

TYPEFACE

The story of a writer

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I think it was the gun he used... I know we're taught that guns don't kill people; I know that... all I am saying is that it was a gun he used to kill himself. A simple 22 caliber pistol that his father kept in a metal code-locked box, the kind you find in top shelf of a musty storage closet under a pile of unused linens. I don't know where his father really kept it, I'm merely speculating. All I know is that it's part of the reason why he's never going to stand up for another bullied kid, why he's never going to play the warped tour circuit, why he, my non-blood brother, is... gone.

He was not the first to go, but he was the one that drove it home for me. It felt like nothing I had known before, like by body had suddenly rejected the heavy dose of reality that poured into my mind and now out of my eyes, and my heart. I can't say I was overcome with grief when I found out, I can't say I was brave either. If anything, I felt like I was the one in the body bag, limbs stiff, flushed of color, blood cold, nerves useless.

It didn't make sense to me, 'dead' is not a title that the average American teenager strives for, at least not to my knowledge, and if it changed I certainly didn't get the chain email... maybe my friends didn't think I was cool enough to know...or maybe he lost a bet, or it was an honor killing, or maybe he was just scared, scared of life, of the pain, of the scars, of the broken bottle in the same hand that used to walk him to school so long ago...

This story involves three main characters: myself, and my two friends who, from here on, shall be referred to as Christian (the one who committed suicide) and Christopher (his other close friend and my companion through the whole ordeal)

ACT I: The News

Scene 1: Man Down, Man-Up

I remember the moment I found out. I was in total denial at first when Christopher, his best friend, told me; this voice quivering over his deep heaving (no tears though, that would be very unmanly). I could feel the frustration in his voice. Like he himself didn't believe what he was saying, and so had to force it out. He sounded like some heartless warlord had tortured a false confession out of him. And I did not want to believe that he was saying as much as he did.

I remember too, being the only guy in a swarm of girls sitting next to him during lunch that day (apparently it's also not manly to sit next to a guy who's about to lose it). I sat there next to him and tried to comfort him as best I could, but when I reached out and patted his shoulder he broke down into a heap of tears and snot and coughing, and in that moment I realized what had just happened. This wasn't a sick joke he pulled to get girls like I had been betting on, now it felt all too real, I closed my eyes to hold back the tears but one managed to escape. I could feel it trail down my face, it felt so foreign my skin, it felt like it was burning as it rolled down my cheek. But I didn't do anything to stop it... it would not change the fact of the situation.

I remember trying to get the picture out of my head, the gruesome scene my imagination painted of what Christopher had told me. How he was found on his bed, body thrown back in a limbo position bent over his knees, a bullet hole in the top of his head the

remnants of his brain gurgling out in to a bloody pool on his pillow, the gun lying between his legs shining softly in the dim light of his room. His father not showing any emotion while his mother bawled, his still warm blood dripping from the ceiling on to his shirt, his mouth agape as if itself in shock of the whole scene. I bet it looked like something from CSI or maybe worse, one of those overly gory horror movies. I could see his father peering into the room for but a moment, only to get into his old blue Chevy and drive off. I bet he got more wasted that night than ever before, each shot followed by a puff on a fat dark cigar, each shot making his dead son seem less and less real... until he was gone.

Scene 2: dRUUnK fOg

I spent the rest of that day in a fog and I refused to come out. *It's better, I thought, that the world stays blurred today, lest it come into focus and I feel the knot in my throat and the sweat on my palms again.* To me, it was simple logic: the less emotion you show, the tougher you look; the tougher you look the tougher you become the tougher you become, the less prone you are to an emotional breakdown. "I won't let this get me down" I would tell myself over and over, I drilled into my head like communist propaganda (the Chinese would have been proud). It was my buffer, a shield from having to deal with reality. Though I knew he was gone, I had still not come to grips with how gone he really was. And I had no intention in doing so

The rest of the week was the same. "He's gone now and you can't control that... don't let this get you down" that was my mantra. I would avoid any contact with anything that reminded me of him. Lunch was especially hard, that's where we used to spend most of our

time together, talking, laughing; we even had some serious moments sitting at our table. It was there I learned my best friends black and blue secret:

“My dad’s crazy... the smallest things tick him off...” he goes on to tell me a story of how he had forgot to bring in the garbage can in one day and his father whaled on him. He showed me the bruise on his shoulder a nasty purple blotch that looked like a shoulder badge, or a tattoo gone wrong. I was fascinated by this, and all I wanted was to hear more of thrilling stories of his clashes with the evil dad, he was like my own Peter Pan. Taking on adult tyranny and showing no fear, in that moment he seemed like the toughest guy on the planet. So I pressed him for more information in an I-want-to-know-because-I-genuinely-care sort of way. What he told me left me speechless (I almost regret asking him, but not really).

