

## Prologue

As the overhead light glistened off the surgical blade in his hand, the man's face lit up with a joyous smile. This practice always made him feel at peace. It made him feel complete. He was prepared to start with the procedure and was working it to perfection.

With the first few attempts, there were difficulties. The man had never gone to medical school or performed any surgical practices prior to these instances, and the results were a bit sloppy. Now he had all of the moves and cuts to an exactness he liked and would finally begin within the next few minutes.

The eyes are the window to the soul, or so the old proverb

states. The amateur surgeon believed this to be true. This was why the eyes of the women he loved were so important. The heart seemed to be just as essential, and he felt his women should give their hearts to him. The women did not show him the same passion and desire, but all that changed. In the end, they pleaded with him to take their hearts, begging him to finish what he started, not to prolong the inevitable any more.

The pain they felt was their own fault. They knew he loved them; he told them this specifically. The only response they had was curses and screams of hatred. This was nothing a surgical blade could not repair, and when he started carving their hatred away, they each finally saw things from his point of view. In the end, they said they loved him, too.

It was at this exact moment the man chose to take the eyes. The woman professed her love, and capturing the soul's mirror at the right time ensured this moment would last forever. The eyes' original possessor always took back their former statement upon the performance of this act, but it was too late. He had their soul's reflection now, and it told him otherwise. Love was declared, and he was not one to let love escape. Their heart now belonged to the man as well, and he gladly removed it, placing it in a jar next to the eyes on a special shelf.

The surgeon built the shelf with care. He called it his

valentine shelf and chose to paint it a deep red and decorate it with white cotton doilies. There were four doilies on each of the five shelves, with a jar carefully placed on each one. The bottom two shelves contained empty jars, but the top three, the ones he was most proud of, held the trophies from the first five victims. Two jars belonged to each victim, with one jar containing the eyes, the soul's mirror, at the left, followed by the same individual's heart. Next to this were the eyes of another victim and then their heart. The top shelf had two used jars and two empty jars he intended on using this night.

The attraction of the surgeon recently led him to another potential lover, a beautiful nineteen-year-old girl. He considered himself the next Casanova and decided all whom he chose would love him in the end, despite their previous feelings. They belonged together, and she would see this.

Blade in hand, Casanova turned away from the shelf and exited the garage, empty of any vehicles, but cluttered with random items. These kept the shelf from standing out, were anybody to enter into this sacred domain. He walked from the garage to his dining room. Rather than including a kitchen table and chairs one would normally expect, a four-foot tall metal table sat in the center of the room, approximately three feet wide and seven feet long. Strapped to this table was Casanova's

latest obsession. She had a piece of grey duct tape placed on her mouth and was stripped down to nothing, completely nude and exposed. On the floor were her clothes from two days ago, tossed to the side like rags, seemingly unimportant at this point. The young woman's beautiful green eyes were wide-open, tears streaming down the side of her face, leaving dark streaks along her cheeks from the mascara she still wore. Her new lover looked into her eyes, and she could see both sincerity and vigorous excitement in them.

"I love you," he stated plainly, as if he had uttered these words a thousand times to her in the past. She could feel the heat from his breath, could smell the remaining stench of his last meal as he exhaled. Without removing his gaze, the man slowly peeled off the tape gagging her mouth. Immediately she spit directly into his face, which only resulted in a returned smile. "You'll love me too. You'll see."

Reaching over with the sharp blade, he lightly traced an area on her chest between her breasts. He did not pierce her flesh, but the pressure from the blade was apparent with the indentation it made when it stroked the skin, teasing her with its impending danger.

"You belong to me now," the surgeon said, applying additional pressure. Blood dripped down the woman's chest while

she screamed in pain; it trickled down her side and dropped onto the metal table. He slid the blade slowly, cleanly slicing the flesh, which gave minimal resistance to the razor sharpness of the steel. The man stopped abruptly, leaned over the girl, and looked into her eyes once again. "Say you love me."

"Go to hell!" she screamed with whatever strength she could muster beneath her sobbing.

