

Innocent By Reason of Insanity

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PROLOGUE

The day was an ordinary day. It was picture perfect. Or so everyone thought. However, Jonathan Stride was no ordinary man.

CHAPTER I
“In the beginning”

He grew up a loner. His mother and father were abusive alcoholics who constantly ridiculed every little thing he did. Sometimes the ridicule came to a point of a beating, to drive the obsession a little bit further. The obsession of total control of their child. Day by day his world kept closing in on him. He became more and more isolated. Isolated in a sense that he wouldn't let anyone get emotionally close to him. This went on for many years. Even after the fiery death of his parents in a head on car crash at age 9. The damage was already done. The child was molded into a very vindictive and devious human being who wasn't at all quite there or was he?

This child was bounced back and forth from orphanage to orphanage. Each institution citing that they were unable to control this disturbed child. No one wanted to foster this child; no one wanted to give this child the love he deserved. The love he never got to know. The orphanages tried their best to convince anxious foster parents of the good nature of this child. They would take pictures but the pure evilness of this child's eyes would overshadow the effectiveness of this attempt. They would have him write about himself but this had disastrous results in itself. Everything they tried met with disastrous results.

However, changes started taking place in young Jonathan Stride. And it was to the better. It was subtle changes at first. A nice word here and there. Then at age 17 it seemed that this child, who had grown up with evilness at his side, had somehow managed to defeat this evil and change into a very gentle man. A man who some started admiring for his total turnaround from evilness to goodness. He was finally adopted by some fine middle class folks and managed to graduate High School at age 18. He had been tutored by the orphanages and only lost a year in his education. His new foster

parents weren't rich but were well off and able to send their new foster child to college to be a doctor, which is what he always wanted to be since he was a little child.

"Jonathan, are you up?", yells his foster mother from downstairs. "Yes, Rebecca, I'm up.", responds Jonathan as he slowly crawls out of bed. "Jonathan, you need to hurry up. It's 8:10 already and school starts at 9:00. You don't want to be late on your first day in college.", says Rebecca. "Yes, mam.", Jonathan responds, still a tad bit sleepy, as he searches for something to wear. After putting the last piece of clothing on he goes to the bathroom to comb his hair and to brush his teeth. Downstairs Rebecca waits patiently for Jonathan since she's driving him to college. "Jonathan, are you all right? We need to get going, its 8:40 already.", a worried Rebecca asks. "I'm coming.", Jonathan says as he comes out of the bathroom. "I was just brushing my teeth.", he remarks as he walks down the stairs. "All right, let's just go. We're going to be late!", Rebecca responds as she walks to the door with Jonathan in pace right behind her. They both get into the car and Rebecca turns the car on and shifts into gear when Jonathan says in a loud worried tone, "Put your seat belt on!!"

"Jonathan!" Rebecca exclaims as she looks over at him in total astonishment. And to her amazement he looked back at her in the same bewilderment. "Sorry, I don't know what came over me." Jonathan responds as he shakes his head. Rebecca not sure of what to say simply says, "O.K.", as she slowly takes her foot off the brake. Neither one says a word to the other all the way to the college. As Rebecca pulls the Lincoln Continental up to the main doors of this college, Jonathan pauses as if he wanted to say something, then shrugs it off and gets out of the car. Rebecca obviously upset drives off slowly. Jonathan walks up to the doors and enters not once looking back.

In class Jonathan starts loosening up from his already tense morning. He gets acquainted to his classmates and then to his teachers in all his classes. All in all his first day at college was quite interesting. And as the time approached to go home he started getting nervous, not knowing what to say to Rebecca. As he leaves the main doors of the college he sees Rebecca's car pull up.

