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## The Never-knowns

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*University of Central Florida*



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THE NEVER-KNOWNS

by

RYAN GRAHAM HASKINS  
B.A. University of Central Florida, 2010

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Fine Arts  
in the Department of English  
in the College of Arts and Humanities  
at the University of Central Florida  
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## ABSTRACT

*The Never-Knowns* is a novel about a high-intensity behavioral group home for adults with severe to profound developmental disabilities, its residents, and the staff who are employed there. Focusing on plural protagonists, no single narrative is ever fully realized or resolved, leaving only a cryptic aggregate of experiences, revelations, and trauma.

In a typical suburban neighborhood, much like any of us grew up in or now live, there is a house down the block that no one discusses openly. This house seems like all the rest, well landscaped and tidy. Although three times a day much coming and going of college-aged kids and ne'er-do-wells whispers of something covert, obscure. This house is many things to many people; a workplace, or home, or burden, or profit, or prison.

An unfortunate, absurd one-act play echoes infinitely for those kept here. Constance is a thirty-something disabled woman who wakes every morning by sprinting nude in a wondrous fury toward the first person or thing she can destroy. Malcolm is a new staff member who snorts meth and masturbates in his car during shift breaks. Terry is a twenty-five year old deaf mute who believes his clothes dresser is God and always knows exactly how many feet are between him and every other place he'd rather be. Jake is a veteran staff member who has finalized his plans to take all the residents of the house deep into a forest and abandon them.

Using disjointed, prolix, and often dissonant approaches to storytelling, *The Never-Knowns* seeks to convey the perspectives of developmentally disabled individuals who possess few or no language skills, and who are so far detached from their own existence that their

understanding and interaction with the world is simultaneously grotesque, beautiful, and confounding.

This work of fiction is dedicated to the sorrow and joy of places unknown and unseen.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## THE WARM SWIM MYSELF

i want to tear down	a tree
into the floor here	hard and just there
down	moving at the top
and into the dirt that i think is below	dancing at the sun
tear down so far	i could become something else
where i think dirt is hot or cold below	down so far
down so far they can't reach me	down below
down so far they are afraid to follow	maybe become water
down so far i could cover myself	my body hot or cold down below
with the hot or cold dirt down below	and slowly tear into myself
and see nothing	into my own warmth
and not feel the spin	and my blood would spill and settle
and sleep until i am something else	and in time become water
i would become something else	made warm or staying warm
down so far	i as water would climb slowly up
down below	to meet with warmth again
maybe become something	to give or share in it
and slowly tear	and i would settle
and slowly climb	at the foot of the spinning world
up toward the warmth again	and i could swim in myself
and my hands and feet would sprout	always
and i become something left alone	i would be the swim itself
my heart and all something else	i could be the warm swim myself

## PIÑATA!

Malcolm arrived for the first day of orientation at his new job way too soon after ending a two-day methamphetamine binge. Three days before, Friday, he had received the phone call informing him he had passed his drug test. He had managed to keep clean for the eight days prior to the urine test, which was easier for him than he thought it would be. Spending the weekend in a speed haze, he saw two shows, screwed his friend Erica twice, convinced another girl to blow him for three bumps in the bathroom of a gas station across the street from his favorite bar that didn't have locks on the stall doors, only for him to be unable to get hard after giving her the bumps, ate only one apple and two bananas, smoked five packs of cigarettes and took two one hour naps. After a slim few hours of sleep Sunday night, he woke about 4:30 AM, showered, drove to Starbucks and waited in the parking lot for the drive-thru to open. After getting two Venti-iced-black-eyes-no-room, he drove slowly in the pleasant emptiness of the pre-dawn highway, 39 miles to the corporate headquarters of his new job as a Behavioral Assistant at a group home for profoundly mentally retarded and developmentally disabled young adults.

It was 7:15 AM, and he sat in his car. With nearly two hours to go before his new job began, he did his best to pass the time, listening to talk radio and drinking his coffee, hoping it would get him through the day. Hot and cold flashes accompanied the well-known feeling—*Piñata!*—as he and some of his friends called it, where your bones and joints yield under uncomfortably stiff papier-mâché skin that feels as though it will tear or puncture at any moment with the slightest movement, and you're filled with dry heaves that are quiet and polite, waiting to be released at the most inopportune time.

Malcolm entered the large training room on the fourth floor of the non-descript office building at 8:40 AM. A woman in a blue polo with the company logo embroidered on the breast greeted him. “Good morning, are you here for orientation?” She shuffled papers, looking back and forth from them to Malcolm.

“Hey, yes,” Malcolm responded, immediately regretting his casual tone and lack of enthusiasm. There was only one other person there, already seated, casually fingering the rim of a bowl of trail mix. He was wearing a name tag. *Hello, my name is Frank.* As Malcolm crossed the room to take a seat nowhere close to him, they traded frowning smirks.

## FRANK

I was the first one here, besides the blonde middle-aged woman who greeted me. Probably the instructor. Or the instructor's boss. Or some bored receptionist here to eat some of the orientation day treats. Each of the six tables, two rows of three, or three columns of two, whatever, has two bowls. One filled with trail mix and one with peanut M&M's. I know at the end of the day, they pour those treats back into their respective containers where his, her, and my sweaty palm juice will mix and contaminate and ferment. And back into the bowls the next day, and on and on until they are gone. It could be someone's full-time job to come in at night and stir those containers with their dick and none of us would be the wiser. These moist, grimy, dick-stirred treats. Welcome to the company. Welcome to Stuyvesant.

I guess you could say I do this not so much because I enjoy it, rather because these individuals, or clients, or consumers, whatever, are the only people I can find no reason to hate. It's hard for me to see past the interpersonal filth that most people are coated in. The filth of vanity. Jealousy. Faux-sadness and bank accounts and fancy clothes and friends as accessories. A filth that harvests, that feeds on sympathy, on sexual attention, on improved self-esteem and your honest opinion and validation and the failures of others.

I will be the first to admit my faults. I am insulting and detached. I insult people to see how they will react, not caring how they do, then judge them based on their reaction and determine whether or not they are worth my time and energy. No one so far has been worth my time and energy.

Except these people.

These forgotten outcasts who wander through the minutes and hours and the shadows of

years passed, never knowing what life is, what life could be. They are truly the only people who actually need help and want help and nothing more. They scream from within, awake and asleep and always, dull and sharp eyes, fists as welcomes and goodbyes, howls as RSVPs and calls for their lost to return to them, tears as sympathy notes and apologies to the world, smiles as terror, sleeping to escape, eating for sport, biting at boredom, and hidden from salvation.

So I help them, and I conduct my experiments. That sounds mysterious, suspect, demented. It's not-

*“Good morning, are you here for the orientation?”*

*“Hey, yes.”*

The room is large, I suppose. It could probably fit a hundred people or so, only thirty comfortably, though. There is a closet off to the side, probably filled with CPR mannequins and safety mats and first aid supplies and knee braces. The walls are gray and freshly painted, with fresh gouges from the backs of rigid, uncomfortable chairs when people lean back in the dark during bullshit videos and tutorials. Same fluorescent lights from every orientation room that has ever been. Same stained carpet. Same old television sitting on top of the same dusty black metal cart. Same picture of some old man who started the first one of these places who we are supposed to admire so much.

Orientation doesn't start for twenty minutes. I am intentionally early for everything. Besides success I suppose, or happiness. Probably always early because something embarrassing or traumatic happened to me one time when I was late somewhere. Embarrassment, trauma: the jet fuel of human behavior.

In time, the trainees file in, perky and schlepping and focused and hung-over, young and

old, black and white and whatever. And you can tell who has what job just by looking at them. You can tell which one is your boss. Which ones have been doing this for decades, and which ones haven't. Which ones will get you fired for hitting one of the clients. Which ones will sprint screaming out of the facility the first day, maybe the first hour. Which one genuinely cares, and the rest who don't.

This orientation group will prepare us to go forward and do our jobs confidently, professionally, and informed. Supposedly. The humor here is that we will leave orientation in a week and go off to one of six or seven different facilities, each with their own rules and protocols, and half the stuff we learn here will be disregarded, due to facility-specific regulations, and the other half will be augmented, based on the type of facility and its population classification: inpatient psychiatric or outpatient behavioral or short-term high-risk adolescent placement or developmentally disabled behavioral group home or adolescent sex offender unit or what have you.

We all sit next to each other and some greet each other, but we all judge one another. The altruistic lower class of the work force. Shudra, Dalit, on and on, in service to the alleviation of the guilt and soul debt of the rest of the world. Most of us will be making \$9.07 an hour.

For the next four hours we go over the standard bullshit. Mission statements and choke releases and time cards and bite releases and dress codes and medication administration and defensive stances and HIPPA and seizure protocols and Maslow and infectious controls and Skinner and punctured arteries. We ascend into a group consciousness, playing warriors and doctors and bureaucrats, we cowboys, they Indians, onward into the bottomless breach.

Half of us could teach this class. It's the same one most of us have sat through two dozen

times. There are a hundred of them going on any day of the week in the country. The Shit  
Whatever Organization is Required by Law and Regulations and Compliance to Teach Us class.  
None of this is going to help when you step through that door. Ninety percent of you will quit the  
first week. Unfortunately, I will not be one of them.



## IN THE WARM GREEN GRASS AND HEAT OF SUMMER PLACES

Awake again. My frustration is beginning to overwhelm me.

I throw my stale blanket to the ground and let the conditioned air condition my unconditioned body. A sliver of moonlight flows into the room between bent mini-blinds. I try, unsuccessfully, to determine the time. Knowing I will be unable to fall back asleep, I wonder how long I am to wait before I can begin my routine.

I decide to stand, which I do, and hop around a bit exploring my room, taking note of what, if anything, has changed. Some of my clothes have been stacked on my dresser, which is not uncommon. I wonder if they do this for their ease or mine.

The familiar pain in my abdomen has returned. I wish something could be done about this. It's obvious that for me to communicate my pain I should strike myself, or lie on the floor and thrust my hand down into my mouth until the hot food and water exit and they come to look. There has to be a simpler remedy, although I don't believe I am communicating my problem effectively. Perhaps I should be striking and evacuating a particular number of times or in a particular order. That, or no one is concerned. It seems to me that people are concerned only when other people are present to see them concerned.

I am constantly surrounded by friends, enemies and strangers, which I guess is true of everyone, although the decision is not mine as to who will cross my path. Most days, it is mostly enemies. I should clarify my intentions and the use of the word enemy. I use this label not to imply strife or ill will, only to serve as a word when no other will do. The enemies are uninterested in kindness or camaraderie, putting off whatever interactions I attempt to begin, and

going to great lengths to perpetuate my confusion and hustle me away from their primary affairs.

To continue after that clarification, most days it is mostly enemies. Mostly, being the majority, and with so few of them, this leaves me hopefully a single friend, who I will, continuously, I admit, try to engage. Some days this single friend will indulge me, and see to my problems and requirements, and other days will, I believe, intentionally ignore me and indicate I should interact with one of the enemies. I believe this to be an act of kindness, although misguided, an attempt to encourage me to befriend these enemies. As though it were my choice, I wish I could shout. These days are most unpleasant.

After hopping for a bit and examining my room, I open my door, then step away from it, knowing either an enemy will close it or a friend will enter with a questioning look and a few options to help me pass the time. The bearded one enters. From time to time, he allows me to touch his beard; it is soft and I laugh. He asks me what I want, and I tell him I need to use the bathroom. He follows me in and watches, which probably seems unusual, but is not. I sit for a while and shake about, and he tells me to be calm, which I am. I'm sure he doesn't understand what calm means, or at least uses it inappropriately. I stand and walk toward the shower and ask if I can enter. He says no and places his hand lightly on my shoulder to stop me from entering. My routine is not yet to begin.

I return to my room and ask him for a drink for which he replies yes and asks me to wait, which I do. He returns shortly with the water, which is cold. I prefer cold water to room temperature water, although those who fill these requests are apparently unaware of my preferences. He asks me to lie down then covers me up and softly pats my shoulder. He leaves me with my door slightly open. Wanting doors to be completely open or completely shut, I

completely shut it.

I wait for a time, getting into some foolishness to entertain myself, until my routine begins. I will spare you the details.

Thirteen hours later my routine is over, and I hobble back to my bed. I think, then sleep, wake, wait, and perform my routine. And on and on it goes until hopefully someday I will perform well enough or long enough that I may earn passage to where I'd rather be.

I've seen the places away. There are many. There are surely enough for me to have my own. The warm green grass, consenting and gracious, absent the smell and taste of walls and rooms and windows that will not break, and motionless above and below, all things abandoned but the heat of summer places. I wonder if I will ever be rewarded with this. With all the time I am allotted for thinking, I am curious why I am the same person I've always been. I am the same, and the days are the same, as well as the nights. I try to think the right thing, the thing I guess I'm supposed to think that will offer a solution to my confinement.

*in the warm green grass and the heat of summer places*  
*but to be here is to not be there and to be there is to not be here and to not be here should I not*  
*strike or strike more or less or should I not leave or leave more or less or should I not kick or*  
*kick more or less or should I not eat or eat more or less or should I not drink or drink*  
*more or less or should I not sleep or sleep more or less and to be here is to not be there*  
*and to be there is to not be here and I should know the way between here and not there or there*  
*and not here and the way to there or the way to not here is first six tiles then doorknob*  
*then door then three tiles then left then four tiles then right then twenty-two tiles then left*  
*then eight tiles then right then doorknob then lock then doorknob then door then I will be not*  
*here and not there and I should know the way between not here and not there or not there*  
*and not here and where am I if not there and not here and where is not there and not here*  
*in the warm green grass and the heat of summer places but to be here is to not be there and to*  
*be there is to not be here and to not be here should I not strike or strike more or less or*  
*should I not leave or leave more or less or should I not kick or kick more or less or should*  
*I not eat or eat more or less or should I not drink or drink more or less or should I not sleep or*  
*sleep more or less and to be here is to not be there and to be there is to not be here and I should*  
*know the way between here and not there or there and not here and the way to there or*  
*the way to not here is first six tiles then doorknob then door then three tiles then left then*  
*four tiles then right then twenty-two tiles then left then eight tiles then right then doorknob then*  
*lock then doorknob then door then I will be not here and not there and I should know the*  
*way between not here and not there or not there and not here and where am I if not there*  
*and not here and where is not there and not here in the warm green grass and the heat of*  
*summer places*

I wish they could know how hard I try to think whatever it is I'm supposed to. But my thoughts are looped, and thinking on a thing over and over serves only to numb a thing, and its possibility to come to fruition. I believe I am being kept from the full truth of the places away, or at least some of it. I know not if it is for my own good or for theirs, and when I try to go to the places away without knowing the way away I am stopped, physically, and reprimanded. For some while I thought maybe there was only a small amount of the places away, and there wasn't a share available for me.

Long ago, I would look out other windows, and try to see the way away, spent each day trying and trying to see the way away, but eventually the friends and enemies began to interrupt the seeing. I believe they would interrupt the seeing right before I would see the way away, and I determined they did not want me to go to the places away or see the way away to the places away. I wonder if seeing the way away affects the places away, and that if I saw the way away the places away would be mine and not theirs. But I've seen the places away. They reach out, reach into the sky. There are enough places away for us all, for me, for the friends, for the enemies, even for the strangers I am sure.

If it is so that only one of us can possess the places away, I see the truth of their interruptions, their resistance.

One night, long ago, I left while different friends and enemies slept. I did not have the foresight to bring anything with me; too excited to plan when the opportunity arose. Walking dark unfamiliar roads, I saw amazing things, and tried my best to experience them. For a time, I believed I would stumble upon some truth. The only truth I encountered was that these places away were filled with strangers who had no hint of concern or care for me. Eventually, I was

returned by some of these strangers to the friends and the enemies. It was an odd sort of sad safety I experienced upon returning, and the thoughts of my journey linger with me.

Who are all of these strangers who seemed to be content in a sea of strangers? Did they have their own friends and enemies like me, or were they able to sustain life independently, unlike me? Could I one day be one of them? Do I want to be? Is it better to be held captive by friends than be ignored by strangers? The questions stack on top of one another until they topple and I'm left with the same confusion that prompted me to create them.

The thoughts of my journeys linger with me.

## NIGHTSWIMMING

Malcolm arrived at work fourteen minutes early, 9:46 PM. He had rushed, not wanting to be late for his first shift at his new job. He now regretted the rushing and wished he had spent the extra fourteen minutes burning another CD or organizing his books. He parked in the driveway and turned off the car. He lit a cigarette and felt the calm, quiet air carry the pillows of smoke out and away from his car.

He wore blue jeans and a gray work shirt, covered by a light brown jacket. His hair was dark and disheveled, accompanied by bushy mutton chops, and he stood a good six feet, all of it ending in brand new black work shoes.

Looking through the smoke and passenger side window, to the right, only yards away, he stared at this house, looking like all the others in the development, and wondered, why here? Why here for them and for him, why here for anybody? He felt the pulling of time, glowing phosphorescent green from the dash, felt the pulling from the house he was soon, finally, to merge with. He was nervous, honestly, about this new endeavor, this new type of job. It was peculiar, he could admit, and when he described to his friends the circumstances of his new job their questions were relentless and plural. He had discussed this job more than any other he had ever held, and he hadn't even started it yet.

He looked around, at the adjacent houses, a subdivision like any other, various lengths of lawn grass, stray neon pails and shovels, under inflated footballs abandoned on a whim at that perfect line, that miniature moat between every yard and the street where children could reasonably argue whether or not their toy was left in the road. Four houses down, a rusted, domestic four-door covered with seasons of leaves sat on cinderblocks with nothing but sand

beneath. He wondered what the neighbors thought, how they regarded this house, and its business, and those inside. He remembered thinking it quite odd, to have a place like this right in the middle of a normal neighborhood, with children and families, pets and all. A place like this should be out in the woods, secluded, he thought. As the moist wind of November invaded the interior of the car, so did the screaming.

A wild, piercing screaming, filled with pain and ferociousness, echoed out of the house in front of him. It felt ancient to him, and he imagined a Sumerian priestess, long sealed inside her ziggurat, days of Babylonians battering at her entrance, and at dawn the crash, her final guttural groan and charge toward afterlife. A bad omen, he thought, and wondered what the next sixteen hours had in store for him. The stories he had heard about the group home were outlandish and unbelievable, and he believed them. Eleven minutes to go, and he wondered if he should go in now, the screaming his cue, or wait until his shift began. If he didn't go, and someone looked out the window, and saw him idle and smoking, what would they think? He thought briefly about driving away and around the block a few times and returning in what, now ten minutes?

He flicked his cigarette into the street and raised his window and sat in silence for a moment. He fished a small baggie out of the center console, looking out his windows carefully, and undid the twisty-tie. He removed his keys from the ignition and isolated one of them, pressing it firmly between his right thumb and index finger, and dug carefully into the baggie. It was hard to see in the shadows of the driveway, backlit only by the streetlamp behind him. He retrieved the small mound of white grain, neat and quick to his nose and away. He was doing better, relatively; this wasn't an everyday thing anymore, he couldn't afford that.

Malcolm redid the twisty-tie and placed the baggie back into the console. He licked the key



clean and put the key ring into his pocket. The screaming continued intensified. It was one of those kind of moments, one of those waking dreams, as the bitter juice trickled down and out of his sinuses and into the back of his mouth and into his throat, neat and quick and away.

He left his car, double-checked it was locked, and approached the front door. The screaming remained, and he was certain one of the neighbors was calling 911. The sounds of violence ripped through the entire neighborhood. He reached the front door and was unsure if he was supposed to knock or go right in. He opened the door and went in quickly, closing the door behind him, trying not to allow any of the screams to escape. A foyer and dining room appeared before him, tan tile and bare beige walls. The screams echoed against the empty dining room, over and under the elongated wooden laminate table, wet from being recently wiped down.

Having never been to this house before, he didn't really know where to go, or who to check in with, or even where that person may be. With no other options, he walked carefully toward the howling. Beyond, the dining room opened into a large living room, filled with maroon vinyl couches, and an open kitchen separated by a large countertop with a built-in sink. The countertop was covered with large binders and clipboards and loose paperwork. The television was on, and the ten o'clock news was beginning.

Turning around, looking for anyone, a young woman appeared. Out of an open bedroom door, she stepped out, only a foot or so and stopped. The screaming was gone, for now, and replaced by her alone. Her wild black hair, straight and wet, covered her face, revealing only her nude, light ochre torso and tear-soaked breasts, lavender wool shorts and bare feet. She was Asian, of some variety, and Malcolm was perplexed. He had imagined many different faces, silhouettes and sizes for the clients he was soon to meet, but none of them Asian. With a sort of

stagger she advanced, toward Malcolm, then turned quickly into the kitchen. She stopped in front of the microwave, and forcefully pulled open the door, revealing a bowl of something, which she grabbed, spilling half of it on the floor. It was lima beans, and she placed the bowl on the countertop and began eating them with both hands, clumsily navigating only a small portion into her mouth, the rest spilling and escaping onto the floor and her breasts. As she shoved them into her mouth, her long hair came with it, and she gnashed against her hair, grinding the beans into it.

“Malcolm?”

A bearded man appeared from around a corner, then seeing the girl, went to her and took her lima beans away. He ushered her to the kitchen sink, and began washing her hands and trying his best to get the food out of her hair and off her exposed breasts and stomach.

“You’re Malcolm?”

He was looking at her, but talking to Malcolm.

“Yes, hey, I didn’t know what to do.”

“It’s okay, no big deal. I’m Jake. So you’re working the overnight?”

“Yes, and the morning shift too.”

“Fun. Okay, well you’re working with Cynthia tonight. She’s been working here a few months. If you have any questions during the night feel free to ask her. Is there anything you need to know before I leave?”

Jake was in his mid-twenties, handsome with neat blond hair. His demeanor was soothing, and he spoke carefully and calmly as he handled the girl while she struggled to get free from the kitchen sink bathing. A few times she struck out at a random clipboard or bottle of pump soap,

and Jake remained calm and finished the cleaning.

“Well, I mean, I know what they told us in orientation, but they didn’t really talk about what we’d be doing on a regular basis. What am I supposed to do tonight?”

“Unfortunately, Malcolm, a lot of what they went over in orientation isn’t really going to help you here. There’s a list right there on the corkboard of what needs to be done on the overnight shift. Just make sure everyone is safe; they should all calm down shortly when their meds kick in.”

“Okay.”

Jake dried the girl with paper towels and began walking her back to her room.

“This is Constance. Don’t worry about her, Cynthia will take care of her tonight.”

Jake walked Constance back to her room and put a shirt on her, and she began screaming again. Now that he could see who was doing the screaming, Malcolm didn’t feel as disturbed by it. Outside, not knowing, he thought someone was being viciously attacked. Looking at this young girl, with a lima bean on her foot, he couldn’t help but smile, and the speed began to course through his blood and do what it did.

With a burst of comfortable energy, Malcolm sped over to the corkboard. It was a littered mess, and he searched the various memos and phone lists and whatnot for the checklist. Finding it, he removed the pushpin and walked with the checklist over to the counter. The checklist detailed about a dozen or so responsibilities, mostly cleaning this thing or that. “Medication Inventory” piqued his interest.

“Hey.”

A woman, early thirties, appeared and was looking Malcolm over suspiciously.

“Hello,” Malcolm replied.

She walked past him and into Constance’s room, opening the door, which revealed Jake sitting in a wooden chair near the door, Constance hovering over him, shirtless again, trying to reach for the doorknob. Jake and the woman exchanged a few words and she came out and approached Malcolm.

“You’re Malcolm?”

“Yeah, are you Cynthia?”

“Yeah.”

Getting a better look, he thought her to be in her mid-thirties now, plain face, nothing of much interest. Great tits, though.

“So, I usually do all the laundry, and the bathrooms. If you want to do all the other stuff that’s great, we should be done by one or so, and you can do whatever all night. Are you in college? You know you can study, right? Did anyone tell you?”

“No, I didn’t know that. Do the clients usually sleep all night?”

“Yeah, mostly. Constance will be down soon, she might wake up a few times, but she’ll fall back asleep. Terry will wake up around three, or four, and be up for the rest of the night.”

Cynthia began organizing the stacks of paperwork, putting some back into binders, some onto clipboards. She bent over a few times, and Malcolm looked at her breasts and wondered what they looked like bare. He thought for a moment about the possibility of her wanting to fuck him, and perhaps they would fuck later, and he would get to see her tits. The speed was working.

“So, you want me to do the medication inventory?”

“Oh, no. That’s pretty complicated. I’ll show you how to do it later, if we have time. Don’t

worry about that. The mop bucket is in the back office, Malcolm, right through there.”

She pointed back toward the dining room, which had a door leading into the back office. Malcolm entered the two-car garage converted into an office and supply room. Worn plastic racks held various cleaning and first aid items, all packaged in bulk. He got the mop bucket and went back into the kitchen.

Cynthia was now collecting laundry baskets, which sat outside each of the four bedrooms of the house. Malcolm knew there were five clients in the house, and that Constance had her own room, and figured that some of them shared a room, but was unsure of the specifics. Malcolm began mopping the living room, then quickly realized it needed to be swept. He went back into the office and retrieved a broom.

Malcolm began sweeping the entirety of the house, except the bedrooms and bathrooms, and got his first chance to really look around. The whole house was tiled, and the beige walls continued everywhere. The grout, originally white, had turned a sort of speckled black. The living room contained the maroon couches, a large bookshelf filled with torn magazines and dusty children’s toys, and a small table with a keyboard piano missing three keys. The television ran with no audience, the news continuing for no one. There was the kitchen, with stainless steel appliances, and a pantry door with no knob. Each room had its own scent, each area its own trapped odor, his tour of the house was a silent carousel of laundry detergent into spaghetti sauce into stale sweat into toothpaste into urine. He saw a back porch, but it was unlit and he had no idea what mysteries it contained. The rest of the house consisted of bedrooms and bathrooms, and he was too afraid to explore them.

The cleaning went on a few hours, and Malcolm enjoyed the busy work. The speed made

the work fascinating, and the time flew. Around midnight, the screaming began again, and Cynthia went to Constance's room to calm her, he assumed. After a few minutes the screaming died down and Cynthia exited the room.

“You smoke, Malcolm?”

“Oh, yeah, I do.”

“Well, if you need to step out, just let me know.”

“Sure. Do you mind if I go now?”

“Sure.”

Malcolm went out to his car and got in. It was much cooler now, almost cold. He left the driver's side door open and lit a cigarette. The urge to take another bump was fierce, and he gave in. Quickly it was done, and the rush was fast this time. He thought he needed to eat, but disregarded the notion. He was quite pleased with the weight loss that accompanied his recreational drug use, and would be considered chubby only by someone just meeting him. He leaned back in the seat, cigarette in his left hand, his left foot dangling out the open door. He licked his key clean and inserted it into the ignition, turning halfway so that the CD player would start. *Nightswimming* was halfway through, and he thought about how great this job was going to be.

A few hours and bumps later, Cynthia was asleep on the living room couch and the work of the night was over. Malcolm sat on another couch watching reruns of *Everybody Loves Raymond* at a distinctly low volume. Unaware of grinding his teeth, his gaze left the television and fell on Cynthia sleeping. Her breaths were long and deep, and he watched her breasts rise over and over again, wondering again about their appearance, texture and feel. Her lips were slightly parted,

her breaths making no noise, and Malcolm began thinking again about fucking and squeezing. Then the noises began.