Suddenly a loud knocking echoed throughout the home. The residence was in a remote location, with houses separated by at least a half mile down a long stretch of road. Nobody ever knocked on one of these homes unexpectedly. The surprise of this intrusion caught the surgeon off guard and he nearly dropped the blade. He reached onto a countertop, set down the scalpel, and grabbed a roll of duct tape. Tearing off a piece, he covered the girl's mouth. Slowly, the man exited the dining room through an arched entryway. He peered back at the metal table and looked at his woman once more.

"Don't go anywhere," he smirked, chuckling under his breath to hide the nervousness he felt. Standing still, trying not to make a sound, the man jumped in surprise when the unknown individual outside knocked once more, this time much louder. He scurried like a frightened mouse, quickly running into the bedroom, making sure not to turn on the light, and quietly opened

the drawer on the nightstand next to his bed, removing a nine-millimeter pistol. The man checked the magazine and ensured the gun contained the ten rounds he loaded three months prior at the time he purchased the weapon. Returning to the living room, Casanova stared at the front door once again, pointing the weapon at the peephole. Almost immediately, the door flew open in a thundering sound echoing throughout the entire home. The handle to the door hit the opposing wall, cracking the sheetrock. Obscured by the darkness outside, a six-foot tall figure stood, completely still. The silhouette appeared strong and firm, unmoving despite the obvious danger it must have recognized in the hands of the homeowner. Without hesitation, Casanova squeezed the trigger three times, sending three rounds towards the front door, each bullet hitting its mark directly in the chest of the intruder. The reaction was completely unexpected, and rather than falling down or crying out in pain, the figure boldly took a step forward, now standing in the house, still not visible to the surgeon. Firing three more rounds, Casanova realized his weapon was ineffective. Blood splattered from the exit wound of each bullet, but its damage was unnoticed by the victim. The figure stood its ground.

The following ten seconds were indescribable for the surgeon. The figure changed before his very eyes. With its feet