He told me another story this one much more serious. His father had come in late one night as drunk as ever and began to curse out his mother for cheating on him (a false allegation, but none the less). Ill knowing the severity of his state of drunkenness, Christian stepped out of his room for some water. His father called him out half way to the kitchen and yanked him aside. “You knew mom was cheatn’ on me, didn’t you? ... Didn’t you! ...you little sack of shit, answer me!” he tried to pull away but got a fist to his spine instead, Christian fell and dad proceeded to kick him. “Why didn’t you tell me?!” Kick... “huh?” the beating continued until Christian couldn’t stand, all the while his mother watching from the kitchen, “stop it! ... I swear one of these days I’m just going to pack up and leave!” (Big mistake) dad gave her a cross look “alright” he sauntered out of the living room and returned with a small silver pistol and aimed it at his wife “ I wanna see you try” he gargled and pulled a chair over to the front door “... I wanna see you try.” He spent the rest of the night in the chair, gun in hand until he passed out...

My vocal cords were rendered useless as I tried to let out some sort of comprehensible sound. Christopher was equally moved but just stared. Christian broke the silence. "I hate it, not so much for my sake but my mom's sake I really wish it could just stop" without a tear I his eye (this sealed his fate as he toughest guy I ever met). But I could feel the distress in his voice. He was not at all happy or proud. His eyes begged for answers, "God, why did you short change me? What did I do to deserve this?" but he felt powerless to do anything more.

That was the image I fought all week long and into the weekend. The stumbling man, the crying woman, the boy holding his gut on the floor. The empty whisky bottles, the underside of the table, the silvery glint of the new pistol. I wondered if the Presidente stash my dad kept in the refrigerator for parties could take it away, but the sight of Christian's bruise quickly trashed that thought. But things only got worse...

Act II: Tough Guys

Scene 1: Blood Runs Thin

T plus nine days, my propaganda tactics had managed to pull me through the week and into the weekend but Monday was a different story. I fell into a heap on my desk chair and nearly missed (I remember because I dropped my phone, I never drop my phone). And out of sheer boredom I began to look back at my week, I poured through my notes, checked my grades online and looked at my assigned homework. My notes were nothing but main titles, my grades were slipping, and all my homework was as BSed as it could get. But I didn't care... *Really what do the Louisiana Purchase, parabolic equations, and Gatsby amount to in the grand*

scheme of things? We're all going to die one way or another, and I doubt that knowledge is going to matter on the other side.

My phone began to rattle on my desk I glanced at the number 'Carlos', my cousin, *buzz buzz*. I looked back up and let voicemail answer (that made me feel like a total badass). Soon after my mother came in my room holding the house phone (and my badass rating plummeted) "It's your cousin" I took the phone "hello" "hey Jeremy, I'm going out tomorrow with some friends I was wondering if you'd like to come?" I don't think lying has ever come more naturally to me than that moment. "Sorry I can't, I got to do a report on Catcher in the Rye" (I've never even read Catcher in the Rye). *He's my cousin I thought, he'll always be around, and besides what's the point; happy or sad we all end up in the same place. What's the point of success, and power, and wealth if you lose it all in the end?"* y churches Senior Pastor had a saying: How much of his wealth did Elvis Presley leave behind when he died? The answer: all of it. I decided to take that to heart, *if we are going to lose all we work for and all we love this side of eternity, what's the point?... why am I really here?*

Scene 2: Tough Guys

My lack of concern for the rest of humanity quickly became evident to my closer friends, but they merely assumed, with no small effort by me, that I was in a phase. "You're just stressed out... c'mon were going out this weekend, come with us." "Sorry I can't, I got to do a

report on Catcher in the Rye.”(Sound familiar) “That’s no problem we can move it to next week” but work or no work I had no intention of doing anything with them “sorry I have plans.”

"...He was just some loser pin prick, dick head that got so depressed he couldn't get any that he killed himself!" That was not what I had expected my plans to include when I told my friends I was "busy." I was at Christopher's house and we had been walking the block when one of his neighbors who heard about what happened thought it would be funny to test our knowledge of derogatory linguistics with some playful banter. Neither of us was sure why, but for some unknown reason this scrawny wannabe gangbanger who would religiously wear his pants below his nonexistent butt and held to his underdeveloped testicles like they might fall off at any second hated Christopher. This... child made it his personal mission to ruin his life in any manner possible, and today was no exception (Personally, I think he was jealous Chris had better looks, style, and far less acne). He started to follow us flanked by his two equally malignant cronies.

"I bet he was some pansy douche who couldn't even get his own hand to jerk his tiny dick off!"

We continued walking but not without our fair share of aggravation though, I wanted to hit him square in the jaw. All my hate, all my anger, all my rage and denial was balled up in that fist ready to exact whatever tough guy vengeance was necessary. That would shut him up, and wipe that smug little grin clean off his face. I didn't care what would happen after. It never even crossed my mind, I wanted satisfaction, now. I wanted to see his blood on my knuckles, see him cough and choke on it, I wanted revenge.

