’d spent the last few years with.

”What the hell. What is this Sidney? I resigned today, I’m not coming back,” Frank said, now leaning confidently against the wall.

“I understand that you’re not coming back to us Frank, you made that clear this morning, but we feel you should see this psychologist in New York. See it as a gift from me to you.”

“Wait,” Frank said, “I need to go inside and talk to my wife, I’ll be right back.”

Frank turned around and slowly walked inside the house, his mind racing. As soon as he entered the bedroom he saw Alice sitting on the bed waiting for him.

”What’s going on,” she asked.

“It’s my boss, he wants to take me to New York to see a psychologist. He thinks I’ve been depressed lately.”

”I’ve been thinking the same thing!” she exclaimed. “I think you should do it, you might never get a chance like this again.”

”Really? I don’t know, there’s something I don’t like about this. Something is fishy. They wouldn’t do this for no reason.”

”Oh Frank, stop being so conspiratorial, just hop in the car and go with them, it’ll be an experience.”

Frank looked at his wife. She really was supportive. After all he’d put her through, working as much as he had the last few years, she still put his needs first.

“All right, maybe I should go with them. You’re right about the fact that I always think the worst about people.”

”Good, you’ll have fun Frank. Now get dressed,” she said, smiling.

When Frank woke up the sun had just started to show up on the horizon ahead of them on the long open highway. He looked around as if trying to understand that all this wasn’t just a dream. He couldn’t remember falling asleep, but decided it must have happened somewhere in Pennsylvania. The front passenger seat was empty, as was the seat beside him. Frank rubbed his neck which was sore from sleeping with his head awkwardly against the window.

“You coming around back there?” Sidney asked in his low, deep voice.

“Where are we?” Frank demanded. He was pissed off now and couldn’t believe he’d agreed to do this.

“We should be out of New Jersey in a minute, so we’ll be there just in time for your appointment.”

“I don’t want to see some shrink, I’m not mentally ill Sidney, you know that. What’s this really about?” Frank felt a bit panicked, he knew Sidney had some sort of hidden agenda, he just didn’t know what it was.

“Of course I know you’re not mentally ill Frank. But we’ve all been sincerely worried that you’ve been under too much stress lately, that’s all.” Sidney spoke to him as if he were a toddler, his voice condescending and patronizing.

“Why New York? There are perfectly good psychologists in Washington, aren’t there?” Frank was not at all comfortable with this situation. He had no control whatsoever.

“We only want to give you the best, and this guy is famous all over the US,” he said. George’s eyes kept darting in and out of the rear view mirror to see Frank’s reactions to everything he said. Frank tried to keep his facial expression as blank as possible. Outside his window, the very outer New York suburbs flashed by. Except for a thin ray of light coming from the sun which was slowly gaining height in the horizon, it was still dark out. The roads were empty apart from the occasional bus hurtling its passengers to different construction sites around New York.

40 minutes later Frank was ascending a narrow flight of stairs leading up to the office of William Sergeant. He took a deep breath before knocking the door. It wasn’t the kind of door you’d expect a high status psychologist in New York would have. It had a red wooden frame with a large white frosted window with the initials W.S. printed on it. After what felt like five minutes of waiting Frank finally heard steps coming from somewhere behind the door. The steps became louder and more pronounced until a large figure suddenly appeared behind the glass. The door croaked loudly as it swung open to reveal a tall, pale and rather ungainly looking man.

“Frank,” he said as if they were childhood friends who hadn’t met for ages, while at the same time putting his hand out.

“Yes, and you are? Frank responded curtly without answering the hand shake.

The man eyed Frank up, as if he hadn’t expected such snappy behaviour from his soon to be patient. “William.” Their hands met.

Frank was led into a small office which reminded him more of that of a small time detective than the best psychologist in New York City. Its dark murky walls were drenched in cigarette smoke, and the few books that littered the shelves looked like the stuff a normal 15-year old kid would read. William gestured towards a leather chair for Frank to sit in, as he himself apparently preferred to stand by the window with his back turned to his clients.

“So, they tell me you’re having some trouble,” he said in a soft voice, but still facing the window.

“Yeah, I want to quit, that’s my problem.”

“Aha, you want to quit. Now why is that, Frank?”

“Do you really think I have enough trust in some shady shrink to tell him my inner thoughts, when he’s hired by my employer?”

“I think we have a few things to clear up here, Frank. First of all, I have nothing to do with your employer, I don’t even know what your job is. All I want to do here is to help you out and get you on your way.”

“I work for the army,” Frank said suddenly, “as a scientist. I’ve seen things you couldn’t even dream of. The methods they use to get people to talk, William, or whatever the hell your name is, are so far beyond what you realise that you wouldn’t believe it.”

“Good Frank, good. Now we’re getting somewhere,” Sergeant said with a sly smile. “I noticed you talk about the army as ‘them’, and not ‘us’. Why is that?”

