

There I was. Standing over the edge of the window, looking out in the distance, not knowing what awaited me. As I looked down, all I could see was black. Black waters violently crashing against the house, and with every crash, the house shook, causing me to lose my balance every time. A small, suicidal part of me wanted to let go and jump to my death. How bittersweet it would be to be able to let go of anything at any time... but that's the case, isn't it? I had the option to let myself go at anytime I wanted, but I never had the inclination to do so until now. A wave of sudden realization overcame me, and I realized that we are all suicidal in some way. We're just too cowardly to admit it, but not me. I admit it. We have that option dangling in front of my face everyday. A knife just lying in wait, waiting to be used. A bridge above rapid waters and razor-edged rocks appeared before us every day. Cars whizzing by, waiting to impact another brave soul. Strangers' hands in our vicinity, waiting to grasp and snap our necks. And there I was. Ready to let go. I looked down once again and saw my fate. I closed my eyes, took the plunge and waited for fate to take me.

Then I awoke.
Heart beating...
Heart beating...

This was the fourth time this week alone that I had woken up in a cold sweat, and I found myself in a puddle, sloshing about. I groaned as I could feel my body stick to the bed sheets as I slowly sat up and cursed silently to myself, "Fuck me." It was completely pitch black except for the moonlight gleaming through the window, and it was hitting particularly on a poster of a little boy fishing at a secluded pond. Every time I look at the poster, I get this feeling of freedom and the sense of being able to grasp it for myself as if I could reach into the poster and trade places with the little boy for I could truly live happily if I were him. And then I noticed the ominous red glow of my alarm clock, which read three zero zero in distinctive red numbers, although, on this particular night just like the other three, the glow was rather bright. It was rather curious and led my mind to wander with endless possibilities. My paranoia had been at an all time high the past few nights. I didn't know why. I had my suspicions, but I still didn't know.

3-0-5. Five minutes had passed, and I was still sitting in my puddle of sweat, being unable to move due to my persisting paranoia. There was no sound that had woken me up. There was nothing out of the ordinary that could have woken me up. Three one zero. Five more minutes had passed, and I knew that I needed to get out of bed. I swung my legs off the edge of the bed and stood up. The moon from my window right across from me immediately hit my face, and it seemed to draw me towards the window. I put my hand on the glass and felt a chilling sensation run up my arm all the way to every nerve ending in my body. It was a cool relief from the hot sweat puddle I had woken up in. The crystal, transparent glass brought me immediate relief and rid me of my paranoia.

I lived in the middle of nowhere with no surrounding neighbors due to my parents' lack of camaraderie, although we did live about a mile from this old, worn-down house, which was presented right in front of my bedroom window. But the house was much too far away to fully notice how old and broken down it was, which was how my parents described it to me. The first time I had taken notice of that house was when I was ten. I was outside playing with the tire swing that my father had built immediately after I was born, and it was the first time I had taken an interest in the house. I remember it just as if it were yesterday.

It was a glorious day; the sun was shining bright; there was a cool breeze blowing just enough to complement the heat coming from the sun. All was right in the world. As I swung higher and higher on the tire swing, an unfamiliar object started appearing in the corner of my eye, and my feet stopped the tire from swinging. I started walking towards the object not knowing what it was. As I walked closer and closer, I started to break out in a sprint, becoming excited about not knowing what this was and the adventure of finding out. As I became within spitting distance, I realized that it was a house. A two story wooden house, as old as time itself. The roof shingles had been either stripped away or degraded due to neglect. All that was left of the roof, were its wooden beams providing just a lonely frame. There was a small window near the cellar door, which led to the basement, I figured. The glass was insanely fogged up and was impossible to see through. And then my gaze went to this door with a long, rectangular window and a single doorknob, seeming to barely be hanging onto the door. This seemed as if it was the only way into the house so I started to reach for the doorknob, when all of a sudden, I heard a noise, which appeared to be very distinctive.