"Johnny!" an unfamiliar voice says from the car. "Who's that?" Jonathan inquires as he maneuvers to get a better view of the driver. "Jonathan, it's me Rebecca!" she responds as Jonathan stares in bewilderment and then realizes who it is. "Who else is in the car with you, Rebecca?" Jonathan inquires. "No one! Are you all right Jonathan?" Rebecca asks looking a little bit confused. "Are you sure? I could have sworn I heard another voice coming from your car, calling me Johnny." Jonathan responds as he walks toward the car looking for another individual. "No, Jonathan, I'm quite sure there is no one what-so-ever in this car." Rebecca insists feeling very concerned at this point. "And anyway I have always called you Jonathan. I've never called you, Johnny. Even though I wish you would call me Mom sometimes, I don't get upset when you call me Rebecca cause that's my name. But I would never call you anything but by your actual name, Jonathan." Rebecca says in a calm and collective manner. "O.K., Rebecca. Don't worry about it. I've probably just been stressed out today and I'm just hearing things. After all it's been a long day." Jonathan says as he opens the car door and sits down. Rebecca stares at him for a couple more seconds as if she wanted to tell him something else. Jonathan glances over; she puts the car in gear and drives off not saying a word.

Weeks go by and everything seems to be going fine. Jonathan is learning interesting things in college. Both in and out of the classroom. He's got a part time job to help pay for his books and other college things. It seems almost normal. No more hearing things. No more arguments at home with his stepparents. Yes, everything indeed seems to be going normal. Almost.

"Jonathan!" exclaims Rebecca who is in a state of panic while she dangles from the balcony of an apartment complex 5 stories up. "Pull me up!" Rebecca calls out to Jonathan. Her grip slowly slipping. "Jonathan, I can't hold on. Help Me!!!" Jonathan stands there just staring at her. Then in a calm manner says, "You didn't say the magic word." Rebecca cries out, "What magic word?" "You know the magic word." Jonathan says in a still calm manner. "OK, OK, OK. Please...Is that it! Now pull me up!" Jonathan moves up to where her hands are at as if he was going to pull her up then says, "Sorry, that's not it." Then he pushes her hands loose from the railing. The moment she starts falling he says in a loud tone, "It was Pretty Please!" he pauses for just a second then adds, "OOPS, I'm sorry. That was two words." He slowly turns around and walks away from the edge as Rebecca screams all the way down. Her body smashing the top of a car parked below.

"Front desk." the apartments office clerk says as he answers the phone. "This is apartment 5C. My mother has just fallen from the balcony. Call 911. And hurry!" Jonathan says in an upset manner. The clerk frantically calls 911. And advises them of the situation. As he hangs up a couple bystanders come running in screaming, "Someone has fell from one of the apartments. Call 911!" The clerk comes out of his office and says, "It's already been taken care of. They are on the way."

The scene is not a pretty one. A crowd of onlookers start gathering as the paramedics and police arrive. The paramedics check for any type of life in the broken body of Rebecca. None exist and they decide that there is no way to revive this woman. The position of the body and the visual signs of blood trickling out of her mouth was enough for them to determine that nothing could be done for this woman. She was dead. The paramedics proceeded to take her off of the car and put her in a body bag. She was then placed in the ambulance and taken to the hospital, where she would be pronounced dead by a doctor.

Meanwhile, as this was going on outside, there was a different scene inside. A couple police officers start taken reports from the two bystanders and the apartment clerk who was still a tad bit shaken up. Two other police officers enter the building heading to where the incident occurred.

“Police!” one of the officers announces as his partner knocks on the door. “The doors unlocked. Come in.”, Jonathan responds. The police enter cautiously not knowing what to expect. They spot Jonathan sitting on the bed with his head in his hand. “Is she?” a low sobbing murmur comes from Jonathan still with his head in his hand. “Yes, I believe so.” one of the officers respond. “Oh, God!” Jonathan sighs as he stands up, looking at the ceiling. As though almost ready to break down crying, Jonathan slowly turns and walks toward the balcony. As he leans on the railing, he just looks straight ahead. As though he’s in a different world. “Sir, I’m Officer DeBrey and my partner over there is Officer Dixon. We need to ask you a few questions.” Officer DeBrey says as he stands next to Jonathan on the Balcony. His partner looking around the room, checking to see any signs of a struggle or something other than a simple accident. “Go

