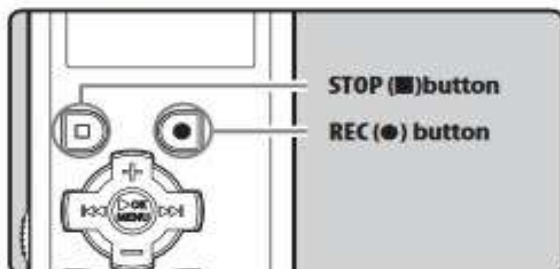


About recording

Recording

Before starting recording, select a folder between [A] to [E]. These five folders can be selectively used to distinguish the kind of recording; for example, Folder [A] might be used to store private information, while Folder [E] might be dedicated to holding business information.



! For WS-710M/WS-700M:

- In modes other than [Recorder] mode, [Cannot record in this folder] will appear if you press the REC (●) button. Only record after you have set the mode to [Recorder] mode on the [Home] display (see P.21).
- With the WS-710M, you can record FM radio in [FM Radio] mode (see P.46).

1 Select the recording folder (see P.22 to P.24).

2 Press the REC (●) button to start recording.

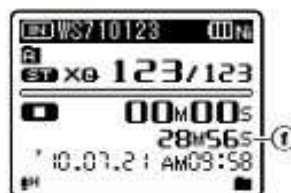
- The recording indicator light glows and [●] will appear on the display.
- Turn the microphone in the direction of the source to be recorded.



- (a) Recording mode
 - (b) Remaining memory bar indicator
 - (c) Elapsed recording time
 - (d) Remaining recording time
 - (e) Level meter (change according to the recording level and recording function settings)
- [Rec Mode] cannot be changed in the recording standby mode or while recording. Configure this while the recorder is stopped (see P.47, P.49).

3 Press the STOP (■) button to stop recording.

- [●] will appear on the display.



(f) File length

Notes

- To ensure that you do not lose the beginning of the recording, only record after confirming that the recording indicator light is lit and checking the mode indicator on the display.
- When remaining recording time is less than 60 seconds, the recording indicator light starts flashing. When the recording time is decreasing to 30 or 10 seconds, the light flashes faster.
- [Folder Full] will appear when the recording cannot be made any further. Select on other folder or delete any unnecessary files before recording (see P.39).
- [Memory Full] will appear when the memory is full. Delete any unnecessary files before recording any further (see P.39).

2

Recording

EN

25

PRESS () RECORD

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Press () Record
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This work is dedicated to those who will never know.

ALBERT COX

I first met Dan a little over a year ago, back in January of 2015. It was a Friday night, and I was over at my usual meeting out in Belmont, 'No Excuses' the group is called. We meet in that tiny Presbyterian church, just off Pleasant Street down the road from the fire station. I saw Dan for the first time during the smoke break in the middle of the meeting. We were both outside on the sidewalk, hanging around in a group with maybe ten or so people. I could tell right away that he was new, that he didn't know anybody. He wasn't talking, and I hadn't seen him at our meeting before. But I could really tell because he wore that face... he had that look, the look every newcomer has. I wore it when I first came around the rooms. You're apprehensive, scared, confused... you hear all these phrases, these sayings, and none of it makes any sense. You see people laughing, having fun, and you feel terrible on the inside. See, AA is an entirely different world than anything you know as an alcoholic or an addict. It's very confusing. It's jarring at first. It's- it's just really difficult when you're first coming in. You're probably in hot water, with the law or with your family, you might have just gotten in a 'jackpot,' you're hurting. You have to be hurting bad to walk into an AA meeting... my sponsor always says nobody comes into the rooms bright eye'd and bushy tail'd. Booze has to beat the hell out of you before you earn your place around the circle at an AA meeting. And Dan had that look. But I noticed him crumple up his pack, sort of upset, like he could've used another cigarette, so instinctively I sort of held out my own, offered him one, introduced myself. He was real quiet. I caught his name, I introduced a couple of guys I know, we were just outside shooting the breeze. I don't really remember what we talked about. But I asked him how much time he

had, how long he had been sober for, and he said "Three days."

That night, sort of a coincidence, even though I been in this program long enough to know there are no coincidences... that night I was celebrating five years clean... ain't nothing I did, man, it has all been the grace of God, truly... but in our group, for a five year anniversary, the person celebrating is asked to be the chairperson at the meeting. Basically the chairperson finds speakers to share their story at the podium, sort of runs the meeting. So after the break, we headed back into the church basement, and at that point, before the next group of speakers started, there is a part of the meeting where our group gives out these little chips to celebrate various lengths of clean time... 9 months, 6 months, 3 months, 1 months... and the last chip, the most important chip we say, is for anyone with 24 hours to 29 days, the 'desire chip' we call it. So I was handing out the chips, and without any planning or letting him know, I called Dan up to come and get a 'desire chip' and introduced him to the group. Everyone clapped, I shook his hand. I didn't do it to embarrass him or anything, make him feel uncomfortable... it's just, man, it wasn't anything special. I did it because that's how I was taught. We try to make people who first come into the rooms feel welcome, feel safe, feel like they have found a new home. You try to give a newcomer a sense of hope, like they are in the right place. Alcoholism is a hopeless disease man. When you're in the depths of your drinking and drugging, you don't feel like there is any way out. You want to stop, but you can't. You don't have any control over your drinking. It's terrifying, really, once you are towards the end. You wake up in the morning, say to yourself 'I am not putting myself through that again,' and by noon there you are back in the same routine of self-destruction. It is a vicious cycle.

And like I said, when you first come in, you usually have hit some sort of 'bottom,' where you have to pay the price... it's hard first coming in, man. That night I met Dan, I was doing it like how other guys in AA had done it for me. This program, it saved my life. It saved my family. I'm no hero, and I didn't think I was doing anything special by reaching my hand out to Dan... I'm just a lucky drunk who was able to get clean through this program. I'm lucky.

So after the meeting, after the last of the speakers, I made it a point to talk some more with Dan, to give him my phone number, see what his plans were for the weekend... he said he didn't have a car, needed a ride, so I offered him a lift back to his apartment. I texted Tracy, my wife, let her know... man, I am so lucky. She understands... she knows what AA has done for me, for our family... so driving him home, we talked a little more... Dan was shy, real quiet at first. I didn't try to force anything. I told him there was a meeting I went to on Monday nights, in Watertown, and told him if he wanted to I would pick him up that Monday. He seemed game, so that next Monday, I swung by his apartment and we went... and from then on, Mondays and Fridays, and eventually Wednesdays too, I would pick Dan up, and we would hit a meeting... over the past year or so... it wasn't anything special. Like I said, I ain't no messiah, I'm no saint, I just did what I was taught to do. None of it was anything special on my end. Other guys had done the same thing for me. In AA, it's said that in order to keep it, you have to pass it on. Everything was freely given to me. I never paid no dues, never had to trade anything back to people for their time, for their love, really... I never expected anything from Dan. I was only trying to pay what I had gotten back to somebody else. And to be honest, the truth of it all is that Dan did more for me than I ever did for him, man. He helped keep me sober. To have another person rely

on you, to be dependable, to be on time, to say you're gonna do something and then do it, accountability... that all benefits me as a recovering drunk at the end of a day. That's insurance for me against the next drink. After five years clean, I thought I had learned something, like I had this program figured out... I was resting on my laurels when I met Dan... but man, he taught me so much. He helped me realize I have a lot more growing up to do.

Now Dan wasn't the first guy I had reached my hand out to. Guys come in and out of the program. Not everyone sticks around. Most guys don't stick around. It's unfortunate. But it's the truth. If everyone who needed this program stayed with it, there would be a whole lot more sober people out there. That's why I say I'm one of the lucky ones. Albert Cox ain't do anything special... man, I sure didn't earn sobriety. It wasn't owed to me. In fact, I bounced around for a couple of years, in and out... it was awful. I've seen a lot of people come and go. I've seen people go who never came back. I've been to funerals, man, funerals of people who had good time, ten, fifteen years, and then went back out. The disease is cunning, baffling, and insidious. But Dan hung in there. I would pick him up and we would grab a cup of coffee then hit a meeting. Maybe after two or three weeks, he started to open up. He was so quiet in the beginning... which looking at Dan, you would never guess how shy, how gentle the guy was. He stood maybe six four, big dude, thick dude, the Mohawk, the baggy pants... man, he was the gentlest, nicest dude I've ever met. No lie. And looking at him, like I said, you would never have guessed it... that's one of the lessons he taught me. Never judge a book, man.

I was surprised when he explained to me, when he finally told me about hitting bottom, what brought him into AA... I asked him how he ended up deciding enough was enough, with the booze, what the last

straw was. Most people have legal trouble, maybe the courts will force them into the rooms, or there are family troubles, divorce, or financial troubles, or a smashed car, or an illness... there's a lot of different ways alcohol can humble a person, whatever it is. So I asked Dan why he decided to get help with his drinking, and he told me about how his last drunk, the last time he drank, he ended up getting into a fight with his partner, ended up beating up his partner in a blackout, and being so terrified the next morning... like I said, Dan wasn't a violent dude. He wouldn't hurt a fly. But that episode shocked him enough to come to AA. I didn't press it much further. It made sense. I was more making small talk, getting to know him more, than anything... so then I talked about times I had been an angry drunk, punched walls and that sort of nonsense, just to relate to him... I didn't think much of it. But after the meeting, later on, driving him back to Waltham, he starts explaining how hard it is to come out to people, that he was so glad I didn't think any less of him for being gay... man, I didn't even catch that our conversation... that it was his way of letting me know. That's how thick I am, man... saying 'partner' instead of 'girlfriend' or whatever... I started laughing! For real! I mean, I could care less, you know? Gay, straight, it didn't matter to me... it makes no difference at all to me. I didn't really know anybody on a personal level who was gay, at that point my life, but it wasn't a big deal at all. Plus, alcoholism don't discriminate. The disease affects every kind of person. Plus, being a recovering drunk, a recovering drug addict, man... you're humbled by your past. You're humbled by the mistakes you've made, the crazy stuff you've done, the lies, the cheating, the stealing, the dangerous situations you've been in, the embarrassing moments... of all the people I've ever met, recovering alcoholics and addicts are by far

the most accepting. Not that there is anything wrong with being gay, not that's is something embarrassing to accept... I just mean that we don't judge other people for who they are. I didn't think anything of Dan being gay. I am in no position to tell somebody they are right or wrong in who they are or what they do. But anyways, Dan told me he had been seeing this other guy for three or four years, his partner, but that last night drinking he attacked the dude, totally lost it... I could understand completely. When you're in the darkness of alcoholism, when you're drinking like that, bad things happen to all of us. I didn't think anything less of Dan. So that was that.

I find myself thinking about it now, I think about why God brought Dan into my life... Dan being gay, I could relate to Dan. Not on a one-to-one understanding, but I could relate to him because we were both outsiders in our own way. Because he told me he felt like an alien sometimes, I could relate to him better than some other people, because in our own way we were different than the majority... he was a gay man in a predominately straight world, and I was a black man in a predominately white world. There aren't many black men in my office, on my street, or in the meetings I go to. I stick out like a sore thumb. It's funny, in AA, they tell you that you need to get outside of feeling terminally unique. We come in and view ourselves as these terrible people, full of shame, hanging onto secrets from the past, your drinking and drugging... all the people in your life who aren't alcoholic, they don't understand you at all. They ask 'Why can't you stop? Why are you doing this to yourself? How could you drink that much? What's wrong with you?' They don't know what it's like. So you feel like an alien when you first come in. You view yourself as different from everyone else. But then you meet other people who have done the

same things as you, who have felt the same feelings as you. Other people who have smashed up their cars. Other people who have gone to jail. Other people who understand why you would go on a two-week-long crack bender when your family was out of town... you aren't so abnormal anymore. You stop feeling like an alien. It's liberating. And meeting Dan, he helped me break down another level of my uniqueness. I wasn't different than him at all. I wasn't the outsider I thought I was... we could relate to each other on that level. I think we were especially good for each other, in that way. You know... it's, God has a funny way of bringing people into your life when you need them. Dan was one of those people.

So time went on. We went to more meetings. We got to know one another. After a month or so, Dan asked me to be his sponsor. Now sponsorship is an important part of the program. Your sponsor is somebody you can depend on, somebody you can always call, somebody to bounce any questions off of, and eventually your sponsor is the person who walks you through the Twelve Steps of AA. So when Dan asked, I said yes... not because I thought I was going to be a great sponsor... I had never sponsored anyone before... but I said yes because my own sponsor taught me that whenever somebody in AA asks you for help, whatever it is, you say "yes" and don't think twice. It's funny... you couldn't have drawn up a stranger pair than Dan and me. At least that's how I thought at first. We were so different, polar opposites... black and white, straight and gay, he was five years older than me, I was on the 9-5 job routine, the family routine, and he was this artist living on monthly disability checks from the government... but again, our differences on paper were perfect. Our differences made it clear that no matter how opposite a person can look from you, fundamentally, you are both human beings, you both have souls, you both are drunks trying to

stay clean, to live a good life... it was perfect, really. Looking back on it now, we both were perfect for each other at that point in our journeys.

I started giving him driving lessons... man, that was funny. But not for my wife! Tracy freaked out a little. We had just bought a car... she was like "You're doing what?" But man, we had some laughs doing that. When he told me he never had a license, I couldn't believe it. I was like 'We are gonna teach you how to drive!' That's how I am I guess. So we would practice on Saturday mornings... first in parking lots, then on little suburban streets, then on busier streets... we had just started on the highway. The plan was for Dan to take the road test at the DMV before the summer started... it was funny, man. Dan always said I smoked more when I was in the passenger seat with him behind the wheel. I believe it... I'd have to yank the wheel, wave on other drivers... Dan was so apologetic, "Sorry Albert, sorry, sorry," but I would crack up. It was hysterical, man. We had some good laughs cruising around.

We got along real well. I brought him to my place a bunch, to meet my wife and my baby, Victoria. Soon enough he was part of the family. He loved them, especially Victoria... she was less than a year old, and Dan would hold her, she would smile... my wife is smart, man. Tracy said to me, "The baby sees into Dan's spirit, she knows he is a good man, she knows he has love in his heart." She was right. He was a good dude. He really was. He was always asking about my ladies, always making sure they were good. Man... but knowing that side of him, that care-free, loving, light side, it made you hurt inside when he would go to the dark places with his depression. He had a rough case of it. I mean I get down in the dumps like anybody, but Dan... Dan would hurt. He would struggle with it. I could always tell when it was hitting him. Sometimes he

would text me before our meeting, say he was sick, that he was 'sitting this one out.' It wasn't like he was physically ill, but... he had it tough man. That's the worst part about depression, too... you're depressed so you isolate, you don't want to go out into the world, you hole up, cut yourself off... but the best thing for you would be to get out there, connect with other people. That's the irony. I know he was seeing a doctor, a psychiatrist, his therapists... but man, when it took hold of him, there was nothing anybody could do. Once I brought him over a meal Tracy had cooked, but he wouldn't even come to the door. I had to set it out in front of his building with a note. There was nothing anybody could do. And that was tough for me to accept... I'm all about action man, figure out what the problem is, ask 'How do we get through this,' then taking care of what needs to be taken care... but his depression wasn't like that. I struggled with accepting that fact. Acceptance is the most difficult part of sobriety, accepting life on life's terms. Accepting you don't have any control, man. I'm no good at that.

But I would try to reaffirm him, when he would express how he felt, I would say 'Well, what are your feet doing right now? Are you going to a meeting? Are you participating in your recovery? Yes! Forget the emotions, forget what your mind says. It's all about your feet. If you don't drink today, you're a success.' You know, I'd try to help him look at his life from a different perspective. He would get so down on himself. He would tell me he was a failure, that his life was a joke, that he would always be in low-income HUD housing, stuck in his crappy apartment, stuck on the monthly disability checks, stuck without a job, broke, depressed... he would have a tough time envisioning a different kind of future for himself. No matter what I said or tried to do... it was hard to watch

man. It was sad. And those two sides of him, the light and the dark, they would swing back and forth. There was no rhyme or reason to it... and I think that's what bothered him the most. He could never predict where his mind would be at... whether things outside, the stuff on paper, whether it was going good or bad... there was never any indication for him. I think that's what hurt him the most. He never knew. One day I would pick him up, he'd be all good. The next, he'd tell me he felt like he was in hell. The unpredictability of those dark moods, when they would cast a shadow over him, or when the storm would break... he had no control over it.

I knew, over the last couple months... I knew he was having a rough winter. He would back out on a bunch of meetings in a row. He wouldn't want to work on the 12 steps. I tried to tell him to focus on his one year anniversary coming up, but he would tell me "Nothing matters Albert, I'm still gonna feel like shit." He would say he hadn't come anywhere in a year... it's hard to change another person's perspective on things. You just can't do it. I tried not to force him, but I knew how much better he would feel if he got out of the apartment, if he could connect... but for him, during those times, going out into the world was the scariest thing he could possibly do. I would tell Dan that people missed seeing him at meetings... which was no lie. Man, it's sad. It makes me sad now to think back on it. Because when Dan was on point, when he was feeling alright, man he would light up a room. It wasn't long at all before he knew everybody in the meetings. He'd walk in and be shaking hands up and down the rows of seats... people loved him. I used to kid with him that he should run for mayor of AA! But seriously, people really felt comfortable around him. People were attracted to his warmth. He was like a big teddy bear, as goofy as

it is to say that... it was true. People felt love around Dan. Man, it's just... it's sad. How much he was liked, how people always enjoyed seeing him, and how that made Dan feel better... but his depression would keep him from going out into the world and having those experiences. That's the worst part about it.