“I don’t want to be a part of it any more, I’m done. I want to live a peaceful life together with my family from now on,” Frank said. For the first time during their conversation, Sergeant turned around to face Frank.

“What is it you’ve seen?” he asked, a penetrating look on his face.

“I’ve seen grown men get turned into babies after eating one pill, American soldiers being tortured by men of their own country, animal testing so harsh that even I couldn’t stand it.”

Sergeant stood silent, watching Frank as he spoke. He reached for a packet of cigarettes on his desk and lit one almost by automation, the way only a long time smoker can do it.

“These things you’ve been seeing lately, how do they make you feel?”

“They make me feel ashamed of working for this government, ashamed of even living in this country.”

“Shame, hmm, that’s very interesting. Do you feel you’re to blame for any of this?”

“I don’t know. Maybe I am. I’ve created weapons capable of killing thousands of people, that’s for sure. I haven’t taken part in developing these interrogation techniques, the Germans did that for us, but I’m ashamed that our great country is collaborating with old Nazis. It makes me sick to be honest with you.”

“I think we’re done here for today, you and I. But I want you to come back a week from now so that we can talk more about this,” he said.

“We’ll see,” Frank said while getting out of his chair.

“Hey Robert, I think I’m going to go out and get a breath of fresh air for a second,” Frank said that evening as they both sat on their beds reading.

“Good idea, I’ll come with you, maybe we could have a drink afterwards.”

“I think I’d rather do this one alone, I really need to think about the advice the psychologist gave me, clear my mind a little bit,” Frank said, looking Robert straight in the eyes.

“Oh, OK, that’s fine,” Robert said, clearly troubled by this. “Just don’t stay out too late, you know how the streets of New York are at night, don’t you?”

“Don’t worry, I’ll be just fine,” Frank said while putting his keys and a few dollars of cash into his pocket. Robert watched him carefully, almost too carefully, Frank thought.

Frank always found that he could think more clearly while breathing fresh air. The confines of the small hotel room definitely did not allow him to do his very best thinking.

As he walked out into the evening air of Manhattan he was astounded by how cold it was for a November night. He stood on the street trying to decide which way to walk, he wanted to get to central park, and decided to follow his whim. He walked along 7th street, not knowing in which direction to walk. Suddenly he realized that he hadn't talked to Alice since he left her in the middle of the night. He immediately found a pay phone and dialled the number.

"Alice?"

"Sweetheart, is that you? I've been a bit worried about you. Where are you?"

"I'm at a pay phone in New York, we're coming back tomorrow."

"What happened? I felt bad about encouraging you to go, have they treated you badly?" she said worriedly.

"No, I'm fine. The psychologist was pretty good, I feel better now."

"Are you sticking to your decision?"

"Yes, I am. I have to go now, there's a line outside the phone booth, I'll see you tomorrow. Say hi to the kids for me."

Back outside the pay phone, Frank decided that it would be stupid to go to central park so late at night, and he felt tired anyway. He started walking the few blocks back to the hotel.

Arriving back in the lobby, Frank decided to walk the stairs up to the room instead of using the elevator. He had gained a few pounds over the course of the last few months, and he was dead set on losing them. The short walk had given him some energy, so he jogged up the stairs with relative ease. For some reason he felt hopeful for the future, things were looking up. When he got home from New York he'd start looking for another job. That would give him more time to spend with his family and make his mood better overall. Working for the CIA was a sure way of making you introverted and boring. He quietly slid the key of the room into the lock and turned it. It was past ten o'clock and he thought Robert might have gone to sleep, but just as Frank entered the room he heard Robert putting down the telephone. Robert tried to appear to be doing nothing out of the ordinary by flicking through some random papers that lay on the desk by the phone.

"Finding anything interesting in those hotel folders?" Frank asked.

"Oh these?" Robert said and turned to the front page of the folder, obviously not even aware of what he was reading. "No, nothing in particular, I was just bored."

"All right, I'm going to bed now. You can stay up if you like. See you in the morning," Frank said. He brushed his teeth, stripped down to his underpants, and got in bed.

After ten minutes of twisting and turning, he opened his eyes and decided that going to sleep was an impossible task. Robert sat completely still at the desk with his back turned towards Frank. There was something that didn't feel quite normal about the situation to Frank. Robert had always been one of his closest colleagues, but now he was acting strangely. He seemed

nervous somehow. A stream of sweat trickled down from Robert's short hair, along his neck, and onto his t-shirt. Frank turned the light on.

"What the hell... why are you sweating like that Robert? Is something wrong?" Frank asked. Robert turned around to look at Frank. His eyes were red and shiny, it looked as though he'd been crying.

"No Frank, nothing's wrong. Go to sleep now, we need to be fresh for the car ride back home tomorrow."

Frank turned to his side, tucked himself in tightly, closed his eyes and went into a deep, deep sleep.