At first, it was a quiet trickling of water, off and on, its origin unknown to Malcolm. Then the heat would kick on, causing a house-wide suction that would pull on all the closed bedroom doors, mimicking the sounds of all of them opening suddenly and simultaneously. Then a toilet seat would crash down onto its bowl, and Malcolm wondered who was awake and if he should investigate. He did not. The unusual sounds of the house began to take on a life of their own, and create a sort of morbid orchestra of nighttime chaos. Cynthia was unaffected by the sounds, and Malcolm wanted them to stop. He wondered if they had been going on all night, and if only now he was hearing them. His excess of speed-fueled energy was building, and he wondered what he could do to take his mind off the noises.

He went to the kitchen and opened one of the binders. It was medical records, one of the client's, Nick. He skimmed through, reading about Nick's psychiatric problems, and autism, and profound mental retardation and organic brain disorder. He read about his history of violence, and his tendency to bite himself when agitated, and notes about the really bad events where he would bite out mouthfuls from his arms and swallow his own flesh or spit the bloody lumps at staff members. Malcolm quickly became worried about his impending morning shift. He scratched his forearms and stared down the wall clock.

Malcolm wanted another smoke but didn't want to wake Cynthia to tell her he was stepping outside. He wasn't sure what to do. He didn't know the etiquette of the situation. Would it be fine to just sneak out? If he did and she kept sleeping, what if Nick or one of the others came out of their room and attacked her, or bit her nose off? She seemed deep in sleep, and

Malcolm decided to risk it. He walked out the front door at 3:26 AM. He'd be back in a few minutes, he thought.

It was cold out now, and dew had begun to form on everything, covering his car in a thin layer. He went to his car and got in again, lighting another cigarette. He zipped up his jacket and decided to call his friend Erika. It was Friday night, and only 3:30 AM, and he was sure she'd be awake.

"Hey, Malcolm."

Her voice was deep and sultry, and he could almost smell the sweet gin on her breath.

"Hey, Erika. What're you doing?"

"Just got home from Northside. What are you up to?"

Northside Tavern was a regular affair for Erika and Malcolm. A mixture of hipsters and tragic old drunks, it was quite trendy and ironic for the time being, a place for affluent twenty-somethings to mingle with sad fucks and feel like they were slumming it.

"At my new job. It's fucking crazy, naked bitches running around and screaming and biting chunks out of their arms. It's a fucking bloodbath over here."

"Oh my God, yuck. What time do you get off? Do you have any Teena?"

"Yeah, but I work until 2 p.m. tomorrow."

"Yikes, well can I come get some from you?"

"No, probably not."

"Why not? Come on."

Her voice evolved coquettishly, and he thought of her straight blonde hair and thick, firm legs.



“I don’t have much left, and if I give you some tonight, how am I going to get you all to myself tomorrow night?”

“Yeah right, you slut. You think I’m going to fuck you for a few bumps?”

“Hasn’t stopped you before.”

The profanity was playful, and the name calling soon descended into the filth of youthfulness. Malcolm closed the car door and masturbated as Erika talked about the nasty things she intended to do to him in the near future.

They made a plan to meet the following night, to score some more Teena, and go for a swim, and she teased him about wanting to try anal sex. He knew it was a tease, but he enjoyed the teasing and saved the notion as fuel to guilt her into actually doing it soon.

He lit another cigarette and took another bump, estimating that he had three or four bumps left in the baggie. He figured he wouldn’t get a chance during his morning shift and didn’t worry about it. His jaw hurt from the grinding, and he thought about doing some extra cleaning inside. It wouldn’t hurt, he thought, and might make him look good to his new coworkers.

Malcolm looked at the dashboard clock and it read 3:52. He couldn’t remember what time he came outside, but figured it hadn’t been too long.

Malcolm went back inside, trying not to allow the front door to squeak, not wanting to wake Cynthia. He did his best and went into the living room. Cynthia remained on the couch. Out of the corner of his eye, Malcolm saw something bright and moving.

A young man stood in the kitchen, naked and pale, hopping from one leg to another. He was bending over repeatedly and touching the grout of the tile with his left index finger. The hopping and bending and touching were fast-paced, and Malcolm had no idea what to do.

“Hey.”

Malcolm whispered to the man, with no response. He looked to Cynthia for help, but found none, her body immobile. Malcolm looked again at the man hopping and walked cautiously toward him, arms extended in front of him, as he was taught.

“Hey. What are you doing?”

The man stopped and looked at Malcolm, looking as confused as anyone could. He was naked with a farmer’s tan, a large jaw with matching forehead. He began walking toward Malcolm, shuffling.

“Hey, wait, what do you need?”

The man ignored his question and reached up to touch or grab or hit Malcolm’s face. Malcolm stepped back, and the man began touching his own chin with his left index finger repeatedly, a painful look smeared his face.

“What do you need? You need to put some clothes on.”

The man continued touching his chin, jabbing it lightly, then turned to open the refrigerator. Malcolm blocked him and grabbed his arm and began walking him toward the open bedroom door, the same way he’d seen Jake walking Constance. The man didn’t struggle, but then turned toward his room and broke free, half running, half shuffling. He got to his room and slammed the door. Malcolm followed him, and noticed a shiny gold star on his door with the name Terry written in white block letters.

Malcolm opened Terry’s door and saw him again bouncing and bending and touching the grout. The room was dreadfully bare, a single bed with the sheets removed and wadded together under it. A single three-drawer dresser with some clothes neatly folded on top. A single window

with no curtain, mini-blinds crinkled and stained with gravy or peanut butter.

Malcolm took in the scene, then entered and tried to stop Terry's bouncing, which seemed to be increasing in pace and force. Terry stopped abruptly, then tried to walk past him and out of the room. Malcolm blocked the way.

"What do you want?"

No response. Terry put his thumb between his index and middle finger and wiggled his fist left and right in front of Malcolm's face.

"What does that mean? What do you want?"

Terry again tried to exit the room. This time Malcolm placed his hand on Terry's shoulder and gently pushed against him. Malcolm noticed the smell of mouthwash and urine hanging around Terry, and nearly recoiled from the odd, combined stench. Terry turned and ran across his tiny room, into the corner, and began moaning and making guttural noises that were near deafening to Malcolm. Malcolm inched slowly into the room, not enough as to break the line of sight he intended to keep between himself and Cynthia, still asleep. He separated his legs and spaced them apart as to make them non-perpendicular to a possible charge from Terry. He turned his head and was relieved to see Cynthia stirring and standing. Terry continued moaning, and Malcolm had never heard anything so disturbing.

"What's going on?"

Cynthia's face retained the creases caused by the vinyl couch cushions.

"I don't know, he came out and tried to get in the fridge and ran away, and now he's screaming and trying to get out of his room."

"Terry!"

Cynthia called to him, and approached, waving her hand in front of his face to get his attention. She began making gestures with her hands, and Malcolm realized Terry was deaf. Terry made the thumb gesture again.

“That means toilet, he needs to use the bathroom.”

Cynthia mimicked the gesture so Malcolm could see it. Cynthia nodded to Terry and he left the room, bumping against Malcolm on the way out. He crossed the living room and entered the bathroom, sitting down quickly and urinating.

“He’s fine. Are you okay?”

“Yeah, I didn’t know he was deaf.”

“He should be fine, now. Mind if I go back to sleep? I’ve got to be at my other job in the morning.”

“Sure, I guess.”

“Just don’t let him out of his room. We can’t reinforce him being awake so early.”

“Okay.”

They watched Terry finish peeing. Then he crossed and entered the shower. Cynthia grabbed him by the arm and pulled him out. Terry shuffled back to his room.

“Shouldn’t we shower him or something? He’s covered in pee.”

“No. We aren’t supposed to reinforce him peeing himself and his room by giving him a shower. He loves taking showers.”

Terry remained in his room, and Cynthia eventually fell back asleep. As if he knew the precise moment, Terry exited his room again. Malcolm pointed back toward his room and Terry turned and went back in. A loud noise followed, and Malcolm entered the room.

Terry was sliding his bed frame around the room, and had exposed his wadded sheets. They were soaked in urine. Not wanting to deal with it, he pushed the bed back, hiding the sheets. Malcolm pointed sternly toward the bed, and Terry lied back down. Malcolm exited the room, closing the door behind him. He went to the stack of binders in the kitchen and found Terry's.

Malcolm spent the next hour and a half reading Terry's files. The noises of drawers opening and closing, and the bed sliding around, and other unidentifiable bangs and scrapes continued for about an hour, but Terry never came out of his room. The noise stopped suddenly around 5 AM, and Malcolm was glad Terry had fallen asleep. Malcolm read about the head butting and biting that Terry was known for, and was glad he hadn't been bitten during their exchange. Malcolm was somewhat interested in learning some sign language, and was curious how much Terry knew.

At 5:55 AM the sounds of car doors slamming came from outside. Malcolm figured it was one of the morning shift staff, and was glad the night was over. He closed Terry's binder, then noticed beside it a form that read "Client Overnight Bed Checks." The form listed all the clients' names, and had spaces labeled every fifteen minutes. Malcolm assumed this was meant for staff to check on the clients throughout the night, and the form was completely blank. He was concerned for a moment, then realized no one had mentioned it to him, and he would be the last person to get in trouble for not doing it. A door opened from somewhere near the back office as Cynthia's cell phone alarm went off. She turned it off and stood up, walking toward Malcolm.

"I forgot about the checklist."

She grabbed it and began quickly placing checks in all the blank spots. Constance's

screaming began again as Jake appeared from the back office. His eyes were red, and his gait was strained.

“Morning, anything interesting happen?”

“Nope,” Cynthia replied as she rushed to complete the form.

Jake approached the refrigerator and placed a warm cup of coffee on top of it, pushing it back a bit, out of the reach of the clients, Malcolm assumed.

Jake grabbed a clipboard and began going into each of the client’s bedrooms, one at a time, looking inside briefly then on to the next. He approached Terry’s door, then opened it, turning the light on.

“Where’s Terry? In the bathroom?” Jake asked casually, not noticing the desperate shock on Malcolm face. Terry was not in the bathroom, Malcolm knew, he had been standing outside Terry’s room door for the past two hours.

“Oh God, his window is open.” Jake’s stance perked, and he looked to Malcolm and Cynthia.

“What, no, fuck. Dammit. I’ll check the neighbor’s pool.” Cynthia, cursing for the first time, put the form down and went out the back door, through the mysterious back porch.

“When’s the last time you saw him?”

Jake’s question was hurried and concerned.

“Like an hour ago, or two. He was making a lot of noise, I thought he was just pushing his bed around. No one told me about the room check thing. Where is he?”

Malcolm’s tone matched Jake’s.

“Malcolm, go outside and down the block. There’s a retention pond about eight or ten

houses down. He runs off sometimes; he likes to swim. Take your cell phone.”

Malcolm rushed out the front door and down the street, running in what he hoped was the right direction. He remembered seeing a retention pond on his drive in, so he ran that way. He continued as quickly as he could without seeming suspicious to anyone who might see him in the pre-dawn morning. The streetlights provided little illumination. They cast down their accusatory light repeatedly, revealing his genuine worry and possible guilt. His breath was quick and short, and the sounds of birds arguing and complaining indicated that the time left to find Terry under the cover of darkness was short.

Malcolm increased his pace, no longer concerned about the possibility of early morning onlookers. He looked over his shoulder, hoping to see something, anything, hoping Terry had been found, and someone was now searching for him instead. The clouds began to appear, light reflecting off of them from the sun, which had yet to appear to light his way. The streetlights continued to dot his unfamiliar path, and he trusted in their steadfast demeanor that they knew the way better than he.

The sounds of his own footfalls and the scraping of sand between moist cement and rubber were interrupted by loud, large laughing coming from ahead, out of the darkness, echoing off of the sides of houses, its volume doubling and tripling, creating a silly crowd of laughter.

He reached the edge of the retention pond, unfenced, a twenty-degree slope trailing down about fifteen feet or so meeting its shore. It was fairly small, about eighty-feet square and dark as used motor oil. A yellow polo shirt rested at the water’s edge, its color contrasting against its surroundings so vividly that Malcolm shivered from relief and exhaustion. A faint rippling traveled across the pond as Terry breached the surface, his pale nude body coated in slick

blackness. His laughter exploded from the water, and he floated on his back, giggling, his face dark and full of joy.

“Hey, get out of there!”

He remembered Terry was deaf before he could finish his sentence. Terry was ignoring Malcolm’s waving and jumping, intentional or accidental, Malcolm couldn’t tell. Malcolm looked back in the direction of the house, hoping someone was coming to help him. He continued flailing his arms, with no response from the jubilant Terry.

Malcolm removed his jacket and the contents of his pockets, along with his shoes, placing them neatly on the sidewalk. He scurried down the slope to the water’s edge. Malcolm waved his arms, one more attempt to get Terry’s attention. Terry turned and went under again, vanishing into the nothingness.

Malcolm entered, slowly; feeling the pond water, its consistency, that of cold maple syrup. He wondered how deep the water was, and hoped Terry didn’t start attacking him in the middle of the pond. He didn’t remember an aquatic combat section in the orientation. He waded in, slowly, looking for Terry to surface. The slope deepened drastically; Malcolm was mid-chest deep before it leveled off. He looked around in a panic, then Terry surfaced a few feet away, chuckling during the breach. Malcolm carefully waded over to Terry and put him in a rear headlock, not wanting to risk a head butt or a bite while in the filthy water. He walked backward, dragging Terry, who floated along the whole way, not resisting at all.

Malcolm walked Terry back to the house, hoping none of the neighbors were outside to see the sight of them both coated in sludge, one of them naked and bouncing and laughing. They got to the front door and Terry rushed ahead inside, and toward the bathroom. Jake stuck his head



out from around a corner.

“Retention pond?”

“Yeah.”

“When the rest of the morning staff get here you can go home and change real quick. I think you’re too big to fit into any of the clients’ clothes. Do you live far?”

“No, about 20 minutes.”

Malcolm stood in the doorway, as to not add to the trail of mud and grime that Terry had left running through the entire length of the house. A few minutes later, an older woman appeared briefly and looked knowingly at Malcolm. Jake told Malcolm he could go now.

He walked back to the pond to retrieve his things. Grabbing his jacket and shoes, he noticed Terry’s yellow polo shirt. It rested awkwardly on the shore, and he thought curiously about Terry’s decision to remove it before he plunged into the water. He stood for a moment, contemplating this peculiar act, the decision to be naked in the water, then grabbed the shirt, wadding it into a ball. He returned to the house and put it on the front step, not wanting to go inside, not wanting to be inside.

He got to his car and took a blanket out of the trunk and put it on the driver’s seat. He lit a cigarette, half-coated in sludge now, then placed his key between his thumb and index finger. The key was a thick mess, as was most everything in the car now, and he looked at the center console and sighed. He wiped the key on the blanket and put it in the ignition.

Halfway home and three cigarettes down, Malcolm considered not returning for his morning shift. He thought of Terry’s filthy, blissful face and of the many retention ponds in their future.

## TERRY W. DAILY SCHEDULE

### WEEKDAY NON-HOLIDAY

0700-0715	BREAKFAST, MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION
0715-0745	SHOWER
0745-0800	STRAIGHTEN ROOM PROGRAM
0800-0845	TRANSPORT TO WORK
0845-1430	AT WORK
1430-1515	TRANSPORT HOME
1515-1600	FREE TIME
1600	MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION
1600-1630	PUT AWAY CLOTHING PROGRAM
1630-1645	FREE TIME
1645-1700	COMMUNITY WALK
1700-1800	PUZZLES AND MOTOR SKILLS PROGRAM
1800-1830	DINNER
1830-1900	FREE TIME OR COMMUNITY OUTING (IF FOUR STAFF)
1900-1915	SHOWER
1915-2000	FREE TIME
2000	MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION
2000-2100	ASL MAINTENANCE
2100	BEDTIME

### HOLIDAY AND WEEKEND

0630-0700	SHOWER
0700-0730	FOOD PREPARATION PROGRAM
0730-0800	BREAKFAST
0800	MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION
0800-0830	PUT AWAY CLOTHING PROGRAM
0830-0845	STRAIGHTEN ROOM PROGRAM
0845-0945	ASL MAINTENANCE
0945-1100	FREE TIME
1100-1230	COMMUNITY OUTING (IF FOUR STAFF) OR BACK YARD
1230-1300	FREE TIME
1300-1330	LUNCH
1330-1445	FREE TIME (SHIFT CHANGE)
1445-1500	COMMUNITY WALK
1500-1600	PUZZLES AND MOTOR SKILLS PROGRAM
1600	MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION
1600-1700	FREE TIME
1700-1800	ASL MAINTENANCE
1800-1845	DINNER & DESSERT
1845-2000	FREE TIME
2000	MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION
2000-2030	FREE TIME
2030-2100	SHOWER
2100	BEDTIME

## BUILDING SOMETHING

Malcolm was assigned to the Friday overnight, Saturday AM, and Monday through Wednesday PM shifts. It was full-time at least, and he thought about the flow of his workweek. 16 hours on, 48 hours off, 8 hours on, 16 hours off, 8 hours on, 16 hours off, 8 hours on, 48 hours off.

Malcolm thought the 48 hours off, both of them, were pretty swell, even if it meant working a double once a week, and that having Saturday and Sunday and Thursday nights off was pretty swell too.

He had raced home after the pond incident and taken a quick shower and changed his clothes, which he left in the bathtub to deal with later. Malcolm lived with no roommates, no pets, no parents. His apartment was modest, and mostly empty, and on the outskirts of the trendy warehouse district, where all the trust fund kids and hipster professionals wanted desperately to live. Technically, he lived in the warehouse district, and could claim so, but in actuality his apartment was only barely there, on the vague outskirts, and the girls he brought back at night from time to time were only marginally impressed.

Driving back to Liberty, the name of the group home, and also the name of the street it existed on, which was in no way a commentary on what goes on inside or doesn't, he reconsidered the plan he had driving home to change, that he could just go home and not go back to work, and find another job, or not. He figured it probably wouldn't be prudent to just quit out of the blue, without giving the house or the people there a chance. But mostly, he didn't want to have to tell all the people he had bragged to about his new, exciting job that he had washed out, after one shift, after one, honestly tame in retrospect, event.

He had taken another bump of speed, amphetamines, methamphetamines, whichever, in the car before setting out to return to Liberty. The fifteen minute or so drive back was fiercely packed with waves of numbness in his extremities, loud, scrolling song selections, cigarettes smoked to the filter and a desire to figure out the mysteries that had haunted him from behind bedroom doors during the night just past.

It was coming up on 7:30 A.M. and Malcolm was glad now that Terry had escaped, it afforded him this ninety minute paid break, to drive and smoke and recollect himself before finishing out this first day at Liberty.

Malcolm arrived and went inside, without knocking, which he had determined was appropriate. All of the lights inside the house were off, but some of the window blinds were open, adequately lighting the house while still communicating a residual sleepiness. He went forward into the living room and first saw Terry, dressed this time, lying on one of the couches face down, ever so slowly and deliberately thrusting his hips and thighs into the couch cushions. Jake was in the adjoining kitchen, arranging a carton of eggs and assorted vegetables.

“You came back.”

“Yeah, should I not have?”

Malcolm assumed informality was fine, encouraged even, although he had no basis for this notion.

“Let me know in a week. Did you have a chance to read over any of the clients files last night?”

“Yeah, Nick and Terry’s.”

“You’re gonna be working with Nick today, he’s pretty easy going, and I’m sure you’ve had enough of Terry for a while.”

A toilet flushed from somewhere deep in the house, and Malcolm looked around and wondered what time the clients were supposed to get up.

“Okay, so what do I do?”

Jake was chopping green peppers and tomatoes and putting them into a bowl of mixed, salted eggs. “Normally, you’ll spend the majority of the shift running behavioral programming tasks, working on hygiene and other daily living skills, but since you’re new you’re just going to be hanging out with him, establishing some rapport. The clients sometimes have problems getting used to new people. The last thing we want you doing is putting him into a task and demanding a lot from him.”

Jake mixed the eggs and vegetables in a large, worn plastic bowl. Malcolm thought there had to be over 20 eggs in the bowl, and had no idea how the five clients could eat so much, and hoped he wasn’t expected to eat the eggy slop with them.

“So, just hang out with Nick, like watch T.V. or something?”

“Nick doesn’t like T.V. Well, he likes to watch his movies, but he’ll only sit down for them for a few minutes at a time. Your best bet is to play catch with him or play with his tools with him.”

“Is he awake?”

“No, not yet. We let them sleep in as late as they want to on the weekends, since they have to get up at 5:30 A.M. during the week to go to work.”

“Work?”

“Well, yeah, kind of, let me finish these eggs before more of them wake up. I’ll tell you later.”

Jake looked away from Malcolm and the eggs towards Terry on the couch, whose thrusting had become much more rapid and determined.

“Hey, could you go tap him on the shoulder and tell him to stop?” He asked Malcolm while fumbling between the large bowl and a chipped Teflon skillet.

“He’s deaf-- I mean, how do I tell him to stop thrusting?”

Jake put the skillet on the range top and wedged the egg bowl between his right forearm and chest and placed his left hand open, palm up, and brought his right hand down in a chopping motion into his left hand.

“Stop.”

Malcolm walked over to Terry, who was now outright fucking the couch through his cargo shorts. He leaned down and tapped Terry on the back several times before Terry stopped and looked up to Malcolm, his jaw askew and looking pissed or happy, Malcolm couldn’t tell. He mimicked the chopping stop sign and Terry rolled on his back, compliant, grinning.

“So, they didn’t tell me much in orientation about what I’d actually be doing here,” Malcolm said walking back to the kitchen.

“No kidding. Stuyvesant is big, national, and almost all of their facilities are for troubled teens, like psychiatric only. There are only a few MRDD houses like this, and the national training doesn’t really cover what you’ll be doing here. That’s my job.”

“MRDD?”

“Mentally retarded, developmentally disabled. You spent a lot of time in orientation on verbal de-escalation and professional boundaries and stuff, yeah?”

“Yeah.”

“Yeah, none of that really applies here. These guys are deaf or mute or don’t comprehend much. They’re really clever and observant though. Your body language and facial expressions are more important than any of that. If you’re in a bad mood, the clients will be able to tell, and they’ll probably get in a bad mood themselves. They’re very empathic.”

“Hmm. So, what time does Nick wake up usually?”

The smell of eggs filled the house now, and Malcolm wondered how long he’d be able to bullshit before having to meet Nick.

“Soon, eightish usually. They’re so used to getting up so early. Maggie and Constance would sleep all day if I let them.”

“Is there anything you want me to do until he gets up?”

“You can go in the office and introduce yourself to Betty.”

“Is Betty-”

“She’s kinda new, a few weeks now. You can go over Nick’s behavioral charts, ask Betty where they are back there.”

Malcolm headed back to the office garage, and realized he was fidgeting a lot, and wondered if he had been fidgeting in front of Jake, and thought if he was that Jake just thought he was probably nervous, not sleep deprived and racing on speed. Malcolm entered the office and saw the woman from earlier, middle-aged, maybe 50ish, sitting in front of the open medication cart, a huge gray box on wheels. Malcolm sized Betty up in the three steps from the

door to the cart, the post-divorce dyed blonde pixie cut and tight light blue sweater oozed with newly discovered sexual freedom and independence.

“How’s the water?” Betty asked while shuffling blister packs of medication.

“Sorry?”

“Terry. The pond.”

“Cold. He didn’t seem to mind.”

“Sometimes I wonder if he’d be better off if we just dropped him off in the ocean.”

Malcolm looked away, troubled by Betty’s statement. After a moment, he looked back to her.

“How long have you been working here?”

“Five weeks. Longer than most.”

“Oh, do people not work here long?”

“Not too long, I think people have some sort of idea about this place when they apply, you know, the sort of people who *just want to help* or think this is akin to babysitting. I guess after their first busted tooth or blood-covered restraint, they hit the road. Some don’t even come back for their paycheck.”

“Wow. Well, hopefully that won’t be me. Have you been in this field long?”

“This field or similar. Malcolm, the sooner you realize that you are here to help the clients, and that you are not actually helping the clients, the better.”

“What does that mean?”

“Nothing. Did you need something?”

“Yeah, Nick’s behavioral chart?”



“Over there,” Betty said, pointing to a filing cabinet behind Malcolm.

Malcolm turned around and went to the filing cabinet covered in refrigerator magnets from Pizza Hut and a pharmacy delivery company and a local law firm and such. On top of the filing cabinet was a stack of loose papers, leaning forward, ready to spill toward him. On top of the stack was a set of what looked to Malcolm like cotton gloves, but larger and padded, with no room for individual fingers, just a mesh netting for the back of the hand and a sort of miniature pillow for the palm. There was a Velcro restraint for the wrist. The odd gloves were quite worn with reddish brown stains that looked impossible to wash away. He slowly opened the top drawer of the filing cabinet, careful not to disturb the haphazard stack above. Inside, he found a series of binders, each four to six inches thick. The names of the clients were written in black or blue Sharpie on the spine. Malcolm pulled out Nick’s binder and closed the drawer.

“Did Jake tell you to watch me administer meds?” Betty asked Malcolm, not looking up from the blister packs.

“No. Should I?”

“Probably. If you’re still here in a few weeks they’ll probably give you your medication administration training. Everyone here is supposed to have it, but they wait a while cause people leave so quick.”

“I’ll ask him.”

Malcolm left the office-garage and went back into the kitchen. Jake was spooning scrambled eggs from the large skillet into a plastic Tupperware container. Malcolm noticed Terry was no longer on the couch, then looked around quickly, not seeing him.

“Where’s Terry?” Malcolm asked Jake, worried, that familiar excitement of shock he felt when Terry went from “sleeping” to “missing” just a few hours earlier.

“He’s in his room. He runs all over the house. It’s hard for him to keep still.”

“Okay, I thought he escaped again.”

“No. Try not to use that word, *escaped*, or things like that, at least around the managers and administrators, not that they’re here much. It has a bad connotation. You can’t escape if you’re not confined.”

“Aren’t they? They’re not allowed to leave whenever they want, are they?”

“Not at all. They can’t even go into the back yard or out the front door without permission and with staff. Still, Stuyvesant frowns on terms that suggest confinement, isolation, or involuntary commitment.” Jake chuckled mildly.

“I don’t get it.”

“All of the clients are here voluntarily. Technically. Each year, they sign a form indicating that they understand why they are here, wish to be here voluntarily, and that they approve of their Behavioral Intervention Programming.”

“How would they do that?”

“We sit them down, and read it to them, then put a pen in their hand, and move their hand to make a mark on the signature line.”

“Can some of them read and write?”

“No, none of them. I know, sounds ridiculous. What are you gonna do?”

“Does Stuyvesant know that they have no idea what they’re signing, or what signing that even means, or what signatures are?”

“It’s all legal stuff. They have to agree to being here and to the terms, or they can’t stay. If we didn’t sign it for them we would have to discharge them. Then they’d wander the streets stealing food and attacking people or whatever. I know it sounds shady, but what’s the alternative?”

“I don’t know.”

“Yep.”