And... now, I ain't a doctor, I'm no therapist, but whatever the medications were, whatever the treatment he was receiving, whatever it was, it wasn't working for him. I don't think whoever was treating him was doing everything they could. That's just my opinion, based on what I saw. I didn't ask him much about that, but he would sometimes explain how they'd be putting him on one thing, taking him off another... he would say he didn't get much out of the therapy, that his doctor was this cold dude who he couldn't relate to. I don't know, I didn't press him on it. But I watched him struggle with that man. I don't think whoever it was, they wasn't doing enough for him. But that's only my opinion.

But at the same time, man, things did get better. Like I said, he was opening up to people, he started coming out of his shell, started to share his story... he got back into his art, and that was a huge part of his life. He said he hadn't been painting in years before he sobered up... that was big for him. That made him happy. And man, no lie... he was gifted. He did amazing work. He would do these sketches by hand, then transfer the image onto his computer programs... I have one of his pieces in my house, framed... it's beautiful. I gave him a picture of Tracy and Victoria and me, and over Christmas, he put together this portrait... he was talented, man. I don't know the first thing about art, but he had skill.

Dan had gone to school for it when he was younger. He told me about that, about having to drop out because of finances, because his

grandmother passed away and she had been paying for his education. His family situation was rough. His old man left him when he was young, came in and out of his life. Dan still saw him from time to time, but I guess his old man was struggling with addiction problems as well. It didn't seem stable. But Dan didn't hate the guy, by any means, but it just wasn't a dependable relationship for him. I think he'd be clean for a little while, his old man, then get back on the stuff. But Dan understood, he didn't hate him for that. Dan could just tell when the guy was messed up, and he didn't want to be around that. And Dan's mom, she seemed like an alright woman, I only met her once at the funeral... Dan's sister introduced us... it was brief... she thanked me for helping her son, but it was brief, she was hurting... I understood, and trust me I wasn't fishing for no thanks. I told her he was a good guy, that I was sorry for her loss... what can you even say, man? But from what Dan told me about her, she was a very conservative woman from a religious family, and she kicked him out of the house when he was 18 for being gay. Well, she had him sent to some camp, three months or something, one of those programs for teenagers, kids with substance issues... he used to smoke a lot more weed back in the day... he'd always say that at meetings, "I was a pothead first, then I graduated to being a raving drunk"... funny stuff like that... but, he left the house when he got back. Their relationship was rocky while he was growing up. But things were getting better as he was doing his own healing, over the last couple years I guess... I know she would still help him out with money, cook him meals, celebrate birthdays... but at the same time, I don't think Dan had completely forgiven her for her views on him, on his life. He didn't talk about their past much, but... after what she had done to him, I got the impression he felt betrayed by her. And I don't

blame him at all. I always hated that, how church people claim Jesus, but then they throw their own flesh and blood to the side... that hypocrisy man, I hate that.

But Dan was connected to his family. He didn't hold any bad blood. And his sister... she was Dan's biggest supporter I think... her and her daughter, Dan's niece, he loved them, man... I just, I think about that... I can't understand it. The whole thing. He had people, and... who knows, man?

But it was beautiful to watch him getting back to his art. I mean, that's what sobriety is all about. The whole point of getting clean is being able to live a life that you want to live... by taking control of your life, and not having a bottle or a baggie call the shots. You clean up and then you can start actively participating in your own life... find hobbies, find your interests, your passions... you get to experience life again. When you're stuck on a bottle or a pipe, you ain't living, man. You're beholden to a substance. But you clean up, then you start to figure out who you are as a person without all of the other garbage. Dan knew he was an artist, he had that going for him. First and foremost... if you asked him, he'd tell you "I'm an artist." He had plans to open up his own gallery, his own design business... he even started selling work to people. I bought that portrait I was talking about before... but he would do paintings for his friends in the gay community, his, I guess Dan called it his 'homo-erotic' work... it wasn't my scene man, but I know he liked doing it, and he was good at it. Again, I ain't in no spot to judge another man's life. If he was happy, not hurting anybody, and making money, I was in full support of it. One of the facilities he went to, this advocacy office over in Waltham where he would meet with an occupational therapist once a week, they let him use their computers to work on his art. But an overnight

janitor... I guess Dan left the computer on, forgot to close out whatever he was doing... Dan was spacey like that... well this janitor saw one of his more, risky, I guess, pieces... they told him not to use the office anymore for personal work. We had a good laugh over that man... but Tracy, she had the idea to ask her boss for one of the old computers at her office, so in a week we had Dan set up with that, so he could work from his apartment. It was cool to see him being productive. He appreciated it so much... in a lot of ways he was moving forward with his life. He wanted things to improve. At times it was hard to see, but deep down, I know he wanted more... that's the hardest part of all this. I don't understand what happened... I wish, I wish he would've talked to me that day... give me a second man...

Who knows though? Who really knows what is in the heart of another man? I feel like I am just beginning to understand who I am, to know myself, after thirty years of living... I don't think most people ever fully open themselves up to the world. It's too risky. It can be too painful. They say only God knows what goes on in each man's heart... I have to believe Dan opened up to me however he could, but at the end of the day... who knows? We were close though, in only a year... I was privileged to be able to call Dan a friend. He was a good friend to me. I hope I was to him...

He was hysterical man, geesh... Dan would crack me up all the time. He would hop in the car, and start telling me some story from high school, from 2nd Period math class with Ms. Johnson, remembering all these details... he had a memory like an elephant. But then, at the same time, he was spacey man... he'd ask me who was in the Super Bowl, and it would be the New England Patriots... I'd be like what planet are you living on man! Or he'd ask where tax dollars went, and the dude had been on government assistance for years. That's

how he was. But he was never embarrassed, about anything. Dan was one of those rare people, he had nothing but raw truth to give you. He had no problem airing out his dirty laundry, or offering intimate details... he'd start telling me a story about how his manager at the Fun Zone, where he worked back in the day, used to suck him off after their shift was over and make Dan promise him never to tell anyone... too much information, right? But he was never embarrassed. He never apologized about who he was. I asked my own sponsor one time, I asked him "What am I supposed to say to some of this stuff?" I was out of my element man. But my sponsor, he told me "Albert, all you are is an ear for Dan's voice," it didn't matter what he was saying. My only job was to listen, not judge, and be an example of the principles of the program. I had just never heard somebody express themselves so candidly. You rarely hear people actually say how they feel. I think about my office, the corporate world... you ask someone, 'How are you?' And 9 times outta 10, they say 'Good.' Not with Dan. He'd tell you flat out how he was. He gave it to you up front. He wasn't afraid... it's funny, with his mom and everything... Dan once told me his earliest memories of life were being terrified of going to hell, because all gay people went to hell, and he knew from an early age, like 7 or 8, he was gay... he told me how it bothered him for years, but by the time he was in junior high, he had gotten past it... he was like, "I'm going to hell, so what could possibly scare me more." I think after he let that go, he was liberated in a way. Like he had nothing to lose. I mean it was easy to see why Dan wasn't all about religion or God... he never liked talking about that stuff much... but he'd make a big joke about it, like "No wonder I'm nuts, I've been afraid of demons torturing me since I was seven years old. Thanks for that, baby Jesus!" He had a great sense of humor

about life, about the paradoxes of being a human... it was inspiring, for me. I wanted to be more like him in that respect... despite his waves of anxiety, he was so at peace with himself, with who he was. He didn't care about what other people thought of him... but not in a way where Dan even said outright, "I don't care what people think of me, screw everyone!" We all know people like that. I think that's almost more defensive, more like posturing... but Dan, he possessed this unspoken attitude. I'm not even sure he could identify it if you asked him to. Sometimes he couldn't see those parts of himself, the strength... that part of him... that part was more mature than me, than most people. He never felt ashamed about who he was. As a black guy who grew up in mostly white neighborhoods, mostly white schools, who now goes to meetings with mostly white people... not that I got nothing against any of that, though, white people are fine by me... but the way Dan embraced his individuality, never apologized... he was an inspiring guy. He gave me way more than I ever gave him. I wish I could have told him that.

Man, it's the beautiful thing about AA... these relationships you make. I would've never predicted I would build a relationship with a guy like Dan... but like I said, God put him into my life for a reason. It's funny. I miss him, man. He was a good dude.

I'll be at the office, or on the train home, and I can still hear him telling one of those stories... he'd lay out the scene, like this one he started describing his grammar school and having to go home early one day to change his pants because he spilled marinara sauce on himself in the cafeteria, all over his crotch, so he waited until all the other kids got up and left. The teachers were yelling at him to line up with the rest of the kids, and he just refused. Man, I feel guilty... sometimes I would be thinking to

myself, listening to him back then in my car or at a meeting, complaining in my own head, like, 'When is this dude gonna shut up?' So selfish, man. I didn't realize all he wanted to do was share who he was with me. I took him for granted, man. I did. And that's another lesson Dan taught me... you better believe when I come home, when I kiss my wife and my baby girl, you better believe I thank God for them, appreciate them... but it's easy to do with your family. The real journey is to do that with everyone you meet. And I think Dan did that. He never made fun of anybody, he never talked smack about anyone after a meeting, he always gave somebody his time who needed it... I remember once waiting in the car, after a Monday night, and ten, fifteen minutes go by... I was steamy, man, I was ticked off. It had been a long day at work, I wanted to go home, eat, see my family... he finally got into the car, and I said 'Where the hell you been? You know I ain't no chauffer service!' and Dan got all quiet and told me about one of the guys who just lost a brother, how he was trying to console him... it really, that's just how Dan was. He surprised me, constantly.

The last time I saw him was about a week before he passed away. We went to our meeting, *No Excuses- TSDD*, I drove him back to his place... he was down, like I said, he had been down in the dumps for most of the past winter, after the holidays... he had gotten his one year chip about a month before, and he was excited about that... his little sister came to the meeting, clapped for him... it was nice to meet her and everything, I think he appreciated her being there a lot... but that February stretch was hard on him. That night we drove back to his place, and I asked him what his weekend plans were. He didn't say much, work on a painting he was finishing, maybe visit his mom and step-father... there was nothing strange about it. I would always say 'Keep doing what you're doing' after we shook

hands, when he opened the car door... but that last time, he gave me this look, this tired look... he used to make fun of me for always saying that, he'd turn and imitate my voice "Keep doing the do, Big Al"... but the last time, he didn't say that. His eyes... there was a tired look in his eyes. He was worn out, by the depression, by the swings of his mood... he once told me he wanted more than anything in life to feel balanced. He looked like he had seen enough. But I didn't think much of it man. I didn't know. I told him to call me if he needed anything. And that was it. He closed the door. I pulled away in the car. It was a typical Friday night, except for that look... I don't know man. Nobody knows. I went home, didn't think anything of it. All weekend.

Then Monday he texted me, said he couldn't make the meeting, so I said it was fine. We had scheduled coffee Wednesday night, to do some 12-step work, and he told me he would be better by then. Last thing he sent to me was 'See you Wednesday. Thanks again for everything Albert.' I hated when he would thank me, because I felt like I wasn't doing anything. I didn't feel like... he would say thank you, and I would tell him to stop... man... he did so much for me. Relationships in life are two-way streets. And to be honest, Dan did way more for me... I didn't text him a response, and then when Wednesday came I called him around 7 and his phone was off. He never got back to me. I was concerned, but I thought maybe he was just riding out the depression, isolating... Thursday morning, a guy from my group who knows one of Dan's aunts, from Waltham, he called me up at about 10AM. He said, "Albert, are you sitting down?" I said "Pete, what are you talking about man?" Then he told me. I didn't know what to say. I was shocked. I tried to work the rest of the day... it was a blur... the whole week was a blur, the wake, the funeral... I, I couldn't believe it man. I know he was

struggling, but to do it the way he did... I can't even imagine what must have been going on in Dan's head. To just, to do it like that...

I was a wreck man. I went to a meeting every night. I cried, man. I cried and cried and cursed God and swore and I couldn't make any sense of it... my first reaction was to take accountability for it. I took the blame, I felt like I should have done more. I felt like I should have done something different. So I was going on and on to my sponsor, how I let Dan down, how I could have done something to help him, to prevent what happened, and my sponsor he called me out, he said, "Albert, how selfish can you be? Look at you! How important do you think you are? You think you're God, Albert? You think you run the show? You don't run shit! It has nothing to do with you! Nothing! Don't you make this about you! You mourn for your friend, but you don't get to mourn for yourself like it was all up to you. Nothing is up to you! You take life on life's terms, and you accept it. That's it!" He set me straight man, I'm lucky... I have people in my life who can do that.

I hope I did that for Dan in some ways, but even that's not important... what's important is being grateful to have known him, to have been able to call him a friend, to have been able to learn as much as I did from him. Dan was a blessing in my life. I was blessed to have known him, absolutely. And I'll tell you what, my wife, Tracy, we just found out we're pregnant with our second... I don't want to see the ultrasound, where they tell you the gender, I like being surprised... but on the day our child is born, if it's a boy... you bet I name him Daniel. Bet your life on that. And I hope one day, when that boy is grown up, I can tell him Dan's story, like you're telling it right now. I would be honored to do that.

FRANK MARSDEN

Well, egh, Daniel Marsden is my son... or he was my son, egh... well, he is my son, it's not like he's not my son anymore, he just... hell, I told you I wadn't gonna be any good at this interview stuff. Egh... well, I guess to understand Daniel's story, I gotta start you with the beginning of my own. I'm from North Carolina, originally, (*exhaling smoke, a gulp*) just between Charlotte and Asheville, not too far off the state line, small town down there. My mama, she worked for Caterpillar, manufacturing plant, damn near thirty-five years, cutting hair on the side... I grew up down there, she raised me and my two brothers... egh, both them are gone... I mean, I know John's dead, but Jimmy, nobody has seen him in 25 years so I'd just as much assume, considerin' the way he was going when I last saw him. My old man left before I could remember his face... so yeah, egh, like I said, my mama she kept food on the table, roof over our head, worked us when we needed a whoopin', took us to church on Sundays. It was alright. It wasn't no different than anyone else I knew, it was like a lot of people down there. Growing up, I was a big football player, if you can imagine that, lookin' at me here now... egh, that's damn near thirty, forty years ago... (*exhaling*) shit... I could've done something with that, I'll tell you what. I had some talent back in my time. I could run that ball like a sonofabitch, no lie. But ain't nothing pan out. My grades weren't no good for college, and I started getting into trouble when I was sixteen, you know, me and John Law didn't get along too great. I ran a little shine, grew some dope, nothing major but nothing entirely legal neither. Nobody wanted to take a risk on a hillbilly like me, so egh, I started working after I dropped out of high school. Windows and walls, I guess you could say that's been my specialty most my life... painting, installing windows, some

roofing... learned the trade young, I was a big boy, I could work you know... I don't know, shit... egh, I got married for the first time when I was just 18... girl named Michelle, and she was only 17... of course it didn't work out, you know... we were young. Way too young. She was crazy. I was already half in the bag even back then, running and rippin' and all... it just didn't work out. We had a son together, but... things weren't going great back home, work was scarce... the sheriff he told me, egh, he said you either go to jail or you get outta the county, so it was time to split.

(*lighting a cigarette*) So I had a cousin up this way, or a second cousin, whatever it was... you know how family is... but whatever it was, I called on him, and he told me, Roger, he said "Come on boy there's plenty work up here." Life was better, there was more opportunity for a man like me... egh, I reckoned it would be a good thing to do. At the time... you know, I fixed my stuff up together, what little I had you know, and I headed north, up with all you Yankees. That was, geesh, 1982... 1983... something like that... I was young. I got on a crew real quick. And you know what, funny, how it is... I remember on my way, I vowed to myself, swear to the Good Lord, I said 'I'm gonna make some money and enjoy myself.' I was happy to be out of the country, happy to have a new place to lay my head, new opportunity, the city and all... it was a fresh start. Fresh start is good for a man. Egh, but... you know just like I done with just about everything else in my life, I went and fucked that up (*exhaling*)... I met Daniel's mother, Laurie, sittin' pretty at a bar, damn near... must have been the second week I was up here. You believe that? And she was 19 at the time, you know... she was local, Boston girl... she was beautiful, pretty little thing boy... and when I seen her at the funeral, ain't too much changed, she still a good looking woman, you know... but I laid eyes on her, and she heard

my accent... boy I tell you what, I caught her attention and she caught mine. And like I said, everything I done planned to do when I got up here went right out the window. I found myself in a bed with her real quick. You know? Couple Budweisers later and I had me another girl pregnant. And that was Daniel.