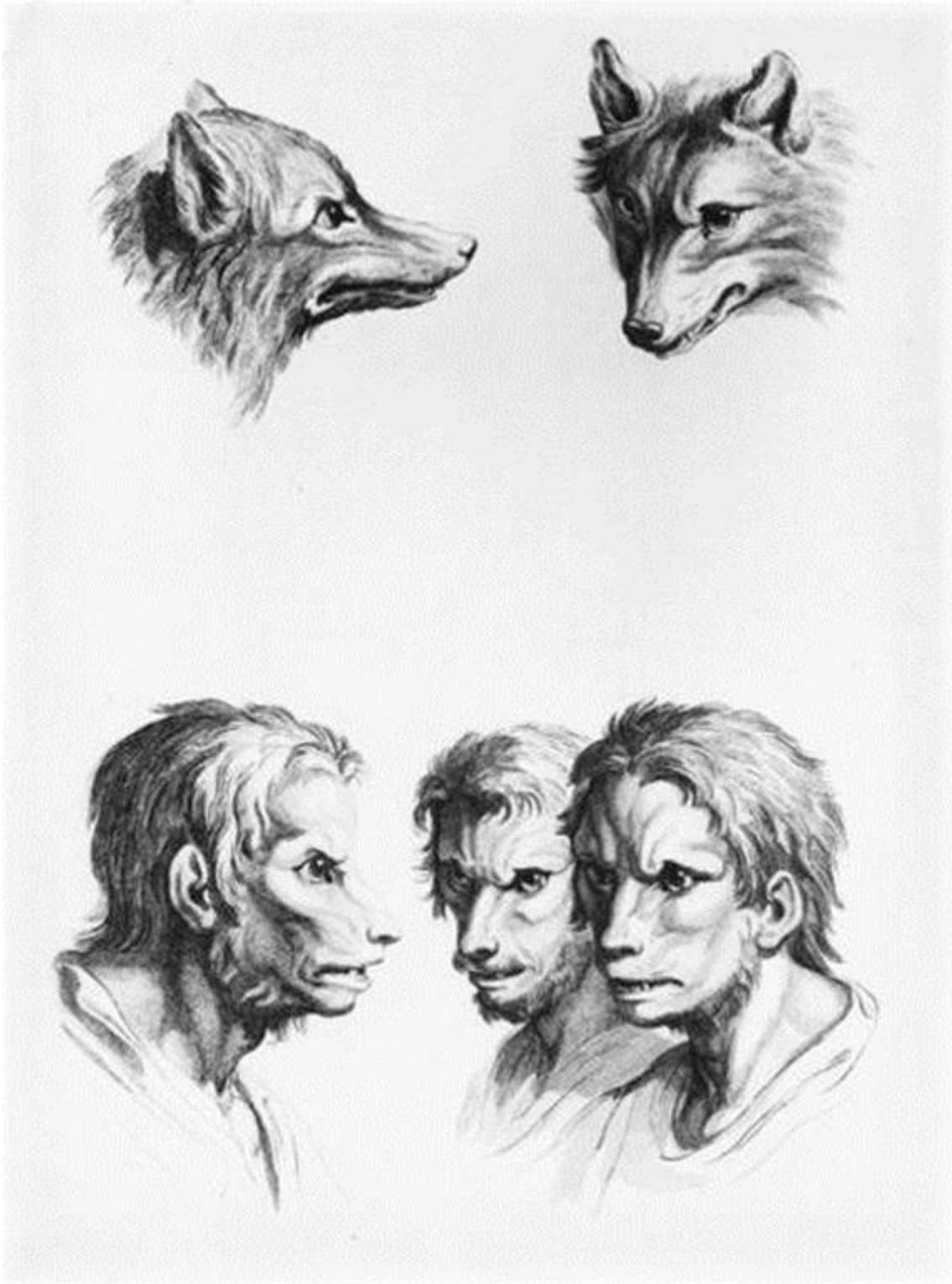
still planted firmly on the ground, it grew taller, arms increasing in width and the head contorting into a different shape. A growl rattled the walls of the living room; where a man once appeared to be standing, a horrifying beast pounced forward, not resembling any known species of mammal. Its face was wolf-like, but its size was immense. With its mouth opened wide in a roar, it revealed its teeth - long, sharp and pointed. The upper and lower canines extended beyond the rest, appearing as piercing knives. The eyes were the most terrifying eyes the surgeon ever saw. In this soul's mirror, the depths of the creature were pure hatred and evil, something only Satan himself could spawn and inspire. The irises were red, almost glowing from the fires of hell fueling this creature's rage.

The beast ended its lunge with its front paws pushing into the man's chest, drawing blood when the sharp claws tore through the white t-shirt and penetrated the flesh beneath. It raised its front paw. The thick muscular bulges flexed in the arms; the hand-like paw had five long fingers, with curved claws extending from each and coming to a point on the end. The sharpness of these could slice through meat like butter; when the arm came down in a swing, dark colored blood splashed onto the opposing wall, nearly covering the area from top to bottom.

The female victim lay on her back in the dining room,

watching the attack in its entirety. She had been in fear for her life before, with the carver demonstrating his intentions. Now her trepidation grew exponentially. The creature stood up on its hind legs, almost human-like. The transformation witnessed next is something only seen in dreams, or perhaps nightmares. The thick carpet of fur retracted and the monster shrank in height. The claws reduced in size and transformed into human fingernails. Its snout pulled back into the head and its pointed ears appeared to diminish and readjust their location towards the side of the face. When the transformation completed, the woman saw a Caucasian male standing before her. Blood streaked his hair and glistened off his chest, decorated with six bullet wounds which bled slightly, but did not appear to bring the man any discomfort or pain. He reached towards the woman, causing her to shudder and then jump in fear when he touched her restraints. Removing the straps binding her to the table, he looked directly into her stare with his blue eyes.

"You're free now," he stated in a deep voice. "Do not tell anybody what you have seen here tonight." Almost immediately, he was gone, leaving the woman alone in an unfamiliar house full of gore and carnage.