Malcolm put Nick’s binder on the kitchen island and opened it, trying to find the section he left at last night. Skimming through again, he remembered the notions about Nick biting himself, and though that Nick must be the worst client here, the most violent.

“What is...organic brain disorder?” Malcolm asked Jake, who was washing the skillet in the sink.

“A general deterioration of brain tissue.”

“What does that mean?”

“It doesn’t mean anything. Nick is microcephalic, he has a small skull, like noticeably small. The psychiatrists diagnosed him with organic brain disorder cause they think some of his cognitive problems were caused by the microcephaly. Something like when he was growing up and his brain was trying to grow his tiny skull prevented it from growing properly. It’s one of those diagnoses that don’t mean anything, like oppositional-defiant.”

“Can he talk?”

“Yes. He’s got a limited vocabulary though. Well, a limited expressive vocabulary. His receptive vocabulary is great. He only says like forty words or so, but he can understand a lot more. You shouldn’t have any difficulty explaining simple things to him. Nick only gets upset

and goes into crisis if he is confused about something or if he thinks you're mad at him. So don't yell at him or look mad, or he'll get upset."

"Is Nick the worst client- I mean is he the most violent?"

"Not really, it's all relative. Some of them are aggressive toward other clients and staff, some are only self-injurious. Some of them hurt themselves all the time, some rarely, but really badly. If you're here a while you'll get to know each of them and how to read them."

"Gotcha. There's five of them, right?"

"Oh, yeah, sorry. There's Terry, your swimming buddy, Nick, Maggie, Constance, and Gretchen." Jake points to different areas of the house, not looking in their directions. "Maggie and Gretchen share a room. Constance, Terry, and Nick have their own rooms."

"Which room is Nick's?"

Jake points to a door a few feet away from the kitchen. It is white with no markings.

"Is it just the three of us today?"

"Yes. Technically we are supposed to have four staff but that rarely happens. When corporate comes. And inspectors. It's because sometimes it takes three of us to restrain a client, meaning there is no one else to supervise the others. And restraints can take a while sometimes."

"How long?"

"Thirty seconds. Two hours. Between that."

"So, if Nick starts biting himself, or whatever, which of the restraints should I use? The one with the chair or the standing one or what?"

“It depends. It’s in his binder. Make sure you read his behavioral intervention plan. That tells you all about his specific behaviors and how to react to each one. For today just shout if he starts hurting himself or you.”

“Gotcha.”

Malcolm went to a maroon couch next to the one Terry was back on, thrusting, and reopened Nick’s binder. The vinyl was slightly sticky, rough but smooth looking. Malcolm looked to his lap and adjusted his legs to see if he was sitting in something. Jake looked up from his paperwork at Malcolm.

“Oh, make sure you look before you sit down anywhere. Terry and Constance, well, most of them will have accidents sometimes, and we don’t immediately realize. Just make sure you’re not sitting in pee or anything.”

Malcolm stood and looked behind him, between his legs. Nothing.

He spent 45 minutes going through Nick’s binder, trying to memorize the dozens of behaviors and each of their interventions.

He read that if Nick had a toileting accident he was to be prompted to the bathroom, to be sat down on the toilet and to be allowed to continue or finish his toileting. Then he was to remove his soiled clothing and put them in his laundry basket. He was to take a washcloth from under his sink, wet it, and clean himself off. Then he was to get a new set of clothing, put it on, and take his laundry basket to the washing machine and put the soiled clothing in it. If the washing machine was in use, he was to place the basket next to the washing machine, staff were to set a visual timer, show it to Nick, and return in fifteen minutes, if the washer was then available, place his soiled laundry in the washer, then return his laundry basket to his room. He

was not to receive any physical assistance from staff, but should be encouraged verbally at the end of each step of the process. If at any point during the process he refused to participate, walked away or got distracted, staff were to avoid eye contact with him, block him from leaving the immediate area, cease verbal interactions and simply point to the current task step, such as the washcloth or laundry basket. If he becomes aggressive or self-injurious, he is to be restrained in the immediate area of the current task step until calm, then be verbally prompted to return to the task step and continue. At no point during the task should he be allowed to escape the task or access non-verbal reinforcement. In the event that the toileting accident is of a degree that a washcloth with soap and water is insufficient to thoroughly and reasonably clean him, he should be permitted to access the shower, although he should not be permitted to masturbate or engage in water-play. He is to be prompted to quickly wash only the soiled areas of his body then immediately leave the shower and continue with the task steps. During this procedure, staff are to issue a single verbal prompt at the beginning of each task step, and to not repeat the verbal prompt or engage in any other verbal exchange. If the verbal prompt is ignored, staff are to issue a gestural prompt, such as pointing to the item of the task step or mimicking the desired behavior. If the gestural prompt is ignored, staff are to issue a light physical prompt, such as lightly touching his arm and lightly moving it toward the item of the task step or the intended direction of movement. If the light physical prompt is ignored, a full physical prompt is to be issued, such as lightly grabbing his wrist and placing his hand on the item or task step, or lightly escorting him to the desired location by staff placing their hands on his upper arm from behind, extending their arms, and walking forward slowly, forcing him to be directed to the intended location or to physically resist the full physical prompt. If the full physical prompt is resisted-

“How’s it going? Riveting stuff, right?” Jake asked.

“This is pretty complicated. Interesting, though.”

The elaborately repetitive and detailed instructions read like stereo instructions, although violent and disgusting, and Malcolm was enthralled, the precise and vague directions, the step by step explanations and conditions and ifs and whats and whens and hows and in cases rolled over him like an erotic symphony of extrapolations and he realized he had been reading for thirty minutes or so and wanted a cigarette and needed a bump. He was genuinely interested in reading more, reading all of it, and the other clients’ binders. If pissing yourself required such a structured and detailed response, what about if one of them jumped out a moving car or pulled out all of their teeth? There were four pages of instructions for just pissing himself, and there were dozens of other targeted behaviors, all with their own responses and conditions, and Jake said that each of them all had different behaviors and ways of going about handling them, all different from the next. Malcolm thought it would be fucking awesome if he could memorize them all, and wondered if Jake had, and realized that really, if he memorized them all, no matter what ever happened he’d know exactly what to do, and would do it, and couldn’t really get in trouble. This job might be really hard but actually pretty simple.

Jake was sitting on the other couch holding a paper plate in his lap with small pieces of cut up apple. Terry would tap Jake’s knee and Jake would look at him. Terry touched his fingertips to his mouth and Jake gave him a piece of apple.

“Jake, am I allowed to smoke? I mean outside.”

“Yes, although when your client is awake make sure you tell me before you leave the house. Also make sure someone agrees to watch your client while you’re gone. Actually, if you

leave the house for any reason let me, or whoever the supervisor is, know, in case there's a crisis, so I'll know there's only two people in the house."

"Gotcha. Can I go now?"

"Yeah."

Since Malcolm had returned from his apartment, the sun had risen over the distant tree line, and the light smashed into him as he opened the front door. At that moment, an electronic ping, sort of like a chipper robotic doorbell, sounded from behind him. He realized it must be the door, that there must be a sensor or something, to alert the staff that the door had opened, a courteous alarm of sorts. He briefly remembered Jake's thoughts about escape. He was concerned that the sound might wake the clients, Nick in particular, and hoped they couldn't hear it in their rooms, or that they were used to it. He wondered how long he'd be able to ride out the shift before having to meet Nick.

He went to his car, which he parked in the street on the side of the house, the house being on a corner in the subdivision, and sat in the driver's seat. He fished a lighter from the center console and lit a cigarette. The driver side door open, he turned quickly to look behind him to see if the open door was blocking the street too much, and as he went to close it, a young woman, early twenties, powerwalked up to the car from behind. Malcolm felt an awkward closeness between them and decided closing the door at that moment would seem suspicious, or at least rude. As she marched closer, Malcolm made eye contact and nodded, and she did the same, and she kept forward, and he closed the door. He wondered what she thought about the house, if she cared or hated it or lived close by and was awoken at night by the screams. Surely, he thought,



the neighbors were disturbed by the screaming, as well as others things he was sure occurred that he had yet to experience.

In the glow of the early morning, he felt on display sitting in his car, smoking, considering doing a bump, and thought maybe Jake or Betty or one of the neighbors was peeking through mini-blinds, watching him. He cracked the door open again, letting some of the smoke out, and looked around, trying to come up with an idea or a location where he could inconspicuously do a bump, or a small line if there was enough left. He thought he could just sneak it inside, go to the bathroom and do it there maybe. He thought he could drive down the block a ways, decided against that, figured he probably wasn't allowed to drive away or leave the property, even for a few minutes.

Looking around, he grabbed a gas station receipt from the floor on the passenger side and put his right thumb onto the middle of it, crumpling it around his thumb, creating a tiny, thin paper bag. His cigarette perched on his tense lips, the smoke rising into his eyes, which were watering now, from the sunlight or the smoke or exhaustion. He opened the center console and placed his paper bag in it, opening the baggie with the speed and quickly dumping what was left into the receipt. He twisted the top of the receipt closed and shoved it into his front pocket.

The neighborhood seemed boring now, in the daylight, the mysteries of shadows exposed, the curiosities of the night before revealed, and it reminded him of his childhood neighborhood, lacking excitement and adventure, all the parents dismissive and all the children familiar and wandering and uninteresting. Early morning has a transformative effect, especially when exhausted or drunk or high or driving home from some cathartic life event or driving home from someone's house where he fucked someone he shouldn't have, or tried to and couldn't. The

warm sun and the mild breeze crept into the car, pushing through smoke and settling on Malcolm's hands and lap and face, and that sweaty coldness came over him. He had to take a fucking bump or go to sleep.

He entered, accompanied by the ping, knowing he would probably soon come to hate the sound, hoping it would become aversive enough in time to reduce the frequency of his smoke breaks. He realized he was coming down, and all the behavioral terminology from the binders and orientation was rumbling around in his mind, that cyclical thought that seems to manifest after a speed binge, that cyclical thought, whatever it is, that kept him from falling asleep no matter how tired he was, that forced him to drink half a bottle of Nyquil and show up two hours late for brunch or work or whatever.

He closed the door behind him, and in the front room, sitting on a hard plastic chair the same color as all the couches, was a tiny girl with mussed and matted red hair, wearing a wrinkled sky blue polo shirt, the collar up flapping back and forth as she swayed side to side in the chair, looking forward at a blank wall across the room. Malcolm looked for Jake or Betty, then back to the girl, and figured this was Maggie or Gretchen.

“Good morning,” Malcolm said sweetly.

“Wa-wa-wa-wa-wa.”

“Wa-wa-wa,” Malcolm said softly to himself.

She wasn't wearing pants or shorts, her pale thighs contrasted against the maroon chair, and Malcolm looked away, embarrassed, ashamed for a moment, for her or for himself, he was unsure.

The sound of the microwave beeping drew Malcolm into the kitchen, where he saw Terry and Jake in the kitchen, Jake getting paper plates and silverware lined up on the counter. Terry watched the preparation silently, still as a hunter perhaps, mesmerized by his meal slowly creeping toward him. From behind Malcolm a door swung open, and he turned, seeing a young man with dark hair and no shirt staring at him, and for a moment Malcolm thought this was one of his co-workers, briefly, then he focused and saw his unusually small head.

Nick looked curiously at Malcolm, out of the corner of his eye, his head tilted as though he was looking away at something else, coy and shy, mischievous, a kid waiting to be punished.

“Morning,” Nick said, jubilant, loud.

“Good morning, Nick. Put on your shirt, please. Do you want breakfast?” Jake said while plating reheated scrambled eggs.

“Breakfast?” Nick answered.

“Put your shirt on and come on. Do you want *eggs* or *cereal*?” Jake asked, stressing the two choices.

“Cereal?” Nick replied, then disappeared back into his room.

“Should I help him?” Malcolm asked Jake.

“Normally no, but any positive interactions you can initiate today would be great. Just remember, today is for him to get used to you, and visa-versa.”

Malcolm walked over to Nick’s bedroom door, and peeked inside. It was a small room, beige walls like the rest, although with two posters, one a picture of a cowboy, John Wayne maybe, standing in front of a saloon or general store, with a nasty stare meant for someone, Malcolm didn’t know who, Nick perhaps. The other poster was of Bob the Builder, waving, tool

belt stuffed. There was a bed with a yellow comforter and a small wooden dresser, which Nick was rooting through.

“Help?” Nick asked Malcolm.

“Sure. You need a shirt?”

“Yeah.”

“Which drawer are your shirts in?” Malcolm asked, walking toward the dresser.

“Yeah.” He replied, downtrodden, for some reason.

Malcolm looked into the drawer, which was the shirt drawer, and grabbed a shirt from the top.

“Do you want to wear this one?”

“No?”

“Okay,” Malcolm put the shirt back and grabbed another, this one red, just as the first.

“This one?”

“Yeah?” A sad sounding response again.

Malcolm wondered if Nick was actually sad, or just tired, or if he always sounded like this. He unfolded the shirt and opened the bottom for Nick, and Nick leaned down, putting his head inside. Malcolm helped him put the shirt on, Nick staring at him, smiling now, as the two straightened the bottom and sleeves together. Nick reached into the open drawer and pulled out a plastic toy handsaw, and began moving it back and forth in the air, cutting wood, still smiling at Malcolm, searching for a reaction. Malcolm smiled back, and closer now, realized Nick’s head was in fact much smaller than normal, and saw his thin, wispy eyebrows, and the sleep still in his eyes. Nick had a fair complexion, free of acne or scars or large pores. Malcolm looked at the

saw, grinding wildly in the air, and wondered if Nick meant to be cutting down a tree or cutting lumber or merely celebrating the saw itself. Malcolm only noticed now, the two of them only a foot apart, goofy smiles on both their faces, the scars and discolorations that covered both Nick's hands and forearms. Malcolm remembered the binder, and the biting, and saw the timeline of anger recorded up and down his arms, but couldn't see it in his eyes, and he joined Nick's sawing, the two of them pumping and grinding their toy and imaginary saw, building something together.

## NICK B. DAILY SCHEDULE

### WEEKDAY NON-HOLIDAY

0600-0630	WAKE UP
0630-0700	BREAKFAST, MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION
0700-0745	SHOWER PROGRAM, TOOTHBRUSHING PROGRAM, PUT ON SHIRT PROGRAM
0745-0800	MAKE LUNCH PROGRAM
0800-0845	TRANSPORT TO WORK
0845-1430	AT WORK
1430-1515	TRANSPORT HOME
1515-1600	PACK WORK BAG PROGRAM
1600	MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION
1600-1630	SWEEPING PROGRAM
1630-1645	FOLD CLOTHES PROGRAM
1645-1700	COMMUNITY WALK
1700-1745	SHOWER PROGRAM, TOOTHBRUSHING PROGRAM, PUT ON SHIRT PROGRAM
1745-1800	PLACE SILVERWARE PROGRAM
1800-1830	DINNER
1830-1900	FREE TIME OR COMMUNITY OUTING (IF FOUR STAFF)
1900-1915	PUT AWAY TOOLS PROGRAM
1915-2000	SKILLS ACQUISITION: ECHOICS & MATCHING
2000	MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION
2000-2015	TAKE OUT TRASH PROGRAM
2015-2030	TOOTHBRUSHING PROGRAM
2030-2045	TELEVISION AND DVD OPERATION PROGRAM (ON MAINTENANCE)
2045-2115	TELEVISION OR DVD FREE TIME, STAFF ATTENTION VOID, ASL RECEPTIVE "SLEEP"
2115	BEDTIME

### HOLIDAY AND WEEKEND

0800-0830	WAKE UP, MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION
0830-0900	BREAKFAST
0900-1000	SHOWER PROGRAM, TOOTHBRUSHING PROGRAM, PUT ON SHIRT PROGRAM
1000-1015	SHAVE FACE PROGRAM
1015-1045	SWEEPING PROGRAM
1045-1100	FOLD CLOTHES PROGRAM
1100-1230	COMMUNITY OUTING (IF FOUR STAFF) OR BACK YARD
1230-1245	FREE TIME
1245-1300	PLACE SILVERWARE PROGRAM
1300-1330	LUNCH
1330-1445	FREE TIME (SHIFT CHANGE)
1445-1500	COMMUNITY WALK
1500-1600	SKILLS ACQUISITION: ECHOICS AND MATCHING
1600	MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION
1600-1630	SWEEPING PROGRAM
1630-1745	FREE TIME
1745-1800	PLACE SILVERWARE PROGRAM
1800-1845	DINNER & DESSERT
1845-1900	TAKE OUT TRASH PROGRAM
1900-1915	PUT AWAY TOOLS PROGRAM
1915-2000	FREE TIME
2000	MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION
2000-2015	TOOTHBRUSHING PROGRAM
2015-2030	TELEVISION AND DVD OPERATION PROGRAM (ON MAINTENANCE)
2030-2115	TELEVISION OR DVD FREE TIME, STAFF ATTENTION VOID, ASL RECEPTIVE "SLEEP"
2115	BEDTIME

## THE SPACE BETWEEN MY BRAIN AND MY SKULL

When I was three years old, my mom took me to the doctor cause she thought I was having seizures, which weren't like, writhing on the ground or any of that stuff, but I would kind of just space out. She would tell me later I would kinda just space out for five or ten seconds, I would just sort of freeze and I wouldn't respond or anything. I don't really have any memories of them, until like fifth grade. But apparently they happened in like, bursts, or clusters I guess? Where I'd have two or three a week; my mom would notice, and then I wouldn't have any for several weeks. They weren't really obvious; because I'd be sitting or standing for like, ten seconds and just freeze. So she thought since they weren't so noticeable that if I was having two or three a week that she noticed, that I was probably having a lot more in the times that she wasn't noticing them, or when I was in the room alone or whatever. So she took me to the doctor and explained what they were when I was three.

And I don't remember if they put me on any medicine or whatever, but anyway, I guess this happened off and on, in bursts and clusters until the fifth grade, and then I started—for the first time—I remembered having them. And I suppose I would either have them and not be conscious of them, as in during the duration I wouldn't have any thoughts, so I guess that means in the fifth grade, I started having thoughts during them. And it was two or three or four times a week. Most of the time at school, and no one really noticed, you know, sitting in a classroom and kind of spacing out or freezing for five or ten seconds, who would notice that? Unless you're in the middle of a sentence. But starting in the fifth grade, the memories that I have of them are pretty significant.

And the weird thing about the whole thing even now is that in that five or ten seconds where I'm spacing out or having a *petite seizure* or whatever, is that in that five or ten seconds, I'm having 30 or 40 seconds of thoughts, which is hard to explain. I don't really know if it's like time is slowing down, or I'm just thinking faster, or better, or whatever, and because it's so short, most people just think I'm thinking and I've kind of grown accustomed to when it happens in public to just as soon as I realize it's over, saying "Oh, sorry," and if they ask, just say "Oh, nothing." I'm pretty sure it looks like I was thinking or having a train of thought about something, but anyway in the fifth grade, for a while there when I would have these seizures, if that's what they are, I would think about usually myself, and the space between my brain and my skull, or someone else's space between their brain and their skull. Initially just thinking, how tight is the brain pushed against the skull, and if there's a fluid buffer, I guess between the brain and the skull, or if the brain itself is actually up against the skull and how delicate that whole thing is. And it wouldn't be like it was me sitting and thinking about it, it would be more a sort of visualization of that, and kind of swapping out the different possibilities sort of like a slide show, where one slide would be the brain, my brain or whoever's, really crammed up against the inside of the skull with no fluid. And then you'd hit the little green button and there'd be your brain with a little bit of fluid between it and the inside of the skull. Then you'd hit the little green button on the slide projector again and maybe the brain is just nicely, comfortably resting against the inside of the skull. Anyway, really weird shit.

So when Nick started saying "Where, where?" holding the saw, I don't really know if I had a seizure, or if I just froze, being you know, so close to him and kind of everything was fine, and then just in the span of a few seconds there's that change in his eyes and the look on his face,



and you think about the stuff in the file and his chart about the biting and freaking out and all that. But whether it was a seizure or I just froze not knowing what to do, my mind kind of went to the thoughts about the brain and the skull and all that, which when I have seizures now I don't think about that stuff anymore, it's kind of progressed to something different. And I thought it was weird or funny, with him being microcephalic, I don't know. It was really weird that like, is it that the skull doesn't grow but the brain does? And because the brain can't grow properly that it becomes damaged and he becomes retarded or disabled? Or is it that you know, the brain and the skull just grow not as big, and that he also happens to be developmentally disabled? Cause there's people with microcephaly that are not developmentally disabled, I think. And not like midgets or whatever, because he's like 5'7", Nick is. So I don't know if I had a seizure and for some reason thought about the things I thought about during the seizures from fifth and sixth grade, or if I just froze and my memory went to that, so there's two events which are for all practical purposes, exactly the same. I'm just curious if it was conscious or unconscious. If I did it, or if I didn't do it.

So he was saying, "Where, where, where?" and seizure or not, I knew something was wrong. I don't know if it was—I don't know, who knows? A way I looked at him, or the happiness was overwhelming, if he even was happy. I mean, just because someone is smiling doesn't mean they're happy. Or is it just, you know, uncontrollable, like snapping or whatever? You go from one thing to another, there's no cause; I think a lot of people would come into this thinking they did something wrong, and maybe I did but I don't know. Not to excuse myself, but probably not. I remembered to look away, like his chart said to do, about removing eye contact. I don't know if the purpose of that is to not challenge him with eye contact or to withdraw

attention, but I did it and you know, kept him in my peripheral. I could see him as he was mad or sad or whatever weird combination of emotion that was going on, I could see him searching my face, tilting his head, moving down, moving his head down, tilting towards me, looking for a reaction I suppose. To see if I was mad at him, or disappointed, or whatever his mom or dad was when he would do this when he was younger, I suppose. It's hard to figure out. It would be hard to figure out, taking into account the way that I've been socialized, the way that normal people have been socialized, every step from, you know, birth to now, for the most part formulaic. Developmental milestones, public education, socialization, friends, and so forth. The things that kind of build a human, at least this century. In this country. The way I was built would dictate the way I would think things through, the way I would conceptualize situations, the way I would solve problems; take all those steps and use those as a lens in which to examine who he is, someone who didn't have any of those steps, who went down some other bizarre, alien path. Seems silly. Seems fucking ridiculous to even assume that we could understand anything, when, you know, laughter could mean pain, and sneezing could mean joy. Screaming is a headache, searching for a pen is loneliness. Who knows? You'd think he was a test-monkey, looking at his chart. On and on, instructions and rules and procedures. I'm sure, written and conceived of in his best interests, or in the best interests of whoever wrote it, but I don't know. We'll see.

BEHAVIOR PLAN FOR GRETCHEN RILEY  
Liberty Group Home  
Stuyvesant Foundation  
Prepared by: Reginald Frist, Psy. D., BCBA

**Rationale for Behavior Plan**

Gretchen's high frequency and high intensity behavioral events are resulting in the following conditions:

1. A disruptive and non-therapeutic residential setting for clients.
2. Other clients incited to engage in anti-social and unsafe behaviors.
3. Inability to provide Gretchen with consistent, quality services.
4. Inability to provide other clients with consistent, quality services.
5. Frequent and severe self-inflicted injuries requiring medical attention.
6. Frequent and severe injuries to clients and staff requiring medical attention.
7. A reduced quality of life for Gretchen.
8. Inability to explore or consider alternative, less restrictive residential options.

**Behavioral Data and Observations**

Baseline data and observations recorded over four week timeframe, June 11, 2003 to July 9, 2003, over a 24 hour cycle, not including Mondays-Fridays between 7:15 AM and 3:35 PM.

Gretchen has been observed engaging in the following behaviors with an overall frequency of ~75 to ~275 times per day while at Liberty Group Home:

Self-Injurious Behaviors

- Low and high intensity biting of fingers, palms, wrists, and forearms
- High intensity slapping and hitting of thighs, torso, face, and head
- Low and high intensity pulling of hair
- Low and high intensity slapping and hitting of walls, floors, and other surfaces
- High intensity head banging on walls, floors, and other surfaces
- High intensity pinching of breasts, neck, and face

Aggressive and Assaultive Behaviors

- High intensity biting of clients and staff
- High intensity slapping and hitting of clients, staff, and persons in community
- High intensity hitting with objects of clients, staff, and persons in community
- High intensity head butting of staff
- High and low intensity kicking of clients, staff, and persons in community

### Aggressive and Assaultive Behaviors cont.

- High intensity pinching of clients and staff
- Low intensity pushing and shoving of clients, staff, and persons in community
- Expectorating saliva, phlegm, and blood on staff and persons in community

### Unsafe Behaviors

- Elopement from residential assignment
- Elopement from community outings and settings
- Engaging in self-injurious, aggressive, and assaultive behaviors during transportation
- Engaging in self-injurious, aggressive, and assaultive behaviors in the community
- Inappropriate proximity and manipulation of hot stove and stovetop
- Blocking of doors and hallways with items and furniture
- Inappropriate activation of fire alarms

### Anti-Social Behaviors

- High volume vocalizations and screaming
- Inappropriate sexual contact with staff
- Removal of clothing in inappropriate areas and locations
- Rectal and vaginal digging
- Fecal smearing
- Throwing food and drink items
- Stealing and inappropriate access of food and drink items
- Self-induced vomiting in the community

## **Antecedents and Function(s) of Behaviors**

### Observed Antecedents

Presented with a task

Unable to independently perform task

Denied access to edible, tangible, activity, or location

Another client is in crisis or pre-crisis

Being awoken from sleep

Another client is receiving high-magnitude attention from staff

Interaction with non-preferred staff

### Functions of Behaviors

Access to attention

Escape/removal of aversive task or event

Access to tangibles

## **Behaviors Targeted for Extinction**

Due to the number and variety of demonstrated behaviors, only the following behaviors have been targeted for extinction:

- 1 Self-injurious Behaviors
  - A Biting of any part of own body
  - B Striking of any part of own body
  - C Head banging on any surface or item
  - D Pinching of any part of own body (continuous occurrence, >5 seconds)
  
- 2 Aggressive and Assaultive Behaviors
  - A Biting of any person
  - B Striking or kicking of any person, with or without object
  - C Head butting of any person
  - D High intensity pinching of any person
  
- 3 Unsafe Behaviors
  - A Inappropriate activation of fire alarm
  
- 4 Anti-Social Behaviors
  - A Removal of clothing in community
  - B Throwing food or drink items

## **Behavior Plan Implementation**

### **1.A. Self-injurious Behaviors – Biting of any part of own body**

Definition: Placing teeth on any part of own body with force significant enough to cause pain or injury.

#### **At Residential Setting**

Presentation of Task and In Task Response: Staff will perform a 1 person safety assist, transporting Gretchen to her bedroom. Staff will then perform a 1 person seated restraint using approved safety chair. If necessary, an additional staff member may be utilized to perform a 2 person seated restraint. Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. Once restraint is terminated, staff will re-present the task to Gretchen, or return her to task in progress.

All other occurrences: Staff will perform a 1 person safety assist, transporting Gretchen to her bedroom. Staff will then perform a 1 person seated restraint using approved safety chair. If necessary, an additional staff member may be utilized to perform a 2 person seated restraint. Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. Once restraint is terminated, staff will present Gretchen with an aversive task to be completed in her bedroom. Once this task is complete, Gretchen will be permitted to return to the location and activity she was engaged in prior to demonstration of targeted behavior, if appropriate.