But apparently so did my friend. He came at the taunter fast and hard (from where I was standing it looked like a daredevil leap, very cool), as his fist landed square on the kid's jaw. The others, on both sides, stood and watched him land butt first on the asphalt with a thud. I could see my friend was near tears while he yelled every expletive known to man in every language he knew. He didn't stop there, Chris gave him a solid kick to the chest (I couldn't help but think of Christian on his dining room floor fighting to catch his breath). The kid, obviously realizing my friend wasn't joking, went pale and shrank into fetal position. I came beside Chris and put my arm on his shoulder. "Let's go, the fuckwit isn't worth your energy." He obliged but only after a solid tug.

The aftermath of his irrational burst formed a thick red puddle on the drive way as its source stammered back to his feet.

"I'm gonna get you for this fuckface!!" he spat. "Just you wait!" But Christopher and I had long since turned and walked off (a most badass move if I do say so myself). I could feel my heart pounding and could only imagine what Christopher's was doing as I looked him over. His eyes were hard, fist still clenched, his feet pounding the ground. I stepped back and examined him.

I can honestly say that never in my life had I ever been so petrified in fear. In that stare the world became black and all I could see was a walking corpse. I could not recognize the sickly frame that marched ahead of me, he became as foreign to me as that tear on my cheek a month before. And with that came the burning again only stronger, I could feel my flesh crawl. My eyes stung like I was surrounded by smoke. My body refused my orders to follow the stranger. And once I stopped, everything came at me like one nasty cluster fuck. The tear, the

isolation, the bruises, the gun, the blood, the bottle, my indifference, the darkness that had swallowed Christian, cooed him with its sweet promise of freedom and a life without pain, only to make him its slave...to the very end. And now Christopher too had fallen prey to the siren song. What was worse, I knew I was going down with him. The pain had taken its toll, but this was far more I couldn't bear to look at him, and so I did the only thing I thought logical at the time, ran.

Scene 3: Spill Poem

That was the last time I saw Christopher. I never said bye, I never called to explain myself, I never looked him up on Facebook or even wanted to. He had become just as dead as Christian. Once home I started work on a long procrastinated English assignment in an effort to get my mind off the afternoons cluster fuck. My music played softly in the background as I typed away, my thoughts quietly shifted to my work.

But it would only last for so long the next song on my playlist came up, *No Roads Left*
Artist: Linkin Park, Windows Media Player flashed. It was Christian's favorite song

"Standing alone with no direction, how did I fall so far behind?"

It wrenched me.

"Why am I searching for perfection knowing it's something I won't find"

...and it all came back, only this time I stopped everything and like before took a good hard look only this time at myself. What I saw scared me,

"In my fear of flaws, I let myself down again."

But I was not surprised. I had let myself be consumed by darkness and ignorance in hopes it would make my pain go away.

"All because, I run, till the silence splits me open."

And all it did was get the better of me

"I run till it puts me underground"

I was lost, and a hostage.

"Till I have not breathe and no roads left but one"

No place to turn to... But not anymore.

To try and make sense of the emotional typhoon I did something I never tried before, I wrote... and wrote and wrote. A poem took form out of the surge and it continued until I finally felt, free. Staring back at the mess of words on the page (which for some reason made sense) I felt something I had long ago lost touch with, understanding. The façade was dead... I was new, and ready to start again.

Breaking to Build

They say that I'm a stuck-up man
The one who claims to have the plans
For every problem threat or issue posed
And they say as well my mind is closed
To any new ideas and thoughts
That to the table you brought
And when you're hurt I do not cry
But walk away with a heavy sigh
But what you see is not all I am
All my innards I hide like a clam
No one knows what I am in side
Not even I know what I have to hide
The burdens I bare
The chains that I ware
They weight on me so greatly and cut off my air
The shell of this body holds my demons inside
But it's a monstrous mistake far too great to hide
I don't understand how to cope with this pain
Or clean out the mess of its toxic black stain
My conflicting desires battle hard for control
Like two heated actors vying for the lead role
They bash me, they burn me, they scar me inside.
But winning this battle will cost me my pride
A price far too high than I want to pay
To get rid of the darkness that won't go away
I've lost all my hope and the ones that I love
But then a voice calms me: *the forest looks different from high up above*
Step back, it tells me, *the big picture will show*
From there I could see why I was unable to grow
From my perch high above, I saw the walls of my pride
Surrounding the darkness that I had to hide
It was then that I realized how I had went wrong
I knew why the dark void had been for so long
I on my own had blocked out the light
By building the walls to keep the dark out of sight
When it fell into place my eyes filled with tears
And I broke down and bawled like I hadn't in years
Now off to the task that I must do
I must break down the walls to build me anew