"Werewolf", Charles Le Brun (1619-1690)

Agency Name Angelina County		<b>Crime/Incident Report</b>				Date 11/20/94			
Report No. 564117955						Time 0215			
<b>I N C I D E N T D A T A</b>	#1	Incident/Crime Homicide	Date of Incident 11/20/94	Date/Time Reported 11/20/94 / 0215	MO Gunshot wound to chest	Location of Incident 3306 Lotus Lane, Lufkin, TX 75904			
	#2	Incident/Crime Accidental Death	Date of Incident 11/20/94	Date/Time Reported 11/20/94 / 0215	MO Possible animal attack	Location of Incident 3306 Lotus Lane, Lufkin, TX 75904			
	#3	Incident/Crime	Date of Incident	Date/Time Reported	MO	Location of Incident			
<b>V I C T I M</b>	#1	Name Branson, Stephanie Dawn	Sex F	Date of Birth 2/12/74	Race/Ethnicity Caucasian	Injury Single entry wound, upper left chest. Fatal.			
		Home Address 3306 Lotus Lane, Lufkin, TX 75904							
		Victim of Crime # 1	Phone Number (936) [REDACTED]	Relationship to Girlfriend	Employer Name N/A	Employer Address N/A			
	#2	Name Cushman, Tyler Brian	Sex M	Date of Birth 5/4/61	Race/Ethnicity Caucasian	Injury Multiple lacerations, limb dismemberment, decapitation. Fatal.			
		Home Address 3306 Lotus Lane, Lufkin, TX 75904							
		Victim of Crime # 2	Phone Number (936) [REDACTED]	Relationship to N/A	Employer Name Angelina County	Employer Address 2311 E Lufkin Ave, Lufkin, TX 75901			
	#3	Name	Sex	Date of Birth	Race/Ethnicity	Injury			
		Home Address							
		Victim of Crime #	Phone Number	Relationship to	Employer Name	Employer Address			
<b>O N T H E L D E R S</b>	CODES: V = Victim (Denote V1, V2)    O = Owner (if other than victim)    R = Reporting person (if other than victim)    W = Witness								
	#1	Code R	Name Austin, Carrie Ann	Date of Birth 8/11/70	Race/Ethnicity Caucasian	Sex F	Employer Name Texaco	Phone Number (936) [REDACTED]	Relationship to Victim Neighbor
		Home Address 3308 Lotus Lane, Lufkin, TX 75904						Employer Address 622 Raguet St, Lufkin, TX 75904	
	#2	Code W	Name Branson, James Gideon	Date of Birth 2/26/90	Race/Ethnicity Caucasian	Sex M	Employer Name N/A	Phone Number (936) [REDACTED]	Relationship to Victim Son
	Home Address 3306 Lotus Lane, Lufkin, TX 75904						Employer Address N/A		
#3	Code	Name	Date of Birth	Race/Ethnicity	Sex	Employer Name	Phone Number	Relationship to Victim	
	Home Address						Employer Address		
Narrative On 20 of November 1994, at approximately 0130 hours, witness Carrie Ann Austin, occupant of 3308 Lotus Lane, overheard domestic dispute in residence of victim, 3306 Lotus Lane. Dispute continued until 0150 hours, when witness heard possible gunshot. Witness then described what she believed to be animal growls, along with adult male screaming. Law enforcement officials were immediately notified and dispatched to premises. Prior to arrival of officials, James Gideon Branson, son of the deceased, was observed by Carrie Austin fleeing from the premises. James Branson is described as follows: four-year old Caucasian male, blue eyes, brown hair. Last seen wearing no shirt, torn navy blue pajama pants. Skin and clothing appeared to be covered in blood. Current whereabouts of James Branson unknown.									
Case Status Open		Officer/ID# D. Santino / 56419815			Signature 			Page 1	