ahead Officer, ask me what you will.” Jonathan says still looking straight ahead. A tear slowly sliding down his face. “What was the name of the woman who fell?” Officer DeBrey asks. “She was my foster mother, Rebecca Stride.” Jonathan responds as he turns around and walks back to the bed and sits down. Officer DeBrey walks over and continues his questioning. “And your name is?” Officer DeBrey asks. “My name is Jonathan Stride,” responds Jonathan. “What exactly happened here, sir?” Officer DeBrey asks. “I don’t know exactly. I was showing Rebecca my new apartment I was getting. And I went to the bathroom while she was on the balcony. She was sitting on the railing and when I came out of the bathroom I heard her screaming. And then I saw her hanging onto the railing of the balcony. I...I ran over there but it was too late.” Jonathan breaks down sobbing. Officer DeBrey hands Jonathan a handkerchief. “I know this must be difficult on you but do you remember anything else?” a hesitant Officer DeBrey asks. “No, sir.” Jonathan manages to get out of his trembling mouth. At that moment Jonathan’s foster father enters the apartment and asks Officer Dixon in the living room where his son is at. Officer Dixon directs him to the bedroom. “Jonathan.” Mr. Stride calls out in a concerned voice. “Tom.” responds Jonathan as he stands up and walks over to the bedroom door where his foster father greets him. Jonathan is taken aback when he sees his foster father who appears to have aged thirty years since this morning. “I...I seen your mother. What in God's name happened, Jonathan?” a very upset and distraught Thomas Stride asks. “I don’t know.” Jonathan says in an almost inaudible tone. “What do you mean you don’t...” at that moment Thomas Stride is interrupted by Officer DeBrey. “Excuse me, sir. I’m Officer DeBrey. Maybe I can shed some light on this situation.” Officer DeBrey says as he approaches the two of them. “Well, I sure the hell hope so. Somebody better tell me what happened here.” Thomas Stride says in a quite upset manner. “Sir, you need to calm down. You’re gonna...”

Officer DeBrey cut off by Thomas Stride. “Calm down! My wife’s on the way to the morgue and you’re telling me to calm down! How dare you tell me to calm down! Your wife isn’t dead!!!” a very angry Thomas Stride responds. “Sir, for one thing my wife is dead and if you don’t calm down you’re going to cause yourself to have a heart attack,” responds Officer DeBrey in a calm manner. “Tom, he’s right.” a concerned Jonathan says. Thomas Stride looks around for a minute, trying to calm down. “All right, lay it on me.” Thomas Stride says not looking at either one. Officer DeBrey tells him what appears to have happened. Thomas Stride begins to weep.

Later that evening Jonathan and Thomas Stride arrive home from the police station where they had been taken to fill out some documents and sign. Both extremely tired from the long, nightmarish day. Neither one saying a word to the other. Could they just go into their rooms and go to sleep? Even though it would seem that they couldn’t go to sleep because of what happened that day, nature takes over their exhausted bodies and they are out like a light.

In the days that follow, no charges are ever brought against poor Jonathan Stride. The police rule the incident as an accident. Case closed. During the police investigation Jonathan goes to Rebecca’s closed-casket funeral. Family members from all over come to pay their respects and to give their support to poor, poor Jonathan Stride. A couple weeks later Jonathan goes back to college to continue his education. Citing, “That’s what Rebecca would want.” However, Thomas Stride isn’t doing as well as Jonathan. He decides to stay in the house that him and his loving wife lived in but it begins eating at him. Her loving smile and gentle touch are no more. His work begins to suffer. It would seem he was heading toward a nervous breakdown. Heaven knows his father had

a nervous breakdown. And his father before him was in a mental institution. Would this be his fate too?