Egh, it's just hard looking back on... when you look at your life... (*sip from coffee cup*) don't get me wrong, you know, I love my children, I loved Laurie, back then... but I wadn't ready for any of that. I wadn't ready to be a family man. I didn't want to be a father again. Hell, I hated my daddy... I never, growin' up, I never wanted to be nobody else's daddy. But there I was. With a 19-year-old nursing assistant, she's pregnant, and of course her family... she's got a pap, four brothers, all older than her... boy, they weren't too happy to see me in the beginning, I'll tell you what. They looked at me like 'Who the hell is this country boy?' Shoot... they never were too keen about me, come to think of it... why would they be though? You know? They were pissed off. They did not like me, not one bit. And when she, she found out she was having a baby... oohwee, the cat was really out of the bag then.

We had to get married. Her folks was Catholic, Irish Catholic, conservative... that's just how you did it back then. Egh... besides I didn't have any money for no abortion, plus with her religion, it wadn't happening... so that's what you did. You had the kid, you know? We got married. So, now, in six months up here... now I had a wife with a kid on the way. And that was Daniel. When he first came (*extinguishing cigarette*), you know, you're happy. You have a child. We were happy to have him. I tried not to look at him like a burden... you try to make the best of it. I don't know. I wadn't drinking as much then, when he was born... especially with Laurie's brothers hawking over me all the damn time, you know... we

moved in to a duplex, living with her parents on the bottom floor. So I wadn't fucking around as much. Sure I'd go out with my cousin every once in a while, but, I mean, for the most part it was working, providing... we made it through a couple years. Daniel was a happy baby, boy... beautiful boy... he had a head of curls, big smile... you know, I kept it together best I could... egh, ay... I tried to make it so he came into the world right. I did. We loved him. I loved him. I remember, I remember his first birthday, and I got him a football, I rolled it up next to him... boy, he wanted nothing to do with that pigskin... he acted like he was allergic to the damn thing! Shoot... he wanted nothing to do with that. That was kind of funny I guess.

You know, he started getting a little older, musta been about two or three... and you know... work cut out, I lost a job... I put a needle in my arm the first time, and egh... well, that was going around back then, just what people did I guess... you know, that fucked everything up. Once you're on that junk, you know, nothing else matters. Everything around you falls to shit, plain and simple. Ain't nothing matters 'cept getting high. So, egh... now we got money problems, I'm out chasing, fiendin'... her folks and her brothers are storming after me, checking bars, dope houses... Laurie was crying all the time, you know... it was no good. I fucked it up, I'll say it here. No sense in tryin' to put lipstick on a pig. I ain't ne'er been to proud, you know... I messed up with all that shit. We'd get into these terrible fights, boy... and her paps would come up, and we'd go at it, then one of the brothers would come over... you know, I was a big boy, but two, three on one... I'd catch a whoopin' then I'd pay the favor back to her... start everything all over again... it's just how it was. Boy, it was crazy, looking back now... it was crazy.

It was just... egh... it's just, it's too bad. It's too bad, but, it got to a point where it clearly was, egh, not goin' to get any better. And the only thing to do was to get outta there... and of course Laurie was pregnant again, around that time... must'a been, shoot, '87, '88... so when that decision got made, you know... egh, that's Katie there, that's my third child now. And, egh, that's my only surviving child, today... you know, my first son with Michelle, back home, he ended up following his father's path, stuck a needle in his arm, he OD'd maybe twelve, thirteen years ago... heroin, boy... shit is sent from the devil. Straight from hell. And now Daniel, you know... and my other son, Adam, later on, and he died in a car accident. I... when I sit here, saying it out loud... you know, I can't help but feel cursed. I don't know... egh (*lights another cigarette*)... but, anyways, so Laurie was pregnant with Katie and I had to go. I had overstayed my welcome, as they say... I had been aced out of the union, lost jobs, my reputation went to shit by this point... it was time to go. There wadn't nothing up here for me anymore, so I packed up my gear and you know... her family couldn't have been happier to get rid of me, boy... they were helpin' me pack my bags, shit-eatin' grins on their faces... once the divorce was final, they changed the locks, and that was it... Laurie had the kids, there wadn't any sense in fighting her in court on any of that. Not that I could've afforded it, but... I left peaceably as I could. What little right I could do, I suppose.

You know, I wadn't a good father, it's... Daniel, and he was, he was a good lookin' little fella... I'll tell you what, he was a handsome little boy. I just... (*gulping*) he was a happy little boy, from what I remember... he had his mother's eyes. I just... you know, my old man left my mama, he left his kids, and I ended up alright, you know... I knew I was leaving Daniel... Laurie was a good woman, she would

make a fine mother, you know? It was better for me to go. It just was. I was more useful gone than if I'd done try to stick around.. it was best for everyone.

So I headed West, out to egh, St. Louis... and be I'll be damned if I didn't do the same thing all over again... another marriage, 'nother divorce, 'nother kid... that son Adam I was talkin' bout... I was out there five years maybe, boy... it's, the cycles of your life, you know... when you're in 'em, you got no, you got nothing to gauge it against, you got no perspective on any of it... and, egh... ack... you just do the best you can at the time, I guess I ended up... (*extinguishing a butt into an ashtray*) I ended up in Florida, took a bid down there... had a warrant out for me, child support all over the goddamn country by then, I guess... I, you know, got nabbed for possession, distribution, minor stuff really... (*gulping coffee*)

I wadn't in contact with Laurie, at all, you know... I wadn't writin' or callin', I figured they didn't want to hear from me... I mean, she told me before I left, she said don't be callin' or confusin' the kids, you know... so I tried to respect that... I come to find later she got married again, um, you know, I just thought it would be best to stay out of their lives... they didn't owe me jack, so... that was my idea'r at least. So I did some time down in Florida, egh, started cleaning up down there for good... got out, stayed clean, started getting my act together, the work was steadier... and you know, I was down there for, damn near, fifteen, twenty years it must'a been... you know, after St. Louis, Florida... it must'a been yeah, twenty years... it's funny, you get old, your bones are crickin' every time you move, you wake up and are sore all over, you look at yourself in that mirror outta the shower and you look about same as you feel, you know... you're coughin' up after every cigarette... sittin' here talkin' about it, I guess...

Well, so I came back up here, egh... must'a been round 2005, reconnected with Roger, found some work with him... you know, it was the only family I had left... I done told you about my brothers, and by then my first son had passed, and in 2000 we buried my mother back home... she died from a heart attack in her sleep (*coughing*), holding onto a rosary, I kid you not... but I didn't want to be back in North Carolina, it wadn't home anymore... there wadn't nothing for me there, nothing but broken dreams and broken glass, you know what I mean? So I started thinking where did I belong in all this. And, egh, I came back up here like I said to Boston and... (*lighting a cigarette*) I came back up and that was the first time I'd seen Daniel in, you know, twenty years or something... I ne'er got any pictures from Laurie or anything, so when I called on him the first time... shoot, he must have been about 25 years old or something, 23, 24... I was shocked when I seen him. I was shocked boy, just at how much he looked like me. It was strange, like seein' yourself in another person... he was a big boy, and I remember one the first things I asked him was if he played any ball growing up... shoot, he started chucklin' at me... egh, you know... it was strange but, you know, he had a good heart. He didn't hate me. He ne'er told me he hated me or nothing like that. He was open to takin' time out to be with me, and, you know, he had a good heart... we'd go out, have our dinners... it was good, you know? I was finally building a relationship with one of my children, with my son... cuz, especially after my first son passed away, I just... you know I did some thinking. I wanted to be a part of Daniel's life. His sister didn't want nothin' to do with me, but I respected her wishes, you know? I understand where she's coming from. But after my first boy died, it woke me up. And I was able to be a part of Daniel's life, you know, I was able to give him a little money here and there, and,

you know... egh, you know, try to learn a little bit about his life... though I didn't agree with, egh, I didn't support everything he was doing, but that's people, you know... I remember, you know, we was sitting at a Wendy's when he told me he said 'Dad, I'm gay' and I just... shoot, I was pissed off for a hot minute there... but what you gonna do? You know, I can't change nobody. I hardly got any say in my own goddamn life. I just remember losing my appetite, couldn't finish eating my burger after hearing that... hell, but it's who he was and he was my son at the end of the day, you know. I loved him. I still love him.

Like I said, these cycles, when you look back... we got to know each other more and more, and you know it was good, I was working like I said and we'd meet up... I'd take him out with my crazy girlfriends, he'd... it was good for a little while. But then, in, um, 2010, yeah it was 2010, I had my accident... (*flicking the butt end*) fell off a ladder on a job, busted up my back real good... and that's when they put me on those goddamn pain meds. You know, I had been clean for a little while, but once those pills came back, and I had those in my system... back on the oxy's... you're fucked then boy. That story... everybody knows that story. The pills were kicking my ass. It all started back up again. You can't afford the pills, you know, so you go back to the junk, cuz it's cheaper, and... boy, it was just another nightmare. Another fuckin' nightmare.

Every Father's Day, we'd make a point, egh, to get together... Katie wanted nothing to do with me. I understand, you know. It's harder, for a girl, for a daughter... you're supposed to have that father-daughter relationship, daddy's girl and all, you're supposed to be there for her... and you know, I wadn't. I wadn't there for her. And she had her step-daddy, and she loves him, so, you know, it's okay. You know I don't wish any ill on him, on her, on any of them. Not

Laurie, nobody... I love 'em, really. There ain't nothing to hate about 'em. I'm not an evil man. I'm not a bad man, I don't think, you know... I certainly ain't wishin' no hatred on them, egh...

Well, you know... egh... those couple years I was back on the pills, on the horse, you know... I just, I stopped seeing him as much, Daniel... I just... the drugs, boy. The shit ruins people, ruins lives, ruins family... and, egh, you know Daniel was having his own troubles at the time... not that, he didn't let on much, you know... I think he'd be frustrated at me, with my shit, so he wadn't fixing to talk as much... but you know, shoot, we still had some fun times! We still did alright you know, cuz, you know me, I always had a crazy story for him 'bout a job or a woman, he'd enjoy hearing all that... and, egh, I knew he was dealing with the depression... the whole thing with his art school, how that didn't work out... he didn't say a whole lot about that, but what he did let on, I could tell he was real upset about it all... I suppose, from what he did say, the way Laurie's mom told him she had saved up enough money to put him through school, but then when she passed... now this all happened before I got back mind you, but... his grandmother passed, and the money couldn't be found, or another one of her kids had taken it... Daniel never got a straight answer about any of it, and that upset him you know. That was his dream, the art school... and, egh... I don't know what happened with it all, but I reckon somebody in Laurie's family took that money that was saved up for him. That's what usually happens.

But... egh, I don't remember a whole lot from those couple years, when I got back on the pills and what not... you know... but I cleaned up, about a year and a half ago, again... just learning to deal with chronic pain, in my back and what not, you know... it's a sonofabitch... everything hurts all the time, even, you sit down to

take a shit and you're wincing, you know... but you just deal with it boy, and egh, you gotta do what you gotta do... so after clearing up, really the last year and a half you know, things were getting better. I been clean since, you know. I been trying. And we'd see each other every couple weeks, you know... this, egh, this last Father's Day we went over to dinner at this Italian joint, over there in Watertown, you know... Bruna's... over there, and egh, you know Daniel he ended up givin' me a picture, as a gift. He done found an old photograph, I don't know how or where, but it was a photograph of me holding him way back when he was just a baby, not even a year old you know... probably a couple months, and, (*chuckling*) I had Daniel in one hand, in the photograph, and a Budweiser in the other, and egh... my shirt was off, you know... it was just a funny picture, taken in our kitchen, when I lived with Laurie... it was a real funny picture, real funny. I didn't even know it existed, you know. But Daniel had redone it all, drawn it up like a portrait like, and egh, he blew it up real big... he gave it to me with a frame, and egh, I'll tell you what, it was beautiful. It really was. I was impressed, and egh... he did a real fantastic job. I still got that picture he did, still got it hanging up in my place, right in my bedroom, you know... egh... it was damn nice. I guess, you know... it's just too bad... (*walks away, refills cup of coffee, lights another cigarette*)

It's just the depression, the drinking, the addiction and all that, you know... it all runs through my side of the family. It's, I, egh... I don't know, if it's a goddamn curse or what it is, but... you know, Daniel got the brunt of it, with his genetics... I don't know the science behind it all, but, I definitely had something to do, with giving him all that... I just, you know, but you come into the world... I came into the world with what I got, everybody does, you know...

you get what you get, and you got to learn to make the best with whatever it is you have... you try to do the best you can, so (gulping)... we just didn't talk a whole lot about the depression. I didn't try to prod, ask him many questions about it and all, you know... we're men, you know... he didn't seem to be too keen on providing many details on it, you know... we just... you try to have a friendly, you know? You try to be on friendly terms with somebody... he was my son. I wanted us to get along, and, egh... it's kind of where we were at. He had forgiven me. You know, I remember... egh, I don't know, we saw a movie, couple months ago... that was nice, we got some popcorn... one of them Marvel action movies... explosions and everything, the super-heroes... you know, it was fun... and, he was... I was just trying to be a part of his life, I don't know... just trying to reclaim a part of my life, make something right for once.

Like I said, you know, you get older, you're starin' into that mirror, lookin' back on your past, you got all these years nippin' at your heels like a goddamn rabid dog, and, egh, you say to yourself 'What the hell do I got?' And for me it was easy answerin', cuz I had my son, you know. I had Daniel. Especially then, once Adam died, my third son... it was only Daniel and Katie left. And... Daniel was my only boy. I loved him. That's all I really had in the world. He was the last thing I really had. And, now he's gone, you know... egh... but... (smoking, taking a sip of coffee, deep breaths) it's just a shame. It's such a goddamn shame. The way it all went down, and... you know, like I said, we didn't do a whole lot of talking on heavy stuff, but I just wish he would've said something to me, to somebody... I know he was seeing a doctor, and he had other people in his life... everybody liked Daniel. I mean, from what I could tell, with him, egh, he was always on the phone, always

getting calls, telling me stories about his friends... you know, he was a likeable kid. He even, one time he went down to Disney, one of his friends, she had a little girl... Daniel went down there, helped out, went to Disney with them... people loved Daniel. He had a heart of gold, he really did. We were different, like that... Daniel wadn't ever gonna hurt anybody. He ne'er set out to mean nobody no harm. I gave him some parts of me, but not everything. I didn't give him my heart, cuz, he just... I'm no monster, but I ain't no saint either. Daniel, he was damn near saint as anyone I ever knew. He was a good, good kid. He had a good heart. He was a good boy. He loved his mama, he loved his family, he loved the people in his life... and you know, he done right by them, and... (gulping) he was a good boy. It's too bad... that's just the shit of it, the way it all happened, you know...

I guess I'm not even... I don't know, it's strange, I'm not angry right now. I'm just shocked, really. Shocked by it all. I'm still shocked... I can't find the time to be all put out, I just... not even sad, or whatever, you know... I'm just in total shock, still. I'm just... it's been a state of shock since I heard. Since Laurie called me, and that was, you know... hearing her voice, picking up the phone... I was surprised by that too, you know. Having her number come up... I said 'What the hell is this?' and then I picked it up... figured 'Why the hell is she calling me boy?'... but her first words... egh... you know, she says, "He's gone." And I said 'What do you mean? Who? What?' I had no clue, no clue whatsoever... I wadn't... how could anybody be expecting something like that? You know? But she said it again, and the second time... then I knew. I just... put a pit right in the middle of my stomach, ate up my heart... it's there now, you know... I knew then, though. You know, there was only one person it could be. It was him. It was Daniel. It just... it don't make any

sense, cuz... Daniel ne'er wanted to cause nobody no pain, that wadn't his nature, like I said. He cared about people. He cared that the people in his life was happy. He cared dearly about that... I know that, absolutely... he even loved me some by the end. And I was a bad father. I'll be the first to admit it. I ain't gettin' no awards in that department, no way. I'm wonderin' every day how I'll answer the Good Lord for that, but I was tryin', you know... but Daniel even loved me. We were trying. There was something there, but... it just don't make any sense... why he done what he did... and, the way he did it... it was... egh, it was so... I don't know... it's just... it's too bad... egh...

I thought maybe, maybe with some more time between us, you know... boy, he used to... we'd meet up, and he'd start poking fun at me, you know, for my fashion sense... my old, I must'a had this coat for about twenty-five years, and he, egh, he would say to me "Dad, this winter I'm buying you a new coat." You know, seeing me in this old thing... he had a caring heart like that. He really did... it's... it's too bad for the world, really... there's so much shit out there, with the way things are goin', they... the world is worse off without Daniel, that's the truth, boy. But... that's the way it happens, you know? The Good Lord gives, the Good Lord takes away. Simple as that. And the Good Lord took Daniel from us. And, egh... I ain't suppose there's any explanation, for any of it, you know. That's not the way it works, far as I can tell... it's just, it's life. And life is shit sometimes... life is shit and it don't make no sense, no matter how far you think it over... and, egh... you know...

They didn't ask me to do much, for the funeral, to participate, and, egh... you know, I didn't much expect them to. Katie still, she wouldn't even acknowledge me, at the wake... Laurie didn't have much to say either, they... she just... but the only thing I asked for, was

that I could have a moment alone with my son before they buried him, before the funeral, with the casket open... I wanted to see my boy before they put him in the ground. The wake was, egh, they had the casket closed... that was hard for people, I think... everyone wanted to see Daniel one last time, you know, to say goodbye... but his condition, egh... when they left me alone with him, and I opened up the casket... I ain't never seen anything like that. It's just... it's an image that will haunt me to my own grave. His body, it... in a way though, it was good for me to see my boy like that, cuz I knew for good that Daniel, egh, he wadn't in that body no more. His spirit, he'd gone somewhere else. That was good for me to see that, to know that my boy was in another place. But anyways, I wrote him a letter, I tucked it under his arm... I... I ended up putting a football, just a small one, but I put that in there too, kind of as a joke between us, you know... but... egh... just a moment alone with my son.