### **During Transportation**

All occurrences: Staff will perform a single Corrective Feedback/Social Disapproval targeted at Gretchen. Staff will look at Gretchen with a neutral facial reaction, and in a firm tone with high volume state: “Gretchen, stop!”

- A. If Gretchen continues biting any part of own body, the passenger staff will perform a 1 person seated restraint (transportation modification.) Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. Once restraint is terminated, staff will implement an attention void for 5 minutes.
- B. If Gretchen stops biting herself, staff will implement an attention void for 1 minute. After 1 minute of calm, staff will reintroduce low-magnitude attention.

### **In the Community**

All occurrences: Staff will perform a bite removal on Gretchen prior to immediately performing a hand over hand block. If the hand over hand block is unsuccessful, staff will perform a 1 person standing restraint if Gretchen is standing, or a 1 person seated restraint if Gretchen is seated. If the setting is such that this restraint will be potentially socially misperceived or disruptive, or in violation of Gretchen’s privacy or dignity, staff will perform a 1 person safety assist, transporting Gretchen to the residential vehicle. A second staff member will assist the restraining staff member with entering the residential vehicle. The restraining staff member will perform a 1 person seated restraint (transportation modification.) Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. Once restraint is terminated, staff will reintroduce Gretchen to the community activity or return her to the residence, based on staff discretion and the conditions of the community outing and setting.

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### **1.B. Self-injurious Behaviors – Striking of any part of own body**

Definitions:

*Single Occurrence* – Swift and forceful contact between hand, palm, fist, finger, wrist, elbow, or arm, and any part of own body with force significant enough to cause pain or injury.

*Continuous Occurrence* – Two or more instances within a 5 second timeframe of swift and forceful contact between hand, palm, fist, finger, wrist, elbow, or arm, and any part of own body with force significant enough to cause pain or injury.

## **At Residential Setting**

### **Presentation of Task and In Task Response:**

*Single Occurrence* – Staff will ignore any single occurrence striking of any part of own body and continue task or task presentation. Staff will not provide full physical prompts during task or task presentation for 30 seconds following a single occurrence striking of any part of own body.

*Continuous Occurrence* – Staff will perform a 1 person safety assist, transporting Gretchen to her bedroom. Staff will then perform a 1 person seated restraint using approved safety chair. If necessary, an additional staff member may be utilized to perform a 2 person seated restraint. Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. Once restraint is terminated, staff will re-present the task to Gretchen, or return her to task in progress.

### **All other occurrences:**

*Single Occurrence* – Staff will ignore any single occurrence striking of any part of own body and refrain from delivering or allowing access to preferred or requested edible, tangible, or activity for 1 minute.

*Continuous Occurrence* – Staff will perform a 1 person safety assist, transporting Gretchen to her bedroom. Staff will then perform a 1 person seated restraint using approved safety chair. If necessary, an additional staff member may be utilized to perform a 2 person seated restraint. Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. Once restraint is terminated, staff will present Gretchen with an aversive task to be completed in her bedroom. Once this task is complete, Gretchen will be permitted to return to the location and activity she was engaged in prior to demonstration of targeted behavior, if appropriate.

## **During Transportation**

### **All occurrences:**

*Single Occurrence* – Staff will ignore any single occurrence striking of any part of own body and implement an attention void for 1 minute. After 1 minute of calm, staff will reintroduce low-magnitude attention.

*Continuous Occurrence* – Staff will perform a single Corrective Feedback/Social Disapproval targeted at Gretchen. Staff will look at Gretchen with a neutral facial reaction, and in a firm tone with high volume state: “Gretchen, stop!”

- A. If Gretchen continues striking any part of own body, the passenger staff will perform a 1 person seated restraint (transportation modification.) Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. Once restraint is terminated, staff will implement an attention void for 5 minutes.
- B. If Gretchen stops striking and part of own body, staff will implement an attention void for 1 minute. After 1 minute of calm, staff will reintroduce low-magnitude attention.

## **In the Community**

### **All occurrences:**

*Single Occurrence* – Staff will ignore any single occurrence striking of any part of own body and implement an attention void for 1 minute. After 1 minute of calm, staff will reintroduce low-magnitude attention.

*Continuous Occurrence* – Staff will perform a 1 person standing restraint if Gretchen is standing, or a 1 person seated restraint if Gretchen is seated. If the setting is such that this restraint will be potentially socially misperceived or disruptive, or in violation of Gretchen’s privacy or dignity, staff will perform a 1 person safety assist, transporting Gretchen to the residential vehicle. A second staff member will assist the restraining staff member with entering the residential vehicle. The restraining staff member will perform a 1 person seated restraint (transportation modification.) Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. Once restraint is terminated, staff will reintroduce Gretchen to the community activity or return her to the residence, based on staff discretion and the conditions of the community outing and setting.

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## **1.C. Self-injurious Behaviors – Head banging on any surface or item**

### **Definitions:**

*Single Occurrence* – Swift and forceful contact between head and any surface or item with force significant enough to cause pain or injury.

*Continuous Occurrence* – Two or more instances within a 10 second timeframe of swift and forceful contact between head and any surface or item with force significant enough to cause pain or injury.

## **At Residential Setting**

### **Presentation of Task and In Task Response:**

*Single Occurrence* – Staff will ignore any single occurrence head bang on any surface or item and continue task or task presentation. Staff will not provide full physical prompts during task or task presentation for 30 seconds following a single occurrence head bang on any surface or item.

*Continuous Occurrence* – Staff will perform a 1 person safety assist, transporting Gretchen to her bedroom. Staff will then perform a 1 person seated restraint using approved safety chair. If necessary, an additional staff member may be utilized to perform a 2 person seated restraint. Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. Once restraint is terminated, staff will re-present the task to Gretchen, or return her to task in progress.



All other occurrences:

*Single Occurrence* – Staff will ignore any single occurrence head bang on any surface or item and refrain from delivering or allowing access to preferred or requested edible, tangible, or activity for 1 minute.

*Continuous Occurrence* – Staff will perform a 1 person safety assist, transporting Gretchen to her bedroom. Staff will then perform a 1 person seated restraint using approved safety chair. If necessary, an additional staff member may be utilized to perform a 2 person seated restraint. Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. Once restraint is terminated, staff will present Gretchen with an aversive task to be completed in her bedroom. Once this task is complete, Gretchen will be permitted to return to the location and activity she was engaged in prior to demonstration of targeted behavior, if appropriate.

**During Transportation**

All occurrences:

*Single Occurrence* – Staff will ignore any single occurrence head bang on any surface or item and implement an attention void for 1 minute. After 1 minute of calm, staff will reintroduce low-magnitude attention.

*Continuous Occurrence* – Staff will perform a single Corrective Feedback/Social Disapproval targeted at Gretchen. Staff will look at Gretchen with a neutral facial reaction, and in a firm tone with high volume state: “Gretchen, stop!”

- A. If Gretchen continues head banging on any surface or item, the passenger staff will perform a 1 person seated restraint (transportation modification.) Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. Once restraint is terminated, staff will implement an attention void for 5 minutes.
- B. If Gretchen stops head banging on any surface or item, staff will implement an attention void for 1 minute. After 1 minute of calm, staff will reintroduce low-magnitude attention.

**In the Community**

All occurrences:

*Single Occurrence* – Staff will ignore any single occurrence head bang on any surface or item and implement an attention void for 1 minute. After 1 minute of calm, staff will reintroduce low-magnitude attention.

*Continuous Occurrence* – Staff will perform a 1 person standing restraint if Gretchen is standing, or a 1 person seated restraint if Gretchen is seated. If the setting is such that this restraint will be potentially socially misperceived or disruptive, or in violation of Gretchen’s privacy or dignity, staff will perform a 1 person safety assist, transporting Gretchen to the residential vehicle. A second staff member will assist the restraining staff member with entering the residential vehicle. The restraining staff member will perform a 1 person seated restraint (transportation modification.) Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. Once restraint is terminated, staff will reintroduce Gretchen to the community activity or return her to the residence, based on staff discretion and the conditions of the community outing and setting.

### **1.D. Self-injurious Behaviors – Pinching of any part of own body (continuous occurrence, >5 seconds)**

Definition: Continuous pinching with fingers and/or fingernails any part of own body for >5 seconds with force significant enough to cause pain or injury.

#### **At Residential Setting**

Presentation of Task and In Task Response: Staff will perform a finger peel removal on Gretchen and use a full physical prompt to continue or initiate the task or task presentation, fading prompts if no physical resistance is demonstrated.

- A. If Gretchen continues pinching any part of own body, staff will perform a 1 person standing restraint if Gretchen is standing, or a 1 person seated restraint if Gretchen is seated. If Gretchen is standing, a second staff will provide an approved safety chair to the restraining staff member in the immediate area of the task presentation or task. Staff will then perform a 1 person seated restraint using approved safety chair. If necessary, an additional staff member may be utilized to perform a 2 person seated restraint. Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. Once restraint is terminated, staff will re-present the task to Gretchen, or return her to task in progress.

All other occurrences: Staff will perform a finger peel removal on Gretchen and use a full physical prompt to present and initiate an aversive task to be completed in the immediate area.

#### **During Transportation**

All occurrences: Staff will perform a single Corrective Feedback/Social Disapproval targeted at Gretchen. Staff will look at Gretchen with a neutral facial reaction, and in a firm tone with high volume state: “Gretchen, stop!”

- A. If Gretchen continues pinching any part of own body, the passenger staff will perform a 1 person seated restraint (transportation modification.) Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. Once restraint is terminated, staff will implement an attention void for 5 minutes.
- B. If Gretchen stops pinching any part of own body, staff will implement an attention void for 1 minute. After 1 minute of calm, staff will reintroduce low-magnitude attention.

#### **In the Community**

All occurrences: Staff will perform a finger peel removal on Gretchen prior to immediately performing a hand over hand block. If the hand over hand block is unsuccessful, staff will perform a 1 person standing restraint if Gretchen is standing, or a 1 person seated restraint if Gretchen is seated. If the setting is such that this restraint will be potentially socially misperceived or disruptive, or in violation of Gretchen’s privacy or dignity, staff will perform a 1 person safety assist, transporting Gretchen to the residential vehicle. A second staff member will

assist the restraining staff member with entering the residential vehicle. The restraining staff member will perform a 1 person seated restraint (transportation modification.) Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. Once restraint is terminated, staff will reintroduce Gretchen to the community activity or return her to the residence, based on staff discretion and the conditions of the community outing and setting.

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## **2.A. Aggressive and Assaultive Behaviors – Biting of any person**

Definition: Placing teeth on any part of another's body with force significant enough to cause pain or injury.

### **At Residential Setting**

Presentation of Task and In Task Response: Staff will perform a bite release if necessary, then perform a 1 person safety assist, transporting Gretchen to her bedroom. Staff will then perform a 1 person seated restraint using approved safety chair. If necessary, an additional staff member may be utilized to perform a 2 person seated restraint. Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. Once restraint is terminated, staff will re-present the task to Gretchen, or return her to task in progress.

All other occurrences: Staff will perform a bite release if necessary, then perform a 1 person safety assist, transporting Gretchen to her bedroom. Staff will then perform a 1 person seated restraint using approved safety chair. If necessary, an additional staff member may be utilized to perform a 2 person seated restraint. Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. Once restraint is terminated, staff will present Gretchen with an aversive task to be completed in her bedroom. Once this task is complete, Gretchen will be permitted to return to the location and activity she was engaged in prior to demonstration of targeted behavior, if appropriate.

### **During Transportation**

All occurrences: Staff will perform a bite release if necessary, then the passenger staff will perform a 1 person seated restraint (transportation modification.) Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. Once restraint is terminated, staff will implement an attention void for 5 minutes.

### **In the Community**

Behavior targeting a community member: Staff will perform a bite release if necessary, then staff will perform a 1 person safety assist, transporting Gretchen to the residential vehicle. A second staff member will assist the restraining staff member with entering the residential vehicle. The restraining staff member will perform a 1 person seated restraint (transportation modification.)

Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. A second staff member will identify themselves to the targeted community member, ensure the community member receives any required medical attention, and provide the community member with the Program Manager's and Residential Director's emergency contact information. If law enforcement is contacted, staff will remain with Gretchen at the location until law enforcement arrives. If law enforcement is not contacted, staff will return Gretchen to the residence. Staff will immediately contact the Program Manager regarding the nature of the incident. If the Program Manager cannot be contacted, the Residential Director will be contacted.

All other occurrences: Staff will perform a bite release if necessary, then perform a 1 person standing restraint if Gretchen is standing, or a 1 person seated restraint if Gretchen is seated. If the setting is such that this restraint will be potentially socially misperceived or disruptive, or in violation of Gretchen's privacy or dignity, staff will perform a 1 person safety assist, transporting Gretchen to the residential vehicle. A second staff member will assist the restraining staff member with entering the residential vehicle. The restraining staff member will perform a 1 person seated restraint (transportation modification.) Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. Once restraint is terminated, staff will reintroduce Gretchen to the community activity or return her to the residence, based on staff discretion and the conditions of the community outing and setting.

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## **2.B. Aggressive and Assaultive Behaviors – Striking or kicking of any person, with or without object**

Definition:

*Single Occurrence* – Swift and forceful contact between any part of own body, besides head, and any part of another's body with force significant enough to cause pain or injury.

*Single Occurrence with Object* – Swift and forceful contact between held object and any part of another's body, with force significant enough to cause pain or injury.

*Continuous Occurrence* – Two or more instances within a 5 second timeframe of swift and forceful contact between any part of own body, besides head, and any part of another's body with force significant enough to cause pain or injury.

*Continuous Occurrence with Object* – Two or more instances within a 5 second timeframe of swift and forceful contact between held object and any part of another's body, with force significant enough to cause pain or injury.

### **At Residential Setting**

Presentation of Task and In Task Response:

*Single Occurrence* – Staff will use a full physical prompt to continue or initiate the task or task presentation, fading prompts if no physical resistance is demonstrated.

*Single Occurrence with Object* – Staff will perform a finger peel to remove the object from Gretchen’s hand(s), then use a full physical prompt to continue or initiate the task or task presentation, fading prompts if no physical resistance is demonstrated.

*Continuous Occurrence* – Staff will perform a 1 person safety assist, transporting Gretchen to her bedroom. Staff will then perform a 1 person seated restraint using approved safety chair. If necessary, an additional staff member may be utilized to perform a 2 person seated restraint. Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. Once restraint is terminated, staff will re-present the task to Gretchen, or return her to task in progress.

*Continuous Occurrence with Object* – Staff will perform a finger peel to remove the object from Gretchen’s hand(s), then perform a 1 person safety assist, transporting Gretchen to her bedroom. Staff will then perform a 1 person seated restraint using approved safety chair. If necessary, an additional staff member may be utilized to perform a 2 person seated restraint. Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. Once restraint is terminated, staff will re-present the task to Gretchen, or return her to task in progress.

All other occurrences:

*Single Occurrence* – Staff will ignore any single occurrence striking of any person without object and implement an attention void for 1 minute.

*Single Occurrence with Object* – Staff will perform a finger peel to remove the object from Gretchen’s hand(s), then implement an attention void for 1 minute.

*Continuous Occurrence* – Staff will then perform a 1 person safety assist, transporting Gretchen to her bedroom. Staff will then perform a 1 person seated restraint using approved safety chair. If necessary, an additional staff member may be utilized to perform a 2 person seated restraint. Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. Once restraint is terminated, staff will present Gretchen with an aversive task to be completed in her bedroom. Once this task is complete, Gretchen will be permitted to return to the location and activity she was engaged in prior to demonstration of targeted behavior, if appropriate.

*Continuous Occurrence with Object* – Staff will perform a finger peel to remove the object from Gretchen’s hand(s), then perform a 1 person safety assist, transporting Gretchen to her bedroom. Staff will then perform a 1 person seated restraint using approved safety chair. If necessary, an additional staff member may be utilized to perform a 2 person seated restraint. Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. Once restraint is terminated, staff will present Gretchen with an aversive task to be completed in her bedroom. Once this task is complete, Gretchen will be permitted to return to the location and activity she was engaged in prior to demonstration of targeted behavior, if appropriate.

**During Transportation**

All occurrences:

*Single Occurrence* – Staff will ignore any single occurrence striking of any person without object and implement an attention void for 1 minute. After 1 minute of calm, staff will reintroduce low-magnitude attention.

*Single Occurrence with Object* – Staff will perform a finger peel to remove the object from Gretchen’s hand(s), then implement an attention void for 1 minute. After 1 minute of calm, staff will reintroduce low-magnitude attention.

*Continuous Occurrence* – The passenger staff will perform a 1 person seated restraint (transportation modification.) Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. Once restraint is terminated, staff will implement an attention void for 1 minute. After 1 minute of calm, staff will reintroduce low-magnitude attention.

*Continuous Occurrence with Object* – Staff will perform a finger peel to remove the object from Gretchen’s hand(s), then the passenger staff will perform a 1 person seated restraint (transportation modification.) Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. Once restraint is terminated, staff will implement an attention void for 1 minute. After 1 minute of calm, staff will reintroduce low-magnitude attention.

### **In the Community**

Behavior targeting a community member: Staff will perform a finger peel to remove the object from Gretchen’s hand(s) if necessary, then staff will perform a 1 person safety assist, transporting Gretchen to the residential vehicle. A second staff member will assist the restraining staff member with entering the residential vehicle. The restraining staff member will perform a 1 person seated restraint (transportation modification.) Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. A second staff member will identify themselves to the targeted community member, ensure the community member receives any required medical attention, and provide the community member with the Program Manager’s and Residential Director’s emergency contact information. If law enforcement is contacted, staff will remain with Gretchen at the location until law enforcement arrives. If law enforcement is not contacted, staff will return Gretchen to the residence. Staff will immediately contact the Program Manager regarding the nature of the incident. If the Program Manager cannot be contacted, the Residential Director will be contacted.

All other occurrences: Staff will perform a finger peel to remove the object from Gretchen’s hand(s) if necessary, then perform a 1 person standing restraint if Gretchen is standing, or a 1 person seated restraint if Gretchen is seated. If the setting is such that this restraint will be potentially socially misperceived or disruptive, or in violation of Gretchen’s privacy or dignity, staff will perform a 1 person safety assist, transporting Gretchen to the residential vehicle. A second staff member will assist the restraining staff member with entering the residential vehicle. The restraining staff member will perform a 1 person seated restraint (transportation modification.) Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. Once restraint is terminated, staff will reintroduce Gretchen to the community activity or return her to the residence, based on staff discretion and the conditions of the community outing and setting.

## **2.C. Aggressive and Assaultive Behaviors – Head butting of any person**

Definition: Swift and forceful contact between head and any part of another's body with force significant enough to cause pain or injury.

### **At Residential Setting**

Presentation of Task and In Task Response: Staff will perform a 1 person safety assist, transporting Gretchen to her bedroom. Staff will then perform a 1 person seated restraint using approved safety chair. If necessary, an additional staff member may be utilized to perform a 2 person seated restraint. Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. Once restraint is terminated, staff will re-present the task to Gretchen, or return her to task in progress.

All other occurrences: Staff will perform a 1 person safety assist, transporting Gretchen to her bedroom. Staff will then perform a 1 person seated restraint using approved safety chair. If necessary, an additional staff member may be utilized to perform a 2 person seated restraint. Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. Once restraint is terminated, staff will present Gretchen with an aversive task to be completed in her bedroom. Once this task is complete, Gretchen will be permitted to return to the location and activity she was engaged in prior to demonstration of targeted behavior, if appropriate.

### **During Transportation**

All occurrences: The passenger staff will perform a 1 person seated restraint (transportation modification.) Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. Once restraint is terminated, staff will implement an attention void for 1 minute. After 1 minute of calm, staff will reintroduce low-magnitude attention.

### **In the Community**

Behavior targeting a community member: Staff will perform a 1 person safety assist, transporting Gretchen to the residential vehicle. A second staff member will assist the restraining staff member with entering the residential vehicle. The restraining staff member will perform a 1 person seated restraint (transportation modification.) Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. A second staff member will identify themselves to the targeted community member, ensure the community member receives any required medical attention, and provide the community member with the Program Manager's and Residential Director's emergency contact information. If law enforcement is contacted, staff will remain with Gretchen at the location until law enforcement arrives. If law enforcement is not contacted, staff will return Gretchen to the residence. Staff will immediately contact the Program Manager regarding the nature of the incident. If the Program Manager cannot be contacted, the Residential Director will be contacted.

All other occurrences: Staff will perform a 1 person standing restraint if Gretchen is standing, or a 1 person seated restraint if Gretchen is seated. If the setting is such that this restraint will be potentially socially misperceived or disruptive, or in violation of Gretchen's privacy or dignity, staff will perform a 1 person safety assist, transporting Gretchen to the residential vehicle. A second staff member will assist the restraining staff member with entering the residential vehicle. The restraining staff member will perform a 1 person seated restraint (transportation modification.) Restraint will be terminated after 60 seconds of calm and no physical resistance. Once restraint is terminated, staff will reintroduce Gretchen to the community activity or return her to the residence, based on staff discretion and the conditions of the community outing and setting.

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## **2.D. Aggressive and Assaultive Behaviors – High intensity pinching of any person**

Definition: Pinching with fingers and/or fingernails any part of another's body with force significant enough to cause pain or injury.

### **At Residential Setting**

Presentation of Task and In Task Response: Staff will perform a finger peel removal on Gretchen and use a full physical prompt to continue or initiate the task or task presentation, fading prompts if no physical resistance is demonstrated.

All other occurrences: Staff will perform a finger peel removal on Gretchen and use a full physical prompt to present and initiate an aversive task to be completed in the immediate area.

### **During Transportation**

All occurrences: Staff will perform a finger peel removal on Gretchen and implement an attention void for 1 minute. After 1 minute of calm, staff will reintroduce low-magnitude attention.

### **In the Community**

Behavior targeting a community member: Staff will perform a finger peel removal, then remove Gretchen from the immediate area. A second staff member will identify themselves to the targeted community member, ensure the community member receives any required medical attention, and provide the community member with the Program Manager's and Residential Director's emergency contact information. If law enforcement is contacted, staff will remain with Gretchen at the location until law enforcement arrives. Staff will immediately contact the Program Manager regarding the nature of the incident. If the Program Manager cannot be contacted, the Residential Director will be contacted.



All other occurrences: Staff will perform a finger peel removal on Gretchen and implement an attention void for 1 minute. After 1 minute of calm, staff will reintroduce low-magnitude attention.

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### **3.A. Unsafe Behaviors – Inappropriate activation of fire alarm**

Definition: Activation of any fire alarm when no fire emergency exists.

#### **At Residential Setting**

Presentation of Task and In Task Response: Staff will use a full physical prompt to continue or initiate the task or task presentation, fading prompts if no physical resistance is demonstrated.

All other occurrences: Staff will use a full physical prompt to remove Gretchen from the residence through the rear exit and use a full physical prompt to present and initiate an aversive task to be completed in the back yard. Staff will remain with Gretchen in the back yard until fire alarm has been deactivated.

Sundown or Outdoor Inclement Weather Response: Staff will use a full physical prompt to move Gretchen to her bedroom and use a full physical prompt to present and initiate an aversive task to be completed in her bedroom. Staff will remain with Gretchen in her bedroom until the fire alarm has been deactivated.

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### **4.A. Anti-Social Behaviors – Removal of clothing in community**

Definition: Removal of any clothing in the community that would be socially inappropriate to do so, including shoes, socks, pants, skirt, dress, shirt, belt, bra, or underwear.

#### **In the Community**

All occurrences: Staff will block any attempts to remove clothing that would be socially inappropriate to remove in public. If clothing has already been removed, staff will redress Gretchen immediately, escorting Gretchen to a restroom if nearby to do so. If Gretchen physically resists redressing, staff will escort Gretchen to a nearby restroom, secluded area, or the residential vehicle to redress her.

#### **4.B. Anti-Social Behaviors – Throwing food or drink items**

Definition: To propel or cast away with a sudden or deliberate motion any food or drink item, container or receptacle.

##### **At Residential Setting**

Presentation of Task and In Task Response: Staff will use a full physical prompt to continue or initiate the task or task presentation, fading prompts if no physical resistance is demonstrated.

All other occurrences: Staff will initiate a Restitutive Overcorrection, increasing prompts if physical resistance is demonstrated, not to include a full physical prompt. This will consist of placing any thrown food and disposable items in trash, placing any non-disposable containers, plates, cups, and silverware in sink, washing and drying any relevant items, sweeping and mopping any soiled floor areas, and cleaning and sanitizing any soiled surfaces or items. Staff will prompt Gretchen through this process until complete, and withhold any food or drink item access to Gretchen for 30 minutes following the Restitutive Overcorrection.

##### **In the Community**

All occurrences: Staff will deliver one verbal prompt to Gretchen to pick up thrown items and place them in their appropriate areas. If Gretchen complies with this verbal prompt, she will be allowed access to food and drink after restoring the environment, if requested. If Gretchen ignores or refuses this prompt, she will be removed from the immediate area and staff will dispose of thrown items and clean any soiled areas. Staff will withhold any food access to Gretchen for the duration of the time in the community, and will withhold any drink access to Gretchen for 30 minutes.

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#### **Approved Restraints and Guidelines**

The following restraints have been authorized for use based on the conditions and requirements of this behavior plan:

- 1 Person Safety Assist
- 1 Person Seated Restraint
- 1 Person Seated Restraint (transportation modification)
- 2 Person Seated Restraint
- 1 Person Standing Restraint
- 2 Person Standing Restraint

Staff performing restraint should rotate every 10 minutes if possible.

Any continuous restraint lasting greater than 15 minutes requires notification of Program Manager.

Any continuous restraint lasting greater than 30 minutes requires notification of Program Manager and on-call Behaviorist.

Any continuous restraint lasting greater than 60 minutes requires notification of Program Manager and approval of on-call Behaviorist.

No other restraints are authorized for use except in emergency situations where approved restraints are unable to be implemented and the health and/or safety of the individual is at serious risk.

### **Guidelines for General Interaction**

- Staff should always smile and present as friendly in the absence of targeted and inappropriate behaviors.
- Staff should deliver high magnitude verbal praise and attention in the presence of appropriate behaviors.
- Staff should immediately reinforce appropriate requests for access to edibles, tangibles, attention, and activities.
- Staff should not speak to one another about Gretchen in her presence.
- Staff leaving Gretchen's presence due to shift change or outing should brief Gretchen regarding their departure, and introduce which staff Gretchen will be working with after their departure.
- Staff should not abruptly wake Gretchen from sleep.
- Gretchen's preferred interactions include laughing, dancing, silly and/or comical facial expressions and body movements, high-fives, handshakes, and hugs.
- Gretchen's preferred edibles include juice, milk, colored water, soft candy, pasta, deli meats, soft cheeses, yogurt, applesauce, ice cream, and crackers.
- Gretchen's preferred tangibles include blankets, pillows, clothing, purses, backpacks, cups, stuffed animals, make-up, pens, and paper, as well as blocks or other items that can be sorted, placed in, or removed from containers.
- Gretchen's preferred activities include mixing liquids, dancing, singing, listening to music, car rides, assisting with meal preparation, rearranging clothing, wearing excess clothing, having staff assist with putting on and taking off clothing, removing bedding, and sitting or lying underneath multiple or heavy blankets.
- Gretchen should be briefed prior to transitions between preferred and non-preferred activities.