To whomever eventually reads this,

I've included this letter as an introduction to the passages that follow. I wrote this after I've learned of whom and what I really am, and I felt it necessary to include it as a preparation for the reader. Over the years, I've recorded the events of my life in a journal. I've taken a variety of passages from this journal and compiled them into this book. My name is James Branson, and this letter will serve as my first journal entry. I hope fate allows me to continue to write it. To my knowledge, there's never been a firsthand account from an individual like me, so I figured I'd be the first. There's no simple way to explain what I am. Let me put it this way: I suffer from a

genetic disorder, which I inherited from my grandfather on my father's side. As far as I know, the condition from which I suffer sometimes skips a generation and passes down through the male bloodline. My abnormality has many names. Navaho Indians called my kind "yeenaeldooshi". The Mohawk Indians used the term "limikkin". Skin walker, vilkacis, lycanthrope, metamorph, shape shifter - all of these terms refer to the same creature. The most common name used is werewolf.

If I'm going to tell my story, I'll need to go back to when I was a child, when it all began. For years I repressed these recollections, and the memories returned a little at a time.

My mother went to a high school party one night with one of her friends from school. There was drinking and drugs, and my mother participated in both of these. The majority of the crowd were popular high school boys in their junior and senior years. These boys made sure they always got what they wanted and didn't ever take no for an answer. My mother usually didn't say no anyway, but regardless, somebody slipped her and her friend something in their drinks; not long after, the two of them were unconscious. They woke up hours later, undressed in an unfamiliar bedroom and unsure of what had occurred during the time they'd lost.

Six weeks later, my mom came to the realization she'd missed

a menstrual cycle. A visit to the doctor later that week confirmed she was pregnant. Her sixteenth birthday occurred exactly two weeks before I was born. She already didn't consider herself the educated type, so she decided to drop out of high school.

My mother lived with alcoholic parents growing up, but prior to my birth, they forced her out of the house. On her own, she did her best to take care of herself and her baby. She worked at a local diner as a waitress, where she endured constant sexual harassment. Local rednecks would grab her as she walked by, or place their hands in inappropriate places when the opportunity presented itself. Their speech was demeaning, as they expressed their perverted desires at every chance they could take. One day, an older man by the name of Tyler Cushman walked in and sat in her section. He was a smooth talker and could charm the pants off anybody. That day, he chose my mother. Within the month, she was moving into his house, unknowingly entering into a trap from which there was no escape.

This thirty-one year old was the sheriff of our small Texas town and he made sure everybody knew it. He was the law. As far as he was concerned, he had the power to alter a person's life for the worse if he chose to do so. He'd exercised this authority on many occasions, arresting those he had a grudge against,

planting evidence, selling drugs, and committing other illegal acts he was supposed to be preventing. His sense of authority was what drove him, and he used intimidation to get what he wanted with everybody, including my mother. Her life became a living hell. It's by the grace of God she survived as long as she did under the same roof as that man.

In addition to this lack of morality, the man had a weakness for alcohol and a horrible temper. The drink only fed this anger, worsening it to frightening levels. There were numerous occasions when he'd come home completely drunk and use my mother for a punching bag. I knew my mother suffered countless beatings, and although I didn't completely understand, I knew she was hurt badly every time. She constantly had to wear sunglasses and invent stories about the cause of her injuries. Those who listened knew the truth, but, like her, were afraid of the sheriff and pretended to believe her lies.

She was a wonderful mother despite the difficulties of her life. Whenever she had the time, she would sit on the floor and play toys with me. She ensured that I did not go to bed without a bedtime story first - always fairy tales. She never read them, but told me from her memory. Sometimes the stories repeated when I requested to hear one a second or third time, but she usually tried to come up with something new. Whenever she bent forward to

kiss me goodnight, I always smelled the scent of strawberry shampoo on her long, straight, black hair. And she always tried to keep me away from Tyler. She told me never to talk to him or approach him, and if he spoke to me, I was to be polite but not engage in conversation with him more than I had to.

The one night that forever altered the course of my life occurred in November when I was four years old. That evening the sheriff stayed out late with some of his buddies - a few deputies and some of the bar regulars. My mother had laid me down for bed at ten o'clock that night, and she assumed I'd fallen asleep immediately. I don't recall what had been on my mind that evening, but something was keeping me upset and I couldn't sleep. I got out of my bed and walked down the hallway to find my mother. I stopped at the end of the hall and could see her washing the dishes. The time must have been about one in the morning. Before I could proceed to the kitchen, the sheriff stumbled through the door, barely able to stand. He smelled awful, and I didn't know what the stench was at the time, but I'm sure it was alcohol.