Now... egh, I don't expect to hear much from Laurie or Katie now, after (*gulping*)... I, well I suppose I expect to be getting out of here soon, to be honest with you... out of Boston, now that he's gone. I don't have much of anything else. Without Daniel, I... I gotta find something else to hang on to... between the back pain, the fuckin' crazy women out here, the fact, egh, that Daniel's gone... there just ain't nothing much in life to be all that excited about. And that ain't good news for no addict, boy... I ain't been afeard of much in my life, but now... the uncertainty, you know? It's just... life goes on I guess.

I remember my mama saying somethin' like that, way back when I was a boy... an old neighbor had passed, the first time I had seen death really, went to a funeral back then and I remember I asked my mama about death, you know... I remember her clear as day saying "Life's

for the living Frankie. That's all you mind." You know... that's the damn truth right there. It's just too bad Daniel... he should be up here living with us... egh... I don't know...

CHERYL ENOOS

My name is Cheryl Enoos, and I had the pleasure of first making Daniel's acquaintance here at the school. As you can tell, given where you are seated, I am a professor at the New England Institute of Art at the Museum of Fine Art here in Boston. Full disclosure- I *despise* the word 'professor.' The connotation, the idea that I have some sort of wisdom to convey to young people- I much prefer the term 'collaborator.' I have been a collaborator with my students for nearly thirty years. I primarily work with undergraduate students, teaching techniques, theory, et cetera. I became acquainted first with Daniel in my Studio Art class for freshman. It is a seminar course, over one semester, that provides an introduction to drawing and painting ideas for students of many disciplines. It is a fundamentals course, if you will. I enjoy it because it provides me exposure to young people, which in turn provides me exposure to a certain vital energy, if you will, to creativity, to fresh thinking. I have been *very*, incredibly fortunate to maintain the position I have been in for as long as I have.

Now I met Daniel, like I said, in Freshman Studio. All of my students, each and every one that I've had the pleasure to work with, enters with their own process, with their own story, with their own background to draw from. The seminar is an exciting class. Many of my collaborators also excel across other mediums, so drawing and painting might not necessarily be their forte. I try to help those individuals to gain insight from my medium of

expertise so they can apply it to their own. But Daniel, (lip smack) he excelled on canvas. He had no formal training upon entering school, but his eye- he had the most remarkable eye. It was his gift. And it was very easy to recognize in his work. Compared to his peers, his ability to frame a scene, as I call it, was unparalleled. Truly. When he submitted his first piece, I knew immediately he possessed a special gift. Not that I have a special insight, or am an accomplished critic- frankly it had nothing to do with me. I'm just an old woman who lives with her nervous little beagle Ginger and loves her job. But I knew right away Daniel had the makings of an artist, an artist in every sense of the word.

As the semester went on, I grew to know Daniel on a more personal basis. A friendship between us blossomed. I have a habit of going out for espresso with each one of my students, individually, in the initial month or so of a new semester. I remember our first, our first of many coffee dates, as I like to call them, and I was struck immediately by Daniel's lack of pretentiousness. Most younger students who possess talent *know* they are talented. It was as if Daniel was oblivious to the nature of his abilities, or rather, how his abilities ranked against his peers. He was confident of himself, but he had no motivation to beat out the competition, or to prove himself like that. What also struck me was that Daniel had no interest in 'talking shop.' So many young artists come to me and want to debate theory or aesthetics or philosophy, they want to expound on one system or another, they have all these esoteric ideas. Which is fine and well, but Daniel utterly disregarded any of that. I remember he asked to see a picture of my dog, laughing when I explained how Ginger's nervousness balanced out my mellowness. I remember he said, "Finding a good match in this world is a blessing." What an

insightful thing to say, don't you think? Now I know he was a few years older than the average freshman; I think he was twenty or twenty-one when most of his peers were eighteen, but there was at the same time a childlike quality to him. He wasn't shy by any means, but he was tender. And that quality, that kindheartedness, that warmth, it exuded from his work.

As I observed his interactions with his classmates, I was surprised to see how well he got along with them. Usually (lip smack) one or two students in each of my classes will stand out, head and shoulders, above their peers. And what happens is the other fifteen or twenty students will secretly despise those one or two students. It is difficult to watch, and more difficult to control as a collaborator. What also tends to happen, is that the one or two superior students will begin to display a cockiness, a *braggadocio*, if you will. But there was none of that with Daniel. With Daniel, well, everyone genuinely liked him. He was witty, charming-inappropriate at times, with his jokes, with some of his sketches, there was always a sexual undercurrent there- but he was well liked. He would offer advice or help whenever he was implored to do so. That semester, his class in particular, it may be my absolute favorite in all my years of teaching. I know a teacher isn't supposed to make evaluations like that, but if I had to pick one class, it would have to be that semester teaching Daniel. There was just an energy with that group. They were talented, they were exciting. They were excited. And our workspace buzzed each time we met together in the workshop. Daniel, to me, seemed to be the catalyst of much of that activity.

So time went on, as it does, and we grew closer, through his work, and through more coffee dates. He would bring his sketch book along to show me his ideas. He was a young Robert Mapplethorpe, if Robert

would have been a painter rather than a photographer. Daniel's subject matter was, like most artists, indicative of his own feelings, of his own inner world. You only have your own truth to reflect on, to pull from. And to be truthful in that reflection; Matisse said 'Creativity takes courage.' So Daniel would explore these deep sexual themes, his own homosexuality, the ideas of masculinity and femininity, society's expectations surrounding those ideas. But again, he would have never been able to explain the *theory* behind any of his work to me. It was all he knew, it was so natural for him. There was nothing cerebral about his process. And despite the controversial, (lip smack) and I mean that from a societal perspective, not from my own perspective mind you, but despite the controversial nature of his subject matter, he approached it with a tenderness that was his own. He was all heart.

And I was excited for him. At that point, after a few months of seeing his work, I would have predicted nothing but possibility and opportunity for him, for his career. Daniel had the goods. It was all up to him what he wanted to do with it.

Now, I must admit- I have to come clean- I love my work, I love collaborating, I love my life. But I think most art is pretty bad, to be frank. (lip smack) Most paintings, most sculpture, most literature, most music, there's nothing eternal about it. Most of what I see at the school, most of my students' work, it's lousy in the grand conversation. That may seem like a cynical, dark thing to say, as a teacher, but- you see, it's the opposite of that. The truth is that the work that is contemporary, much of it is going to appear pretty bad. Some of it is brilliant, but- you see, what happens is the bad stuff falls away. I was in New York not terribly long ago, and I went to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, my favorite

place in the city, one of my favorite museums in the world. And I didn't see a single painting there that wasn't timeless or eternal, that didn't deserve to be there. And you could get the impression from that somehow paintings are *worthy* all the time. But what a lot of people don't realize is that for every painting that hangs at the Met, there are ten thousand worthless, stupid, jerky, amateur paintings. Now there's nothing wrong with that. I think it's wonderful people try to paint, try to be creative, take a shot at it. But it's unusual that it would be worth *bothering* somebody else about, that is to say, there's something in the work that merits the attention and consideration of an audience, of an observer. Fortunately the fractional bit of really, really good work is enough to change your life, to make it worth engaging. With film, for example, people say 'Why don't they make good movies now like they did in the 30's and the 40's?' Did they make good movies in the 30's and the 40's? Yes, they did, there were a lot of great films to come from that period. But there were also a lot of lousy ones. We just don't *remember* them. I think fifty, sixty years from now, they'll say 'Why don't they make good movies like they did back in the new millennium?' Because people will have forgotten all the bad ones. Time is the great decider. But for now, what I look for in a piece of art, especially from my students, is for it not to be *boring*. I want to experience a piece that makes me think, react. I can't decide what is timeless, or whether Daniel's work would have one day hung in the Met, or in the MFA in Boston, or in the Louvre, I can't tell you that. I am a lousy prognosticator. But what I can tell you is that Daniel's work did change my life completely in only the way great art can do. His work turned me upside down, transported, opened me up. That's what his work did for me. There was nothing boring about

it.

Daniel, with all his warmth, tenderness, and despite the complete lack of a competitive drive, still had ambition. Every good artist has ambition. What did Dali say? "At 6 I wanted to be a cook. At 7 I wanted to be Napoleon. And my ambition has been growing ever since." Daniel was no different. For his final portfolio, there were six pieces required- I remember he submitted to me a dozen. And none of the work was diluted. It would have been a poor choice for any other student, but he wanted to complete a series themed on the 12 months of the year, the 12 apostles, the 12 signs of the zodiac. It was quite ambitious, and quite well done.

So, our studio class reached its conclusion. The semester was over. (lip smack) After winter break, Daniel emailed me to meet him, in, it must have been February or March. Early March, yes. But when I saw him on that occasion, his entire disposition, his aura, had radically changed. He looked despondent. Completely. All his joviality, it was gone. I immediately asked him what was wrong. I could tell right away, he didn't even have to allude to there being problem. So he began explaining to me his financial situation. He said, "Cheryl, I won't be able to continue with school after this semester." I asked him why. He explained that his grandmother, on his mother's side, had been saving the money up for Daniel to attend college all of his life. And that winter, his grandmother had passed away. Now she had told Daniel, before she died, that she had saved enough for him to finish school, and for him not to worry about anything if something were to happen to her. She told him it was all provided for in her estate, in her last will and testament. But after she died, Daniel approached his mother regarding his education, regarding the account that had been established for him. His mother told him she had no knowledge of

such an account existing. Daniel insisted his grandmother had told him about the account. His mother insisted quite the opposite. They had a fight over the whole situation. I don't think Daniel was living at home at the time, and their relationship was strained. So Daniel was convinced his mother had taken the money, to alleviate her own financial problems, instead of following the grandmother's will and using the money for Daniel's education. He told me his mother went and paid off her mortgage and her credit card debts with the money and was lying to him. He was *convinced*.

On top of all of that, Daniel was heartbroken by the loss. His grandmother was more of a mother to him, I think. The way he described her to me, his grandmother was the only one in his family who still *cared* for him, who accepted him and loved him after he came out as being homosexual. His grandmother believed in his artistic abilities, and pushed him to use his gift. Daniel was torn up with grief. I remember he began to cry while we sat at our booth in the student lounge. I tried to console him. I told him about my own story, when my boyfriend of many years passed away from cancer, and how I tried to explore death as a subject matter, to use my pain and my loss to inspire my work. I don't suppose it helped much, but that wasn't the point. You try your best to offer what you can in those moments.

We talked several times after that, but ultimately he was not able to continue to afford school after the semester was over. I sent him information on various scholarships, grants, but he seemed despondent. He was resigned at that point. I really felt for Daniel, I did, but the hardest thing was seeing him write off any chance of redemption. He refused to see any hope in the situation. I think his grandmother was his last lifeline, if you will, at that point in his journey. He was only a young man. I can't imagine

being in his situation.

Art is frustration. (lip smack) Art is humiliation. Life operates under the same mechanisms. And people react one of two ways to that, the *pain*, those 'dark nights of the soul,' if you will. People either use those periods of duress and discomfort to energize themselves and propel forward, or, what I have seen happen more frequently, they become prisoners of that pain. And don't misunderstand me. I am not saying Daniel was wrong for being overtaken by the passing of his grandmother, by his financial circumstances. I am not calling him weak. I am making no assessment of the young man. He was a lovely individual. The fact of the matter is I have no idea why certain people react one way, and others react differently. It has nothing to do with moral fiber, willpower, work ethic- none of that Puritanical nonsense. It is a roll of the dice. It's life.

When I came back into contact with Daniel, oh, after three or four years since he had left the program, and he described to me what he was doing, how he was feeling, I told him what I just told you, about pain, about moving forward one way or another. We met on a Sunday afternoon in June, if I recall, and I hardly recognized him. The vitality, the vim and the vigor, you see, by then it had been drained out of him, *totally*. The world was doing to Daniel what it does to many people. He was beat up. He said to me, "Cheryl, I can't go on like this. I have no purpose. I wipe down a video game arcade every night and trade in tickets for stuffed animals. My life is a complete failure." And I said to him, 'Daniel, your life hasn't even *begun* sweetheart! Take it easy. Transform your world. Take that despair and turn it into work.' At that point he had stopped painting, so I gave him some materials, canvas, color, et cetera, and I told him to use it. Just because he wasn't in

school didn't necessarily guarantee he couldn't have a career. I told him that. But, as you're well aware, you can't force inspiration into people.

We met a few more times, but- well, I think it's important to make a distinction here, or to shed illumination on a common misconception many people have when they speak about art and depression, creative people and despair. There's this archetype of the tortured artist, of the man or woman whose internal life is so wrought with paradox, confusion, hopelessness, which is *necessary* for him or her to produce masterful works of art. This archetype does exist, certainly, and there are individuals who can operate within that energy process. But for the most part, you see, that internal struggle is debilitating. Depression, malaise, despair, they often kill art. They don't propel it forward. I've known so many like Daniel who had ample inherent talent, that *sine non qua* if you will, but were destroyed by their disposition, or destroyed by drugs or alcohol. I've had, let's see- (lip smack) off the top of my head, I could name for you at least seven contemporaries of mine who died from suicide or drugs far before their prime. That's no exaggeration. And I loathe this idea that those individuals needed the torture to produce their work. No. I emphatically disagree. The torture ruined their work, ruined their talent! Don't you see! Their talent was entirely separated from their psychological disposition. And furthermore, to celebrate that torture, as I see some in our community do, who believe it is necessary for the artist to produce, that, as sick as this sounds, that torture ought to be *strived* for- as if there is some expectation, or requirement, that in order to be an artist, you *ought* to be tortured- I couldn't disagree more. For those people who are suffering, we ought to encourage them to seek help, to

embrace healing within their psyche. It's a shame, when I see young people with talent like Daniel's who come into the program from good upbringings, with strong values, and you watch them fall into drugs, into despair. They think they have to do it, to become better artists. It's *killing* people, to be blunt. It truly is.

I tried, at one point, (lip smack) it must have been about five years ago. By then Daniel had quit reaching out to me. We hadn't communicated in some time. But I heard about an internship position, an associate of mine, he had a friend in the design business, graphics, and asked if I could recommend anyone to him for a summer internship. Now I still had my own students, but upon learning about the opportunity, the first name that came to my mind, that popped in there, was Daniel Marsden. I thought to myself, 'Well that's funny.' I am a firm believer in the 'first thought, best thought' ethos. I suppose being a child raised on Beat novels, lusting over Kerouac's *Road* and all of that- well it's beside the point. But I reached out to Daniel, via email, and provided him with the details of the position. And Daniel responded to me very promptly, he thanked me profusely for thinking of him, and he indicated more or less he would take the interview. So I connected him with the proper official at the design firm, and that was that. I never heard back from Daniel again. That was my last communication with him. I found out, about a month later, that an appointment had been scheduled for Daniel to meet with a representative, for a sit-down, or whatever they call it, but Daniel never showed up. There was no follow-up. Daniel more or less blew off the interview. And, well, I didn't know how to reach back out to Daniel, to ask him what happened. I- I didn't know how to proceed. I didn't want to reprehend him or make him feel bad, I- it was difficult. But that communication was our last.

I certainly thought of him from time to time over the next couple of years, but, life moves on, memories fade, it all passes. "So it goes," as Vonnegut said. But then, about two months ago, I was reading through the paper, and- well, I have this nasty habit of reading through the obituary section. It's embarrassing, to be sure, a bit voyeuristic, distilling an entire existence in one paragraph, judging the photograph of the departed against the story provided about his or her life. Regardless- I opened up the paper, and there was Daniel's picture. I wish I could tell you I was shocked by seeing his name in bold there in the newsprint, but I wasn't. Like I indicated previously, (lip smack) I have been in the 'scene,' if you will, long enough to know what happens to all too many of our type. I'm old, but I'm not naïve. Drugs. Depression. Suicide. Death. For all the celebrating of life, the celebration of emotions, for everything that art is *supposed* to be about- I wasn't surprised. I was saddened, to be sure, but not surprised.

Truly it was a chance of fate that I was able to find the information there, regarding the wake and the funeral, and I had the opportunity to attend Daniel's services and speak with his mother. She was distraught, of course, but I tried to console her by offering my assistance in *possibly* curating a gallery exposition of his work, work that she had kept or that might have been found in his possession. I am in the unique position to be able to curate something like that, a posthumous display of his work, so if I can perform that function, I'd like to. We exchanged information and such, so we'll see what comes of it. But I suppose that would be proper, it would be a worthy testament for Daniel, to see that through.