“Mr. Stride! Mr. Stride!” Thomas Stride’s secretary walks into his office sounding worried. “Sir, I’ve been calling you on the intercom. Did you not hear me?” his secretary says as Thomas Stride just stares out of his office window not saying a word in response. His secretary approaches. “Are you all right, sir?” she still gets no response but has now positioned herself to where she can see tears running down his face. “Tom, I know that you’re still upset about your wife’s death but it’s been 5 months now and if you don’t snap out of it soon you’re going to have a nervous breakdown.” Thomas stride responds only with silence to his secretary’s attempt to help him with some good advice. She stares at him for a couple more seconds and then starts to walk out of the office to leave him alone. She stops at the doorway and turns around. “Tom, if you can’t do this for yourself, then do it for your son.” his Secretary says as she grabs the doorknob and closes the door. Thomas Stride turns around and looks out the window, a tear runs down his face. And as he stands there he slowly reaches in his coat pocket and pulls out a gun. In one smooth movement he raises the gun to his head and mumbles, “I love you, Elizabeth.” and pulls the trigger. A loud gunshot rings out. And Thomas Stride though still young in some respects lay dead on his office floor. No one around to come to his aid. He is finally at rest.

The next morning it is quite a normal morning except for the fog. People all around town are on the roads heading to work. And so it is so with one Secretary that is unaware of the tragedy that will come before her shortly. She stops and gets her morning coffee at the local cafe on the corner. She parks her car. It’s just a normal day. As she

unlocks the door she gets a sense that something isn't quite right. She had noticed that Thomas Stride's car was still parked outside, in what she believed was the same place. But why was the door locked? Then it hit her. He must not have left last night. As she places her cup of coffee on her desk, she realizes, he probably just fell asleep at his desk. Which wouldn't be the first time that had happened. A smile crosses her face as she looks up from her desk and approaches his office. She knocks on the door, "Mr. Stride are you in there." she says as she enters his office. "Tom." she calmly says though she cannot see him. "I bet you have fallen asleep on the floor, haven't you?" she half jokingly says as she approaches and walks around the desk. All you hear next is the most piercing scream followed by "Oh, my God, no!" She quickly turns around and picks up the phone though she knows there is no chance for him as he lies there in a pool of blood. "911." the 911 operator answers. "I need an ambulance quick at 253 Maple Street. Hurry!" the Secretary frantically says. Calmly the 911 operator responds, "Mam, what is the status of the emergency." A still audibly shook up Secretary responds, "My boss, Thomas Stride, has shot himself in the head." The 911 operator pauses for a brief moment. "Mam, calm down. Is he still breathing?" the 911 operator asks. "I don't know, I mean I don't think so, there's so much blood." at this point she is in tears. "Mam, I have already dispatched a unit. Stay on the line with me 'till they arrive." the 911 operator says still in a calm manner. "What should I do? What could I have done?" the Secretary starts mumbling. "Mam, don't blame yourself. Just let the paramedics handle it when they get there. He might still..." she's cut off in mid-sentence. "I think they're here." the Secretary shouts out over the phone. "I'm going now to direct them here. Bye." the Secretary hangs up and runs out the office and out of her office, out into the hallway. She's greeted by paramedics who quickly respond to her directions of where her boss man is lying. The paramedics see upon approaching the body that there is

no chance of survival for this man. His apparent suicide attempt was successful. A bullet hole clearly visible on his right temple and a fairly good deal of blood on the floor was too much for the secretary to handle so she stood back while the paramedics evaluated the situation. After a few preliminary procedures, one of the paramedics looks up at the secretary sadly and responds, “Sorry mam, but there’s nothing else we can do for him. He’s been dead too long.”