"Get me some food!" he shouted with slurred speech. "I haven't had anything since lunch!"

My mother hurried from the kitchen like a shy and scared slave girl, while I observed from my hiding spot, my heart

thumping heavily in my chest. I didn't want him to hurt my mother again. I didn't like her being hurt. She hurriedly placed the plate she prepared earlier for Tyler into the microwave and pressed the buttons. While the machine hummed for the next minute and a half, Tyler sat in silence. I don't know if he was so drunk that whatever words were in his mind couldn't make contact with the speech part of his brain, or if he was waiting, trying to find something cruel and nasty to say to my mother. Finally, the timer beeped, and my mom removed the plate. When she did so, the sheriff looked over with a mean glare.

"We've been together for over a year. I never would have brought you home if I'd known you'd get so fat."

My mother was at a very healthy weight, although she'd gained maybe twenty pounds in the last year. She'd been nearly underweight to begin with, but who'd blame her for putting on a few pounds, with the life she had to deal with?

"And you're getting pimples all over. It's disgusting. Do you even shower? I work all day so you could quit working at that damn diner, and what do you do around here? I'm not even near you and I can smell your disgusting stench. It's no wonder I don't screw you anymore."

He paused, pondering his next statement and then decided to continue.

"Maybe if you took care of yourself, I wouldn't have to be nailing that waitress at the bar all the time."

I wanted to do something, but I felt paralyzed. His words didn't mean a lot to me, but I knew they were horrible and mean in the way my mother reacted to them.

My mother quietly brought the plate from the microwave to the table, tears streaming from her eyes. She set it down gently and backed away slowly. He took one look at the food and scowled up at her. Without warning, he swung the back of his arm with full force, hitting the side of her face and knocking her backwards onto the ground.

"My bun is soggy, and you didn't even bring me a drink! Who do you think you are? I'm the sheriff and you will treat me with the respect I deserve, you stupid bitch"

Tears trickled from my eyes as I watched her fall down. I was only a child, and I felt completely helpless. He pushed his chair back quickly and before my mother could even stand, he kicked her in the side with the steel toe of his boot. I heard a crack from her rib cage. In intense pain, my mother struggled to drag herself backwards into the kitchen, away from the danger. She must not have been thinking with clarity, because all she resulted in doing was trapping herself in a corner. Grabbing the edge of the counter, she used whatever strength she could muster

and stood to her feet.

"I didn't tell you to get up, whore!" Tyler yelled, this time balling up his fist. He punched her face, making direct contact with her nose, blood streaming down onto her shirt. "Look at my hand now. I got your blood all over me."

He shoved my mother; when she fell her arms swung and knocked several items off the counter. Two glasses fell, a plate shattered, and a wood block filled with steak knives tipped over, scattering the black-handled, silver-bladed objects all over the kitchen floor. Tyler's foot swung towards my mother's head this time, but she somehow managed to dodge it and avoid a cracked skull. This was the worst I'd ever seen him, and my mother knew this too. Her life was in jeopardy and it would all be over quickly.

She reached over and grabbed the largest butcher knife from the wood block lying on the floor inches away from Tyler's feet. In an instant, she held the knife up above her head with both hands, blade pointing to the ground. With one swift movement, she brought the knife down with full force, towards the sheriff's left boot. The knife struck above the steel toe, penetrated the leather, and went in deep, through the skin, bone, and out the bottom of Tyler's foot, pinning it to the wooden floor. My mother ran from the kitchen while the sheriff screamed in anguish.