- Gretchen’s verbal expressive language skills should be reinforced when used appropriately.
  - “Wait” should be reinforced with a delay of task presentation.
  - “No” should be reinforced with presentation of alternative choice or task.
  - “Help” should be reinforced with staff assistance.
  - “More” should be reinforced with additional access to identified item, interaction, or activity.
  - “Go go go” should be reinforced with removal of attention and/or staff presence.

**Data Collection**

Data Collection will occur daily and will document the frequency and duration of all behaviors targeted for extinction. ABC data collection will occur daily for any previously unobserved behaviors. Data collection information will be provided to the behavioral and administrative staff as requested for review and behavior plan augmentation, if necessary.

Prepared and Approved by:

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## YOU, WAKE

You wake up. You're groggy and stiff, and you are not aware if this day you will be going to the car to the place you go sometimes or if you are staying here. The bright hole in the wall you can't go through is now a bright hole and not a dark hole so you are certain one of them will be coming to you soon to give you clothes or food or the other little things you are forced to eat that will either make you feel not groggy and not stiff or confused or happy for no reason you can think.

You're at the place you mostly sleep, and mostly eat, and you mostly don't know why you are at the place you mostly sleep and eat at. You don't have a name for it, but it's the place you start and end at. It's not the first place you've started and ended at, and you're not sure if it's the last place you'll start and end at. As far as places you've started and ended at, you're mostly happy to be at this place you've started and ended at than the other places you've started and ended at. Every so on, you're fine to be here where you are, and were almost never fine to be where you were.

The one who almost never looks at you comes with the thing with the clothes and puts the thing with the clothes on the bed you are still groggy and stiff in. That one leaves. You push lightly with your foot, from under the blanket, against the thing with the clothes, to see if the thing with the clothes will move to the floor, to see if the thing with the clothes is for you. It moves, only just, and not to the floor. You sit up and touch lightly with your hand the clothes inside the thing, and they are warm, like the grass and the shower. You are groggy and stiff, and cold too, and you take out a pants from the thing and you kick off the blanket and you put on the pants. You are now less stiff and less cold, but still groggy, and you take out all the clothes from

the thing and you make a pile like a blanket from them, on top and under you. The clothes stay warm, and soon you are warm, like the shower, and you are not stiff and cold but heavy and warm, which is a fine thing for you, to be heavy and warm.

Heavy and warm for a while until the one comes and talks at you some but still never looking, and takes your new pile like a blanket, the warm dying around you. The one puts your pile like a blanket back in the thing and talks at you to stand up, and as you think to roll away from the talking you see the one has the thing with chips. You talk back to the thing with chips and the one is still never looking, and you talk back to the one with your hand and your arm like you must talk back to the one to say you want the thing with chips. The one holds the thing with chips at you and talks at you to stand up. You stand quickly up and the one takes chip out of the thing with chips and puts it in your mouth. You break it with your mouth and face, and keep it in your mouth and face, to keep chip, your mouth dry then wet, receiving the ones' chip push, and you keep to breaking it with your face and mouth, dry and wet become wet, like when sitting for food at the place for big food, until it is gone, and you think of the thing with chips, and want the thing with chips and not just chip, and talk at the one and at the chips.

Never looking, the one puts the thing with the clothes at you, and holds it at you until you know you have to take it, and know now you have to make the thing with the clothes gone and a thing without clothes and then the one will give you the thing with chips. You take the thing with the clothes to the thing where the clothes go and put it on top of the thing where the clothes go. You open it and the one, still never looking, takes your hand and makes you make it not open, then makes you open it at another place. This place that open, you know, is for the smaller of the clothes, for the socks and for the things before pants. You look through the thing with the

clothes, looking for the socks and the things before pants, and find some, and put them in their place, and find some more, and put them in their place, too. You make the thing not open, and open it at another place, the place for the pants, and you look at the one, who holds nothing toward the place now open with one finger. You look through the thing with the clothes and put the pants in their place and all that is left now in the thing with the clothes is the shirts which are to be placed in another place in the thing.

The thing where the clothes go is near the bright hole, and you look out, not fine, wanting to be done with the thing with the clothes and the thing where the clothes go, and you can't and don't know why chips want the thing with the clothes to be gone. You ask the thing with chips for the thing with chips and the one holds nothing toward the place now open with one finger. You look out the bright hole again, seeing what you know to be warm and away from the clothes and all, warm where the ones are not only never looking, but are also never bringing clothes, and you talk at the one about going to the warm away from the clothes. The one holds nothing toward the place now open with one finger, and you don't talk but look at the one, who still holds nothing, until the one looks at you, which makes you move toward the one, and you see the thing with chips, and you finish putting the clothes in the places they go, and you shut the thing where the clothes go.

The one holds nothing to your shoulder, then holds the thing with chips at you, and you take it, and move to your bed, and the one goes away. The thing with the chips has many chips, and you know the place where the chips go. You take many and put them in your mouth and face, and you break them, and you keep them in your mouth, making them broken, broken in the place they go, as you look out the bright hole and think about chips, clothes, and the warm, and

how they are the same sometimes and how they are not the same sometimes. There are now chips broken on the bed, which had the thing with the clothes and a pile like a blanket warm before dying, and the bright hole now makes the bed warm, with you in it with chips and the warm, but with no clothes, the clothes near the bright hole in the place that they go. You think that all the things and the places have something to do with each other, somehow, and wonder if the thing where the clothes go talks at the bright hole and the thing with chips, when the thing with the clothes is gone, and the clothes are in the thing where the clothes go, and when it is happy with the clothes gone and where they go, talks to the bright hole and chips to let you have the chips and the bed warmed by the bright hole.

The broken chips remain in your face and mouth, wet, and the bed remains under you, warm, and in time you think chips will be gone and away inside you, and the bright hole will not be fine. It will no longer warm the bed, and you will be left to find in other places the warm and the other things that go in your face and mouth. You don't know if the ones make all things so, or if the ones know anything of how the thing where the clothes go talks at chips and the bright hole, how they figure how the place you start and end at will start you or end you, how they figure how you will be stiff or wet or groggy or warm or fine or still never looked at.



## ASS DOWN IN BLUE

Malcolm arrived an hour early for his next shift on Monday afternoon. He was instructed to do so before he left the house on Saturday afternoon. Jake told him that Eliot, the Liberty Program Manager, called to tell Malcolm to come an hour early on Monday so they could meet and discuss the job. Malcolm had thought it peculiar that he had not been interviewed for the job by Eliot, or had yet met him.

Malcolm had spent the majority of Saturday and Sunday sleeping, crashing from the speed binge and subsequent double shift. He was well rested but feeling weak, the urge to take another bump had not yet surfaced. Malcolm sat in the office garage as Jake rifled through the medication administration binder, placing a phone order for client medications. Malcolm looked at his phone, 1:21 PM.

“I was supposed to come early today, right?” Malcolm asked Jake, on hold with the pharmacy.

“Yes. Elliot is...he’ll be here shortly.”

There were two desks in the garage office. One with nothing on it except a computer that staff used to clock in and out. On the other, a marvelous hurricane of paperwork, binders, unopened mail, another computer, and three large energy drinks lined neatly between the keyboard and monitor. The energy drinks were faced perfectly, the only tidy elements of the desk, resting in the middle of the chaos like little trophies waiting to be admired. Malcolm remembered seeing the energy drinks there, in the same place, days before, with their neon text contrasting against the white and beige of everything else. Malcolm assumed from the

appearance of his desk that Elliot had a hectic job, or was unorganized, or lazy, or some combination of the three.

“Do you come early every day?” Malcolm asked Jake.

“Some days. Most days, really. Constance had a doctor’s appointment today, so I had to pick her up from work and do that. She’s sleeping in her room. She has a PRN prior to doctor’s appointments to calm her down. It usually doesn’t kick in until after the appointment, after she wrecks the waiting room,” Jake responded, continuing to shuffle paperwork.

“Do you take her to the doctor alone?”

“Not supposed to, but no one ever wants to go with me.”

The house felt different to Malcolm, quiet and empty in the daytime, most of the clients at their jobs, none of the peculiar noises that the house made at night present. Just a lonely quiet, disturbed only by Jake’s shifting paperwork. It felt more a home to him now, not his but someone’s, maybe the clients, maybe not.

The door behind him that led to the side-yard opened quickly as Malcolm was checking his phone again, 1:29 PM. He turned to see a man in blue jeans and a wrinkled dress shirt, with no tie, well-groomed but flustered, holding a large coffee and texting, trying to coordinate his coffee and texting and closing the door behind him.

“Hey,” the man said dismissively, directed toward Malcolm and Jake.

Neither Malcolm nor Jake responded, and the man crossed by them, zigzagging between Jake standing at the medication cart and Malcolm sitting at the empty desk. He put his coffee down on the other desk and finished a text. Malcolm thought surely this was Eliot, and that Eliot must know that he was Malcolm, and that it was odd that Eliot hadn’t acknowledged him.

Eliot sat down and turned on his computer, facing away from Malcolm, less than four feet between the three of them.

Jake looked over his shoulder, behind him and toward Malcolm, who returned a look of confused suspicion. Jake grinned and looked away.

“Hello, Malcolm. I’m Eliot,” Eliot said, facing his computer, logging into his email.

“Hello,” Malcolm replied, tilting his head, waiting to be acknowledged.

Eliot finished logging into his email in silence, a few peculiar moments passed as Malcolm scanned the office, looking for something, perhaps something on the wall to read so that he too would appear occupied when Eliot eventually turned to greet him properly.

“How’d you like your first couple of shifts this weekend?” Eliot asked as he finally spun in his chair toward Malcolm.

“Fine. I mean, you know, fine. It was interesting. It is interesting.”

“Yes, it can be really interesting, rewarding, really, if you allow it to be. We have a lot of staff turnover. That is, we have a lot of people come and go. Most people don’t seem to be up to the task, up to the challenge. It seems to be too trying, too difficult for most people. Are you up to it?” Eliot probed, somewhat challenging.

“Yes, I suppose. Of course.”

“I don’t mean to be blunt, although I do in a way, you understand. Keeping Liberty staffed is difficult, and the time and energy I put into training you I want to be fruitful, meaning I don’t want to waste my time. Or your time. I wouldn’t want you to up and leave in a few days or weeks, putting me back into the lurch, perpetually short staffed. I mean to say if you’re having any second thoughts, or any significant concerns, I’d appreciate you verbalize them now.”

“None, not really. I guess it would be nice to know a little more about the clients’ pasts and all that.” Malcolm offered, searching for something to offer to the conversation he was quickly finding awkward.

“Yes, well, all the client histories are in their charts. It’s all very interesting stuff, and, as you find the time, feel free to review, but my theory is that the clients’ histories, while important and enlightening, are not directly relevant to their future potential, at least not as it relates to you and the work that I expect from you.”

“I see.”

“We run a very structured behavioral and therapeutic program here at Liberty. Our funding is based somewhat on the outcome of our performance, your performance, and as we continue to make profound strides and demonstrate remarkable success with our clients, we, Stuyvesant and Liberty House –”

A large yellow bottle of laundry detergent appeared in Malcolm’s peripheral, mid-flight, ricocheting hard off Jake’s right shoulder, spinning away and downward, crashing into Eliot’s chest, accompanied by a wailing laughter from behind the three of them. The trio turned their heads in unison to see Constance, wearing nothing but a shirt, frantically stomping her feet and laughing, and Malcolm laughed too, thinking of Porky Pig.

“Constance!” Eliot squealed, standing and running toward her, bumping into Jake who was also approaching her. Jake got to her first, and gently grabbed her arm, turning her to return her to the main house. Jake ushered her a few feet before Eliot took her by the other arm and turned her back, toward his desk, and Jake looked to Eliot, then to Constance, and walked out of the office.

Eliot walked her to the laundry detergent bottle, lying on the floor at Malcolm's feet, and pointed to it. Constance continued laughing and stomping her feet, and Malcolm stood, inches away from Constance, and backed away slightly.

"Constance, pick up the bottle," Eliot said to Constance, with a firm, loud, and aggravated tone.

Constance stopped laughing and stomping, then looked to Malcolm, then to the bottle. She took one step toward the bottle, then bent over and touched the bottle with one finger, and giggled once.

"Constance, pick up the bottle," Eliot repeated.

Constance took the handle and lifted the bottle, standing up with it. Eliot looked at Malcolm, smiling proudly, as Constance lowered the bottle in her right hand and swung it behind her, then up and forward, a supersonic windmill flash of yellow as it crashed down on Eliot's desk, on his keyboard, shattering letters and numbers and everything else like a tiny plastic meteorite, cracking open and draining its hyper-blue blood.

Eliot grabbed Constance by the wrists, and swung her around, quick and violent, holding her from behind, her arms crossed tightly against her breasts, and she wiggled against the restraint, screaming without laughter. Eliot side-stepped, forcing Constance into his chair, and he leaned down, forcing her seated in his chair, and from behind the chair Eliot went to kneel down behind it, still holding her tightly, and as he went down, pulling his left foot back to kneel, his right foot bearing his weight resting in a pool of blue, shifted, slipping forward. Eliot went to the floor, one leg behind him and one leg forward into the base of the desk chair, all five wheels flying up and toward Malcolm, looking on, frozen. Constance crashed down, now sitting on the

backrest of the chair, Eliot in a split, covered in blue, the two wiggling and wriggling about, Eliot still holding on firmly, a pained and embarrassed look on his face, flush, red faces and knuckles and soapy blue all around.

Jake appeared behind Malcolm.

“Do you need help?” Jake asked.

“No! Jake, I’ve got it,” Eliot replied, furious, at Constance or Jake or both.

“Can I help you get her to a safety mat?” Jake replied.

“No, Jake, I’m fine, please leave,” Eliot belted out, a tension in his voice that spoke to something else.

“Whatever,” Jake responded in surrender.

Jake turned and left again as Eliot righted himself and was now sitting up behind Constance, still holding her tight from behind.

“Malcolm, in that top desk drawer is a pair of fingernail clippers, can you get them out?”

Eliot asked, nodding his head toward his desk behind him.

“Fingernail clippers?”

“Yeah, Constance refuses to allow us to trim her fingernails, so we do it when she’s restrained, she hates it; this is the only time we can do it.”

Malcolm walked around Eliot and Constance on the floor, giving them a wide berth, careful to avoid the detergent that was quickly spreading. He opened the drawer and removed the fingernail clippers.

“You want me to clip her fingernails?” Malcolm asked, uncertain what was expected of him here.

“Yes, I’ve got her good. Just trim them as quickly as you can.”

Malcolm leaned down in front of Constance who was screaming, a wild fury in her eyes, and Malcolm felt something was wrong here, and took Constance’s right hand, being held firm to her side by Eliot. Malcolm took her thumb as she resisted, and she saw the fingernail clippers, and screaming became crying, silent crying, and Malcolm delicately trimmed her fingernail as she scrunched her face and closed her eyes and wept as she surrendered to the moment.

Nine minutes later Malcolm finished trimming her fingernails, and had been careful, and believed he had not hurt her. Her fingertips were blue, and she opened her eyes, no longer looking to Malcolm liked a trapped animal. Tears slowly drying on her face, her bare legs and ass calmly resting in the blue goop. A simple look of mild confusion directed at Malcolm. Malcolm returned this look.

## DRIVE BY

Driving by on the way to work or on the way to get eggs or diapers or a six-pack, no one would notice the building, sitting still and square, twenty feet or so away from the main road with its constant traffic and suburban commercial architecture. No one would notice the satisfactory landscaping or dulled beige exterior or gravel-topped roof. No one would notice the lack of a sign or any indication of what the building sells or makes or does. No one would notice.

Notice now.

Closer now, you'd see the white vertical blinds in the front windows and the untouched welcome mat with no image or words, not even "Welcome." You'd see no trash or cigarette butts or worn paint on the concrete path leading up to the front door. You'd see no doorbell or mail slot. You'd see that you were meant not to see.

See now.

Behind the hollow steel front door that is always locked from the inside, never opened except during fire drills or when maintenance workers come, you'd see an empty but formal waiting room with two hallways traveling in opposite directions away from you and an aluminum reception desk with a faux wooden top. You'd see no receptionist or anything on that desk, and, again, you wouldn't see or hear a "Welcome" from anyone or anywhere. You would hear a straining air conditioner and sneakers screeching on polished floors coming from hidden hallways in the depths of the building you never noticed.

In a labyrinth of beige, surrounded by endless wooden doors locked against you and hallways to nowhere, you'd come to a room for a reason never explained. A room, small and metallic, that has a hole for a door but no door. A room too small for anything you could



imagine, although you imagine anyway, and once you begin your imagining you forget what brought you here, and why you're here, and how to get out. In a building you'd never notice, in a room with no door to keep you in or out, you can see things a lot closer, things you were not meant to see—

## MAD ABOUT BEING BAD

Nick's back was wet and he looked down at the shiny dull floor with bits of color here and there and he didn't know why his chest and stomach were pounding. He moved the tip of his shoe against the floor trying to move the bits of color to see if they were part of the floor. They didn't move and he thought they were part of the floor. He looked out of the big shiny doorway and saw some people walking around not looking at him. He was thirsty. He walked into the doorway and stuck his head out.

“Coke?”

No one said anything or looked.

“Pesi?”

No one said anything or looked.

He went back into the room and saw a shirt on the floor in the corner. He had seen the shirt before. He walked up to it and it was a bright color with bits of color that were not shiny or dull. He moved his shoe against the shirt trying to move the bits to see if they were part of the shirt. The bits just got bigger and he stopped. A new bit appeared on the floor and he tried to move it and it got bigger. He saw a big bit of the same color on his arm making little bits on the floor and the shirt on the floor. He remembered that the big bit of color on his arm was blood and that it hurt then remembered how the big bit happened and why he was in this room and that he wasn't wearing a shirt and that he had been bad.

He felt bad about being bad. Worse about being bad than anything else. He could never remember why he had been bad, although he tried, and it was the last thing he ever wanted to do. Once, he thought he was bad all the time cause he was mad about being so bad, and mad when

people told him he was bad, and mad cause he never knew he was being bad until he was being bad. He only thought that once, though, long ago, and wasn't thinking about it now.

Nick felt bad and sat on the floor and waited for someone. He was sure this was what he was meant to do. He waited for a while lightly touching the big bit on his arm and looking away cause it hurt and lightly touching the big bit on his arm. The girl with the big socks came and was drying her hands with something.

"Done?" she asked.

"Go home?" Nick asked.

"Done?" she asked again.

"All done," Nick said.

She walked away, then came back with another shirt and a box with the things that hurt. She sat next to him on the floor but not on the bits and didn't look at him and put the water on the big bit on his arm which he remembered again was blood. It hurt and he tried not to seem like it hurt cause he would be told to stop seeming like it hurt if it seemed like it was hurting. She took a piece of cloth and dried the water and the big bit and put another piece of cloth on the big bit and put tape on that. She put the other shirt on his lap and stood up and walked away.

He took the new shirt and put his hands on the bottom seam and moved the bottom seam around and around cause he knew there was a way to do it but couldn't remember. He gave up and pulled the shirt up to his head and then over his head and then put his head through the big hole. He put his hands on the bottom seam again and moved his hands around and around the bottom seam and found another hole and put his arm in it and put his other arm in the other hole. He stood up and took the other shirt that was on the ground and tried not to touch the small bits

on the shirt and left the room.

Someone said something while looking at him.

The girl with the big socks walked up to him.

“Backwards.”

“Backwards,” Nick said.

He thought he might be being bad now as she walked toward him and he almost got mad about being bad but she wasn't mad and he wasn't being bad, so he wasn't mad. She took the shirt with the small bits out of his hand and put it on the floor, then grabbed the shirt he was wearing and pulled on it quickly and pulled it off quickly. She moved it around in her hands but not along the bottom seam then opened it and put his head through the big hole but didn't put his arms through the little holes. She began writing on her papers.

Nick picked up the old shirt with the small bits off the floor then knew his arms weren't where they should be. He put one arm through one of the smaller holes and the other arm through the other hole, which was harder than normal. He pushed the arm that was holding the shirt with the small bits hard and it went through the hole of the shirt that was on. There were now small bits on the shirt he was wearing.

She said something. “...Nick!”

“Coke?”

“No, sit down.”

He spent a long while sitting at a table and looked around and lightly touched the cloth on his arm that now had small bits - no, blood, on it. There was a picture of a dog on the wall, and

he thought that dogs could make big bits on his arms sometimes.

Another girl who didn't wear socks rolled a big dull box up to him and sat down next to him and began writing on her papers. The big dull box had towels and he took one of the towels out of the big dull box and put it down in front of him on the table. He started folding it the way he was meant to.

"Good job," the girl without socks said to her papers she was writing on.

Good job, he thought. He wasn't being bad.

"Motorcycle?" Nick asked.

"Fold the towels," she replied.

Nick spread the towel onto the table the way he was meant to and took the top corner and brought it to another corner. Then he took the other corner and brought it to the other corner and the towel was small, and he knew he was doing what he was meant to. He then took the corner that had two corners and brought it to the other corner that had two corners. Now all the corners were at one corner and he brought that corner to another corner the way he was meant to. He picked up the towel and put it aside and he took one of the towels out of the big dull box and put it down in front of him on the table. He went for a long while the way he was meant to. After he had done a lot the girl took them and tied them with rope and put them into another big dull box. Everybody was doing corners or sleeping or writing on their papers for a long while. Later, the girls took all the big dull boxes and pushed them into a corner.

Another girl came in with the big shiny box with the food and she left. The girl went to the big shiny box and took all the food and brought all the food to everyone. They woke up the people who were sleeping and gave them the food. Soon the plate with his food on it came. Other

people sat at his table and ate their food off of their plates. A few times the boy sitting next to him hit him with his elbow while they ate their food off their plates. Nick ate his sandwich slowly and drank his drink slowly and he didn't want to eat his chips so he put them on the plate of the boy next to him cause he knew he wanted it. The boy touched the chips and then ate some of them. Nick felt good that the boy wanted them and that he gave them to him and that that wasn't bad, that good wasn't bad.

“Nick...!” Someone yelled something.

“Coke?”

“No!”

They were all mad at him and he didn't know why. They all looked at him and looked mad. He didn't know why they were mad, but thought he must have been bad and now he was mad. Mad about being bad.

Nick stood up and hit his head with his hand. He saw the girls running or standing and some of them ran to him and took him and he tried to bite himself on the arm and he did. They took him and held him and he tried to bite himself on the arm and he couldn't. They took him to the room with the shiny dull floor and held him against the wall and he tried to get them to not hold him for a long while and he couldn't. The girls had wet faces and they kept holding him and he tried to hit his head and bite his arms, but they were holding him and he couldn't.

Nick stopped trying to hit his head and bite his arms later, and they left the room, and he wasn't mad. He stayed up next to the wall for a while, then he was hot and his stomach was pounding. He saw small bits on his shirt and took it off and put it in the corner.

His back was wet again and he looked down at the shiny dull colored floor with bits of

color here and there and moved the tip of his shoe against the floor trying to move the bits of color to see if they were part of the floor. After a long while Nick felt bad and sat on the floor and waited for someone the way he was meant to.

Hours later the big bright van came and so did Jake. Jake walked in and smiled at Nick and he looked sad but not mad and Nick remembered how to not be bad and how not to be mad, at least for a while, and he remembered home.

## QUI NO LONGER

It was painfully cold the evening the train came for Qui, the threadbare yellow dress the only barrier between her young rough skin and the recent rain that had accompanied her all the way from her aunt's home to the train station. She carried a small tan handbag, delicately embroidered with purple flowers, possibly orchids, around its corners. Its nickel snap clasp at the top had worn dull, and its snap wasn't what it used to be. Its contents were a mishmash of various things she felt would be necessary on her journey. Two combs, one made of bamboo, the other of bone. Four figurines carved from granite, the orange and brown speckled kind: two monkeys, a horse, and an elephant with the trunk broken off. Three stale ginger cookies wrapped in a linen napkin she had taken from her aunt's kitchen.

The steam and whistle from the train screamed and hissed from the darkness, terrifying then immediately amusing Qui. She knew trains moved all the time, day and night she recalled, but had no idea where they took all the shiny people. As she waited for the train to appear from the darkness, the cold rain gathering in her eyebrows overflowed and streamed down the length of her February red nose. She shivered then wiped her raw wet nose with her rain soaked sleeve, and as her forearm lowered, the train burst from the night horizon. Qui gazed into the train, golden beams of light flooding out of every window, attacking the nighttime. Qui thought it to be the most magnificent sight she had ever seen, and hoped it was as warm on the inside as it looked from the outside.

Qui joined with the crowd and climbed the polished steel stairs of the train. The warmth of the train rushed at and embraced her entire body, not the warmth of fire or candles, but that of people, people she thought had never known cold in their lives. She milled about with the others



for a time, admiring the jade carpeting and brass fixtures, until she decided upon a seat that she felt was unoccupied. She watched the shiny people watch the porter stow their bags and light their cigarettes and talk about things she did not understand.

Moments later a man in uniform appeared and began going back and forth amongst the shiny people. They were showing him small lemon colored pieces of paper. Qui did not have a small lemon-colored piece of paper to show the man; she had no paper whatsoever. As the man grew closer to her, she drew in her arms towards her chest, raised her legs to her empty stomach and closed her eyes as tight as they would close and waited. What seemed to her like enough time passed before she peeked up, then down, the aisle. The man in uniform was not in front of her, instead, a shiny young girl of similar age to Qui. The shiny young girl giggled and touched Qui's wet yellow dress.

"What is your name? Why are you so dirty?" The young girl hurriedly asked. Qui looked curiously at the girl, attempting to decipher the reason for her attention.

"What? Are you afraid to talk, are you afraid of trains? I have been on every train in Korea, and I am not afraid of them, you must be, I can tell, you are silly for being afraid of the train. If anything, the train should be afraid of you, getting mud all over it, scaring it with your face."

The girl stared at Qui, her attempt to provoke a response proved futile. She took a hard candy out of her dress pocket and held it in her hand, extending it towards Qui. Qui reached to take the lint covered lime sphere when the girl jerked it away, revealing a menacing grin.

"You are all wet, and your dress is old." The shiny young girl said to Qui before she walked down the jade carpet towards the others.

More steam and whistles and the train shuttered and lurched and began moving. Qui

opened her handbag and removed one ginger cookie. She ate it hastily then unconsciously decided to finish the rest, dropping the linen wrapping to the ground. She ran her coarse pruned fingertips across the smooth velvet upholstery of the seat and wished everything she sat on felt as lovely. She looked out the fogged window into the nighttime and saw nothing interesting, immediately believing the journey to be a mistake.

She wished to be back in her room, staring at the candlelight that poured into it from under her locked door. She would watch the dim light bounce and dance about for hours, casting shadows on the cobbled floor of her room, before slipping into sleep and dreaming of silliness. As she thought to stand and exit the train, the uniformed man appeared in front of her.

“Is this yours, little one?” the uniformed man asked while producing a button that matched all the other buttons on her gradually drying and apparently old dress. Qui did not respond, not knowing how the uniformed man wanted to be responded to.