I froze.

My hand stopped reaching.

All of a sudden, I felt arms being wrapped around me, and I was instantly lifted off the ground with no struggle at all. As soon as my feet left contact with the ground, everything went black. The next thing I remember was waking up at three a.m. in a puddle of my own sweat. It was as if nothing had ever happened.

That was eight years ago; I am eighteen now, and I still wake up in a cold sweat at exactly three a.m. on random nights.

Ever since that traumatic night, I had an inhumane, burning obsession with that house, although, I could never seem to bring myself to go back. It was as if a fear-induced disease riddled my mind to no end, and I was stuck within the confines of my own room and my home. I rarely went outside ever since that night, and I was perfectly content with the situation I was in. I was safe and sound in my own home, and it seemed as if no one or nothing could ever persuade me to ever voluntarily escape, but as life would have it, I had spoken far too soon.

Once I awoke, it was impossible for me to sleep again, and I would not get any sleep until the following night at exactly ten p.m., which was another unusual routine of mine, so I bided my time by sitting at my desk, staring outside of the

window, gazing at the night sky, dreaming of what might have been. Since we lived in the middle of nowhere, there were no lights in our vicinity to pollute the night sky. The stars shining brought me a sense of purity. In the quiet hours of the late night, I liked to write poetry as an escape from the pathetic life I led. It was the only thing left that was mine and mine alone, and I held a special regard for it in my heart. The theme of all my poems were inspired by my feelings of helplessness and loneliness...

*Trapped behind the window
Of a 47-4
Always flying high
Racing the race
Never winning
But never wanting to die*

*Is it all just a dream?
Is there no escaping the beam?
Balancing world's pain
But really, who's to blame*

*Just like Cain
Couldn't resist
Never a winner
Never wanting to die*

As I was writing all of my dark thoughts of utter loneliness, something caught my eye outside of the window as if a light was flickering. At first I had thought that it was just our porch light flickering below me. I paid no attention to it and continued writing. Then it happened again. But as soon as I looked up, there was nothing that seemed to be out of the ordinary. Just pitch black darkness with the gleam of the moon that shone onto the tall grass in our backyard with the tire swing slowly swinging in and out of the light from the steady wind. Again, I decided to brush it off as if my mind had been playing tricks on me due to the late hours of the night, and at this moment, I looked over to my alarm clock, which was beside my bed, and it reads 3-3-0. Twenty minutes had passed since I awoke, but it had felt like longer. Time was never a clear concept to me. I spent most of my time just sulking around my room or wandering around our house. I thought I was losing my sanity, so I decided to put my pen and paper down to pace back and forth, which proved to be a total mind cleanser. I did so quietly to make sure I wasn't making a racket due to the chance I might awake my parents.

Fucking relax...

I took a glance at my poster of the little boy and pretended I was in his place for a while, and that calmed me down quickly but not for long. When I looked around at the window, there was a light in the distance flickering. And it was at that moment that I knew my mind wasn't playing tricks on me. I instantly ducked under my desk. I was having heart palpitations, and I kept cursing over

and over, "Jesus fucking Christ. Fuck. Fuck." I took a second to recollect myself, and then I peered over my desk just enough to get a view of the window and the house.

The light was off. I was flummoxed beyond belief, but decided to brush it off. I was sleep-deprived, so that was my excuse. I calmed myself to a point where I had accepted that there was a slight possibility of me becoming clinically insane.

To me, there were only two acceptable forms of insanity, no matter what anyone else thought. I would not accept any other forms. The first form is normal insanity, and this the most common form of the two.

Normal insanity is when everything in the world didn't necessarily make sense to your diseased mind, and there wasn't anything you could do about it. But, see, the thing is that you never really know. You just are. There can be a point in your life where you begin to notice it. Your insanity. Once you notice, there's no turning back. You know the truth. And that is enough to drive you insane. You become clinically insane.