What happened next was almost a blur. Tyler pulled the gun from his holster, fully loaded. I didn't know what a gun was and I didn't know what Tyler was about to do. The look in his face told me something bad was going to happen to my mom. I instinctively ran from my bedroom to protect her. I heard the gun cock and then the click of him pulling the trigger. I had heightened senses; everything moved in slow motion. The round exited the chamber and whistled while it traveled. I lunged forward, between the bullet and my mother, towards the sheriff. I felt something hit me in the chest, causing me to jolt. I continued to fly through the air, then everything went black.

When I regained consciousness, the scene I observed was one of chaos. I stood in the kitchen, over what once was Tyler. The kitchen floor was soaked with blood; massive amounts of splatter decorated the walls. It smelled like vomit and shit, with the coppery stench of blood overwhelming all other odors. What caught my attention was the sound of tiny plops, slowly, in even repetition. I looked to my left and saw blood all over the counter. It dripped off the edge like a leaky faucet. I stood up and peered further, spotting the source of the outflow. Tyler's right arm rested on the counter pressed against the back wall, separated from the rest of his body. The elbow bent slightly and the end of the arm marked the beginning of the counter's blood

pool. I turned my head and looked at the back wall of the kitchen, directly in front of me. There was damage to the sheetrock and blood dripping down in thin lines hid the design created from the cracks.

I then realized something lay underneath me. Slowly, I looked down. At my feet was an adult man's torso, deep gashes covering it. There was little surface area left undamaged and it was nearly impossible to recognize what the object was. In the center of the chest, I could see a large gaping hole where something appeared missing, leaving an empty void.

I bent my hands forward so I could look at them. A thick red liquid covered my palms and fingers. I let my arms drop and turned around slowly. In doing this, I stepped over the body of Tyler Cushman, nearly stumbling in the process. The fear I felt increased once I viewed the object on top of the table, looking at me. Lying on its side but still facing me was Tyler's head. The eyes stared blankly; there was no emotion or sign of humanity behind them. I stepped forward four steps and stumbled, falling to the ground on my face. I recovered from my clumsiness slowly, now even more drenched than I was previously. My foot stung, and I looked at it. There was a deep cut between my big and second toe where something had sliced me when I tripped. Behind me was the knife that had pinned Tyler's foot to the kitchen floor. His

foot was no longer there. It had ripped through the shiny blade and lay on the ground with the leg still attached to it, but the torso further into the kitchen had been ripped away from this appendage, leaving the limb isolated. I was short and it was not difficult for me to view beneath the dining room table where Tyler's other arm and leg rested, surrounded in wet blood. The flaccid tomatoes and soggy bun from his burger rested in the red pool beside them.

Dripping in the sheriff's fluids, I limped into the living room and found my mother's body on the floor. I bent down and nudged her gently, trying to awaken her. There was no response, so I turned her over to look at her face. I saw her eyes opened and lifeless. I looked at her chest and saw sticky red blood staining her shirt. Placing my hand over her heart, I felt a hole. This led me to examine my own chest, where I found a cavity in myself as well. My injury hurt, but not enough to restrain me from movement. I reached towards my back, which was now bare. My ripped shirt was on the kitchen floor in shreds, soaking up the blood like a sponge. The pajama pants I wore were also torn and stretched, but the elastic around the waist had held. After spending some time searching my back, I found the hole where the bullet had exited my body and proceeded to hit its mark. I'd unsuccessfully attempted to save my mother, and now I was alone

and scared.

I fled the scene and hid behind a house several streets down. Eventually, the sun rose; I was incoherent and chose to forget the events which had occurred the night before. My gunshot wounds disappeared, but I didn't notice. I don't know how I was found or by whom. All I know is that I was in a hospital at some point. The doctors examined me and were unable to find any physical injuries - no scars and no signs at all that I'd been shot through the chest.

The death of my mother resulted in me spending the rest of my young life living in the foster system, going through many temporary guardians. Until the age of six, I didn't speak to anyone at all. As the years passed, I underwent numerous psychiatric examinations trying to help me get past the shock of this incident.

Now, if the reader chooses to believe any of this, they now know there are things in this world that are impossible, things we only imagine in our worst fears and nightmares. The world you believe you live in does not exist.

James Gideon Branson

November 2, 2009