

SAMPLE

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Yesterday, Once More

A novel of love, sex, time travel ...*and murder!*

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This is a work of fiction. All characters in this work are fictitious. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

The Arraignment

She scanned the courtroom, checking each face, desperate to see the one she needed to see. He could get her out of this mess with just his smile. He was the one man she trusted when he said he would always be there for her. He wasn't there.

The judge's gavel drew her back to the gravity of her predicament. She sank into a sullen trance.

"In the matter of State of Michigan vs. Kaley Elizabeth Seabrook, you are charged with Murder in the First Degree of Clark Shanahan Kelleher. How do you plead?"

A ruffled lawyer, wearing a suit that hadn't fit him for a decade, looked to the despondent girl, then spoke for her. "Not guilty, Your Honor."

The Prosecutor, whose blond hair and blue eyes would have won her a beauty contest in the Third Reich, slashed for the jugular. "Your Honor, the Prosecution seeks \$100,000 bail. We believe she is a flight risk."

The defense attorney harrumphed under his cookie-duster mustache. "Your Honor, she is a college student. She's never had so much as a traffic ticket. We ask that she be released on her own recognizance."

"ROR!?" The Prosecutor scowled at the judge. "Your Honor, this 'college student' lured the victim to the basement of her department, dismembered him, stabbed him in the heart, then arranged to have his body literally ground into hamburger. The only bodily evidence we recovered came from his finger in a glass of water and residue from the grinder blades."

The judge shook her head, and reached for her gavel, but paused when she heard Kaley

whisper something.

“What’s that, Honey?”

“He’s not dead,” she whimpered, again glancing into the gallery.

“Well, good. He can post your bond. Bail is set at \$100,000.” The gavel fell.

Kaley wept. “He’s not dead...”

Day 1 — April 20, 2012

“GIVE ME ONE GOOD REASON WHY I SHOULDN’T SPLATTER YOUR FUCKING BRAINS AGAINST THE WALL, YOU STUPID FUCKING BITCH!” he screamed at her in a voice that would have caused army recruits to shit their olive drabs. In a flash of enraged madness, he imagined hurling her through the plate glass window, to watch her plummet 14 stories. Instead, he chose to smash her against the wall.

But just before he unleashed his Hulk-like fury, he heard her final reply. “Would you like me to search the web for ‘why I shouldn’t splatter your fucking brains against the wall, you stupid fucking bitch?’”

He stayed his hand, and relaxed his death grip. Shaking from his adrenaline-laced cocktail of chemicals, he chuckled, then Frisbee-tossed his iPhone onto his couch. She bounced onto the floor. Struck with remorse, he hurried over and picked her up like a bird with a broken wing, hating himself for what he feared he had done.

How did I become like this?

But he saw no scratches or cracks in her glass. He pressed her button. In a tone that betrayed the still-burning embers of rage, he hissed, “Siri, give me one good reason why I shouldn’t buy a fucking Droid!”

“Evan Michael Baelin! Your language!” she replied.

The humanity of the reply startled him, and he laughed. He could feel the acid in his blood mellowing to an inebriating liquor. “You’d think that with eighty billion dollars in cash reserves, they’d be able to make an AI that could tell the difference between ‘Seva Restaurant menu’ and

‘save a restaurant men you.’”

I remember when only Microsoft could make me that angry. I’m slipping if Apple can now make me feel like that.

He shook his head as he hand-typed his Google search, haunted by the memory of the previous two iPhones.

I smashed one of them over my knee like a piece of firewood. They each cost me fifty bucks, but cost my sanity far more than that.

Feeling asinine for venting the frustration he’d built up over the decades, he pressed her button. “I’m sorry, Siri.”

“It’s OK.”

Evan Michael Baelin It’s April and summer has arrived. Now that I think of it, so have I.

13 people like this.

The Michigan July sun, which had arrived in April, massaged the day-in-a-cubicle tension from his shoulders as he entered the Diag under what had once been the Engineering Arch. After twenty-five years of success, catastrophe, chaos, and now entering his sixth year at ‘the best day job in the world’, he had arrived at his new home. The place from which he once hailed—the Central Campus of the University of Michigan—embraced him. The yellow polo shirt glared a light maize in the radiance of the light blue sky. Making his way home from work, he carried the black leather blazer he had needed on his foggy morning stroll to work. His maize & blue badge

clipped to his khakis peeked out occasionally, offering the illusion that he might be a professor.

As he passed the street musician with the washboard, he saw something that made him slow his stride. Students—mostly female, dressed for the heat. He stole glances of them as their ships passed in the daylight.

I feel like an astronomer in the midst of a globular cluster! I can't believe that mirrored aviators are back in style.

He'd worn out many pairs of them in his 4-1/2 year tenure, and every time he wore them, he could swear that the girls he pretended not to ogle could feel his gaze.

Wow! Either the good looking girls got smarter, or the smart girls got better looking. So much for 9 out of 10 girls in the Big Ten being good looking. Now, instead of the 10th one going to Michigan, the 10s are going to Michigan. I wish they were this good looking when I was their age.

He sighed.