Clinical insanity is when every drive, every power and every aspect of your human spirit just broke down and completely gave up, but the thing was that you were fully aware and in your right state-of-mind, in a disturbing way, that you were insane. Those are the two forms, and everything else is somewhat arbitrary. I was the latter of the two. I was clinically insane. I knew that to be true, and to me, it was the only sure and pure thought I had thus far in my eighteen years of living.

I got up and sat down at my seat. I picked up the pen and started to write random words, hoping it would attempt to keep my mind sane for the time being, but I already knew. I knew that my mind was past the line between sanity and insanity. I looked behind me, at the red glow of the clock, which seemed to be glowing even brighter, as if it were becoming brighter as every minute passed. The time read 4-0-0. Thirty minutes had passed.

The moon was high in the sky, and it moved its gaze from the tire swing to the house. As soon as I set sights in the direction of the house, which appeared as invisible due to the thick blackness of the night. The moon's glow barely reached the house for it only shone on the field between. There wasn't anything right about the atmosphere, and there wasn't anything out of the ordinary. But nothing sat right with me. And then I saw it.

A figure.

It was walking towards me.

I saw it as clear as day, or in this case, as clear as the moon allowed it. The figure had the apparent shape of a man. I could not make out who or what it was. The only thought that crossed my mind was to run, but I could not move. My feet were glued to the ground, and my gaze never broke the figure's movements; my eyes refused to let go. I was in a dormant state. The figure stopped for a short while, and I could feel its demonic energy drawing me in.

Then the figure picked up its pace. I immediately broke my gaze and sprinted out of my room, down the stairs and into my parents' bedroom only to find that it was empty. They were nowhere to be found, nor was their bed slept in. The golden brown sheets and comforter on the bed were fitted perfectly. Almost too perfectly. It had seemed as if no one had been in it for a long while. I walked over to their drawers, and started opening them all, and to my astonishment, they were all empty. No clothes. No shirts. No pants. No socks. No, nothing. I backed away slowly and ran to the room next door, which was my father's office. It was normally filled with too many books to name on his bookshelf, documents scattered all over his desk next to his computer and his cigar box always filled up to the brim with his exquisite cigars, as he called them. But when I entered the room, nothing was the same as it was the day before or the week before, but it was just as well that everything was exactly the same. The atmosphere was completely off in the room just as it was in the bedroom. His desk occupied all of his papers he needed for work, and it was in the exact same order as it always had been. The cigar box was filled up to the brim, but there wasn't that sweet aroma of smoke in the air, along with the intimidating ambience of intelligence. Both were lacking. The bookshelf was stocked with books he collected throughout the years, and one of them caught my eye. *History of Children*. An ominous mood started to fill me up.

What in the fuck? I thought to myself.

I scoured the room for something that would give me a clue of the whereabouts of my father and my mother but to no avail. My heart was completely broken. I was lost, and I had no idea what was occurring inside of my own house. It was at that moment I had the sudden realization that the figure was still out there, and it was coming.

I heard a door slowly creak open.

It was here.

Heart beating...

Heart beating...

I ran as fast as I could up the stairs to my room and slammed the door. It was coming for me, and it was going to kill me. I was absolutely sure of that.

"Don't be afraid," the figure said. The voice came from downstairs. My ears felt as if they were being slowly tortured with a knife buried deep down inside and slowly turning until I bled to death just before begging to die. The voice pulsated an extreme noise of static that was simultaneously static-like and clear. It was the strangest, yet the most compelling thing I had ever heard. For some reason, the voice was music to my ears, although it was torture.

Imagine being so deeply in love that it tears away at your every reason to live and your every reason to wake up in the morning. Imagine being so deeply in love that it takes away your very bane of existence and tears away at your humanity until there is nothing except the purest parts of your soul hanging on for dear life, and then the next morning, it starts all over again.