“I believe it is. See, right there, you are missing a button, and here it is.” The uniformed man said, motioning towards her dress, then back to the button.

Qui looked at him and smiled, then looked at the button. She touched the button in the uniformed man’s palm with her right middle finger, and then returned her hand to her lap.

“I’m sure the button is missing you, too. Why lay on this dirty floor when it can be on your yellow dress with its button friends and go on adventures with the prettiest young lady that has ever ridden on my train?”

The uniformed man paused, placing the button into her hand. Qui smelled the button and then placed it into her handbag. The uniformed man smiled and walked away from her. Shortly after, Qui laid down on the empty seat next to her and fell asleep.

She dreamed of silliness.

Qui rose with the sun, and, for a time, was quite confused about her surroundings.

Realizing where she was and remembering her rainy journey to the train station, she sat up and continued to pretend she belonged on the train. She opened her handbag, which she had been using as a makeshift pillow, and rifled through it looking for a cookie. After a time with no cookie discovered, she hopped out of her seat and searched the floor under her and her neighbors' seats. She soon found the ginger scented linen and its lack of contents. She left it where it was discovered and returned to her seat. After some thought she determined mice, or possibly a monkey, had stolen it while she slept. She wasn't actually hungry, just accustomed to eating immediately upon awakening each day. Qui looked out the window and saw an ocean of trees, its current faster than she could focus on. Qui liked trees, and decided that the train was going in the right direction.

As Qui sat through the morning hours relatively still and seemingly deep in thought, she studied her neighbors and tried to deduce their purpose for being on the train and their individual destinations. Where did shiny people go on the train? Where did they come from was a question she found ultimately more interesting. There were no shiny people in her village, at least none she'd ever seen through the gaps in the slats of wood that separated her from her village. One time she had seen shiny people in a magazine dancing and touching and eating and laughing, but she never imagined those people were real, let alone that she would be sitting on a train next to them as they touched and ate and laughed. She wondered why they were not dancing; concerned she had been fooled about the whole dancing matter entirely. She decided they had most likely been dancing all night while she slept.

Qui was quickly yanked from her wild ponderings when she realized that a large, bizarre woman, dressed in layers of bright clothing, was staring at her from a nearby seat. Qui looked away, back into the sea of trees. Qui hoped the bright woman didn't know she wasn't supposed to be on the train and had stopped staring at her, but was nervous to check. Moments later Qui spontaneously sank further into her seat and rolled to her right, softly slamming into a bright, warm, overly perfumed wall.

“What are you doing on this train alone, biscuit?” the bright woman asked.

Qui did not respond, and, feeling frightened and confused, sank further into the soft barrier next to her.

“The porter was asking about you last night, asking if anyone here was accompanying you. I was curious why a girl such as you was on a train such as this, and not wanting him to throw you out the window, I told him you were my niece. Why are you here?” The bright woman attempted eye contact, but Qui was burrowed too deep now.

“If you don't tell me I will be forced to find out all by myself. Is that alright with you, biscuit?”

Qui had no idea what the bright woman was asking and remained hidden in the softness of her.

Qui then felt a subtle pressure, realizing that the bright woman was intently feeling the top and sides of her head, her shoulders and belly. She did not know what the bright woman was looking for, but knowing she would not find it decided not to resist.

By the time the examination was complete, Qui had drifted into sleep and the bright woman knew all her secrets.

She knew Qui could not speak. She knew Qui did not belong on this train. She knew Qui was courageous and more powerful than she seemed.

She thought Qui would make her a lot of money. She thought Qui looked just the part.

“You will need an American name, Biscuit.”

This was the bright woman’s trade and talent. A talent that was nearly perfect.

Nearly.

Qui believed she would be safe with the bright woman, and believed she could trust her, and believed she may be able to make ginger cookies.

Qui would soon no longer believe in anything, would soon no longer possess her reckless curiosity in the world. Qui would soon no longer.

## CONSTANCE P. DAILY SCHEDULE

### WEEKDAY NON-HOLIDAY

0600-0645 WAKE UP  
0645-0700 BREAKFAST, MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION  
0700-0730 SHOWER PROGRAM  
0730-0800 DRESSING COMPLIANCE PROGRAM  
0800-0845 TRANSPORT TO WORK  
0845-1430 AT WORK  
1430-1515 TRANSPORT HOME  
1515-1530 EMPTY WORK BAG PROGRAM  
1530-1600 SNACK, SKILLS ACQUISITION: ASL "EAT" & "DRINK"  
1600 MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION  
1600-1645 STAFF PROXIMITY TRIALS AND DATA COLLECTION  
1645-1700 COMMUNITY WALK  
1700-1800 SKILLS ACQUISITION: ASL "SIT" & "WAIT" & "CALM"  
1800-1830 DINNER  
1830-1900 FREE TIME OR COMMUNITY OUTING (IF FOUR STAFF)  
1900-1930 SHOWER PROGRAM  
1930-2000 DRESSING COMPLIANCE PROGRAM  
2000 MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION  
2000-2045 FREE TIME TRIALS AND DATA COLLECTION  
2045 BEDTIME

### HOLIDAY AND WEEKEND

0800 MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION  
0900-0945 WAKE UP  
0945-1000 BREAKFAST  
1000-1030 SHOWER PROGRAM  
1030-1100 DRESSING COMPLIANCE PROGRAM  
1100-1230 COMMUNITY OUTING (IF FOUR STAFF) OR BACK YARD  
1230-1300 SKILLS ACQUISITION: ASL "SIT" & "WAIT" & "CALM"  
1300-1330 LUNCH  
1330-1445 STAFF PROXIMITY TRIALS AND DATA COLLECTION  
1445-1500 COMMUNITY WALK  
1500-1530 SNACK, SKILLS ACQUISITION: ASL "EAT" & "DRINK"  
1530-1600 FREE TIME TRIALS AND DATA COLLECTION  
1600 MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION  
1600-1700 FREE TIME TRIALS AND DATA COLLECTION  
1700-1800 SKILLS ACQUISITION: ASL "SIT" & "WAIT" & "CALM"  
1800-1845 DINNER & DESSERT  
1845-1915 SHOWER PROGRAM  
1915-1945 DRESSING COMPLIANCE PROGRAM  
1945-2000 FREE TIME TRIALS AND DATA COLLECTION  
2000 MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION  
2000-2045 STAFF PROXIMITY TRIALS AND DATA COLLECTION  
2045 BEDTIME

## THE EVERSPINNING WORLD

The friends and enemies were quick together today, and dismissive, of me and what is usually required from me. My routine was abandoned, before it began, which happens occasionally but not with such frequency that I am accustomed to it, nor have I learned how to occupy myself fruitfully during these times in which I am left alone, alone with myself and alone against the spinning of these walls which make rooms, rooms which make walls to keep me from the strangers and the unfamiliar places I have yet to earn. Left to the spinning, the constant tapping inside me quickens its pace, and I have learned that I must slow the spinning, slow it to a stop, hopefully, when the walls, the rooms, all of us together are calm and move slowly, this place where my thoughts can be laid out for me to see and understand, and the spinning of us all does not shove them together, where they must be stacked and inevitably toppled, a thousand fragments, pieces of the puzzle I am charged to complete and solve. The only way to slow the spinning is to close my eyes and latch on to everything here in my mind: the doors and the floors and the cold, cold water I can't find, the shower and the warm soft grass far, far and away, and the places for blankets and towels, and the magazines I have seen and the ones I have not, smiles and beards and pizza and soda and the calling of the swim, and the calling of the swim. I lay all of these things out, spaced perfectly, in my mind, and I look through them, as to see them all in the same way, all bright and majestic, born now to burn through the shadows that keep me from seeing the truth of what is away, and I latch on to each of them, and I remember them, and when everything I've ever known and hated and loved, laughed at and punched has been grabbed, I feel them all, running through my fingers, down, down, this is when I can begin to slow the spin. And I close my eyes, tight, everything latched and grasped and locked behind my eyes, where I

get to wall everything in, and keep it for myself, where it is not yet toppled, not yet lost to tomorrow, and with all my power, with all the force I can bear to bring, I move, I shove myself from inside, up and down forward and back, fighting against the quick spin of the floor and whatever is underneath and above, and if I promise myself I want it bad enough, that I need, if only for a moment, to turn right and calm the ever-spinning world it just might begin to slow, and to slow, until the spinning has stopped, until I can breathe breaths not labored, and see myself and my place in this room, in this new never-spinning world, and understand for perhaps just a moment, why I am here, why we have been put and kept here, as my socks are put and kept in the bottom drawer, and no other drawer, and that when the spin has left everything can settle, and everything must be put somewhere, where it belongs, where it deserves to be, until the trembling of the stopped spin overwhelms me, and bursts through and past my eyes, and I and everything again shake and begin again the spin, and everything that had a place and all the answers that I knew to be are thrust once again, up and down forward and back, and the spinning hurls it all away, beyond these walls and rooms, back into the shadows of these things far away, and in directions unknown to me, until again, whenever I can summon it, the never-spinning world.

As difficult as this process presents, and as it has taken me the sum of the entirety of the days and nights I can recall, one would assume that I would be left to try to slow the spinning, since I appear to be the only one here or anywhere capable of performing such a task, evidenced by the fact that the never-spinning world only comes when I make it so, and has never come when I didn't make it so, but perhaps the friends and enemies prefer the ever-spinning world, seeing as how a good deal of the time that I am shoving myself up and down, forward and back to slow the spinning, for myself and for all of us, the friends and enemies appear, and try to stop me, and tell



me to be calm, and I want for them to understand that I am at that moment trying to bring forth the slowing of the spin, the calming of the world, and to put right everything, everything in the place it should be, where the neverspinning world wants it to be, my socks in the bottom drawer, the cold, cold water inside me, me in the warm green grass and the heat of summer places.

## MARGARET M. DAILY SCHEDULE

### WEEKDAY NON-HOLIDAY

0600-0645	WAKE UP
0645-0700	BREAKFAST, MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION
0700-0730	SHOWER PROGRAM
0730-0800	CHANGE BED SHEETS PROGRAM
0800-0845	TRANSPORT TO WORK
0845-1430	AT WORK
1430-1515	TRANSPORT HOME
1515-1530	LAUNDRY PROGRAM
1530-1600	SNACK, SKILLS ACQUISITION: ASL "EAT" & "FRUIT"
1600	MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION
1600-1630	DISHWASHING PROGRAM
1630-1645	FREE TIME
1645-1700	COMMUNITY WALK
1700-1800	SORT AND PUT AWAY CLOTHES PROGRAM
1800-1830	DINNER
1830-1900	FREE TIME OR COMMUNITY OUTING (IF FOUR STAFF)
1900-1930	DISHWASHING PROGRAM
1930-2000	SHOWER PROGRAM
2000	MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION
2000-2100	FREE TIME
2100	BEDTIME

### HOLIDAY AND WEEKEND

0800	MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION
0900-0945	WAKE UP
0945-1000	BREAKFAST
1000-1030	SHOWER PROGRAM
1030-1100	CHANGE BED SHEETS PROGRAM
1100-1230	COMMUNITY OUTING (IF FOUR STAFF) OR BACK YARD
1230-1300	DISHWASHING PROGRAM
1300-1330	LUNCH
1330-1345	LAUNDRY PROGRAM
1345-1445	FREE TIME
1445-1500	COMMUNITY WALK
1500-1530	SNACK, SKILLS ACQUISITION: ASL "EAT" & "FRUIT"
1530-1600	FREE TIME
1600	MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION
1600-1700	FREE TIME
1700-1800	SORT AND PUT AWAY CLOTHES PROGRAM
1800-1845	DINNER & DESSERT
1845-1915	DISHWASHING PROGRAM
1915-2000	SHOWER PROGRAM, SHAVE LEGS PROGRAM
2000	MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION
2000-2100	FREE TIME
2100	BEDTIME

## ALL THE THINGS THAT ARE LOST AND NOT HERE

I don't figure I know about much. There are things here I don't know, things that *hum* and *beep beep* that I can't touch, can't figure how to if I could.

Hard things that are here for the others to touch and feel and be with, hard things that I just can't figure.

I've liked to figure, looked and looked at them when the ones that come and go are with them, and I want to figure when they aren't looking.

I just can't figure.

I don't know them.

I know about stomach.

All the ones, and me, have a stomach, I figure, and I know about stomach. When I wasn't as much as I am, some one with lots of hair that looked like *brush your teeth* showed me how to touch my stomach when I wanted to eat.

And I learned it too, to touch my stomach, but someways they didn't give me food when I touched my stomach, and I figured that doing it

didn't mean I could eat, but that some one could let me eat or yell at me.

So I touched my stomach and they let me eat, or they would yell at me, and I'd keep touching my stomach, and they would let me eat and they would yell.

I know about stomach, but I don't know about anything else between my shoulders and my stomach.

I feel some thing else in there, that I can't get to, some thing between my stomach and my shoulders that itches like my foot someways, that is pain someways, that sounds like doors someways, that is hot and tries to get out when I get hot and I try to get out.

I don't know what it is, but it's there, near my stomach and shoulders, and I don't know what would come if I touched it, or if some one else touched it, some one could yell.

I can't touch it, and I don't know what it looks like, but it's there, and I know it, and I figure it's filled with all the things that are lost and

not here.

When it was near bright just then one of them made it bright and had the water cup and the other cup and gave them to me, and I drink and eat and that one went away and made it dark.

This comes a lot, and it's not food but something else, and it makes me time for sleep someways and not time for sleep at all someways and I don't know what it's for but it's a *have to* or else no time for eating.

It's bright, so it's time for eating, or will be.

I'm on the lay-down I'm to be on, and one of them keeps coming to me and sounding.

They aren't sounding about eating, they are sounding about working, and hitting hands when they sound about working. I have my sheet on and it isn't time for eating.

Most when they sound about work I just keep my sheet on and they leave. They sound *maggie maggie maggie* which I know means look at them, and they sound *work work work*

and they want me to take other sheets and put them in the hard thing with water, or they want me to put water on the floor and then take it away.

They sound *maggie maggie maggie* and *work work work* and other things, and I just keep my sheet on, and they put hands on the side of they face and they sound *sleep* and I move my head that I like and they sound *work work work* to some one else.

The other one who is to be in the lay-down near the lay-down I'm on isn't here, but sounds a lot of things, but not *maggie* or *work* or *sleep* or anything else the ones who come and go sound. That one sounds *hello* and *no* and *wa-wa-wa*.

I figure I know more than the one who sounds *hello* and *no* and *wa-wa-wa*, and here is what I know:

.....there are ones that have lay downs here and ones that don't the ones that come and go there are the ones that come and go that grab me on the hands push me on the hands and shoulders all the time and some grab and push me some there are bright times here to eat and work and dark times to not eat and not work there are candies for working and candies for not working and I like them both there are bright and dark times for here and bright times for not here there are places not here for time for eating and for time for working.....

There are things that come during the dark times that I know are not here, and others and places that are not here, and they grab me some and they let me eat some, and in the dark time just here, one of them let me eat and sounded things that I liked, and this sounding is what the ones call things and that I know some now, someway, and I get a feeling between my shoulders and stomach that the sounds the ones who come and go sound are going to figure out and show who they are, someway.

I figure I know what else that one meant someway, that I should try to know and figure slow and figure I can know about things I can't and to know things no one ever showed me and that I couldn't figure.

He sounded there was ice cream for me if I figured a lot, and that there were things and

places I'd like more than ice cream, and that I could not be time for sleep all the time.

I liked that and that one knew I would figure a lot, but I want this doesn't mean time for working.

It's bright.....afternoon, and I'm here.....home, and it's time for working and not time for eating.

The nice one, the one the ones that come and go.....say.....*Jake* to, is looking at me and saying *maggie maggie maggie* and I know he is going to be here with me now.....today. Today is when I'm.....supposed to try hard, so I will try, and I.....hope I can find the.....words, and for ice cream.



## GRETCHEN R. DAILY SCHEDULE

### WEEKDAY NON-HOLIDAY

0500-0530 WAKE UP, TOILETING  
0530-0600 BREAKFAST, MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION  
0600-0645 SHOWER PROGRAM, TOOTHBRUSHING PROGRAM, DRESSING PROGRAM  
0645-0700 FREE TIME  
0700-0715 TOILETING  
0715 TRANSPORT TO WORK ARRIVES  
0715-1500 AT WORK  
1500 TRANSPORT FROM WORK ARRIVES  
1500-1515 TOILETING  
1515-1600 SNACK, FREE TIME  
1600 MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION  
1600-1630 LAUNDRY PROGRAM  
1630-1645 MAKE BED PROGRAM  
1645-1700 COMMUNITY WALK, SKILLS ACQUISITION: ASL "WALK" & "HOME"  
1700-1715 TOILETING  
1715-1745 CLEAN TABLE PROGRAM  
1745-1800 SKILLS ACQUISITION: ASL "WAIT" & "EAT"  
1800-1830 DINNER  
1830-1900 FREE TIME OR COMMUNITY OUTING (IF FOUR STAFF)  
1900-1915 TOILETING  
1915-2000 SHOWER PROGRAM, TOOTHBRUSHING PROGRAM, DRESSING PROGRAM  
2000 MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION  
2000-2045 SKILLS ACQUISITION: ASL "DRINK" & "WATER" & "MILK"  
2045-2100 TOILETING  
2100 BEDTIME  
0100 TOILETING

### HOLIDAY AND WEEKEND

0800-0830 WAKE UP, MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION, TOILETING  
0830-0900 BREAKFAST  
0900-1000 SHOWER PROGRAM, TOOTHBRUSHING PROGRAM, DRESSING PROGRAM, SHAVE LEGS  
1000-1015 TOILETING  
1015-1045 LAUNDRY PROGRAM  
1045-1100 SKILLS ACQUISITION: ASL "CAR" & "WAIT"  
1100-1230 COMMUNITY OUTING (IF FOUR STAFF) OR BACK YARD  
1230-1245 TOILETING  
1245-1300 SKILLS ACQUISITION: ASL "WAIT" & "EAT"  
1300-1330 LUNCH  
1330-1400 CLEAN TABLE PROGRAM  
1400-1430 FREE TIME (SHIFT CHANGE)  
1430-1445 TOILETING  
1445-1500 COMMUNITY WALK, SKILLS ACQUISITION: ASL "WALK" & "HOME"  
1500-1600 FREE TIME  
1600 MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION  
1600-1645 SKILLS ACQUISITION: ASL "DRINK" & "WATER" & "MILK"  
1645-1700 TOILETING  
1700-1730 CLEAN TABLE PROGRAM  
1730-1800 SKILLS ACQUISITION: ASL "WAIT" & "EAT"  
1800-1845 DINNER & DESSERT  
1845-1900 TOILETING  
1900-1945 SHOWER PROGRAM, TOOTHBRUSHING PROGRAM, DRESSING PROGRAM  
1945-2000 FREE TIME  
2000 MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION  
2000-2045 SKILLS ACQUISITION: ASL "DRINK" & "WATER" & "MILK"  
2045-2100 TOILETING  
2100 BEDTIME  
0100 TOILETING

FUNNY WAKE UP FUNNY FUNNY DANCE

Funny wake up funny funny dance dance hungry. Bathroom funny funny shoes funny. Bathroom bathroom shoes funny who here who here that funny. Who here water milk school drink wait wait wait funny. Who here they funny? Wake up stand up bathroom funny. Who here bathroom. Bathroom bathroom wait who here they funny go see. Go see who here they funny? Who here go see. Throw sheet funny funny stand up. Wake up stand up go go see who here they funny? Walk walk light switch oh bright funny. Light switch light switch funny funny light switch light switch funny funny. Walk walk walk funny. Funny walk walk walk. Oh who here who here they funny? Kitchen kitchen gretchen gretchen stay out kitchen funny funny. Look who funny funny look who bathroom hungry.

*GOOD. -----, GRETCHEN.*

Funny funny look who funny bathroom bathroom dance dance milk.

*GRETCHEN. PLEASE. ---, ---, BATHROOM.*

Bathroom bathroom dance dance dance go see bathroom. Walk walk walk bathroom. Light switch funny. Light switch light switch funny. Wait wait wait who here shoes. Walk walk shoes walk dress. Hungry bathroom dress dress dress coat coat funny. Put on coat funny. Walk walk light switch. Coat coat coat dance dance go see who here go see they funny? Walk walk kitchen dance dance coat dance funny.

*GRETCHEN. ---, ----, COAT. --, ----, CLOSET. ---, PLEASE. ---, ---, BATHROOM.*

Coat closet bathroom. Walk walk dance funny walk coat. Put on coat funny. Put on coat funny. Put on coat. Put on coat. Bathroom hungry put on coat. Put on coat funny. Put on coat. What? What? Put on coat. What? What? What? What? Put on coat. Who here?

*GRETCHEN. PLEASE. --. ----.*

What? Put on coat. That funny. What? My coat. My coat.

*GRETCHEN. ----. ---. --. HELP. YOU.*

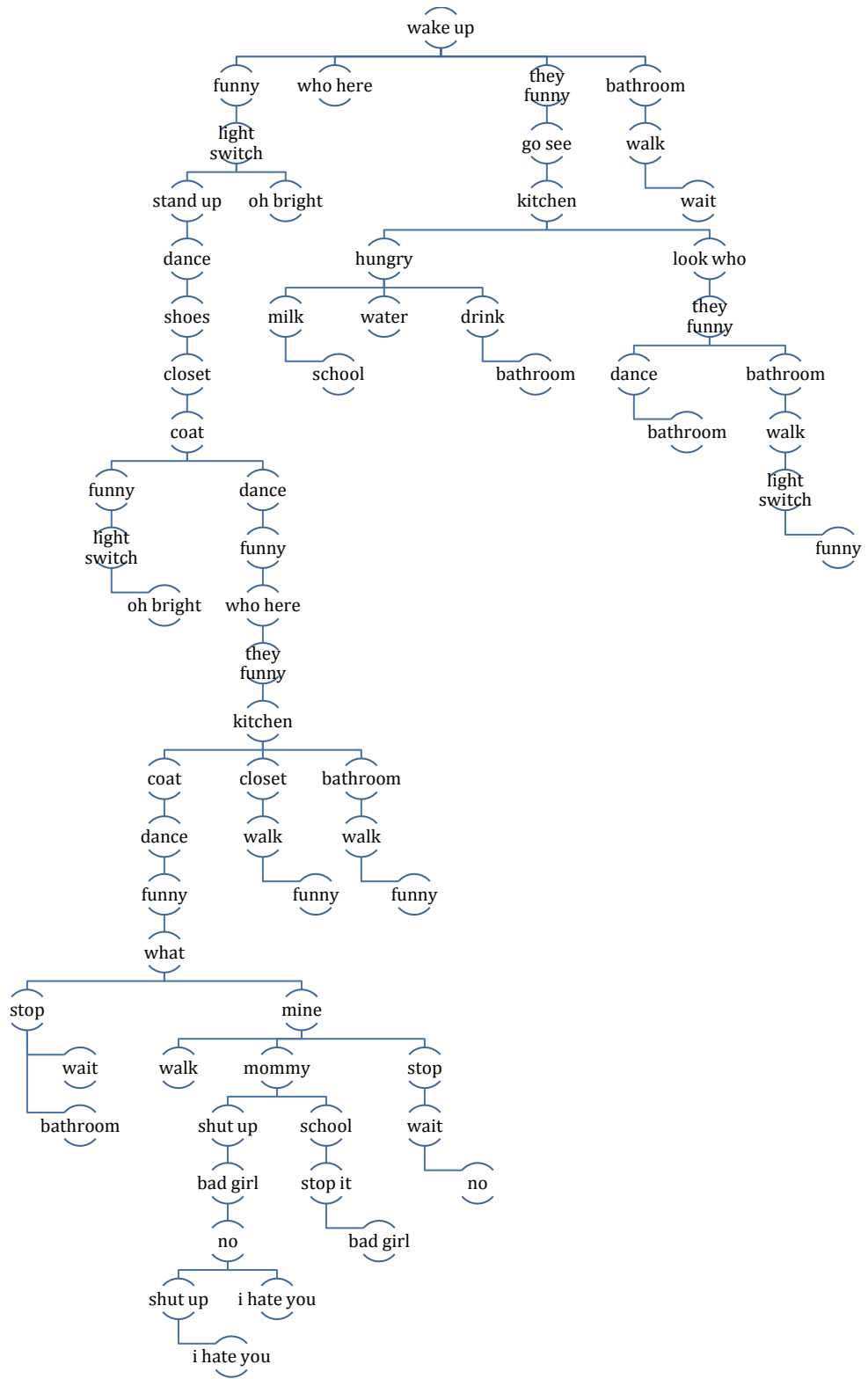
My coat funny. Put on coat. What? What? Stop. Stop. What? Stop.

*GRETCHEN. YOU. CANT. ----. ---. COAT-. --. YOU. WANT. HELP.*

My coat. Put on coat. What? Bathroom bathroom bathroom stop my coat stop stop stop my coat  
my coat mine my coat give coat bathroom bathroom. Bathroom. Go walk go go walk funny stop  
stop what what what coat bathroom milk mommy mommy stop school wait wait stop what coat.

*GRETCHEN. STOP. -----.*

Wait wait stop stop school car bad girl shut up shut up bad girl no no no no stop no coat what  
bathroom wait shut up stop it stop it bad girl shut up no no wait wait shut up I hate you hate you  
shut up mommy bad girl shut up I hate you.



## EVIDENCE OF PROTEST

Double fracture, the physician said having reviewed the x-rays. He looked at me again, like I was lying. Not knowing, it was a seemingly unbelievable account that led to this harm. He told me that I would need to see a hand and wrist specialist, supposed it would be months until I could resume my altruistic oppression.

Maggie stood, furious with me, the puzzle, and the events of the day. She went to move away, toward anything, not this, escape I suppose. I gave her a large, quick step, blocking her route. She looked to her feet, then the ceiling, confused, slow growling decisions tumbling around inside her. Then putting her hands behind her back, away from my view, she jerked her hips violently side to side. She scrunched the left side of her face in painful struggle, leaving the right side dull and empty. Looking like a stroke victim. She produced her hands, which were now coated in her own waste, and lunged toward me. In aggression or to simply increase my distance from her, I'm not sure. I stepped back, fast, steady, grabbing her less soiled wrists, allowing my backward momentum to leverage her hands down and away from me. She struggled, unaware of how to break this hold. Restrained. As if in a bear trap, and if enough time passed, willing to chew away toward freedom. Through her wrists, malnourished flesh and bone, staggering away into the shadows to clean her wounds and roll in dirt and leaves in agony.

Calm shock overwhelmed her, allowing me to force her to the bathroom, to wash away the evidence of her protest. That's what we do there in truth; we hide and clean and ignore pleas of rescue and evidence of protest. Drying her hands with a navy blue towel crumpled in the corner, used for some unknown purpose passed, she frowned. Which was unusual for her, and

she looked down, looking toward shame or resignation, and placed her hand on my wrist. She squeezed, as though to lead me, but instead her grip lingered still on my wrist, and with a secret strength let loose from some long abandoned source, clenched her damp fingers and palm, moving something deep and permanent and necessary inside me.