The police arrive and quickly enter the scene. One of them starts questioning the secretary while the other investigates the scene. “Mam, I’m Officer DeBrey. Are you all right to answer a few questions?” Officer DeBrey asks. A sobbing secretary just nods her head yes. Officer DeBrey then gently takes her by the arm and says, “Mam, um, I think you need to sit down.” as he leads her to the couch that’s outside of the office. She sits down, still sobbing. “Here” Officer DeBrey hands her a handkerchief. “Thank you”, she responds. “I know this is kind of hard but could you tell who the man is in the office and your association to him.” Officer DeBrey asks cautiously. Not trying to upset her anymore. “No, that’s okay.” she responds as she regains her composure, “I’m Helen McCormick and the man”, she takes a deep breath, “on the floor in there is my boss, Thomas Stride. I’m his secretary.” Then she starts crying again as she says, “Oh God, how could this happen.” The tears are flowing steadily down her face. Officer DeBrey needing to ask a few questions pauses briefly until she slightly regains her composure. “Mam, I know this is hard but I need to, um, ask you a few more questions.” She nods her head yes, as if saying it’s okay. “Did he have financial problems or something else that drastically happened lately that would lead to this?” Officer DeBrey inquires not realizing at that moment that he had dealt with Thomas Stride when his wife died.

“No, nothing like that. Nothing financial that is. I thought he was all right last night when I left. I know he was a little upset. But I never thought...” she momentarily can’t speak. Trying to hold it in. Officer DeBrey briefly sits there silently, trying not to come off too insensitive as he continues his questioning. “What was he upset about?” he asks. She looks at him, “Well you see a few months ago his wife, Rebecca, died in a tragic accident. He’s never been the same since.” she wipes her nose with the handkerchief. Then as if a light bulb came on his head, Officer DeBrey realizes who the man was. “I remember now, his wife fell from his sons apartment balcony. Right?” he says to her. “Yea, that’s right. How did you know?” a surprised look comes across her face. “I was the Officer that was called to the scene, along with my partner in there, when his wife had that unfortunate accident.” explains Officer DeBrey. “I believe it was ruled an accidental death.” Officer DeBrey adds. “Yes, that’s right.” Helen McCormick responds. “However, I believe that he felt responsible for the accident.” she says. “How so?” Officer DeBrey inquires. “Well you see, she had asked him to go with her to see the apartment but he had to finish up what he was working on at his job and he just couldn’t take off at that moment. And well, that has haunted him ever since.” she adds, “You see he felt that had he went, she might still be alive.” Officer DeBrey looks down slightly shaking his head. “He didn’t know that. You just can’t go second-guessing yourself in life. You must move on,” says Officer DeBrey. “I agree with you and I told him this but it didn’t help any. The pain, I guess, was too great. He really loved her. I guess they’re finally together now.” she says as a single tear rolls down her face. At that point the body comes rolling out with the coroner. She turns her head. For she’s not able to watch his body go rolling by. She’s still somewhat overcome with grief. Then Officer DeBrey’s partner approaches along with the Homicide Detective. “Mac, I think we’ve gotten everything we need here. That is if you’re done?” Officer Dixon asks. “Yea, um,

I...I believe I got everything I need here.” he says as he clears his throat. Then he stands and turns to Mrs. McCormick. “Again I’d like to express my deepest sympathy for what has happened. And if there is anything I can do for you, here’s my card. Just call.” Officer DeBrey hands her his business card. “Thank you, your very kind.” she responds. He briefly stares as if to say something else, and then he gives a sympathetic grin and turns to walk out with his partner.

Meanwhile, Jonathan is enjoying his studies at college. Going about his normal routine. With not even a clue of what has just happened a few hours earlier. “Jonathan Stride report to the office. Jonathan Stride report to the office.” sounds over the intercom. He hears this as he’s walking out the door on his way to lunch.

As he approaches the office, he gets a sense of unrest and nervousness. And as he sees the police officer standing at the counter of the receptionist in the office. He wonders what could they possibly want with him. As he approaches the counter he interrupts the Officer who was carrying on small talk with the receptionist. “Excuse me. I’m Jonathan Stride. I was called to the office.” Jonathan says directly to the Receptionist. “Hey, how are you doing Jonathan?” the Officer says as Jonathan looks at him with an inquisitive look on his face. “Do I know you?” Jonathan responds. “Yes, my name is Officer DeBrey. Come walk with me son.” Officer DeBrey says as he heads out of the office into the hallway. “Am I suppose to know that name?” says Jonathan. “Well, yes, actually. I was the officer who first arrived on the scene of your mother’s accidental death.” Officer DeBrey says as they walk out the front doors. “That was my step-mother not my real mother.” Jonathan says as he stops, looking a little bit irritated. “Oh, yea, sorry.” Officer DeBrey says as he turns around, wondering why Jonathan was