Almost without fail, the question of (lip smack) 'waste' comes to

mind. Was Daniel's talent wasted? This idea of waste, of talent-it is important to consider, I think. Was Daniel at fault, was he guilty of wasting his talent? Some people would think so. Others might look elsewhere. Is society guilty for allowing his talent to go undeveloped? Am I guilty as one of his collaborators? Is his family at fault? I, however, find the far more poignant question to be: was it even his to waste? Are the expectations fair, that he should have done something *more* with his talent? Because he doesn't have a piece hanging in a museum, is he a failure? Why do we have to chalk his life up between two terms, success or failure? What did Daniel really owe the world, or any of us? Like I said, I have known many men and women who left this world unexpectedly, young, with plenty of ability and potential. But I have come to understand that nobody is owed anything. Nobody is entitled to time, to life. It is a gift we are afforded by an unknown force, and that same force takes the gift back without indication or warning. I like to think nothing is wasted. Every moment, every person, every act, it contributes in some way or another to the great work, to the whole of life.

KATIE FOLEY

That's a weird question... I guess, like, my first memories of Danny were as kid, growing up with him. He was my big brother, right, so I remember little things... like, I remember a birthday party where he put frosting on his nose and was like dancing around, that was funny. I remember riding bikes with him. We would like to make up these adventures... my mom's house, we weren't well off by any stretch, so there wasn't a whole lot to do but go outside and sort of make the world your own playground. Like Danny and I would ride back behind Prospect Hill, we would build secret forts... there was a lady in our neighborhood, Lorraine... and I guess she was like

mentally ill, but she had all these bags stuffed with cans she would deposit for money, and she would walk around, she'd be like talking to herself... she scared the crap out of us. So we would always be on the run from her... I guess she was like the evil queen in the whole game. I don't know. Silly stuff like that. I got along with Danny real well as a kid. We were buddies, for sure.

Our childhood was good, like, my mom did the best she could... we lived with my grandma and grandpa, in a duplex, when I was real little, but my grandpa passed away when I was young, maybe six or seven, and my grandma had to go to a nursing home. She had bad arthritis, like, and she couldn't walk around much. Danny would draw her pictures and decorate her room in the home, she loved that. But when my grandparents left, my mom had to sell the house, so we moved to a smaller place, on the west side of town. Then my mom met Dave, our step-dad, and that was great. Dave is my father, as far as I'm concerned... that's why I took his last name. I haven't talked to my biological father, like, ever. I mean, I saw him at Danny's funeral, but he's a joke. He's a drug addict. He's a liar, he... I think he took advantage of Danny, towards the end, took advantage of his kind heart. I want nothing to do with the guy. He's an asshole, and what he did to my mother... he would beat her... he's a piece of crap. Why do you think I don't have the same last name as Danny? But this isn't about my father...

Anyways, the four of us, mom and Dave and Danny and me, we made up the family, and things were good early on. We weren't rich, but we always had food to eat, clothes on our back. We would have popcorn night, rent a movie from Blockbuster, stuff like that. My parents worked hard. Like, as a mother now, as a single mother, I know what it's like. I know what a struggle it is, what my mom had to do. My daughter Samantha is eleven, and I was only nineteen when

I had her. That made me appreciate my mother more than ever, like, because I know what she had to go through raising me.

Like I said Danny and I, we were close in age, only four years apart, so we had a good relationship. He always watched out for me. He was a big kid, he was a big guy when he grew up, but even back then... he protected his little sister, right? I really looked up to him. I remember once a boy in my class, Chet Andrews, he used to tease me to no end. He would make fun of my pig tails; he would make fun of my back pack. He would steal my pencil case. He was a little project rat. But Danny, like, I remember Danny after school one day he went up to Chet, and he pushed him right into this bush, whack! And Chet Andrews shut his mouth after that, like, it was great. Danny was a great brother. He was funny too. He was always goofing around, doing impressions, making jokes. He was a riot. People always liked him, he always had friends.

And like, you know Danny, he was gay and everything, and even from an early age like the feminine qualities... he would do makeup with me, dress up, he was never afraid of dolls. He used to love to paint his nails with me. It was fun. I didn't think anything of it, right? I was a kid. I knew that most boys liked sports and getting dirty, but I didn't think anything of it. He was just, like, my brother.

As we got older, though, he started to do his own thing. Danny was always interested in his art, his drawing. But around, I don't know, maybe junior high, the start of high school, I think then he started to experiment with drugs. He smoked pot. I remember my mom, she found a glass pipe in his room, and her and Dave they tore the whole house up, looking for more drugs or whatever. Like, there was a ton of tension there. Danny wasn't a mean kid, or a

bad kid, but he started disobeying her rules. He would break curfew. He would sneak out. There was tension, for sure. But they never beat up on him or anything. Like I said, my mom, like, she did the best she could. Her and Dave. They gave me and Danny love, they provided for us. But Danny got into his own stuff. He started hanging around with different kids, like the more artsy kids, the emo kids, the goths and all that stuff. They were interested in smoking pot, hanging out, listening to music, graffiti and all that kind of stuff. My mom wanted Danny to focus more on school. He was never really good at school. I was definitely more the 'get good grades' type, and I think my mom compared us on that level, like, 'Why can't you be more like your sister?' Around that time, like, our relationship started to change. I think Danny thought of me as a goody-two-shoes or whatever, so we weren't as close then.

That's when the fits of rage started, when Danny was in high school. He would get caught for something, and like, he'd go into these huge outbursts. He'd be throwing stuff around the house, breaking dishes in the kitchen. He would just go ballistic. And my mom, she didn't know what to do. By that point Danny was bigger than Dave, and Dave wasn't the type to get into it physically, so it was hard for them to control Danny. Like, I remember once he punched Dave in the face and broke his nose. They were going to press charges. Danny must have been 15 or 16. I was upset. Like, I loved Danny, but I hated what he was doing. I couldn't understand why he just wouldn't follow the rules, why he had to upset everyone all the time. Our house was chaotic. My mom and Dave were always worried about Danny, where he was, why he wasn't home on time, whether or not he was smoking pot... I didn't feel like I was getting any attention, like, it was like Danny was the center of the world for everyone, and I was just supposed to get good grades and keep

quiet. I don't know. I started getting mad about all of that.

I didn't know about his anxiety or his depression, like, he never sat me down and told me he was depressed, but I heard my mom and Dave talk about it a lot. I could tell Danny's mood was changing. I know they started sending him to a doctor, like a shrink, to try to help him. I think he started taking prescription stuff around then, like anti-depressants or whatever. I didn't know much about it. He would just go to his room when he was grounded and never come out. I remember he would get caught for sneaking out, and then he'd be grounded, for months on end. He'd work on his sketches, but like, he wouldn't even come out for dinner. And this was for months at a time. But he would still cut classes, smoke pot, ditch school and all that. I think by his third year in high school he barely had enough credits to be considered a sophomore. It just wasn't important to him. And when I started high school, he should have been finishing up, but that's sort of when everything happened with the breakdown, when he left.

Now, by then I knew that Danny was gay. He didn't flat out tell me, but I knew, by the time I was like twelve and he was sixteen. I just knew, I don't know... you know your own brother. But my mom and Dave really had no idea until they caught him that one night. That was a nightmare. Like, I guess Danny had snuck this guy into our house, to spend the night, and I don't know if they were having sex, or what, but my mom heard something going on in Danny's room. Our house wasn't all that big, our rooms were all next to each other, so... all I remember hearing was my mom screaming bloody murder. I don't know what she saw, but later on Danny told me he and this guy were having sex and she walked in. It was a bad situation. My mom lost it, like... we all went to church on Sunday growing up. My mom is a big Catholic, old-school like her parents.

She thought Danny was going to hell, that he was a sinner and all this. It was such a huge disappointment for her, I think, to learn about her son being gay, especially like that. I think it would have turned out better if he would've just told her, but even that would've been hard. I could understand why he would have wanted to keep it a secret from her. She just... she's old-school like that. It was a big deal in our house to say your prayers, to go to Communion, get married before you had sex, all of that stuff. Danny was probably afraid of her reaction. But there literally could not have been a worse way for her to find out. Like that, I know that devastated her.

And after that night, everything changed. Like, they didn't even talk anymore, Danny and my parents. They just yelled at each other. There was constant shouting, all the time. I couldn't bring friends over to the house. People would call the police, for like disturbing the peace. They even took Dan in once or twice. It really... things went downhill quickly. And he was still, he was seventeen, and he didn't have any money or any job, so he was stuck being at home, and my parents were stuck dealing with him. I was sort of in the middle of everything. And like, I think at the time, that's why I started seeing boys, started doing my own thing... I wanted some attention. The main focus was on Danny, all the time.

Finally, between the depression, the pot, the arguments, all of the chaos, really, my mom had enough. She had a friend I think who ran one of these summer camps for teenagers with substance issues and psychological problems and stuff, and she signed Danny up to go. It was for three months, out west somewhere, I think Utah or Montana or something... Danny was pissed when she told him. He ran away, which wasn't anything new, but he was gone for like a week before my mom could track him down. She got him out there, though,

and he spent the summer doing that. To be honest, it was nice to finally have some peace and quiet back. Like I said, I was only like thirteen, so I didn't know the details or anything, but it was just good to have some time with my parents where I was getting their attention. It was a great summer. But when Danny got home... it just, the situation was terrible. He hated my mom at that point. I guess most of the kids out there were into harder drugs, like heroin or whatever, and he just thought like he had been shipped out of the house. He felt abandoned I think. He hated the experience. He was not an outdoorsy guy, he wasn't a 'let's go camping' kind of guy. He really hated my mom for that. And when he got back, they basically had it out, and he said 'fuck you' to her and Dave and just left. He packed up all his stuff... I remember going into his room, and I wanted to talk to him, I wanted to ask him to stay, to ask him what was wrong, and I'll never forget it... he just turned to me and said "Get the fuck out of here perfect child!" That hurt. A lot. That really... that like killed me. So when he left, to be honest, I was glad he did. It was the best for everyone.

Things at home kind of cooled down from there. Like, I was a teenager, I was so into my own life, boys, high school, cheerleading. I didn't see Danny a whole lot. Really for almost two years... he was living with friends, sort of couch surfing, and he wasn't welcome back home. Not that he was looking for an invitation. I think a couple times he would find older men to put him up for a couple months at a time, it was a weird situation. We didn't talk about Danny around the dinner table. That's just the way it was. We didn't see him for holidays, didn't meet for dinner or anything... we even were going to the same high school, and I didn't see him there. People would ask me if he was my brother,

and I would lie, say his dad was different than mine. He was just.. he was strange then. He finally finished school, by the time I was a junior, and then I never saw him. It's hard to explain. I loved Danny, I did.. but from what he did at home, all the craziness, I don't know. We just didn't talk anymore.

But I know he still kept in touch with my grandma. He would go visit her at the nursing home. She always loved Danny, he was her favorite, for sure. And he loved her. She would help him out with money, and I know when he started art school, she helped him get started with that. When she passed away.. and, you know the day she died, right? No? February 24th. No kidding.. but after grandma died, Danny came to her funeral. Danny and me finally had a chance to talk, face to face, almost like adults, for the first time in our lives. We sort of acknowledged each other as adults for the first time, if that makes sense? He was super upset, I remember, but he still had this brightness to him, even then. I remember when we hugged.. it was like getting my brother back. I can't even.. Danny was such a special guy. He asked me how I was doing. He even apologized for everything, he remembered that scene in the bedroom when he left and he said he acted like an asshole. I was surprised. I gave him a big hug. We cried. We talked for a long time. It was like, it was a really important moment for our relationship.. I'll never forget that. I think our grandma dying really healed what happened between us. We made a point to stay in better touch after that.

With my parents though, it really didn't get any better. He really stayed away from my mom during the funeral, and Dave really, he just didn't know how to handle it. Danny apparently came over, I wasn't home at the time, but he came to the house after grandma died and was asking about his school. My mom told me that Danny

was threatening her, threatening to kill her, making up stuff about some money that had been stolen from him... Danny told me that grandma had promised him that there was a special savings account in his name, and that no matter what happened he would be able to finish art school. That was his dream, to like become an artist, a designer. But I don't know what happened. I never brought it up. It was just one of those things. I know that he couldn't keep at school, so he dropped out, and then started working at Fun Zone, that old arcade off Lexington Street. He started working there and lived in a boarding house down the street, and that's when I think the depression got worse, the drugs, the drinking.

I mean, we talked a lot more then. I was in the midst of my own crisis, like... I had started acting out in high school, sleeping with guys, and when I was 18, with an offer to go to college, a scholarship, I ended up getting pregnant with Samantha. So my whole future was put on hold. And her father, he was a deadbeat. My mom wanted us to get married, but I saw what had happened to her, with my biological father, so there was no way I was going to repeat that. I don't even know where Samantha's dad is today. It's just one of those things, like... but I guess what I'm trying to say is Danny and I got closer through all of this. He was so excited to be an uncle. It was funny... he was like the only one who was happy about me being pregnant! And he loved her so much, he always did. He hardly had any money, working at Fun Zone, but he would always bring her over little presents, toys and stuff. She loved him so much... she... can we stop for a second? I'm sorry.

This has been so hard for Sammy. When I told her that Uncle Danny died... she's at that age where it isn't a mystery, like, she knows what death is. She can comprehend it. And she was so confused, because of how young Danny was. She asked me "Was Uncle Danny sick

mama? Did he have cancers?" She just... I couldn't explain it to her. I don't want to ruin how she thinks of him, how she remembers him. What am I supposed to do? Tell her 'No Sammy, Uncle Danny was so depressed that he decided to throw himself under a car one night.' Like, I... there's no good way of putting it to her. I told her it was an accident, a terrible accident. She wanted to see him one last time... maybe one day I'll explain it, but not now. I don't have the heart to, and really, like, what's the point? I don't want her to change how she remembers him. She's so cute, she... every night, since the funeral, when I tuck her into bed, she says, "Mama, don't forget to say your prayers for Uncle Danny tonight, so he can go to heaven?" It's... I'm sorry.

Samantha brought me and Danny together, for sure. Her birth was a blessing in a lot of ways, even though when it happened I really couldn't look at it that way... I wanted to go to school to become a doctor, now I'm one of the technicians in the hospital who works the x-ray machine. But I'm not complaining, like, my life is good. I have a healthy child, I'm healthy... having her at nineteen just wasn't exactly how I'd planned my life to go.

So time went on, Samantha got older, I got older, Danny got older... some of the ice between my mom and him melted. He started coming back around for holidays. I don't know if they formally made peace, but there was an understanding... Samantha brought us all back together. But his drinking, then, it really picked up. You could tell when he was all wasted, like, he would call slurring his words, or he would show up to the house with his face all red. It started to get worse, and I noticed it more. I remember asking him about it, but he always shrugged it off. He said it was no big deal. He said he had quit smoking pot, and liked to drink "every once in awhile." And the thing was, he was working, he had his own

place, the rooming house... my point is, he was an adult. I couldn't tell Danny what to do.

When he met Brian, though, I was hopeful, like, I thought that it would be a good thing for Danny. Brian was this older guy, a lawyer downtown, he had his crap together. Like, I thought Danny being with Brian would motivate my brother to move forward with his life. I know Brian offered to help Danny go back to art school, he wanted to help Danny get better. He moved Danny into his house in Newton, and for a little while, it seemed like the drinking, it seemed like things were getting better. But at the end of the day, like, nobody really can force anyone else to get better. Danny quit his job, at Fun Zone, so he had all this time on his hands... the drinking continued to pick up. The drinking ended up being way worse, really. I remember Brian called me a couple times, he wanted to hear my advice. Brian really loved Danny. He saw that brightness in my brother, that warmth... when Danny was straight, when he was put together, he was the best guy. He was so gentle and loving. And Brian saw that side of him. Brian wanted that side of him to become more of, like the permanent side, if that makes any sense.

It just didn't work out. They stayed together for a couple years, but by the end, I hate to say it, but like Danny was leeching onto Brian. I never would blame Brian for leaving him. I told him that at the funeral, I said 'None of this is your fault.' It's the truth. And Brian was heartbroken, too... everybody was. But my brother, he wouldn't get a job. He refused pursue his art. When he was with Brian, all he cared about was getting fucked up. He was drunk all the time. Brian would hide bottles, wouldn't give him any money, but Danny would get on the train to go down the Common and hit on guys for free drinks. He would stay out for nights at a time. I don't blame Brian at all. And then when Danny moved out,

when Brian had enough, and he started living in that studio apartment in Waltham. The place was so disgusting. There would be food wrappers everywhere, trash all over the floor, empty fifths of vodka, no sheets on the bed. Mice. Stains. It was so gross. Danny was trying to drink himself to death. Like, it was really his first suicide attempt. That time period, that year or two of him living in Waltham, seeing Brian on and off, getting his disability checks and not working... Danny wanted to kill himself then.

It's so hard knowing somebody who is trying to kill themselves, who is only interested in getting drunk. We all tried to get through to him, but by the end, he had broken ties with all of us. He stopped coming to family parties because he always showed up hammered, so he wasn't welcome. I didn't want him around my daughter when he was like that. My mom didn't want to deal with him. Brian couldn't keep him in the house in Newton, like, but he would still visit and check in on Danny, he really loved Danny... but then Danny attacked him, tried to literally kill Brian one night when he visited, when Danny was hammered, so Brian had to completely end everything at that point... no one was to blame. There was nothing to do.