Or I wish I were their age now that they are this good looking.

He reluctantly left the Diag and crossed State Street onto William, where the sun's angle had two profound effects on him. The first pressed down on him as the rays conspired with the humid Gulf air to create an oven blast worthy of the Art Fair. The other effect leached in far more subtly, but he'd felt it before...

I have to study for finals!

His Frisbee throwing hand ached even though those days of wasting study days before finals were long past.

He turned off William onto Thompson and craned his gaze up the spanking new brick and

glass building—ZaraMark West.

My new home.

The luxury apartments cost more in a month than his entire gasoline budget for a year of commuting.

Of which I did about 20 years. No wonder he ached at the end of the day. Or the decade.

That commute cost me more than the gas I burned.

The hours of sitting alone on crowded asphalt certainly contributed to the reason that his life now fit into a one-bedroom luxury apartment. For two dreary decades, he'd plowed that 50-mile row to a scarce harvest. A blighted marriage had borne only one apple, and that apple of his eye had moved to Chicago.

Probably to be just close enough but just far enough from both of her parents.

He twiddled his iPhone; the counterpart to hers. FaceTime lingered as his sole consolation prize.

At the base of the 14-story tower, one of several which were invading his beloved A-Squared, the scent of basil and balsamic vinegar caught his sensibilities, reminding him that he had nothing in his place for dinner. Like the stride-drilling Michigan bandsman he'd once been, he snapped right and sought what he smelled. The new building's spanking-new air conditioning easily filled the deli with winter, and a few of the girls in line hugged themselves in response.

He bought a pound of an orzo-tomato-basil salad, grabbed a plastic spork, and stepped out the door into summer scenery. A master of nonchalance, he hovered near the street corner, leaning on the post, taking in the seasonal fare, most of which were in short shorts and peasant blouses. *How the hell do I know they're called peasant blouses?*

After ten minutes, his salad grew too lukewarm for his palate, and the sun both seared and blinded him.

I'll come back tomorrow for more scenery. It's going to be a long summer, and I live here, now.

“I live here,” he murmured. “That still hasn’t sunk in. It may take all summer.”

He nudged his shoulder to shove off the post. Then he saw the sign, taped to the post over flyer of some band that thought they had a great name. It bore the image of the monster formerly known as Bruce Banner.

FRUSTRATED?

DOES ANGER MAKE YOU WANT TO TURN **GREEN?**

MAYBE YOU WERE BORN THIS WAY...

U of M School of Public Health is conducting a two-week study of the effects of stress and frustration on the heart and nervous system. Participants must be between the ages of 35 and 55, willing to provide DNA, blood, and other fluid samples, able to perform strenuous exercise such as weight machines, elliptical running, or stationary spinning for a minimum of 30 minutes. A history of stress arising from being confined, isolated, abandoned (including long hours in a cubicle or commuting) preferred.

I'm perfect!

He tore off the first tab on the tearsheet. Being back on speaking terms with Siri, and before heading to the stainless-steel elevator, which would rob him of phone signal, he dictated his

Facebook status.

Evan Michael Baelin is going to volunteer for a study on the effects of stress. HA! If they want to do stress experiments on me just set me down in front of a copy of Microsoft Word! I'd peg their meter! If I had a time machine, I wouldn't go back and kill Hitler... I'd go back and make sure Bill Gates stayed in school and became a lawyer.

He did a quick tally of the damage that Microsoft had done in his life; the standards it ignored, the interface that he couldn't believe they ever used themselves, the self-incompatibility.

Really!?! How much is it to ask that a SQL Server Query use the same syntax as an ASP.NET query?

His decades of frustration manifesting itself in anger, yelling, even the Office-Space treatment on certain hardware, made him the perfect test subject, even if they didn't use MS Office as the cheese in their maze.

He froze in his tracks. An ancient memory stirred in the depths of his internal database. He scowled and cocked his head, trying to zero in on the memory. His eyes widened a little, and he hurried for the elevator. As he rose to his 14th floor space, he fiddled with his phone's calendar, his shaking hands making things difficult.

As he approached his door, his phone signaled and the door popped open for him. He slammed it behind him and made a beeline to his file cabinet; the metal one, in meatspace. Digging into a place that only he could have found it, he pulled out a wad of tiny booklets, smaller than checkbooks, lashed together by a thick rubber band long past its half-life. He rifled

through the stack, scanning the first page of each, discarding them, until...

Bingo!

He hurried through the pages of the “Baldwin Pocket Date Book for 1980.” He ran his finger down the cryptic entries for April. Most were dates, times, course numbers for exams of material long forgotten. He slid past them until he settled on the most cryptic of all, a series of dates with the label “Dana”, which extended from April 25th into early May.

He reeled back and landed in the Aeron chair in front of his computer monitor array. Flopping his arms down over the arm rests, he dropped his date book onto the floor. For a moment, he stared through the monitors, the wall, and 32 years of space and time.

“Holy shit...” he muttered in disbelief. “I *do* have a time machine.”