being so specific. “That’s fine but what are you doing here now. I thought everything was straight with that accident. Or are you all trying to dig stuff up.” Jonathan says sarcastically. “No, that’s not it. Unless of course you didn’t tell us everything. But in any case that case is closed. I’m here for another reason.” Officer DeBrey says while being a little bit suspicious by Jonathan’s jumping to conclusions. Officer DeBrey pauses briefly. “Well, what is it? Or do I have to guess.” Jonathan says impatiently. “Jonathan, I’m afraid I’ve got some bad news. It seems last night around 10:00pm your stepfather committed suicide. I’m real sorry I had to bring this news to you.” Officer DeBrey says sincerely as he places his hand on Jonathan’s shoulder. “How!” a surprised Jonathan asks. “Well it seems that he put a 9mm hand gun to his temple and pulled the trigger. From the look of it he was probably dead before he hit the floor.” Officer DeBrey responds to Jonathan’s question. Jonathan acting stunned, sits down on the bench outside the front doors. As Jonathan sits there silently, Officer DeBrey sits down beside him. Neither one saying a word. “Do you need me to identify the body?” Jonathan manages to mumble. “No, we’ve already got a positive ID from his secretary.” Officer DeBrey says, looking somewhat worried at how this might affect young Jonathan Stride. With both stepparents deaths so close together, one can only wonder of the torment this young man must be going thru. Then all of a sudden. “Thank you, Officer DeBrey. I appreciate you coming over to tell me this.” Jonathan says as he stands up and turns toward Officer DeBrey who is still sitting down. “I’ve got to go now. I...I have got to get me something to eat. And then I’ll get the funeral arrangements together. See you later.” Jonathan concludes as he walks away from a slightly confused Officer DeBrey. For he did not expect this reaction from him. However, Officer DeBrey dismisses this and goes on with his own business.

It's a fairly big funeral with many family and friends attending. Thomas Stride was a very popular man who, as it appears, will be very much missed. Once again condolences are handed out to poor Jonathan Stride. For now he is alone again. Though a grown man now. Nonetheless, he's still alone. Many family members express their deep concerns. Wondering if he'll be able to overcome these obstacles that have come before him. And as a young Jonathan Stride assures them that there is nothing to worry about that just makes them worry more. But Jonathan manages to pull through fine in the next few months. And things slowly but surely start going back to normal. Well, for some that is.

CHAPTER II
“Beware”

“Oh, Rebecca, why did you have to leave me? Just why?” Thomas Stride says. Then a voice from out of nowhere says, “Just do it!” A reflection bounces off of the window; Thomas Stride is looking out of. It’s Jonathan. “Jonathan, is that you?” Thomas Stride asks, being somewhat bewildered. Again the voice says, “Just do it!” As he stands there with gun in hand, he slowly lifts it to his head. As though he was having second thoughts, he starts to lower the gun when the gun mysteriously fires.... Jonathan awakens from this terrifying nightmare. Beads of sweat roll down his body. This was a strange dream that seems to have deeply disturbed Jonathan. Then a sinister grin comes across his face as he lies back down, falling fast asleep.

Now it is several months down the road and Jonathan is graduating college. Ready to head off to Medical School where he will learn to be a surgeon. Upon his stepfathers death Jonathan was left a small amount of money from a life insurance policy Thomas Stride had taken out a couple months before his death. Though it wasn’t much, it was enough to put him through Medical School. He soon gets a part time job and an apartment. He did splurge a little though. Not like you couldn’t tell with a new convertible corvette. He always wanted one, so why not.

On his first day at Medical School, Jonathan meets a young aspiring student, like himself, that he takes quite an interest in. Both seem to hit it off well. And before long they are partners in class. Soon other things would follow that would change the course of Becky Cross’s life and Jonathan’s too.