But that's not where it ended, like... this is the part that confuses me, so much... that Danny survived through that period, those terrible years, and found AA, found sobriety, and started to get better... then he killed himself. Like, it makes no sense. I stay up at night, running it through my head... I can't understand it. I don't think I ever will. He went through all this crap, this terrible time in his life, but then he *got out of it*. He cleaned himself up. He started working out. He went to meetings. He came back around the house, Samantha fell right back in love with him...

things were good with my mom and him, with him and me, even Brian started talking to him again. I went to his one-year sober anniversary, over in Belmont, and it was great. I was so proud of him. He was up at the front of the room, calling on all these different people to come up and tell their drinking story or whatever, and everyone knew him, everyone hugged him. It was so positive. I met his sponsor, Albert... Danny seemed like he had found a home. He really did. I remember at the funeral, Albert came up to me, he told me how sorry he was... I gave him a big hug. I told him 'You kept my brother alive longer than he ever wanted to be, for sure. You were good to him. You gave him a chance, and you gave him more time with us. Thank you for taking care of him.' And that was the truth.

That's the hardest part... there was no suicide note, no explanation... nothing. It like makes no sense. His path was... I... I need a minute.

This past New Years, like, we had a party at my mom's house... my mom made her famous seven layer lasagna, and we decided to let Samantha stay up for the countdown for the first time... we were all wearing these silly party hats, blowing kazoos, it was a blast. And Danny came down the stairs after midnight all dressed up in this penguin suit, this like furry outfit, I have no idea like where he found it... but he was saying he was the New Year's penguin, and if you rubbed his nose and made a wish for the New Year, it would come true... you should have seen Samantha. She loved it. She loved him, so much... we all did. The depression stole Danny away from us. That whole side of him, that sadness, that pain, that's not who he really was. And that's not how I'm going to remember my brother. Like, Danny will forever be in my heart as my big brother, my protector, the guy who made me laugh, the guy who made me smile, the guy who loved me. The New Year's penguin.

People, my own friends... they have said to me what Danny did was selfish. Taking his life, like, that it was wrong to do... that it wasn't fair to all of us. Like I wasn't a perfect sister to Danny, and he wasn't a perfect brother to me, but at the end of the day, we loved each other. I know, one hundred percent for certain, that whatever came over him that night, what had been building inside of him, that pain... he couldn't share that with anybody. That was his burden. And I know that burden had to have been so enormous, so terrible, like the most horrible feeling imaginable, for him to do what he did. I don't think it was selfish at all. He had to do what he did. I know he thought about all of us before he did it. And I know that in order for him to run out in front of that car, the pain in his heart had to outweigh all his love for us. I can't imagine how terrible that must have been. Like, he had to do what he did. I wouldn't want him to live with that pain anyways. There was nothing selfish about it. He's out of it now. He's free.

GUS SCARPETTI

Well, I've been here at the shop since '76. Started off as an assistant mechanic, worked my way as head mechanic, then into the front office, the business side, managed for a while, and now I'm one of the owners. I'll still get under the hood, too... was working on an old Pontiac the other day. Over forty years... that's hard work for ya. Ya don't see that nowadays, ya just don't. Kids these days... ya just don't see it anymore.

Well, I don't have any family to speak of. Nothing to be sad about, it's been that way for some time. I was my parent's only child. And my folks lived good long lives, didn't suffer at the end. My mother died in '92, my father in '99. Both passed quickly, massive strokes. Didn't lose their wits, no cancer or anything like that...

I wouldn't mind going that way myself. I still live in the same house I grew up in. Lived there my whole life. Took care of my folks as I got older, as they got older. I didn't do no college, never was a bookworm, I could use my hands, ya see... wasn't any sense paying money for some guy to teach me something he knew nothing about anyways. Big waste of money if ya ask me.

Well, yeah... I've called Waltham home my entire life. Seen this town change with the seasons... I grew up as a kid in a small Italian neighborhood, hard-working Italians, like my folks... then the Irish came in, flooded in around the 80's... wretched people. Lazy like shines. Did the drugs like shines, too... I think that all goes hand in hand. They really destroyed what this town had once been. Ya know, the history of Waltham... we were the first place in America to build watches using an assembly line. Watch City, ya ever hear of that? That's the reason why. The factories, over by Moody St. by the river, they shut down in, oh, '57 or '58. Before I was born. But in my time, I seen the Irish come in, the crime, the drugs... the '80's were tough times for Waltham. Wasn't a safe place... wasn't like how I grew up. Ya couldn't go out walking at night. Heroin. Cocaine. Hooligans stealing cars, robbing honest folks. It was a bad time. But things got better, the economy improved, more shops, more jobs... Main St. really took off... these big companies, medical companies, moved their headquarters, and that brought jobs. Actually, I'll tell ya what... my grandparents were immigrants, and I don't have anything against hard-working people... the Indians, the Hispanics that have come in the last ten or fifteen years, they're good people. They done good for the city. Nothing like the Irish. They raise their kids to work hard... ya see the whole family, running the grocery store, taking care of the shop... that's the way it's supposed to be. Ya see, kids were taught how to work by their

parents when I was coming up. I had a paper route when I was nine-years-old. That's the right way. Ya see kids today, the Irish especially... those kids all want a handout. They sit on the dole, smoking their cigarettes, sitting on their asses... lazy people.

Well I inherited the property from my folks. I had a good job, there was no reason to leave... and now that I'm an owner here at the gas station... that's the way ya do it. Ya put in the time, save the money, move your way up. I never got anything handed to me. Ya see this arm? Had it since I can remember. My mother used to call it my 'lucky arm.' Can't move it at all, just hangs there. My whole life, one-armed, I done more than people with two good arms and a whole lot more advantages than me. It's because I worked. I put in the time. I didn't expect anything to come for free. And that's what my folks taught me.

Well, hobbies? I suppose ya might count my trains... I build model trains. My basement is full of them. I like designing the tracks, building the models, painting them, assembling them, setting up the wiring... I've been at that since I was a kid. I used to go down by the tracks at the river and watch the boxcars pass. I still do. Something about trains... when I'm not working, I suppose that gets most of my time.

Well I had a girl for a while, when I was a much younger man... but all she could talk about was leaving Waltham, leaving Boston. We courted for a while, but, it didn't work out. I had everything I needed here. Never saw any reason to leave. But I haven't heard or seen from her in, well, must be thirty years at least. Don't think about it much, really... can't remember the last time I thought about it, until just now.

Well, ya see the people who come in here? Ya seen how many have

walked by since we started talking? I must see, well, at least 250 different customers a day when I'm behind the counter. Easy. Maybe 500 hundred on a real busy day. Now ya figure I work at least five days a week... seven days a week until maybe five years ago... I'd say a million customers, easy. Like McDonalds... a lot of folks. Some are regulars, sure... before any of these cell phones came out, folks would talk to each other. People would look at each other in the eye. I still have a Diet Pepsi and a bag of chips out for the letter-carrier, every day at 11:45 sharp, stuff like that... but it's rare nowadays. A customer will come in, order up their cigarettes, head down, swipe the card... it's impersonal. Ya try to say something, but they don't want any conversation.

Well that's not to say I don't remember any in particular. I remember cars better, when I was working in the body shop... but I remember folks, sure. Certain faces... well, let me see the picture... how do ya know this kid? Well I'm asking because I caught him shoplifting, maybe fifteen years ago. Well of course ya remember that.

Hold on a second... (a clerk walks outside, whispers to Gus, and Gus excuses himself for a moment)... see, that's exactly what we've been talking about! Woman just came in. She's thirty cents short, on a sandwich and soda, asks if we can take the hit for it, or see if she can come pay us back later... that's no way to run a business... I don't care if she had a kid with her. No lesson to teach your kid. Well I told her to pick something else to buy, or to come back with the money and we'd be happy to sell her what she needed. Everyone wants something free nowadays. See that truck over here? I earned that on my own. See this gas station? I became partner, on my own. It's called going to work. It's called doing things the right way. Plain and simple.

Well... I told ya, that picture ya just showed me... kid was a shoplifter. But funny thing is he started coming back around, maybe two or three years ago... I'll tell ya what... the first time he did come back, I looked him square in the eye and I told him I remembered him... I told him if he ever tried to pull that again he'd be sorry... he was surprised I still remembered him. I remember the look on his face when he saw I remembered. Big scaredy cat. Yeah, he was a big fat kid... well, I let him come back to pay for his stuff, well, because he wasn't running anywhere.

Well he was typical. He was one of those kids the Irish brought up to be stealing, probably smoking dope... he wore that hairstyle, that punk hairstyle... plenty of kids around here like that. They used to wear all black... boys, wearing black nail polish... how much sense does that make? I've seen it all.

Well most of those kids are out of west Waltham. Ya get the kids from Prospect Hill, there's low income housing around there. All the landlords, all the factory owners, all the business men stayed on the east end of town, and then the Irish moved in to the west end of town, as the Italians and the factory workers moved out... there's a dividing line, still, to this day. I don't go near that area, up the hill, I never have. It's gotten better I've heard, but it was like a ghetto in the 80's. No work ethic. No morals. No class, really.

What was the picture for?

Well... was it drugs? Suicide? Cowardice. Suicide... nothing more cowardly than that I tell ya. People killing themselves because life is too hard? Give me a break. Most those people got no idea about having it tough. My grandfather got to this country without a penny to bite on. Tough... nothing tough about living in today's

world like these kids do. I have no sympathy, none.

Well, ya might think me cruel to say this, but a kid like that was never going to amount to anything. Look at his background, his habits, probably raised by idiots... I see plenty like that. Call me cold hearted, but I call it like I see it. Kids like that, they start stealing, start smoking the dope, end up in the ground or in jail. Their folks don't teach them anything worth learning. It's... some men come from good stock, some from bad. That's the way it is. But every man knows right from wrong, ya see. Ain't no excuse, the stock ya come from. Every man knows what's right and wrong. Takes character to make the right choice.

Well I don't need to know anything else about him. Depression? What the hell is that? I know about the great depression, the stock market crash... depression? Makes no difference to me. Ya know, life isn't too difficult. It really isn't. Ya wake up. Ya shower. Ya shave. Ya go to work. Ya work. Ya take a break for lunch and read a paper. Ya go back to work. Ya punch out when the day is over. Ya fix yourself dinner. Ya watch some television, work on whatever it is ya work on to stay busy, then ya go to bed. How difficult is that?

ERIC KAPLAN

With depression, alright, we're looking at three distinct clinical categories: major depressive disorder, dysthymia, and bipolar disorder. I won't get into bipolar, because it had no bearing in Daniel's diagnosis. But with major depressive disorder, we see a sudden onset of symptoms ranging from sleeplessness, weight change, decreased activity, fatigue, diminished concentration, suicidal thoughts and ideations. Fundamentally, it is a major shift in mood away from the patient's typical baseline. Their standard,

day-to-day emotional and mental condition becomes altered in a negative way. Often times an external change in a patient's environment will cause the onset of symptoms, but they can also arise internally without any clear correlation with the patient's environment. Symptoms present and maintain over the course of time, over the course of weeks, maybe months. The classification of a major depressive episode can range from mild, to moderate, to severe, depending on a number of factors. But simplified to its core, the condition interferes with all aspects of a patient's life. So there we have major depressive disorder.

Now, with dysthymia, or persistent depressive disorder, you're looking at a less severe presentation involving the same symptoms as major depressive disorder, but over a longer period of time. We see a milder depression, but it lasts longer. Specifically, for dysthymia, the symptoms must be present for more than two years to be diagnosed accordingly. The interesting thing about dysthymia, is that in at least half of the cases, you find a concurring substance abuse condition. Now with Daniel, by the time he came into my office, he had been diagnosed with persistent depressive disorder punctuated by major depressive episodes, along with a comorbid substance abuse disorder. Clinically, we would classify Daniel as a double-depressive. In patients like Daniel, typically we see periodic major depressive episodes that correlate with how serious the substance abuse issues are at a given time. If a patient isn't drinking or using drugs as frequently, there is less of chance for major depressive episodes. If the patient is having trouble controlling their drug or alcohol use, going on benders, those sorts of behaviors, then we see much higher chances of major depressive episodes. Especially with alcohol. Alcohol by definition is classified as a depressant. The more alcohol a

depressed patient drinks, the more likely they are to experience depressive symptoms. So in the last year, with Daniel's sobriety, theoretically we should have seen a lower prevalence of major depressive episodes. Theoretically.

When I began seeing Daniel last year, he had been seen previously by thirteen different psychologists, therapists, and psychiatrists over the five years he had been on disability. Before that, he indicated he had seen at least three or four more professionals since he was about fifteen years old when his parents first brought him in for counseling up until the age of about nineteen. Initially, he was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, ADHD, when he was fifteen, as well as Generalized Anxiety Disorder. He admitted to being a chronic marijuana user by that age as well. By the time he was eighteen he had experienced at least three major depressive episodes, was re-diagnosed as bipolar. By the time he was twenty-one he had stopped seeking treatment altogether and had explained in any given year he could recall at least four major episodes. Even as a young man Daniel had been prescribed a wide range of pharmaceuticals, beginning with ritalin and lorazepam, moving to librium after he had been incorrectly diagnosed as being bipolar, then to different SSRI's such as Prozac, Paxil, Celexa, Lexapro, as well as various anxiety medications like Xanax and Valium. The problem in evaluating how well the medication was working or not working involved inconsistency. Daniel received medication early on in his teenage years, stopped taking medication around the age of 21, then turned to marijuana and alcohol until the age of 27, when he then resumed treatment for major depressive symptoms. We saw no clear, consistent path of treatment for Daniel up until the last year, really, because of his substance abuse issues. Patients with

substance abuse issues present quite the challenge to a clinician, as it is near impossible to effectively treat a depressed patient who continues to consume alcohol and abuse drugs. There is no consistency, and medication not only becomes less effective, but also highly dangerous. In fact, they are contraindicated specifically against alcohol and drugs.

Daniel's psychiatrist and I constructed a plan of moving him to one SNRI, Effexor, and one tranquilizer to be used during instances when his anxiety would manifest as a panic attack, for which we selected klonopin. We wanted to begin him on a clear path for treatment which we could measure over a period of time. He had switched on and off so many different prescriptions, we thought it would be important to stabilize his medication patterns. Too often a patient comes into a doctor's office when they are being treated for depression, and they tell the clinician that the medication is not working. Most of the serotonin re-uptake medications we offer can take weeks, even months to begin to display tangible, observable results. We call them 'therapeutic effects.' So it is the nature of the illness. There are no quick fixes.

Also with Daniel, while we took the approach of consistency in his medication, we pushed for a variety in his therapy options. His occupational therapist, Maureen, had helped Daniel establish a gym membership about eight months ago, and we stressed the importance of physical exercise in our sessions. She would help him with paperwork, with his financial planning, budgeting his monthly stipend, assisting him with food stamps and trips to the food pantry. Lynn, another one of his counselors, more of a holistic therapist, she would focus on mindfulness techniques with Daniel and other alternative approaches to building positive mental habits and developing tools to help combat his underlying anxiety.

We also encouraged art therapy, and we were happy to let Daniel use our resources for his work, at least- well it came to our attention that some of his subject matter might be considered offensive to other patients, so we had to restrict his use of the computer. But we were supportive of him continuing to work on his art as a means of treatment as well. We tried to encourage Daniel to pursue as many different options as possible.

My meetings with Daniel took place on a bi-weekly schedule. We would typically meet on Wednesday afternoons, from 2 to 3PM. Our meetings were a requirement, based on his social security disability. Now, let me think of how to phrase this- too often, individuals on disability for mental health reasons fall into the 'comfort' of the system. They often are not motivated to improve their condition because they are afraid the financial support which social-security disability provides will be removed. Please do not misinterpret me. Daniel's diagnosis was 100% legitimate. He without question suffered from mental illness. But in my experience, I have seen patients like Daniel fall into patterns of learned helplessness, where they have no incentive to participate in their own treatment, and do not see any possibility of improving their symptoms. I did not want to see Daniel become one of those patients. Daniel was one of my first clients after I took this position at the facility, and because of his age, his support system, his commitment to his sobriety, I saw a great deal of potential in him. I hoped that one day Daniel would be able to go back to gainful employment, return to school, own a house- all the things anyone aspires to. And I hoped this for Daniel because he expressed all of these outcomes as his own goals, for himself. My job is to help people cope with their mental illnesses so they can live a life of their choosing. With every client- I take that as

my aim. And I truly believe, without question, that if Daniel would have continued on the course he was on- he would have been in a position to achieve the goals he expressed to me.

Let's go ahead and take the elephant out of the living room. Suicide is impossible to predict. Research done by the Mayo Clinic has indicated that around 10% of patients affected by persistent depression end up committing suicide. The numbers are higher for individuals with double-depression, as Daniel was diagnosed. But within those cases, very few predicative factors have been identified. Daniel had several support systems in place that, on paper, would have made a strong case for him not to become a casualty of suicide. He still had relationships with his family members. He had a passion in life, for his art. He had found a support group in Alcoholics Anonymous, which he described to me as an important network of friends whom he relied on and had established positive relationships around. All of these factors could be seen as protection from suicide. But the grim truth of it is, as a clinician, even as somebody who has studied mental illness for years and worked with hundreds of patients like Daniel, I had no way of predicting whether or not he was at a greater risk than any other patient for suicide. There is not enough research, enough science, behind these sorts of outcomes.