Prosecution Witness — Medical Examiner

“Can you tell us, Doctor, the cause of death of the victim?” County Prosecutor Marcia McBrien’s blue eyes sliced with the same surgical precision she’d brought to the arraignment. She’d prosecuted murders in Washtenaw County before, but none bore this personal, brutal nature. This killer had a score to settle with her victim.

“The victim received a puncture wound in the right ventricle, and upon withdrawal of the weapon, the victim bled profusely, causing unconsciousness in seconds. Death followed within a minute as his body went into shock from blood loss.” Dr. Jennifer Jensen spoke with a clarity and precision expected of an expert witness, but the pursing of her lips betrayed her masked disgust.

“Thank you. And what weapon was used to cause this puncture wound?”

“A common steak knife, inserted with tremendous force upwardly into the lowest part of the heart.”

“Let the record show that Prosecution Exhibit A is a steak knife. Doctor, is this the knife used to cause this murder?”

“Yes. The tag carries my signature. I obtained samples of the victims blood, which matched his DNA.”

“You said that the blade punctured the right ventricle. How did you ascertain that precise an entry point?”

“The blood in the right ventricle is the least oxygenated, being the last stop in the circulatory system. From there, the blood travels via the pulmonary artery to the lungs, where the blood is

re-oxygenated. From the samples on Exhibit A, we determined with certainty that this blood came from the victim's right ventricle."

"Thank you. Did you find any other samples of blood from the victim's right ventricle?"

"We did."

"Where did you obtain these samples?"

"From the clothing of the defendant."

"How did that blood get onto the clothing of the defendant?"

Dr. Jensen spoke as if describing her gardening. "The blood spatter is characteristic of someone standing directly in front of a victim whose right ventricle has been perforated."

"Anywhere else?"

"On the hands, and under the fingernails of the defendant."

"Thank you, nothing further."

Day 2 — April 21, 2012

Evan Michael Baelin becomes a guinea pig. Film at 11.

24 people like this.

He realized that half of his 2,431 Facebook friends had no idea what ‘film at 11’ meant. Of those born after CNN opened the ever-flow of news, nearly half got their so-called news from the Internet.

Which I lose when I descend into the lower level of the Ross School of Business.

He walked down the hallway, devoid of students, being after hours and in the Study Days before Finals. As he strolled past the couple-of-year-old sustainable wood, terra cotta, and cork building materials, he marveled at how much had changed over the years. The building he’d been exploring this morning had hand-hewn stone walls on massive limestone blocks the size of the truck bed that had brought them nearly a century ago. *Which is precisely why they hid the treasure there. And it’s still there, all but forgotten.*

He fiddled in his pocket for the card he’d been given by the test conductors of his stress study during his lunch break meeting. He pushed the glass door to the Oaks Fitness Center and cast a wary glance at the array of machines. They offered the promise of adding to his lifespan by draining a portion of his life-force for half an hour. He sighed, mostly to give his lungs a chance to stretch for what was coming, then faced the front desk.

Behind the rich-looking but sustainably-built counter, suitable for a fine hotel, a young girl

looked up from a textbook, apparently having waited until he seemed ready.

“I’m here to get started on my program,” he said, handing her the blue plastic card, similar to the ones from the hospital, which held only a fragment of his identity.

Apparently, they designed this to ID me here at the Och, but to mask my identity everywhere else. I like it.

She scanned the QR code card. “You are ID number 10301. I’m supposed to tell you two things. You can do this test by yourself, but we can help you if you need. I’m a student assistant, but we also have a Certified Personal Trainer on duty at all times. So if you have any questions or concerns, find one of us.”

“Thanks, I guess it’s time to get started.”

“No time like the present,” she said as she sat back down and picked up her textbook. Her voice carried not a tinge of humor, but not a hint of sarcasm either, as if she’d heard that all her life and merely parroted it.

“I don’t know. They don’t make time like they used to, when I was your age.”

She glanced up from her studies through her eyebrows and registered a slight smile, just enough to move the corners of her closed mouth, and the faintest ‘heh’ eked out of her nostrils.

He moved a few paces along the glass wall toward the vast exercise area, but paused. *I must be getting old. I didn’t ask her name. I didn’t look into her eyes. When I stop doing that, I’m truly dead.*

He lifted his iPhone to his eye level and waved it around, pretending to be looking for signal. When the phone eclipsed her, he stole a glimpse, to put a face to a bit player in his seemingly-fictional life. Her walnut brown hair, absent even a trace of red, hung straight down past her face,

with her bangs tucked into the cascade on the right, to keep them out of her eyes while reading. Her skin emanated a healthy, well-hydrated glow, but didn't retain the color of the spring-break or salon tan. From ten feet away, he could see her slightly-crossed eyes tracking the lines of her imminent exam materials. They were dark, but he couldn't tell if green, brown, or tawny. Her eyebrows were natural, tidy, and softly toned, absent even a hint of 'wickedness.'

He tried to read her name tag, but he didn't own glasses that focused at that specific distance.

Even as 'plain' as this bookworm is, she'd have been in the 90th percentile of Michigan women back in my day.

"I know I'm just a number, but you can call me Evan."

She glanced up and nodded like an pine bough in a gentle breeze. "Libby."