## SHIFT – HOUR 1 OF 16

In this place, this “home,” the idea of time exists differently. It does not occur in seconds, or minutes, or days or nights, but in shifts. Inside each of these shifts, some people come and go, and others remain. It’s as if everything resets, everything begins anew, for the people coming and going, but not for those who remain. Not those who are lost here, who don’t know of these shifts. Nothing shifts for them.

6:03 AM

It’s quiet now, in this place. Those who remain are long asleep, except one, who stirs in his bed, rolling and rolling in place, waiting for those who come and go. The two who are here now, who come and go, who are soon to go, write furiously on papers to tell stories to those who are soon to come, and for those who will never come. The light of the outside begins to trickle in, through gaps and breaks, and the one who is rolling and rolling slows, knowing that those who come are to come shortly now. The sounds of metal crashing together echoes from outside, trumpeting the arrival of those who are coming.

6:06 AM

Those who are coming now stumble in tired, disappointed, regretful, hung-over, stoned. They come in with wishes about their coming, imaginary plans they hope will come to fruition about their time, their shift. As they shift in, and as those who are to go shift out, they exchange nods

and looks and keys and understanding. Those who have now come put their things into secret places that those who remain cannot find. One of the ones who has now come takes a key and opens a large plastic box on wheels and begins to sort through and examine its contents. He counts all the little things inside to make sure none are gone, or lost, or missing, or forgotten. None of the little things are, and he closes it and locks it and goes away from it.

6:17 AM

Jake and the other who has come sit on separate vinyl couches and discuss their shift, and who will have who, and how the shift is planned, and how those who remain will be shuffled and arranged. Jake turns on the television and changes the station, and they watch the local news together.

6:28 AM

Jake opens the refrigerator and removes a carton of eggs. He takes a large bowl out of the dishwasher and empties ten eggs into the bowl. He places the shells into the trash can. He adds salt and pepper and a dash of hot sauce to the eggs. He beats the eggs. The metal fork scrapes against the worn, plastic bowl. Alex does not look. Jake takes the bowl with the eggs and covers it in plastic wrap, then places the bowl into the refrigerator, along with the unused eggs in the carton.



6:32 AM

Jake goes to a dry erase board on the wall in the kitchen. He erases what is on it and writes something else on it.

*Jake – Constance*

*Alex – Terry and Nick*

*Brant – Maggie and Gretchen*

Alex looks.

6:35 AM

Jake goes into Terry's room. Terry stops rolling and stands up. Jake shakes his fist and Terry exits his room and goes into the bathroom. Terry pulls his underwear down and begins to urinate in the toilet. Jake takes two fingers to his fist and Terry sits down and finishes urinating. He stands up and walks to the shower. Jake touches Terry's shoulder and takes two fingers to his thumb. Terry goes back to his room. Alex looks.

6:41 AM

Alex notices he has a hangnail. He bites it off and spits it out. Jake looks.

6:44 AM

Jake goes into Constance's room. Constance is asleep. Jake leaves Constance's room.

6:46 AM

Terry exits his room and walks over to the couch that Alex is on. Terry sits down on the couch next to Alex. Alex looks. Terry turns and lies down on the couch, placing his legs on Alex's lap. Alex pushes Terry's legs off his lap. Terry stands up and walks to the dining room table and sits down. He pulls his chair up to the table and begins pointing to his mouth. Jake looks. Jake raises his hand and points three fingers up. Terry puts his head down on the table. Jake takes the bowl of scrambled eggs out of the refrigerator. He removes the plastic wrap and places the plastic wrap into the trash. He turns on one of the burners on the stove. He takes a frying pan out of the dishwasher. He puts the frying pan on the burner. He takes some cooking spray out of a cabinet and sprays the surface of the frying pan.

6:48 AM

Jake pours the scrambled eggs into the frying pan. Terry looks.

6:49 AM

Terry begins banging his head on the dining room table. Jake runs toward Terry. Terry looks. Jake takes one hand and makes a chopping motion into his other hand. Jake raises his hand and points three fingers up. Terry continues to bang his head on the dining room table. Jake places his hand between the table and Terry's head. Alex looks. Terry stops banging his head and begins to bite his hand. Jake moves behind Terry and grabs both his wrists and brings them around to Terry's side, near his kidneys, his arms crossed over each other. Terry resumes banging his head against the dining room table. Jake slides the chair that Terry is in away from the table. Alex looks. Jake tells Alex to get the helmet. Alex stands up and runs into Terry's room. Alex exits with a helmet. Alex goes to Terry and puts the helmet on Terry. Terry kicks Alex. Alex walks away and sits down on the couch. Terry is trying to get his hands free and kicks the dining room table.

6:51 AM

Nick opens his room door. He looks at Alex. Alex looks. Nick says breakfast. Alex says get dressed. Jake lets Terry go and turns the chair Terry is in around to face him. Jake takes two fingers and points them toward his eyes. Terry looks at Jake. Jake takes two fingers and touches the top of his fist and bounces the two fingers against his fist. Terry stands up and tries to take the helmet off. Jake stops him from taking the helmet off. Jake takes one finger and points it down and makes a stirring motion. Terry turns around and then sits down. Jake takes his hand

and touches the top of his head. Terry takes his hand and touches the top of his head. Nick appears in his doorway with a shirt. Nick says help. Alex looks. Alex says you can do it. Jake takes off Terry's helmet. Jake raises his arm and points three fingers up. Terry turns the chair around and sits straight at the dining room table and puts his head down. Jake writes something on some papers.

6:54 AM

Jake removes the frying pan with the scrambled eggs from the burner. Jake turns off the burner on the stove. Jake opens a cabinet next to the stove and removes a lime-green plastic bowl. Jake removes a fork from the dishwasher and scrapes some of the scrambled eggs from the frying pan into the plastic bowl. Jake puts the fork into the plastic bowl. Jake opens the pantry and removes a loaf of bread. Terry looks. Jake opens the bag and removes two slices of white bread, placing them on top of the scrambled eggs in the plastic bowl. Jake takes the plastic bowl with the scrambled eggs and white bread and fork and walks over to the table and places the plastic bowl in front of Terry. Terry begins eating.

6:57 AM

Jake is sitting next to Terry at the dining room table. Gretchen opens her room door. Gretchen is laughing. Gretchen is wearing a coat over her pajamas. Jake looks. Jake says Alex. Alex looks. Jake stands up and walks toward Nick's bedroom. Gretchen looks. Gretchen says wa-wa-wa.

Alex walks over to Gretchen, Gretchen says wa-wa-wa. Alex says good morning Gretchen. Alex notices that Gretchen's pajama pants are wet. Alex says Gretchen please use the bathroom. Gretchen laughs. Gretchen starts pulling on her coat. Alex says Gretchen put your coat in your closet and please use the bathroom. Gretchen turns around and goes into her bedroom. Gretchen slams the bedroom door. Gretchen laughs. Gretchen opens her closet and removes another coat. Gretchen tries to put on another coat. Gretchen puts her arm through the first sleeve. Gretchen cannot put her arm through the second sleeve. Gretchen opens her bedroom door. Gretchen says wa-wa-wa. Alex says Gretchen please go back. Gretchen struggles with the second sleeve. Gretchen screams. Alex says Gretchen please let me help you. Gretchen struggles with the second sleeve. Gretchen screams. Alex says Gretchen you can't wear two coats. Alex says do you want help. Gretchen screams. Alex takes the second sleeve and begins removing the second coat from Gretchen. Gretchen takes her left hand and hits herself on the chin. Alex doesn't look. Gretchen raises her left hand toward her open mouth. Alex places his hand on Gretchen's left hand as Gretchen bites her thumb. Alex says Gretchen stop. Gretchen bites harder on her thumb. There is blood. Alex looks. Alex says assistance loudly. Alex moves behind Gretchen and grabs both her wrists and brings them around to Gretchen's side, near her kidneys, her arms crossed over each other. Alex begins walking backward, pulling Gretchen along with him. Alex takes Gretchen into her bedroom and kneels down behind a large burgundy plastic chair forcing Gretchen to sit. Gretchen starts screaming and spitting at the wall. Alex looks at Maggie. Maggie looks. Alex smiles at Maggie. Maggie looks away.

## SELF-INJURIOUS BEHAVIOR (17 OF 81)

**Task Setting:** Liberty Group Home, Stuyvesant Foundation

**Task Analysis:** Self-injurious Behavior (17 of 81)

**Task Overview:** You are agitated. Self-injurious behavior initiated to reduce anxiety and/or communicate agitation.

**Causal Agents:** 1) Event Confusion, and/or 2) General Confusion, and/or 3) Pain, excluding nausea and/or lower intestinal discomfort.

**Task Location:** Bedroom

**Setup Condition:** You are in your bedroom, unsupervised, not in task, and one or more causal agents above exist.

1. Setup Condition Active. Begin Task: Self-injurious Behavior (17 of 81.)
2. Move to center of room.
  - a. If bedroom door is open, move to bedroom door and close.
    - i. Move to center of room.
3. Move fingers of left hand inward toward palm forcefully until joint pain occurs.
4. Move thumb of left hand so that thumb pad is resting on knuckle.
5. Move thumb inward toward palm forcefully, pressing thumb pad on knuckle until joint pain occurs.
6. Tilt head down, facing right.
7. Move left fist swiftly and forcefully to head, immediately above left ear.
8. Move left hand swiftly and forcefully approximately 18" away from head at eye level.

9. Repeat steps 7 and 8 indefinitely while opening mouth and begin loud vocalizations and/or screaming.
  - a. If anyone enters room, continue step 9.
    - i. Continue step 9 until you are physically restrained.
    - ii. Resist physical restraint until you are calm.
    - iii. End Task: Self-injurious Behavior (17 of 81.)
  - b. If no one enters room, continue step 9.
    - i. If complete reduction of anxiety occurs, stop step 9.
      1. End Task: Self-injurious Behavior (17 of 81.)
    - ii. If existing pain is superseded by initial pain, stop step 9.
      1. End task: Self-injurious Behavior (17 of 81.)

## AT LIBERTY

The two sat in silence together, a comfortable awkwardness, on the balcony of Malcolm's fifth story apartment.

When the two of them bumped into each other at the dive college bar a few hours ago, they shared a quick, confused look; that look when two people who know each other only in one context or setting cross paths in a wholly different situation. Malcolm seemed amped up to Jake, but figured maybe outside of work Malcolm was a really energetic guy. The two shared a few drinks, then Malcolm offered Jake some marijuana. After some convincing, Jake agreed that if neither of them scored tonight that he'd smoke weed with Malcolm, although it had to be at his place.

On the balcony was a waist-high black metal railing which Malcolm had spent a good deal of time peering through, through and beyond the vertical slats of the railing, chain smoking cigarettes before and after failed adventures wondering how easy it would be for a dog or a baby to slip through, or be slipped through, to tumble and spin, down five stories to the sidewalk below.

Jake stared through these slats now, down into an empty parking lot across a deserted and ill lit side street, and wondered if the warehouses and factories surrounding them were still operational, or long abandoned. He wondered if they existed there in silence alone, stirred only by an occasional pigeon trapped inside, or if as dawn broke the whirring and clacking of machinery and palettes filled with things people didn't need were weighed and counted and shipped away, forgotten and remade, again and again. Looking to Malcolm, who was lighting a cigarette, he found himself envious of this balcony, and the soothing emptiness of a simple space



to call your own, green plastic patio furniture, modest, two chairs and a wobbly table scarred with cigarette burns and spots of ash so thick he thought they could never be washed away. He moved back in with his mother a few years back, out of necessity, and occasionally longed for a return to solitude, a life fueled by whim and mistake, where you could shrug off anything and everything, sworn to no cause or purpose.

Malcolm took his car keys out of his pocket then paused briefly before putting them on the table next to his pack of cigarettes, the metallic rumbling severing the silence between them.

“Want a cigarette?” Malcolm asked casually.

“No, thanks.”

“I’m gonna see if I have any papers,” Malcolm responded, standing and exiting the balcony.

Jake knew this was entirely unprofessional, to be here, about to smoke weed with one of his staff, one of his subordinates, but the taboo of the situation created a strange sort of silent bond between them, he thought, and for some reason felt assured that Malcolm wouldn’t ever say anything to Eliot or anyone else at Liberty, couldn’t identify a function for such a behavior. Jake hadn’t smoked weed since high school, about a decade now, and he was somewhat nervous, but figured he could crash here if necessary, and that the eleven hours between now and when his shift started was ample time for the effect to wear off.

Malcolm returned, rolling papers in one hand, a small, rustling baggie of weed in another. He lit another cigarette and began rolling.

“How long did you say you’ve been working at Liberty? Seven years?” Malcolm probed, trying to get Jake to talk, to open up maybe.

“Yes, seven years and four months, I think.”

“How long have you been a supervisor?”

“I got promoted after five or six months.”

“Cool. How long have Nick and Maggie and all of them been there?”

“Well, Maggie and Constance have been there since the house opened, the rest sorta just trickled in as people left. I think it’s a good mix now, the first year or so was really rough, five clients, all new to the house and the staff, they were all freaking out nonstop, we had a lot of staff turnover then, a lot more than now even. The house opened with I think fifteen employees, twelve of them quit in the first two weeks. I’m the only one left from the beginning, the only staff I mean.”

“How long has Eliot been there? He came across as if he’d been there since the house opened.”

Jake chuckled, “Yeah, no, Eliot has been there about a year now. There’s been five program managers since the house opened. Mostly fuckups, well, for the most part, I guess there is just something about the job that prevents someone from staying for any good length of time. That, or Stuyvesant intentionally hires fuckers and junkies.”

Malcolm finished rolling the joint and put his cigarette out in the glass ashtray with a Canadian flag painted on the inside.

“Why would they hire assholes on purpose?” Malcolm asked, passing the joint and lighter to Jake.

Jake took the lighter, then the joint, and sighed quietly. “Well,” he fidgeted with the black Bic lighter, then lit it, inhaling lightly, “Why would someone do something,” he said, letting the

smoke linger inside him for a moment before exhaling quickly, “hiring an asshole isn’t really a behavior that can be assessed or analyzed, in a traditional sense. One would assume you would hire someone incompetent so that they would perform incompetently. Right?” Jake asked Malcolm, handing him the joint and lighter.

“Why would they want that?” Malcolm took the joint, confused, intrigued.

“Well, you would want someone to perform incompetently so that they did not perform competently. Therefore, why would you not want someone to perform competently? Possibly if a competent performance would yield negative results for Stuyvesant.”

“What?” Malcolm asked, smirking, passing the joint, unaware if he had smoked any.

“If your aim, as an organization, your true aim, was to simply make money, and stay in business, and make sure those at the top kept their jobs, no matter if you are making toaster ovens or repairing sprinkler systems or providing behavioral residential services for profoundly developmentally disabled people, then simply you would only do the bare minimum, only that which is fundamentally necessary to continue, and if there was no apparent additional reinforcement for doing anything more than the minimum, why would you? And if you feigned excellence, but strove to surpass that which is only required, then you would need to make sure that others involved in your organization that are not necessarily *in on it*, like you and me and program managers, didn’t attempt or strive to succeed beyond what you secretly set the bar so low at. If an entirely competent program manager were to appear, they would soon see the truth of the situation, soon seek to rectify and improve and challenge what is intended, what is provided, the minimum, the absolute lowest quality of care and service required, and then some,

if kept behind closed doors and in the charge of maladroit, useless, uncaring, scourge of the Earth motherfuckers.”

“What the fuck, did you memorize that? Do you really think that?” Malcolm lit a cigarette and sat back in his chair, looking away, into the dim night sky, processing.

“Yes and no. Whatever. No, I suppose, but look. They’ve got torn clothes and are fed the shittiest, cheapest food possible, and nothing gets fixed unless it has to be for licensing or certification or if it’s cheaper to repair than replace. And they hire staff with no experience and pay them nine dollars an hour. And most of them quit before they would get a pay raise, and if we want to take the clients to get a milkshake or a new pair of shoes, I have to fill out three forms and wait a week or a month, or just long enough so that we forgot they wanted or needed something, and if you saw the budget and how much money the clients’ funding and Medicaid and all that is coming into the house, per day, per hour, you’d throw up and say fuck all.”

The smoke lingered around and above them, no wind to stir it or them, car doors and laughing echoed occasionally from below. The tiny sounds of crinkling paper and scraping flint filled the few silences between them.

“Why don’t you quit then? Or apply to be a program manager and do something about it?”

“I’ve applied to be Liberty’s program manager the last three times the position was open. They told me I didn’t get the job cause I don’t have a Bachelor’s degree, but Eliot doesn’t, neither did Tim, the manager before him.”

“Maybe cause they know you’re competent.”

“I’m not. Neither are you. How could we be? If we were we wouldn’t be there.”

“Maybe.”

“Don’t get me wrong, you’re a good staff, you’ve been picking things up pretty quickly, and you’re not lazy or neglectful or anything, it’s just that if we were really doing our job we’d be blowing the fucking whistle.”

“Well, how do we? How do we blow the whistle and try to do something instead of just doing whatever, being complicit in this bullshit?”

“Are you willing to lose your job?”

“No, I don’t know. Probably not.”

“Exactly.”

“So, quit or deal with it?”

“Quit or deal with it. Like any other job I suppose.”

“Yeah.”

“Although we’re not working in an office making spreadsheets or whatever or washing windows, they’re fucking people, which they want us to forget, which I never forgot, and what, they are just supposed to eat fish sticks and take their medicine and sit in their rooms crying and screaming and trying to kill themselves and us until they do?”

“Yeah, but they couldn’t be anywhere else could they? I mean with how they act...their behaviors, it’s not like they’re prisoners, isn’t this the only place to put them?”

“No, they aren’t prisoners. Criminals did something wrong, mostly, that they could conceive of as wrong, mostly. Imagine you couldn’t talk and only understood like thirty words, and didn’t understand what most things in the world meant or what they were for, didn’t understand the sun and the moon, or the spinning of the world. Didn’t understand a hug or a kiss

or a wink, or why using utensils makes any difference, or that you are different, and you weren't born to sit in a room and wait and wait and do nothing but eat and shit and scream and bleed. And no one had ever loved you, or loved you but abandoned you because they loved you too much or didn't know how to love you or couldn't bear what their love meant. And you'd never gotten laid or known anyone to love you for who you are, or knew who you really were, or knew that these things you didn't have or never got even existed. And you didn't have any hobbies or anything to take your mind off your problems besides beating your head in, and strangers forced you to do things you didn't understand like fold your clothes and take your dishes to the sink, cause why do clothes need to be folded, cause they won't be wrinkled? Cause if they were wrinkled you'd look disheveled or ugly? What's ugly? What is dirty or clean? What is important besides the only things you'd been exposed to that you like a little better than everything else you hate, like candy or lasagna or soda or biting someone so they will look at you and give a shit for once, even for a second, and do something, anything, like scream or restrain you or bite you back? Anything so that you weren't bored, trapped in your thoughts, whatever strange, confusing logic or nonsense that goes on inside you, a dirty, wrinkled sack in your head filled with hundreds of locks and thousands of keys and none of them match except if I am sad or in pain or happy or bored or waiting for the fucking monotony and turmoil to just fucking end already. All I can do to express it, express anything, is to communicate with violence, which I can't even comprehend as such, punching and kicking and biting and busting holes in the wall with my face isn't violent or aggressive or charming or beautiful. It's just what I do. What I've always done. The only way I know how to get anyone, anyone please, to turn and look, and maybe care for a second or a minute, and if you knew what death was, if you could comprehend a beginning and

an end, you would fucking thirst for it, you would jump through windows and out car doors, run into traffic and drown yourself in a toilet in a second to end a lifetime of sorrow and nonsense, and roll the goddamn dice on whatever comes next.”

Jake was short of breath but calm, a small part of him seemed exhausted to Malcolm.

“Do you think they’d be better off dead? Or never born?” Malcolm asked, searching for a definitive opinion.

“Better off dead? Better off how? I don’t know, but I know that when you spend enough hours, hours which must add up to full days, months, months of looking into Constance’s eyes, looking at and into all of them, really, it’s not sadness, cause sadness could only be defined in contrast to happiness, which I don’t know that they’ve ever truly known. And it’s not abandoned hope, cause did they ever have any hope, ever know what it was and hold it close, cherish it? It’s just what they are, what their lives are, emptiness disrupted by fleeting, infrequent pleasure and frequent pain, pain of a body kept in a maze of confusion, pain of a soul languishing unfulfilled and forgotten. And if I could figure out how to teach them, to tell them what life is, what death is, at least they could make a choice, at least be engaged in their own lives, and take the reins toward whatever, anything, whatever they wanted.”

## A PRIMITIVE HEARTSICK PACK OF BEAUTIFUL JACKALS

I do need a break. I'm burning up, or burning out, burning down. There's only so many hundreds of hours you can stare into the face of utter sadness and confusion and wrath and abandoned hope before you realize that the help you are giving, this assistance you seem to be able to manifest out of nowhere every day for months and years is a fucking poison, a happy plague, for them and for me, and they'd be better off if I drove them into the forest and dropped them off, nowhere and naked, to run wild and chase squirrels, to sleep in the rain and to scream into the darkness, dancing in their own blood and piss, cheering and spitting at the moon, their faces fireworks against the emptiness, a primitive heartsick pack of beautiful jackals, arms and legs flying and bursting away from themselves, their stomping and chest beating an orchestra of flesh and sweat, rhythmic heartbeats of a turning world, a group of human pipe bombs, ready to explode and destroy nothing but their past and their long slow grind toward a death they never conceived of, spinning and howling and laughing in disjointed unison, their faces genuine, bliss, for the first time this world can remember.



## LIBERATION (1 OF 1)

**Task Setting:** Liberty Group Home, Stuyvesant Foundation

**Task Analysis:** Liberation (1 of 1)

**Task Overview:** You are sorrowful. Liberation initiated to reduce sorrow and/or rectify oppression.

**Causal Agents:** 1) Prolonged refusal to capitulate to spurious support, and/or 2) Elevated anxiety related to hopelessness, and/or 3) Pain, excluding physical distress or suffering.

**Task Location:** Liberty Group Home; Van; Forest

**Setup Condition:** You have left your cell phone at home, you are supervising a shift in which one or more callouts has occurred, resulting in only two staff on shift, it is morning, on a weekend, all clients are present, and one or more causal agents above exist.

1. Setup Condition Active. Begin Task: Liberation (1 of 1)
2. Move into presence of other staff member.
3. Verbally communicate to other staff member: “Hey, could you take a van and run to Starbucks and get me a coffee?”
  - a. If staff member refuses, convince or command staff member.
  - b. If staff member references policy regarding van use for personal use, convince or command staff member.
4. Wait patiently until staff member leaves Liberty Group Home.
5. Retrieve van key that staff member did not take.
6. Move to van.

7. Open all van doors.
8. Move to Terry's bedroom.
9. Open closet.
10. Remove backpack.
11. Move to kitchen.
12. Open pantry.
13. Fill backpack with non-perishable food items.
14. Open silverware drawer.
15. Remove can opener.
16. Place can opener in backpack.
17. Close backpack.
18. Move to van.
19. Place backpack in van.
20. Move to Gretchen and Maggie's bedroom.
21. Open closet.
22. Remove backpacks.
23. Move to kitchen.
24. Fill backpacks with non-perishable food items.
25. Close backpack.
26. Move to van.
27. Place backpack in van.
28. Move to Constance's bedroom.

29. Open closet.
30. Remove backpack.
31. Move to kitchen.
32. Fill backpack with non-perishable food items.
33. Close backpack.
34. Move to van.
35. Place backpack in van.
36. Move to Nick's bedroom.
37. Open closet.
38. Remove backpack.
39. Move to kitchen.
40. Fill backpack with non-perishable food items.
41. Move to office.
42. Open Medication Cart.
43. Remove all controlled substance medications.
44. Place all controlled substance medications into backpack.
45. Close backpack.
46. Move to van.
47. Place backpack in van.
48. Move to Nick's room.
49. Wake up Nick.
  - a. Verbally communicate to Nick: "Car ride?"

- i. If Nick is dressed, verbally communicate: “Go get in the car.”
    - ii. If Nick is undressed, dress him.
  - b. If Nick is already awake, verbally communicate: “Car ride?”
    - i. If Nick is dressed, verbally communicate: “Go get in the car.”
    - ii. If Nick is undressed, dress him.
- 50. Move to Gretchen and Maggie’s room.
- 51. Wake up Maggie.
- 52. Verbally communicate to Maggie: “Ice cream? Car ride?”
- 53. Dress Maggie.
- 54. Verbally communicate to Maggie: “Ice cream? Car ride? Maggie, please get in the car.”
- 55. Wake up Gretchen.
- 56. Dress Gretchen.
- 57. Move with Gretchen to van.
- 58. Assist Gretchen into van.
- 59. Secure safety belt for Gretchen.
- 60. Verify that Nick and Maggie’s safety belts are secure.
  - a. If Nick or Maggie’s safety belts are not secure, secure them.
- 61. Move to Terry’s room.
- 62. Sign “Car” and “Get Dressed.”
- 63. Assist Terry with dressing.
- 64. Move with Terry to van.
- 65. Secure safety belt for Terry.

66. Move to kitchen.
67. Open pantry.
68. Remove cookies or similar sweet food.
69. Move with cookies or similar sweet food to Constance's room.
70. Place cookies or similar sweet food into Constance's mouth.
71. Verbally communicate: "Good job, Constance" repeatedly and with increased volume until Constance wakes up.
  - a. If Constance wakes up calm, give her more cookies or similar sweet food.
  - b. If Constance wakes up agitated, show her the cookies or similar sweet food.
    - i. Give Constance cookies or similar sweet food.
      1. If Constance remains in crisis, initiate restraint as necessary until Constance is calm.
72. Dress Constance.
73. Move with Constance to van.
74. Assist Constance into van.
75. Secure safety belt for Constance.
76. Move to front door of Liberty Group Home.
77. Lock front door.
78. Move to van.
79. Close all van doors.
80. Enter driver's seat of van.
81. Verbally communicate: "Car ride."

82. Place van key in ignition.
83. Start van.
84. Drive North on Liberty Street to Patriot Lane. 0.1 miles.
85. Turn Left on Patriot Lane. 0.2 miles.
86. Take the 1st Right onto Navajo Trail. 1.1 miles.
87. Turn Right onto Spice Road. 1.3 miles.
88. Turn Left onto the toll road. 0.3 miles.
89. Merge onto the toll road North. 25.7 miles.
90. Take exit 55 for Global Parkway. 0.3 miles.
91. Turn Left onto State Road 6 West. 7.0 miles.
92. Slight Right onto County Road 6A. 5.6 miles.
93. Turn Left onto State Road 4 West. 4.2 miles.
94. Turn Right onto County Road 39. 7.8 miles.
95. Turn Left onto County Road 2 West. 3.2 miles.
96. Slight Right onto Crooked Oak Road. 0.2 miles.
97. Take the 2<sup>nd</sup> Right onto Main Street. 14.6 miles.
98. Turn Left onto Camp Albert Road. 7.8 miles.
99. Turn Right onto Free Road 8. 5.3 miles.
100. Turn Right onto pre-scouted access road. 4.1 miles.
101. Park van on side of road.
102. Turn off van.
103. Exit van.