I can tell you that he did express to me several times certain 'thought patterns' that more or less represented suicidal ideation. Daniel described one instance where upon opening a can of soup at his home, he looked down on the jagged edge of the can, and debated whether or not to use the edge to slit open his wrists. He described to me another instance where he found himself looking out of the window of a lover's apartment and debating whether or not the height from the ground would be sufficient enough to kill

him, if he were to jump. He called these his 'demon' thoughts. He did not describe voices or hallucinations associated with these cognitive themes, so I was hesitant to diagnosis him as schizophrenic. Suicidal ideations, alright, such as the ones Daniel experienced, are common in depressed patients. As a clinician, I employed different techniques, like cognitive-behavioral therapy and imaginative therapy, to help Daniel understand why carrying out such an action would not be a positive choice for him, or for the people he cared for. Daniel never expressed any ideations involving vehicles, or killing himself using the means he ultimately did employ.

Was I surprised to hear about Daniel's suicide? That is a profoundly difficult question for me to answer. Let me take a moment, so I phrase this correctly. I have had several patients over the years, who like Daniel, suffered from major depression and ultimately took their own life. So in that respect, I am rarely surprised by anything at this point in my career because I have seen such a wide range of outcomes for my patients. But in some ways I was surprised, because of the protective factors surrounding Daniel, which I described before- it is a difficult line of work. There are success stories, there are tragedies. We hope for the best in our patients, but we have to acknowledge at the end of the day, as clinicians, we are treating an illness which science is only beginning to comprehend. Our treatment methods are limited. The research is limited. The medications are limited. I am limited as a clinician. There are too many variables when treating any type of mental illness. We hope for the best, but we have to acknowledge that the worst is always a possibility.

Daniel's family history? It was not unique. He grew up in a divorced home, his mother remarried. It seems that she did not

suffer from depression, but Daniel described her as a very anxious person. Daniel also described that one of his uncles was diagnosed as bipolar, and that several of his cousins also struggled with various mental health issues. He had a step-brother, whom he did not know, who passed away from an overdose. His biological father had substance abuse issues throughout his life- continues to, to this day, at least according to what Daniel expressed to me. And yes, there absolutely is a genetic component behind depression, and substance abuse. Daniel certainly was predisposed, based on the information I had available to me provided by him. Depression, substance abuse- these are family illnesses.

From what I have seen in my experience, the fact that he began experimenting with marijuana at an early age, and became a chronic marijuana user by his early teens: individuals who display such behavior often are more prone to mental health issues later in life. Research has shown that chronic marijuana use negatively impacts the adolescent brain. Young marijuana users are more prone to impulsivity. They exhibit damaged white-matter regions of their cortex. They perform more poorly on tests of executive function, which include planning, flexibility, abstract thinking and inhibition of inappropriate responses. Again, more research is necessary, especially longitudinal studies, but I think based on what science currently knows, marijuana does indeed have some effect. It may have led to his alcoholism, which seemed to manifest later in his life, near his mid-twenties. Daniel explained to me that marijuana "stopped working" for him at the same point he began drinking heavily. At first marijuana provided a great relief for his anxiety. By the end of his marijuana use, he stated it only made him paranoid. So he began drinking, and continued to consume heavier volumes as time went on. As I previously indicated,

addiction and depression are very much linked. A patient will rely on a substance to provide relief for feelings of depression, nervousness, or anxiety, but as time goes on, that substance will contribute to those feelings of depression, nervousness, and anxiety more and more. It becomes cyclical. That is why when Daniel started attending AA meetings and began living a sober lifestyle, I considered it a very positive decision. Treating addiction and substance use almost always helps in the treatment of depressive symptoms.

Daniel's personality? Obviously, he displayed a depressed personality type. He would often appear tired, unenthused, bored. He often would wander in our sessions. He had trouble formulating ideas and expressing himself on specific topics. His mental health conditions impacted his personality, without question. Daniel was, however, optimistic on several occasions. Daniel often told me he knew eventually his depression would become manageable. He often expressed a belief that he was subjected to his depression so that one day he would be able to help people in similar situations. He was not interested in religion or faith-based systems, but he did use language on more than one occasion which would indicate a belief in God on his part. How can I phrase this? Daniel was often times immature for his age, alright. He would make sexual references, innuendo. He would make inappropriate comments. As a clinician, I really had no opinion on such language or behavior, but I would bring it to his attention that in most social settings, such language or behavior would not be deemed acceptable. There was certainly an attention-seeking aspect to such behavior. We see this often times in patients with similar histories as Daniel's- to be specific, in children growing up with divorced parents. There were classic attention-seeking patterns at work. His cognitive

abilities were most likely equivalent to that of a freshman or sophomore in high school. He never expressed any interest in reading, in current events. His IQ was somewhat below average, but he was by no means learning disabled. He was interested in his art, in his romantic relationships, in his family. There was a spectrum, though, to all of this. When Daniel was experiencing symptoms of his depression, he would become non-responsive, disinterested. It is difficult to provide an accurate representation of his personality, or classify him under a certain Myers Briggs sub-type, or something to that effect. There are limitations with such measures.

Daniel's family relationships? Daniel had begun to rebuild several relationships that had become strained by the time we started working together. I believe he was making substantial progress in that respect. His sister, and his niece, they seemed to be very important to Daniel. He would express happiness over seeing them, in being able to participate in their lives. He was working on his relationship with his mother. There were several points of conflict he felt when discussing their relationship. Daniel did not appreciate some of the decisions she made while he was a teenager and our work involved discussing and dealing with some of his issues. Her disapproval of his sexual orientation bothered him for years, but from what he described, she was beginning to open up to his lifestyle as he got older. I would be comfortable in saying he no longer was seeking any sort of approval from her, in that respect. However, Daniel very much admired his step-father, and felt remorse that they had not gotten along as well in the past. Daniel described him as a decent, hard-working man who took good care of his mother.

Daniel's romantic relationships? In our conversations, he

described several high-risk behaviors involving his sex-life. He referred to himself as a 'slut,' on more than one occasion. Awaiting the results of STD or HIV tests often caused him great anxiety. He also described situations where he felt inappropriately attracted to certain men, such as his sponsor in AA, and felt guilty over wanting to make sexual advances. In the past, especially while consuming alcohol, he would prostitute himself, essentially, for items such as clothes, housing, or money. Now, he didn't work a corner, alright, but he described situations where he found older men on the internet who he would make deals with, to exchange sexual favors for various goods. We were working on eliminating those behaviors, and in the past year, he seemed to have ceased in engaging in such activity. Daniel often had several partners at a time, and when I would ask him to describe his ideal sex-life, he often stated he wanted to find a stable, monogamous relationship rooted in 'love.' Many times he expressed a desire to find 'love' in a partner. He had discontinued a relationship with a partner of several years, and he regretted that situation. He described that relationship as the closest thing he had found to his ideal. However, he was conflicted. Daniel would say that he could not help himself, that having many partners made him feel more whole, more valued. It gave him a means to define his self-worth. Of course I would try to explain how it might be dangerous for him to make an appraisal of himself based on the number of partners he had, or the number of sexual encounters he experienced, to which he would agree. He certainly was conflicted in this respect. Again, as a clinician, we try to employ techniques to help our patients come to realize how their own behaviors may be inhibiting them, how their behaviors may be destructive, and to offer alternative ways to approach certain life situations. Daniel

wanted stability one day, but then would come into my office the next bragging that he had seen several men the prior evening.

Daniel's sexuality? Let me rethink how I can phrase this appropriately- an episode of sexual abuse in Daniel's early life had a profound effect on Daniel and his sexuality. The incident, as he described to me, involved an older cousin forcing Daniel to perform oral sex on him while Daniel was only seven or eight. Daniel could not remember his exact age at the time, but he confided in me that he had never told anyone else about the episode. Daniel stated that the cousin was his senior by about four or five years, and that he threatened to kill Daniel if Daniel ever told anyone about the incident. Now, this incident did not cause Daniel's homosexuality, per say, but research has shown that victims of same-gender sexual abuse by family members often do display homosexual preferences later in life. After Daniel described the incident, I encouraged him to explore the subject in therapy with his other healthcare providers. Lynn has done extensive work with victims of sexual abuse, and I thought it could benefit Daniel greatly. However, Daniel refused to pursue the topic. He remained hesitant to explore it any further.

Daniel's depression restricted our therapy sessions a great deal. Treating an individual with Daniel's diagnosis is extremely difficult for even the most accomplished clinician. Patients of his type can often feel overwhelmed during sessions and begin to display symptoms of a panic attack. They are fearful to try different techniques or explore different treatment options. Some days Daniel would not approach our session with any enthusiasm. He would declare himself a failure, that he was hopeless, that he would be stuck in his depression forever. Those moments, I would try to remind him of what he had expressed during previous

meetings, that he was in fact hopeful he could overcome his depression, that it would serve a 'greater purpose,' as he put it in his own words. Patience, compassion, and tact- they are all critical traits that must be utilized on the part of the clinician. Slow and steady wins the race, as they say. There were many areas that we had only touched the surface of in our sessions. I thought with more time, Daniel would have had the chance to work beyond several obstacles that seemed to be holding him back. One by one, slow and steady. But again, I cannot say any of this with certainty. At this point, it is nothing more than conjecture.

The relationship between a clinician and a patient is not the same as one between friends. It is not a relationship between peers, and it is not a relationship like the patient has with any other acquaintances outside of the treatment setting. It would not have been beneficial for either of us for me to assume a fraternal, or paternal, role in Daniel's life. I maintain the same relationship type with all of my patients. It reflects how I was trained as a clinician. I cannot effectively treat a patient who looks at me as one of their buddies, as their brother, as their father- it simply isn't possible. There are countless studies to support my claim. We certainly had a friendly rapport, though, and I feel that if you were to ask Daniel he would indicate that he felt comfortable in my office and was able to open up during our sessions. It is a delicate balance. I approach each case individually, but certain elements of my training must be applied to all aspects of my practice.

No, I did not attend Daniel's funeral. As I just explained, there is a professional boundary that must be maintained.

No, I did not attend the funeral out of fear. That is preposterous.

In no way am I fearful of receiving blame from Daniel's family for what happened. Why should I be? I have not received any threats from them. I have not been made aware of any such feelings that they might harbor. I simply did not attend the funeral based on reasons I have previously stated.

That is an unfair question.

Because there is no appropriate answer I can provide you. It is a baited question. If I respond that in some way I do feel a sense of responsibility for Daniel's suicide, then it implies I failed as a clinician and that our sessions in some way failed Daniel as a patient. It implies that I am at fault. It implies culpability. There is no blame to be placed in these kinds of situations. And if I respond that I do not feel any sense of responsibility, then I appear to be a cold, calloused practitioner. I appear to be devoid of emotion or concern for my patients. I don't believe such a question is fair to pose. The attention ought to be placed on the individuals in Daniel's life, in helping them heal through this tragedy. This is a tragic situation. I absolutely am saddened by what happened. But in terms of taking blame, or implying that there is fault to be placed- no, I will not answer your question.

I would like to ask you to leave. I believe our time together has gone on long enough.

REGINA DeMARCO

Oh my gawd... it's fucken horrible, the whole thing. His family... I feel for his sistah, so hard. I can't fucken imagine. I can't. It's too much. I'm so destroyed by it... I knew Dan since we were thirteen. Fucken thirteen. That's twenty years, plus. And... he didn't, I swear to gawd, he didn't say anything that would have

made me think... a fucken car, like that, to go out and do that? I coulda never imagined it. Not in a million fucken years. No way. Fucken impossible. Unreal. Un-fucken-real.

Dan, fucken, I met Dan after school one day smoking a joint in the parking lot! Hah! Like two little 9th grade shits. Typical high school shits. We were just kids back then. We had similar upbringing. His dad left, my dad left too... we could relate to each other. We hated fucken school, that's for sure. He at least finished. I dropped out after 10th grade, fucken, I couldn't do it anymore. I thought about going back, working over at the fucken Quik E Mart selling packs of smokes, but then I was pregnant, so, once I had Skylah, it was just, your life changes. Fucken that was it for me. Books weren't doing me any good. Plus they didn't want my ass around there. I was a little project rat back then. I was smokin pot, we were smokin pot, every day, gettin into trouble, just chillin with friends. I was carefree, I liked to party. So what? Big fucken deal. School wasn't our thing.

Dan, he was soo funny, even from the beginnin... back in the day, fucken he would do these impressions of teachers... he was hysterical, fucken made us all laugh, laughing our asses off. He'd joke around and call me his little Gina, like va-gina! We hung out in this group of like ten, fifteen of us... it was a motley crew, let me tell you. Fucken misfits. But we all, we cared about each otha, for real. We fucken loved each otha. I loved Dan like a brotha. I felt like a sistah to him. We could talk about anything, any-fucken-thing. We'd talk about boys we wanted to fuck. We'd talk about how much our homes sucked, how much we hated our folks. We'd talk about anything. I shared every secret with Dan. He was like that. I trusted him like a brotha. And he told me everything too, it was how it was. When you're a kid, and you know you don't

fit in with like the jocks or the rich kids... see, our school was like fucken segregated. It wasn't like racial or anything, but you had the rich kids from east Waltham, and then you had us project rats from the west side of town. We hated those fucken preps, gawd. So hard. Dan was soo funny... he would graffiti on these kids' lockers, he would go run up on guys... Dan was always a big dude... like people didn't know he was gay or whateva, because Dan wasn't no queen. He was a tough dude. I seen Dan beat the shit outta guys on sports teams and shit, fucken, like he could always hold his own. I loved that about him too. He never took any shit. He never let any of his friends take any shit, he'd always stick up for you, fucken get your back. No matter what.

We were like peas in a pawd, I swear. And my house was always open, my ma, she'd be out fucken gawd knows who, all coke'd out, freak'd out and shit, so Dan would come over and we would just smoke and party. We had some wild times, fucken crazy times. Back in the day, I was, you know, you're a kid... there was another girl, Lindsay Presley, and we used to get drunk or stoned or whateva, and we would mess around... it was fun, whateva. And one time we were eating each otha out, in front of Dan, and I swear to gawd, he was just sitting across the room, fucken playing video games. We was looking over at him, all sexy and shit, like, "Dan, you want to come join in?" It was fucken hysterical! Hah! He didn't even pay no attention. But it was funny, cuz kids were giving him shit at school or whatevah... Dan didn't really come out to everyone or anything, only a few of us knew he was gay, which is fine, it was his fucken life... I supported Dan no mattah what... but me and Lindsay started telling other guys that we would have three-ways and Dan would fuck us both, that he had this huge monster cawk and would get us both to cum... he was like a fucken celebrity after that. It

was crazy times! You're young, so you don't give a shit. And I loved Dan. I loved him like a brotha, so hard.

His motha, she started figurin out where he was partying and shit, so she'd come ovah all hours looking for him when he ran away or whatevah... she'd come by, screamin her ass off, "Where's Daniel!? I know he's in there!" And my motha, she'd be so fucked up, one time she stuck her head out the window, I swear to gawd, and she yelled back at Dan's mom, "Lady, I don't know who you're fucken yellin about! I don't know who the fuck Daniel is! He ain't here!" And Dan was sitting right there on the couch... and my motha, she comes back into the living room, and looks at us, she's all fucked up, and goes, "Who the hell is this Daniel kid this crazy woman is after?" We were pissin our pants laughing, oh my gawd! Fucken crazy. That's just how it was back then, like, we looked out for each otha, no mattah what. We always did. To the day he died, I can't even fucken imagine...

Dan would get in huge fights at home. Fucken huge. His mom was this Jesus freak, and Dan, he wasn't about any of that... Dan loved his art, he loved to pahty, listen to music, and he loved cawk. Pure and simple. And he knew that she was going to hate him for that. They told him he was going to hell, at fucken sixteen or seventeen, whenever she found out. Can you imagine that? Fucken tellin' your son that he's going to hell, at that age. I never saw eye to eye with her. I know it got better, she mellowed out by the time he got older, but I nevah thought much of her. I didn't say much to her at the funeral. His sistah, Katie, I love her to death too, but Dan's mom... I just never could respect no motha who would say that to her kid. Fucken couldn't.

We'd go to shows, go to fucken pahties, go runnin' around like

kids do. Dan never had a cah so we'd have to bum rides from whoeva. Our one friend Marty he ended up driving all ovah the place, we'd go in the city and go dancin', we'd go find a little grunge club and headbang and shit. It was crazy. Dan always seemed game, he would just go. He'd tell us, "Pick me up down the block from my house at 11 o'clock." So he'd go home, stuff some pillows in his bed, and then climb out the window at 11 to come meet us down the street. See, most our parents didn't care much, but Dan was grounded and had curfew. He was always stressed on that. Once I dropped out and stahted workin, I wasn't listenin to anybody. My money, my rules, fucken period.