That's what the voice felt like. Toxic, yet beautiful, but I knew in the deepest pits of my insanity-riddled mind that I needed to escape, and the window was my only chance. "Let me see that beautiful face. Let me see your face." The voice was coming up the stairs. I opened the window and crept on the roof. The voice was drawing closer and closer, causing me to regret every step I was taking. I took a deep breath and jumped. The instant I hit the ground, immediate regret filled me up to from head to toe. I felt a crack in my leg, and I screamed in agonizing pain. Everything went black for an instant, and then I came to. The tall grass surrounded me as I looked up at the roof from where I jumped and suffered only a broken leg. I was in unbearable, throbbing pain and could not get up until I just saw it. It was unrecognizable due to the darkness consuming its face. It was standing over me on the rooftop, looking straight into my soul. I felt as if it could peer into and open up all the darkness inside of me and unlock it free. It did not move nor did I. With all of my strength, I broke my gaze and forced my limp body to get up and start running as fast as I could, which deemed almost impossible. I ran and I ran and I ran as fast as physically possible without looking back, because I knew that once I looked back, that was going to be it for me. That would have been the end of my pathetic excuse of a life of loneliness and regret. I could see the house in the distance, and to my shock, the light was on.

I went into the house. As I came up against the door, grimacing in pain, I hesitated for a second and began to think to myself, *What if I actually die? That would be horrible.* I laughed and walked in.

I opened the door. As the door slowly opened, I was welcomed with absolutely nothing except darkness. The kind of darkness that I felt when the figure peered into my soul. I immediately slammed the door shut, locked it, and then began to feel my way around the room, trying to get a hold of another door that led farther and farther away from the figure. I was fumbling around in the dark for God knows how much time. I found it. There was a door, and I could feel the creases in it but no doorknob. In anger, I kicked down the door only to find myself thrown into more darkness and despair. The gleam of the moon shone through the window of the outside door into the house and provided very little light. I could only make out a few feet in front of me, and there were stairs that led to what I had assumed was the basement. I had no other choice except to descend down the stairs. It was coming for me. As I raised my hands in order to shield me from what might be in my way, I could not see them. It was as if I was drowning in a sea deeper and deeper to the bottom. I felt as though I could not breathe. I was suffocating. The air felt excruciatingly musty and overcame me like darkness.

This was not a means to an end, but a means to a beginning.

My hands were sliding frantically all over the walls, and then I felt a beacon of hope blossom inside of me. There it was. I ran my fingers over the light switch, but there was nothing that I could see. No light had turned on, but in the corner of my eye, I could make out such a dim light. It was so dim that I could

hardly see the area around it. I slowly made my way across the room as I had gotten to the bottom of the stairs, making sure I didn't trip across anything for it was still a blanket of darkness. Everything was silent. Too silent. The atmosphere was too eerie, and when I finally came within spitting distance of the light, my heart instantly dropped.

The dim light was a small lamp on a wooden table on the far side of the room opposite of the stairs. It was just a lamp all by its lonesome and aside from it was a small, golden brown chest with worn down leather straps. The straps weren't fastened. There was no lock, which made me assume that nothing inside of it was meant to be private or so I thought. As a reflex, I looked behind me, but I could barely see anything, even with the glow of the dimly lit lamp. There was the unsettling thought of the figure still being out there, not knowing whether it was in the house or not, because my sense of sound was distracted by my surroundings. It was too quiet in that room. I could hear my own heartbeat.

Heart beating...
Heart beating...

I reached for the box with my clammy hands and quickly opened it. As I looked inside, I found newspaper clippings filled with reports of kids missing. The year on the newspapers was 1985. That was eighteen years ago. I was confused. I started looking through them one by one.

Bobby Brown
Christina Gardner
Oliver Scott
Serena Faulkner

I had no idea who those people were. As I kept on reading, my body went into shock. My heart stopped. I came across a name I knew very well.

My own.
Charles Davenport.