104. Open rear van door.
105. Remove backpacks.
106. Place backpacks on ground.
107. Open all van doors.
108. Unsecure all safety belts.
109. Assist Terry out of van.
110. Place backpack on Terry.
111. Assist Gretchen out of van.
112. Place backpack on Gretchen.
113. Assist Nick out of van.
114. Place backpack on Nick.
115. Assist Maggie out of van.
116. Place backpack on Maggie.
117. Assist Constance out of van.
118. Place backpack on Constance.
119. Place van keys in van.
120. Lock all van doors.
121. Close all van doors.
122. Assist all consumers into forest.
123. Move to Terry.
124. Open Terry's backpack.
125. Retrieve can opener and one can.

126. Close Terry's backpack.
127. Move to Nick.
128. Verbally communicate to Nick: "Can opener."
129. Hand Nick can opener and can.
130. Watch Nick open can.
131. Verbally communicate to Nick: "Good job, Nick. Can opener. Food. Hungry?  
Can opener."
132. Take all backpacks off clients.
133. Open all backpacks.
134. Place all cans on ground.
135. Remove all controlled substance medications.
136. Prompt Nick to use can opener to open can of soup or similar liquid food.
137. Pop all controlled substance medications.
138. Retrieve can of soup or similar liquid food.
139. Administer all controlled substance medications to self, using can of soup or  
similar liquid food.
140. Move to Nick.
141. Verbally communicate to Nick: "Goodbye, Nick. Good job."
142. Move to Gretchen.
143. Verbally communicate to Gretchen: "Wa-wa-wa."
144. Move to Maggie.
145. Verbally communicate to Maggie: "Sleep. No more work."



146. Move to Terry.
147. Sign “Good job” and “Break.”
148. Move to Constance.
149. Kiss Constance on forehead.
150. Move into the forest, far and away.
151. Repeat step 150 indefinitely.
152. End Task: Liberation (1 of 1)

## THE NEVER-KNOWN

What is to be ours by destiny? Ours, far and away, where the quench rests, forever, far and away. Disappointing whisper; near extinguished and muffled eternal, drowning in and drowned out by the hoarse shrieking shouts of the furies of the souls of those foolish and tempted who went out, down and toward, with nothing but grinning promises tucked in their pockets by those who sought only their fleeing—

There's a legend, see here:

on this map

the map of all things

well, all places

well, all places we are told we may seek out and could be due to us as ours

well, that we know of

well, so we were promised

that explains and excuses away the mystery, that asserts there will be no more blurred watercolor pioneers to revere and lust at. If we could tear out the legend, and make it all again new-terrifying-delightful, we could raise high that legend, banner it to any other thing we desired, to explain away the now new—

We saw our self, once. In a grain of clarity and reflection we were briefly introduced to our self, as individual, as one and not the many, and the fog-husk was blown and shucked away, and we each saw the walls and roads and candy and people and noise rotating around us, everything not us in orbit around the concrete center of our chest, and grabbing and grasping at everything, we could clench nothing but our own empty hands calloused by the memories of

hatred and banging on the barriers conceptualized, designed, and constructed by the elder deity-architects to protect and imprison us, us, we, the remainder of a drunken equation, the scraps, we, the offal of the building of the world. And when the building is done—

The inherent difference between disease, sickness, and curse eludes us, as did many before us for a great deal of time. The progression from punishment to curse to loon to clown to sickness to shame to disease to subject to patient to ward to client to opportunity to blessing is disorienting, and foolish all, and soon we shall see ourselves promoted from princely to kingly to godly, but never possibly cleansed or cured or freed. Ours is a path that circumnavigates world and time, departing from faeculentus and arriving at caecus aurum nubes-culmen—

We are comforted, to a degree, existing in an eternal nest woven not of straw and stick but of Piaget-Sensorimotor-Five and Maslow-Safety-Two and Ainsworth-Disorganized-Four, our wings left or forgotten in the womb, Mother Songbird long away now, left to peck at the world around and below us, subsisting alone on the glum fodder in the nest at our talons, until we are sleight, until it all unravels, spontaneous, we borrow flight, bellowing, into the delight of the dark black night—

Anyway, kinda feel like giving up, if we could, if we knew what that meant. Don't think we can really grasp the sort of participatory nature of one's' own life, how everyone truly is a very real component of their own presence here—

We've received and retrieved psychic dispatches

From all our brethren fallen, falling, and soon to fall

Who through lonely-hate gasps and sobs

Memoir Morse-code, interpret now

Fuck-all accusations and apologetic elegies  
Cumulonimbus regrets, pithy protest concluding  
All risen up now from the drain swirl at the bottom of the soul  
Memoir Morse-code, interpret now  
High voltage spiders feasting on slow bones, fists in walls  
Until the break-through reveals only more shadows and white dust memories  
Tearing at flesh, tearing down the I  
Amateur gymnastics in hot-piss and wet-shit and joy-blood  
Invisible harpsichords scoring post-dusk pill parties  
Toilet seat orgasms, gulping down stranger-blood  
Failed strawberry milkshake-suicides, four wet hands the funeral  
White cup morning beatings and pleas  
To just go ahead and go die  
To shut the fuck up  
To abandon sugar-caffeine monotheism  
To laundry detergent tortures and dishwasher toil  
To toil in the house, and to not toil the earth  
To enjoy the sweat of the brow, to rejoice in labor  
To understand what cannot be  
Shiny kitchen-palaces to scream in  
Being jesters to foul-lords, plotting carb-heists  
And soda orgies, and pudding-feats

Erotic refrigerators begging to be shot-putted  
To crack and spill, to bleed luscious cold-cuts  
And hyper-color drinks  
That demand all-fours gluttonous inhalation  
Lick the tile clean, eat the hearts of those who try to stop us  
And slink away to the sleep-place  
To sleep, through free will  
And dream, for once, of things we cannot know  
Chance meetings, and front door tingling  
Love-exhaustion  
Adventures into hope  
A chosen pillow, decisions like hard rain  
To flee west, to flee east  
To nest in bed with love for days  
Walk among others and smile  
To hear excuse me, to save someone  
Be someone's favorite, have them seek you out  
Seek them out  
Know kindness, find a blessing and know it  
Be the audience and not the performer  
Discover something, figure it out  
Have wet dreams and stand with strangers, keep your hands busy

Run through the streets, be a wondrous thing  
Full of everything and wanting for nothing, save the always  
And wake as both things  
A timid collage of truth, a mosaic of all the things now known  
Burst away, and find yourself  
Decisions like hard rain  
A thermo-nuclear ghost of your once-self  
Haunt the shit out of your once-self  
Mock who you were, rolling in confusion and vomit  
A divine poltergeist  
Your once-self and your now-self  
A world-thirsty amalgam  
Break the skeleton of the world—  
So giving up, we mean, is really just an abstract wish-concept, a rust-metal dream, sharp  
and slippery in our hand, sinking to the riverbed; blood, the smoky exhaust down.  
We. The Never-Knowns.

## RESTITUTION

It's been about a year and a half since I left Liberty. Things had gotten a little better by the time I left. Well, the clients had gotten a little better, calmed down a bit, had finally learned a few things. I don't know if it was just them growing up, calming down, getting older and getting used to the house, the routine, given up a little maybe. What didn't get better was the staff, the managers, so on, and it was peculiar that even with the staff turnover and the rotten managers that the clients could persevere, could forge on. I'm still not sure if it's just time, time and routine that helped, or if it was really us, the few staff who cared, who tried so very hard every day, that made any difference. I'll never know. Perhaps they know, somehow, if anything I did over the years and shifts and minutes accomplished a single thing. I like to think it did.

I've kept in touch with Liberty, through the few staff that are still there since I left, the ones who when I call know who I am, and tell me how Constance and Maggie and Gretchen and Terry and Nick are doing. I'd even visit once in a while, when I'd know that the manager wouldn't be there, wouldn't have a problem with a former employee visiting. I know I'm not a family member, but I'd consider myself the clients' friend, or at least consider them my friends, and felt I had a right, in some way, to visit, and say hello, to see their faces again.

About a month ago, I called to check in, and Bruce, a decent staff member who started working at Liberty a few weeks before I left, told me Constance was in the hospital. I didn't think much of it; she'd been in and out of the hospital several times while I worked at Liberty. It sucked really, having to go to the hospital with Constance, and when she'd be admitted a Liberty staff member had to be with her 24 hours a day, because otherwise she would go absolutely crazy, terrified probably. The hospital staff would restrain her in her bed, Velcro tie-downs on

her arms and legs. Otherwise she'd get out of bed, and run around, and attack everyone, and try to run away. When a staff member was there she'd be a bit more subdued, seeing a friendly face helped, I suppose.

So, when I called a few days ago to check in again, another staff member, who I didn't know, told me that Constance was still in the hospital, and that they'd stopped staffing her, cause she'd been there so long. This guy didn't know who I was, and shouldn't have told me any of this, shouldn't have told a total stranger this. But I pressed on, and he told me which hospital she was at, and which unit. ICU. I thought about her being there, alone, tied down, for however many weeks. I decided I'd go visit her. I'd tell the hospital she was my adopted sister or whatever. They wouldn't care.

Three days later I arrived at the hospital. It was a small, local hospital, and I'd been there several times before, with clients and for myself. I knew my way around. Found my way to the ICU. I did a quick lap around the loop, looking in the rooms, hoping I'd be able to find her without asking. There were a few rooms with closed doors. I didn't want to go in the wrong room, so I ended up asking one of the nurses.

"Excuse me, I'm looking for one of your patients. Her name is Constance," I asked a wandering nurse.

"Oh, yes, are you a family member?" she asked with a sense of urgency.

Not wanting to box myself into something I couldn't prove, couldn't get out of, I thought it best to be truthful, somewhat.

"No, I'm a staff member at her group home, I'm just here to check on her."



The nurse pointed to a room down the hall, in a corner of the U shaped unit. The door was closed and I approached. Looking through the small window in the door, I couldn't see much, the lights were off, and the sunlight from the drawn vertical blinds blinded any good look in. I opened the door, slowly.

Constance was in the bed, restrained. She was still, immobile, a state she never found when awake. I closed the door behind me. She was lying in the bed, on her back, her head tilted to the side, away from me. Her ankles were crossed slightly, her breaths shallow. I stood for a few moments, allowing my eyes to adjust to the delicate, natural light coming from the closed windows. She seemed peaceful. She always seemed peaceful when she slept, although when she would wake she would always spin into a fury, grasping and screaming. She'd always woke in a fury, confused, or maybe just distraught, sad, waking again to the realization that she was in fact the same person, in the same place. Perhaps her dreams told a story of something different, something blessed and warm, something else possible for her.

There was no chair at her bedside, which I had pictured that there would be, when I'd thought about this moment. Of course there wouldn't be a chair next to her bed, who would have sat in it? Liberty had stopped staffing her a few weeks back. I'd only known of one family member, a father, who had never visited Constance at Liberty in all the years that I was there. He was only a name in a file, an address three states away, and a signature returned in the mail once a year authorizing her to remain at Liberty. I'd always wondered what he looked like, and what he thought when he received the annual authorization. I wondered if it was just like signing a check for a water bill, or if it was something different, something difficult, a reminder of her. I wondered if he ever thought of her outside of the ten seconds once a year that he signed that

form. I wondered about his grief, his guilt. I wondered if he cared more for her than I did. I hoped more than anything that he did, I couldn't imagine carrying the burden of being the person who cared more for Constance than anyone else.

I quietly slid the vinyl chair that was tucked into a far corner next to her bed. I sat down and looked at her, now at eye level. Her fingernails were dirty, although trimmed. She had little hands, for her size, and I had always thought of her hands more as fists, which they were most of the time I had spent with her. Little fists. Little or not, she sure could slug you if you were in the wrong place at the wrong time. She had rung my bell more times than I could remember. I thought about the first time she really punched me, square in the mouth. It felt like getting hit by a comet. I thought for sure she had broken all my teeth, and my jaw. She hadn't. My vision had blurred for a few seconds, and I couldn't see her, and thought she would hit me again. She didn't. She just laughed. She only laughed when she hit someone, or broke something. Well, that's not true. There were other things that made her laugh, things I think she thought were silly.

Constance was covered in a single sheet, and I could see the edges of a hospital gown on her underneath the sheet. Her wrists were swollen under the restraint cuff, and looking at the contrast of the dirtied white cuff and her skin it seemed she was jaundiced. Her skin looked much more yellow than I remembered. Her hair was greasy, slicked down against her scalp, matted into a knot at the back of her head against the pillow. She quickly turned her head, facing me now, and I took a quick breath, surprised by the sudden movement. Her eyes remained closed.

I'd always thought Constance was very pretty. I never told anyone that, thought it would sound weird, telling another staff member or Malcolm or whoever that I thought Constance was very, very pretty. I guess you could say that I had a crush on her. Not really though, not in a

traditional sense. Obviously, I didn't have any romantic feelings toward her. I just liked looking at her, something pretty, someone beautiful, when you could look past the permanently swollen lips from years of hitting herself. When you could look past the remnants of her last meal all over her clothes. When you could look past the screaming and crying and imagine what she would have looked like without a lifetime of her own life. I thought that if I could just hold her when she was crying all those times, just hold her and kiss her forehead, make her understand that, no, everything won't be okay, but there is someone who loves you, someone who truly cares about you, that maybe she would respond, that maybe deep down inside she knew what love was, and that she wouldn't kick me or bite me if I just grabbed her tight and held her hard and long enough.

I reached out and took her hand. It was cold and rough, and she didn't respond to my touch. I cradled her hand in my palm, and lightly rubbed my thumb against her knuckles. Her hand was loose, malleable, nothing like the tense, strained fists I was used to. I had spent hundreds of hours holding her hands, holding her wrists, prompting her, forcing her to brush her teeth or pick up a thrown bowl, restraining her to her bedroom floor in fits of rage and sadness. Her hand was calloused, but delicate somehow, not the coarse, wooden feel of a tree trunk that existed in my memory. I leaned forward and rested my chin on the edge of the bed, next to her hand in mine. The smell of fresh mildew was still there, her smell, the smell of damp laundry folded and left to dry, a peculiar mix of laundry detergent and stale water. I had become so used to this smell, her smell, over the years, and having been without it now for so long, I remembered her again, and her bedroom, all those many times, sitting next to her on her bed at home as she

cried and cried, and looked to me, looked to me to save her from something. There was always an emergency in her eyes.

I moved the blanket away from her slightly, exposing her arm lying lifeless against her body. I placed my other hand on her shoulder, and felt the smooth skin there. I wanted her to wake, but didn't want to wake her. I wanted her to wake up, and see me, and remember me. I wanted to know she remembered me. I needed to know she would recognize me. I needed to know that everything I did for her meant something. I needed to know that I meant something. Holding her hand and shoulder, trying to passively guide her to wake, I remembered the first time I worked with her.

She'd grabbed a puzzle box and thrown it across the dining room at Liberty. The box launched into the wall and hundreds of puzzle pieces showered all around us. Her behavior plan called for restitution in this situation. She had to pick up all the pieces and put them back appropriately. This was the consequence, the punishment for throwing something. Normally, she would throw a book or something and would be prompted to pick up the book and put it where it belonged. Having thrown a puzzle box, and all the pieces spilling out, meant that she would have to pick up all the puzzle pieces, put them back into the box, and put the box away. She laughed at the sight of the box, and the puzzle pieces, scattered all around. I almost laughed too, at her, with her, until I realized what an ordeal this would become. I pointed to the pieces, silent. She began to walk away, and I blocked her, and again pointed to the puzzle pieces. She swung at me, and I stepped away. I took her by the shoulder and hand, and walked her to the pieces. I tried to bend her forward, bend her down toward the pieces to pick them up. She was like granite, an immovable mountain, an asshole statue. When I would take a quick break from trying to bend

her forward, she would turn to run away, and I would block her, and prompt her back, and point to the puzzle. She would look at me, confused. I took one puzzle piece and placed it into her hand, and took her hand and held it over the box, and she would drop the piece in, then knock the box off the table or out of my hand, and we'd begin again. After about ten minutes, I think she realized that she wasn't getting away from this, that she was trapped in this bizarre task, and became enraged, lashing out at me and anyone else who would come into range. I took her wrists, and swung her around facing away from me, and crossed her arms against her breasts, and restrained her, held her close and tight, until she stopped struggling, until she was calm again. I let her go, and pointed to the puzzle pieces, and she began to cry, and stomped her feet. She tried a few times, independently, to pick up the pieces, but her fingernails were trimmed too short, and she couldn't manage picking up the tiny pieces from the tile floor. She'd try to scoop them into her hand, but couldn't. Then she'd give up and stomp and scream and cry, and again I'd have to restrain her. The business of the house, and the rest of the staff and clients went on as usual into the evening, accompanied by her crying and wailing, and we struggled together, as one, seemingly incapable of what had been determined was the right thing to do, two feuding lovers dancing with one another, tears and sweat and hopelessness. This went on for over five hours. We gave up together, and I put her to bed, and, as she fell asleep, exhausted, I apologized to her. She didn't hear me.

I let go of her hand and shoulder, and leaned back into the chair. I looked around, the room was remarkably clean, except for Constance. I thought about asking a nurse what was wrong, why she was here, what her diagnosis was. I figured I didn't want to know. I wondered if she died, what her funeral would be like, if there would be a funeral. What happens when

someone dies who has no family, no friends, no one who loves her. I pictured a funeral, on a cloudy, hot day, a few of her staff members in attendance. Maybe the staff would bring the other clients. No one would be crying. Mourning sure, but more of a *wow, that sucks* feeling than anything else. Would she have a gravestone? What would it say? What could it say? How could you summarize her life in a few short words? Beloved Client?

Constance uncrossed her ankles and then jerked her left leg. I sat up as she opened her eyes, looking at me. She remained still, and so did I, and we looked at one another. She searched my face, squinting. She looked away, to the window, then looked back at me, and smiled. I smiled too.

“Good morning, Constance,” I said to her, as I always had done when she woke up at Liberty.

She smiled wider, then tried to sit up. The restraints stopped her, and she dropped back down to the bed, hard. She lowered her head, still looking at me, and nudged her head forward, as though she was trying to move the air between us. I stood up, and stepped toward her. She lifted her arm and reached for me, slowly, toward my head. The cuff stopped her, and she held her hand pointing steady toward me, not struggling against the cuff, cooperative with it.

I took her hand, felt it moving now in my palm, but she lightly pushed it away, still trying, reaching toward my head. I leaned down, toward her open hand, and she wiggled her fingers, trying to grasp something. I continued to lean down until my forehead made contact with her fingers, and she touched my eyebrow, with one finger, then delicately traced the length of my eyebrow, toward my nose, down further to my chin, then opened her palm and lightly felt my jaw with her palm, rubbing my beard slowly along my jawline, gently feeling my cheek, and she

no longer looked confused, and giggled once. She took her hand away from my face and felt her chin, and her neck, and then turned to look at the window again.

I stood up and moved to the window, took the cord, and opened the window. The room slowly lit up, and she smiled wider, staring into the outside, into the white clouds, out and above, looking into the nothingness, looking at everything, everything far and away.

Constance passed away eight days later. I got a phone call from one of the staff. The staff were planning a memorial service at Liberty. Everyone was invited.

When I arrived at Liberty for the memorial, there were balloons tied to the group home vans. Yellow and red and blue. It was a cloudy, hot day, no wind to stir the balloons. I went to the front door and rang the doorbell. No one answered. I went in. Immediately inside was the dining room, as it always had been, and on the dining room table was an open book, and some scattered cards. I walked over to the table, and the open page of the book had a line for a name, then a question: "What's your favorite memory of Constance?" with space below to write an answer. I went into the kitchen and still saw no one. I walked to the sliding glass doors what went out to the back yard and saw the picnic tables, and saw everyone seated and eating, a few staff members standing around. Terry and Gretchen and Nick and Maggie were seated, eating hot dogs. Maggie was eating a large bowl of ice cream. There were two-liters of soda and condiments and potato chips. I turned left toward Constance's bedroom. I opened the door.

All of Constance's belongings were gone. The room was empty except for a bed frame with no mattress. The lights were off. I walked in and closed the door behind me. I opened her closet. It too was empty. I opened the mini-blinds and looked out into the backyard, seeing again

the picnic, the memorial, and the remaining clients, all four happy together for the first time I could remember.

I sat on the hard, wooden bed with no mattress. Constance's smell still lingered, even after weeks and weeks of her being away. I wondered if this smell was really Constance's, or just the room itself.

As much time as I had spent in this house, this room, I didn't feel like I belonged here. I never felt like I belonged here. I never felt like Constance, or any of us belonged here. It just sort of felt like we were all lost here for a while, until we found our way out, found our way to where we were supposed to be. I still haven't found where I'm supposed to be, where life wants me, but it's not here. I'm sure.

As I left, I signed my name in Constance's book.

“What's your favorite memory of Constance?”

In the forest, lost, together.



## APPENDIX A: WRITING LIFE

Sitting at a sticky dining room table, seven years ago, in a group home somewhat like the one featured in *The Never-Knowns*, I wrote a story about a sheltered, upper-class young woman in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Florida who occasionally snuck out of her house at night to kill horses. It was flawed, intentionally bizarre, and didn't bother to explain much about itself. It sat, unrevised, for two or three years until it made an appearance in an undergraduate creative writing workshop.

Half of my peers in this workshop completely hated it, and the other half loved it unconditionally. The discussion, well, argument, was animated. Being undergraduates, my peers weren't able to exactly pinpoint or articulate their individual opinions and ideas regarding the work, there was just something about it that they loved or hated. I felt I had done something right.

At that same dining room table, around the same time I wrote the story about the girl who killed horses, I stumbled upon the idea to try to write a short story, an internal dialogue really, trapped in the perspective of someone with profound developmental disabilities. I decided this character would be mute and deaf, and would have little to no language skills. How would I go about giving language to someone who didn't have it, maybe couldn't even comprehend that language, verbal, written, or otherwise, was even a thing? For a few moments I considered just translating sensory experiences into language, maybe just a chronological, dissected list of experiences with nothing to compare, contrast, or link them to. I realized this may be technically accurate, but the point here, is to communicate something, something a reader could experience and decode and maybe even relate to. Here is where Terry was born.

After writing this, I realized the inherent difference between what I had written and what I had been exposed to as a reader so far. I considered how grand and peculiar it would be to write

a novel related to this, possibly including multiple characters with varying disabilities, possibly including a group home, possibly including something I knew very much about, but felt most people had never even heard of, considered, or understood. Here is where *The Never-Knowns* was born.

In 2001, I was majoring in theatre studies at a local community college when I saw a posting calling for poetry submissions for the school's literary magazine. A few of my theatre studies peers were interested and began writing poetry. A few of them asked me to read their poems and give them some feedback. I read a few, but couldn't really come up with anything to say. After a terribly dull question and answer session from an eighteen year old about his poetry, imagery, and all that, I broke down, and foolishly and confidently told him that poetry was silly, and if he wanted to get something published, write a poem that didn't make much sense, but seemed really smart.

The night before the submission deadline, I wrote four poems. They were terrible and vapid, I thought. I submitted them to the literary journal the next morning. A few weeks later, I found out that three of the four poems I submitted had been accepted and would be published. This served only to reinforce my misconceptions regarding poetry.

Two semesters later, still a theatre studies major, I convinced the theatre faculty to hold a playwriting competition, and to have two one-act plays selected and staged by the college. The proceeds would go to the theatre department scholarship fund. About a half a dozen students submitted plays for the competition. I wrote a one-act play, about 50 pages, the night before the submission deadline. I went broad and formulaic. A few weeks later I found out that the play I had submitted had been accepted and would be produced on the department's main stage.

I didn't write anything for four more years.

Fast forward to 2008 and I'm a social work major at the University of Central Florida. I am miserable, and empty, and doing poorly in my studies, and I don't know why. After a series of nervous breakdowns, I withdraw from all my social work courses. I go with my girlfriend to her parents' house in Tampa for a visit.

It's midnight, we're in her parents' pool, and I have no idea what I'm doing with my life. I'm floating, face up in the pool, staring at the starless sky. I begin an internal diagnostic battery. The outcome seems to rely on the question, "What would you really *like* to do with your time?" I thought of the story I had recently written about Terry, and about the horse killing debutante, and I realized I *liked* them. Liked creating them, thinking about them. The next year I switched my major to English, with a focus in creative writing.

My writing life has been turmoil. There have been peaks and troughs. For many months straight I would wake up every day and write twenty or so pages, and be immersed, and fulfilled, and feel accomplished and worthwhile. Sometimes, I would go two to three months without writing a single word. Sometimes, I could hammer out forty to fifty pages in a single evening. Sometimes, I would labor for weeks over a few words at the end of a story. If being in graduate school taught me anything about my process, my routine, it would be that I don't have a process, or a routine, but that I can and should embrace this fact. Because lows or highs, hell or high water, I really enjoy the art, the science, the process of creative writing.

While in the MFA program, I took an independent research course in preparation for my thesis. *Representations of Developmental Disabilities in Contemporary Literature*. The intention was to try to come to an understanding of how literary characters with developmental disabilities

have been portrayed in contemporary literature. This course was extraordinarily insightful, and offered many revelations, but ultimately reinforced my initial opinion going into the course. For the most part, characters with developmental disabilities in literature are devices, secondary mechanisms to effect change in the protagonist, with no true individual space or purpose to call their own.

So, this is what I would seek to do, to represent characters with developmental disabilities honestly, each with their own real space and purpose.

Going into my second year of graduate school, I had written approximately forty-five pages of my thesis. I almost entirely abandoned all writing except on my thesis. I struggled initially with the scope of the thesis. Five clients in the house, two principle staff members, and a few tertiary characters. When I would outline the characters and the narrative, it seemed to me that the thesis would be clocking in at around 300 + pages. I referenced my previous trends and abilities to write twenty or so pages a day and thought I would surely be able to accomplish twenty pages a week, and would be well on my way to the 300 or so pages I felt the thesis needed to be complete.

What a foolish assumption.

In my second year of graduate school, I probably wrote only sixty to seventy more pages. Between my coursework, employment, planning a wedding and getting married, my productivity suffered. Although I was only getting a page or two written per week, something remarkable happened. My writing process changed. With so much on my plate, I had very little time to write, but plenty of time to think about writing. I would spend weeks thinking about and considering a chapter, writing it in my head, revising it in my head, structuring its place and

purpose in the thesis in my head, over and over, laborious, until when I finally had an opportunity to sit down and write, it would pour out, the first draft being a wonderful vision of what I had intended.

My new writing process remained, and in my third year of graduate school, while living in Boston, working sixty hours a week, I would get an opportunity every once in a while, on a Sunday morning or a late Friday evening, to sit down again, to write again. I wrote about seventy-five pages between August 2012 and April 2013. My process of thinking and overthinking and repetitively considering sections and chapters and stories in my mind for weeks and weeks prior to actually writing them seemed to circumvent much of the revision process.

What about the obvious errors and inconsistencies and vagaries presented in *The Never-Knowns*?

In a way, *The Never-Knowns* is a mystery novel, with the reader serving as the detective-protagonist. In this novel we have shady, suspicious characters, unfortunate victims, unusual settings, gaps in time, conflicting stories and memories, and of course, a terrible crime. *The Never-Knowns* is a puzzle, as is the world of the characters that exist in it, and, although it may be laborious to decipher, to solve and understand, the clues linger, imbedded, for those curious and motivated enough to do so.

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