“Hey, Jonathan. How was your weekend?”, asks a smiling Becky Cross. “Oh, just fine Becky. How was yours?”, Jonathan says as he sits at their table in class. “Oh,

you know, just the usual.”, Becky says. “Boring, huh?”, Jonathan says lightheartedly. She smiles as she nods her head in agreement. “Say, um, you know instead of us, you know, um, being bored separately on the weekend. How about if we just kind of like hang out together and be bored together. Or maybe we won’t be.”, Jonathan manages to say shyly to her. She looks at him and smiles. “Sounds stupid, huh?”, Jonathan adds. “No..... No, not at all. Actually that’s not such a bad idea. I was just wondering when you’d get around to asking me out.”, Becky says. Jonathan sighs. As if a big weight had just been lifted off of his shoulders. “Well, great!”, Jonathan enthusiastically says. “So, um, say 8:00pm this Friday. That is if you don’t have any plans.”, Jonathan continues. “I’d be delighted.”, Becky says as the teacher, Mr. Brumfield, enters the classroom. Neither one notices the teacher coming in nor the room becoming quiet since both of them were distracted by the other. Of course being seated in the back of the classroom didn’t help matters any. “So 8:00pm it is then...”, Jonathan is cut off by Mr. Brumfield who clears his throat pretty loudly, as if to get their attention. They both turn their head. “Am I, oh, I don’t know, interrupting something? Or are you both teaching class today!”, Mr. Brumfield says emphatically. Both of them respond in unison, “No Sir.” He stares at them for a moment then continues to inform the class what today’s lesson is on. Nothing else is said the rest of the class except of an occasional word here and there. On the class work at hand that is. Soon the bell rings and class is concluded for the day. “Mr. Stride and Ms. Cross, if I could please have a word with the both of you.”, Mr. Brumfield says from his desk at the front of the classroom. They both approach the desk hesitantly. “I would appreciate it from now on if you both would keep your personal lives out of this classroom. It has no place in this classroom. It never has and never will. I could care less what goes on outside this classroom but the moment you walk through those doors, you are here to learn. Do I make myself crystal clear?”, Mr. Brumfield says

as he leans back in his chair. Yes, Mr. Brumfield, we understand.”, Jonathan responds for the both of them. “Good then. I’ll see you both tomorrow. Good day.”, Mr. Brumfield says as he twirls his chair around to his desk to look at some papers that are lying there. Both Jonathan and Becky pause briefly, then they both turn around and walk out of the classroom. As Jonathan closes the door behind him, Becky keeps walking. Not slowing down or to wait on Jonathan one little bit. “Hey, wait up Becky.”, says Jonathan as he tries to catch up with Becky. She stops and turns around at the main door of the University. “Look I’m sorry about that back there.”, Jonathan says apologetically. “Don’t worry about it. I just got an appointment to get to. I’ll see you tomorrow. O.K.?” , Becky says as she turns around and walks out the door. He follows her out. “O.K., well I’ll see you tomorrow.”, Jonathan says to her as she walks down the steps on the way to her car. She smiles back at him as she gets into her car and drives off. Jonathan waves and then proceeds to walk down the stairs, heading toward his own vehicle, when all of a sudden a voice looms out. “Hey, Jonathan. You comin’ to Jake’s Pool Hall tonight, man?”, Robert Daily, one of Jonathan’s newly acquired friends, yells out from his car as Jonathan walks down the stairs. “Yea, Bro, I’ll be there.”, Jonathan responds. “See ya, then.”, Robert yells as he drives off. Jonathan nods his head as he opens his car door and gets in. And drives off heading home.

Later that evening he goes out to Jake’s Pool Hall to hang out with his friends. And as the night progresses Jonathan appears to be on another world. So his friends notice. Jonathan tries to lighten up but just can’t. Something keeps nagging at him. He can’t put a finger on it but he just feels like doing something else.

“Hey, man, you all right. You seem kind of distant.”, Robert Daily asks as he sits down at the table Jonathan is sitting at. “Yea, I’ll be fine. I’m just really not in the mood for pool I guess.”, Jonathan responds. “Well that’s fine. John and me will just battle it out. That is if he doesn’t run the table.”, Robert says as he slightly raises his voice at the end of what he had said. “Oh, don’t worry, I’ll give you a chance sometime tonight.”, John says as he looks up from the pool table while striking the cue ball at the same time. Another ball falls into a pocket. “See, what I mean.”, Robert says as he shakes his head. Jonathan laughs. “Oh, my god. You laughed. Does that mean you’re having a good time?”, Robert says jokingly. “Oh, shut up. My mind is just a little preoccupied right now. That’s all.”, Jonathan says with a hum drum attitude. Then Robert jumps up. “Ha, you missed one.”, he says as he walks toward the table to take his shot. And hopefully run the table himself. But no such luck. For he misses the ball his second shot and John finishes running the table. “Again?”, John asks Robert. “Yea, why not.”, responds Robert. Then Jonathan clears his throat as he gets up. Both of them look at him. “Look I think I’m gonna call it a night. O.K.”, Jonathan says as he puts his coat on. “Yea, sure.”, Robert says. “I’ll catch you guys later.”, Jonathan says as he walks away. A look of bewilderment comes across their faces. Just briefly though. As they turn around and continue playing pool.

As Jonathan heads home he takes a detour and winds up cruisin’ the down town area. Finally Jonathan finds what’s been bugging him all night long. It’s a hooker. And as he stops to talk to the hooker they agree on an amount. Then off they go to her hotel room to conclude their business.

The next morning Jonathan awakes in his home to his alarm clock. He gets up to get ready for school as he always does. He flips on the TV and then takes a shower. As the TV plays, quite a disturbing news broadcast is airing.

“This is Anna Smith with WQRS Channel 3 reporting. We have a special news bulletin. There was a brutal murder last night in the downtown section of this city. Preliminary police reports indicate that a prostitute was dismembered very cleanly and her body parts glued to every wall in her apartment. The police are asking anyone that might have seen this woman”, a photo of the prostitute flashes across the screen, “with any man or woman yesterday evening. If so please contact the police department. This is Anna Smith reporting live, will keep you up to date on further developments.”, Anchorwoman Anna Smith announces as a phone # appears on the screen for the police department hotline. As Jonathan comes out of the shower, the news broadcast is over. He dresses and heads to the kitchen. After grabbing a bite to eat, he’s out the door. On his way to school.

In class everyone is talking about the murder. It appears to be the topic of the day. Jonathan walks in with a look of bewilderment at what everyone is talking about.

“What’s going on?”, Jonathan asks Becky as he sits down at their table. “Didn’t you hear?”, Jonathan shrugs his shoulders, “A prostitute was murdered last night in her hotel room.”, Becky says in an excited, if somewhat disgusted manner. “So.”, Jonathan says as if it’s no big thing. “Jonathan! A person is murdered and all you’ve got to say is “So!”. That’s pretty insensitive don’t you think?”, Becky says feeling somewhat disturbed by Jonathan’s lackadaisical manner to the subject. “I don’t mean it like that.

All I'm saying is that it's not like it's a safe job. Prostitutes are killed quite often. You hear it all the time on the news. It's not that I don't care. It's just not that unusual.", Jonathan says apologetically. "Well you don't have to be so cold hearted about it.", Becky says in a more subtle way. "I'm sorry.", Jonathan says.

"Jonathan it's not that she was murdered, it's how she was murdered.", Becky says after a long pause. "What do you mean?", Jonathan asks. "Well, from what the police have said so far. She was dismembered and her body parts were glued to every wall in the hotel room. The sick bastard even drank her blood or did something with it cause she was drained dry.", Becky tells Jonathan who sits there amazed or so it would seem. "Do they have any leads?" Jonathan inquires innocently. "No, but...", Becky's cut off by the professor entering the classroom. Then she softly whispers, "They are still looking."

More to come.....