We pahtied, pahtied... hah! I would see him after my shift was over, on the weekends... but finally, like I think when we were seventeen, then he basically got kicked out of his house by his motha. Well, so here's how it went down... Dan was a little perv, okay? Like, fucken he would find these little secret boyfriends... guys that would shock you, right. I can't even mention some of them, they're still living in Waltham... but one night, Dan had one of his boy-toys over to spend the night, like a fucken idiot. If you knew what Dan's motha's house was like, you would think it was a stupid fucken idea too. Like the stupidest fucken idea. Their walls, they were paper thin. And the whole place is cramped in, it was a nightmare. I can't believe this guy agreed... but they were in there, playing with each otha's cawks or whatever, and of course Dan's mother, she hears all the moaning and licking and sucking, and she comes in without any wahnin... now, the other guy, he straight up jumped through the window when she opened the door. He just, he fucken bolted. Hah! And Dan was laying there with his cawk out, totally busted. Well this bitch, she fucken loses it... she decides to send him to one of those Christian camps, one of those fucken

gay camps where some weirdo tries to make kids straight with praying or some fucken shit... it was fucken bullshit. Dan was so pissed off, but he didn't have any choice in the mattah. He had to go. He had no money, no options. I love Dan, but he was a lazy little shit... he wasn't getting no job to support himself. Plus he was still a minor, so... for three months, that whole summah, he's out in like Wyoming at some Baptist camp or some shit, some fucken Jesus freak place... it was awful. He couldn't write. He couldn't call. He got back... I mean, obviously the shit didn't work, hah! Dan was still Dan, but, he never talked about it... he swore me to secrecy. He told everyone else he went to a drug camp or some shit. Nah. I don't think so. And when he got back... it was only a mattah of time. He hated his motha for putting him through that. Soon afta, that's when he did end up leaving... living in basements, couch surfin, fucken out in the woods sometimes. He crashed over here all the time, but eventually... he would find one place or another, sometimes find an older guy to stay with for a while... until we'd come over and pahty or somethin and then shit would end up stolen... it was crazy.

Mimi, though... see Dan kept goin to school because of his Mimi, got his high school degree cuz of her... he would go visit her at the nursing home... she was a sweet old lady, let me tell you. I neva met a sweeta woman than Dan's Mimi. She was beautiful. And she told him to stay in high school, to finish, to work on his art. She never judged him or nothing like his own motha. I miss her, I ain't... been fucken years since I thought about Mimi. Years since I thought about any this shit, tell you the truth... you look up in the mirror and wondah what the fuck happened.

Fucken... two kids later... but, well, speaking of kids, my first came... and her father was a miserable fucken bastahd... fucken asshole... but

when you're a new mother, you know, you can't be out partying, out with friends. You look trashy as hell at the club, with the baby bump... I stopped really fucken around after my little girl came... she's my angel. Drives me up a fucken wall, but, now... she is my everything. And that's growin up. Plain as day right there. You either step up or fuck it up, and I was determined to not turn into my motha... gawd rest her soul, too, but... she did the best she could. This town... things have changed a lot in the past, maybe five years or so... which is good, fucken finally, with the economy improving, more jobs, the property value goes up, except for the fucken taxes on the house, it's good... but for years, everything west of Lexington Ave. in Waltham was a fucken trap. It was young single mothas. It was dead beat dads out of work. It was brothas and young kids runnin the streets, pushing drugs, stealin cars, getting chased by the cawps. And fucken all that ever meant was jail. I had a brotha go to jail for ten years on an attempted murdah, robbin a fucken jewelry store with a gun that accidentally went off. Didn't shoot no one, but cuz it went off during the robbery, he got a bid for like twenty years. That's a fucken lifetime! You understanding me? That's where we're from. That's what we saw all the time growin up.

Dan would visit me and Sky every now and then, but years rolled by... we fell out. We'd catch up here and there, you're always runnin into fucken people in this town, but it wasn't like the old days. I'd bring Sky over to Fun Zone when she was old enough, she loved that place as a kid. But Dan hated seeing us there. He hated workin there. The fucken managah was a bastahd... Dan felt like a losah... he had to leave art college, he was depressed. He was livin in a roomin house over on Lex Ave, I think, over there near the Burger King... fucken place was a nightmare. Dope fiends livin next door.

His shit would get broken into. Fuckin crazy old people with cats. Place was a dump. And he stahted really drinkin more... now it wasn't just pahtying anymore, it was just drinkin to black out and shit. I remember once he came ova to my place, he stopped by, and he stahted joking around about the suicide shit... about how he should just blow his head off, nothing matta'd, life sucks... I tried to talk him through that. Like a friend should. And I felt like I was able to convince him outta it then. I really do. Then he ended up meeting Brian, and he moved out to Newton... over to high society, I used to joke with him. Newton is like Hollywood for gawd's sakes... but he kept boozin'. That's what else you saw growin up around here. Addiction, alcoholics... everyone is a drunk or has one in their fucken family. It's just the way it is.

I really didn't see him for a couple of years. I had another kid, Jamie. I got a job as a managah over at the depahtment store, still there today. It's a good job, good benefits for the kids, flexible. I'd text Dan every once in a while, to catch up, to try to cheer him up, but we didn't see eachotha much. But the last year or so... Dan called me up outta the blue one day. He asks me to meet him for coffee. He told me about what happened with Brian, how he ended up getting sobah... I thought it was great. I was happy for him. Skylah remembered him from back in the day, she was happy to see him again... last summah, after we reconnected or whateva, I told him we were driving down to Florida, to go see Disney and Mickey Mouse and all that shit... I hadn't taken the kids on a propah vacation, and I had been saving for a while... I asked him if he wanted to come. We had the best fucken time! He helped me at the pahks, takin the kids on all the rides, takin pictures and everything. It was so nice to have him around. I was jokin with him, sayin how he could be my gay baby-daddy... it was hysterical!

Hah! He was doin good. It was good to see him happy, and... he would come by, check in on us... I thought everythin was gettin betta for him.

Dan was tellin me one time about AA, and all these steps, and his sponsah... that shit was weird to me. It seemed like a lot of pressha. His sponsah was telling him he needed to work on gettin off disability, that he had to do all this homework or whatevah, this self-help bullshit... I seen people in AA before. Shit is like a fucken cult. It's weird. People on their AA high horses, lookin at me havin one drink at the bah, like I'm some fucken animal or something. I'm not saying it was bad he was sobah, but... the whole thing seemed bizzah. Maybe that was stressin him out... I think about why it happened... like I said, I thought his life was gettin betta... he neva told me about thinkin about suicide or anything like that. But if those AA people were always with him, running his life and shit... tell me how none of them had a fucken clue? If they were the closest people to him, how did none of them fucken see where he was headed with all this shit? Strange if you ask me. I don't know those people, but... I know for a fact that shit stressed him out. I'm just sayin.

Something happened. I don't know what for sure, but something had to have happened. You don't just go runnin in front of fucken traffic for nothing, cuz you're havin a bad fucken day. I don't know what, but something had to have gone down for him to do that, to do it the way he did. I don't buy that it was all the depression and shit. I don't. I'm sorry... I knew Dan for twenty fucken years. He wasn't ever talkin about endin his life by jumpin in front of some fucken car. It makes no sense. Nope.

And the funeral... the funeral was a fucken mess. People were bawlin,

everybody. I ain't neva seen so many people cryin, huggin. People loved Dan. He had a spirit to him, this fucken... he was this lovable teddy bear, largah than life. Fucken... I saw kids from way back in the day at the funeral parlah, kids I hadn't seen in years. We all were tellin our stories... all of us ended on the same road, one way or anotha. Girls got pregnant. Guys went to jail. It was like a fucked up family reunion! Hah! But at the same time, it was still good to catch up. Where we're from, it's a struggle, it's a fucken grind. But we all got that in common. You keep on fightin. That should be Waltham's fucken motto or something.

When I found out, I got a text from a friend, she was watching the TV. It was un-fucken-real. She told me to turn on channel 7. They reported it on the fucken 5 o'clock news. Then the way it came out in the newspaypa article... it was fucken crazy. I feel for his sistah, I really do. I see Katie around, and... like I said, I know what it's like to have a brotha fuck up, to have family issues... but to have it all ovah, I really feel for her. People talkin and shit. Everyone's got a fucken opinion. But at the end of the day, nobody knows shit.

BRIAN FLEMING

Daniel Marsden was my one true love. Daniel was my everything. There will never be another like Daniel, not another lover, not another friend, not another confidant... he was my soul mate.

Life had a funny way of bringing me together with my soul mate, to say the least. Some people, I had to lie to them, tell them Daniel and I met in the park, but really, my soul mate found me during 'leather night' at a club downtown. Imagine that! Not that we were embarrassed, but... back then, Daniel was sort of a celebrity in the bear community. Everyone knew his face. He was adorable. He was

this big, burly, chubby, hairy, beautiful hunk, and he knew it. The Mohawk. The care free attitude. Trust me, he knew it. I had just broken up with another ex-, so I decided to stop feeling sorry for myself and go out for some fun. What does a boy do when he needs some fun? Straps on his finest bondage gear and heads out into the evening without his car keys or his worries! That's what! So on that fateful night, I met Daniel at the bar and offered to buy him a drink. We started making-out right there. He was an aggressive little cub.

You might be thinking to yourself, "How could anything enduring come from such depravity?" Well, you don't know Daniel. Or me. Sure that first night was more a torrent of passion than anything else, but when we woke up together the next morning, our souls clicked. I don't know how to put it in words. It all falls short, or sounds cliché. We looked at each other with this recognition, like, 'You are the one I've been looking for.' It was love, right off the bat. No doubt about it. I felt like a little schoolboy all over again. The nerves, the excitement... Daniel brought that out in me. He made me feel, so deeply. And that's why love is so dangerous, because you expose yourself to emotional swings. Daniel could bring me so high, but then he could set me down, so low.

Most people would say we moved too fast in the beginning. We didn't care. Everything seemed so right. We didn't question any of it. We didn't leave the bedroom that first Saturday, and Sunday, I drove him back to the rooming house he was living in, in Waltham. Once I saw the place, I asked him if I could go upstairs with him and help him pack his bags. He started laughing. I told him I was serious. I said, 'Listen, as long as I know you, I refuse to see you call a dump like this your home. Absolutely not. Over my dead body will you go on living here.' It was dramatic, sure, but it

was right. It felt so right. And that afternoon, we packed up his clothes and his belongings, filled up the trunk of my car... no pun intended there... and we brought him back to my home in Newton. There was no time for conversation or planning. It wasn't necessary. When you know, you know. We knew.

I asked him what he did for a living, and he told me about the Fun Zone... I said, 'You never have to go back there if you don't want to.' And he never did. It was like overnight, everything changed for us. And I know some people might think that I was bribing him, that I was enabling him, that I'm some old queen predator... they don't understand. Daniel was, and is, my soul mate. You only have one soul mate in this lifetime. I believe that, 100%. I was almost forty when I met Daniel. I had my share of lovers, of friends, of this boy and that boy... none of it came close to what I experienced being with Daniel. Daniel changed my world. He was my everything. I wanted to take care of him, I wanted to make him happy. I didn't want to see him struggling, living in a seedy rooming house with drug dealers, working at a dingy arcade with a manager who berated him. No. I refused to see him like that. So I did whatever I could to help him. That's what you do for somebody you love.

In the beginning, it was magic. It was pure bliss. We had so much fun together. I still remember our little routine like it was yesterday. I would go off to work in the morning, and Daniel would make me breakfast, then we would shower, a little this and a little of that, and then he would kiss me at the door before I left for the train right at the door. I would come home, and he would have gone to the grocery store, assembled some ingredients for dinner, and after we would make love, we would drink wine and cook. We would listen to music. We would dance. It was divine. Can you imagine? Those first days, weeks, months, I can't describe them to

you. That was the happiest period of my life. I had found the man I wanted to spend the rest of my life with. It was extraordinary.

We grew to learn more about each other. You know that period, in the beginning of any relationship, when you are absorbed by the other person, you want to learn all you can about them, understand their background, their upbringing, their childhood... you confess your dreams, your fears, your passions. We began to unravel in each other. I told him about my prep high school days, about being in the closet all through college and into law school, about running away to New York City to become a hot-shot attorney. I told him about my father renouncing me once they found out about who I really was. We related to one another's story, so deeply. He told me about his mother, their tenuous relationship, about what she had done to him as a teenager. He told me about his dream of art school, of becoming a painter, but then the financial situation with his grandmother's death. I offered to file legal action, right then and there. I did. I was abhorred. Most people will never understand what it's like to be a gay man who is rejected by his family, by his own mother. That is the worst pain, the worst betrayal, anybody could ever go through. Your mother is supposed to love you unconditionally. Your mother is supposed to take care of you from the moment you are born until the moment she dies, ideally. Nature programs it to happen like that. But to have that woman, the woman who tucked you in as a small child and told you "I love you" every night, to have her turn her back on you. Nothing can compare to that pain. Absolutely nothing. I don't care who you are or what happened.

And that's how we got to know each other. So many parts of our stories were alike. Our connection was so deep, I... people think 'soul mate' is a romantic concept. There is no hint of fantasy

when I use the term. Daniel and I were destined to be together. 100%. We both knew it. I would have had to have been blind not to see it.

When I think back on those days... the pet names, the cute little gestures... my honey bear, his baby cakes... it all went by so fast. It seems so long ago, now. But like every honeymoon, that period in our relationship ended. I suppose the changes started to occur gradually, oh, maybe after three or four months. It was a little bit at a time. Our little routine was working out fine, but I suppose I began to put pressure on him to explore what he wanted to do with his life. He was still so young. I said to him, 'You can't be a homemaker! You have to live, to follow your dreams! Pursue your art!' I wanted him to do paintings of us. I put pressure on him to do that, and then finally he exploded with frustration. He said he had given art up, for the time being, and that he didn't like being told what to do. He said it would come back in its own time. I said 'Alright. But what are you going to do in the meantime?' I was pushy. I guess that's who I am. I'm type A. I want to see progress, see results. I'm move move move. Daniel was a great balance for me. He was more relax relax relax. That was our own yin and yang. But after that argument, in particular, I could see things start to change.

I could tell he wasn't interested in hearing about my job, when I came home and would gossip about this and that in the office. He would get frustrated with me. Corporate tax law isn't exactly a compelling subject, but I would say 'Okay, then what should we talk about? What did you do today that was so exciting?' Then he would get defensive, he would say I was attacking him. We would go back and forth.

You might think I didn't notice the drinking, but I did. I read my credit card statements. I knew what he was spending my money on. He started going to the liquor store every day. He thought he was sneaky, but I knew what was going on. It was so difficult to confront Daniel on anything. He would become so hurt, so wounded, by any perceived attack, that there was no graceful way to go about bringing it up to him. But then other times, if you did let something out that was bothering you, he would snap. He would start yelling. He would scream. He would divert from his normal personality in an instant. It was hard. There wasn't a right way to approach any of it from my end.

Fight, make-up. Fight, make-up. A pattern started. We would go at each other, then the next minute we'd be in each other's arms in bed, starstruck. The swings were intense. High, then low. Low, then high.

Don't be fooled though, we certainly enjoyed drinking together. We had our wine. We would go out to dinner, cocktails, this and that. But after a couple evenings where I came home to him passed out on the living room sofa, I said 'What is going on with the drinking? Why do you have to drink so much, all the time?' I cut him off from the credit card for a little while, but then he would go out and find men to buy him drinks during the day. Or he would pawn something for money. It was pointless. It was safer for me to just buy him a bottle and let him stay in the house to do what he needed to do. And his drinking got worse. We would go out to my friends, and he would be shattered. We had embarrassing moments. He would hit on other men, my friends, in front of me. He would black out, pass out places, and he was so big, I mean, look at me... I was not carrying Daniel anywhere. It was embarrassing. Eventually, he wasn't welcome around certain people's homes. He stopped wanting

to go out. He just wanted to stay home, drink, and make love. The third part, well I had no qualms with. But the isolation, I didn't like it. I like going out. I like groups. I like restaurants and clubs, concerts, plays. I like being social. As our relationship came to about the year mark, everything from the beginning had changed.

Now at this point, people might say, "Why didn't you call the whole thing off?" Again, you don't understand. You don't know what it was like to have your soul mate, the person you had spent your life dreaming about, self-destructing in front of your eyes. I couldn't cut him out of my life, certainly not in the condition he was in. That would have been sicker of me to do than stay in the relationship. So I took the lesser of two evils. We went on like that for another two years. Daniel drinking, me working, us fighting. Don't paint with broad strokes though, we had our share of fun. I have so many wonderful memories of Daniel. But a pattern had been cemented.

Not long after meeting his sister Katie, I reached out to her. I tried to ask her for help. We tried to come up with a plan. I didn't ever feel like I was saving Daniel... I didn't... I didn't consciously say to myself 'You have to save him Brian.' I just... I loved him. I wanted his life to improve. And Katie and I, we thought about doing an intervention, but looking back, that would have been terrible. I couldn't betray his trust like that. So I paid for therapists, for psychiatrists. We tried different medications, we tried counseling. I would drive him to appointments every weekend. Eventually I helped represent him to file for social security disability on account of his depression. Daniel was mentally ill. None of it was his fault. I couldn't throw him out like that, for being who he was? He had no control over any of

that. When you love somebody, you accept them totally. That's what I did with Daniel. I accepted and loved him fully. I have no regrets in that sense.

Eventually it got to where I was having nervous breakdowns on account of Daniel. He would call me drunk at work, with some drama about how he wanted to see me, how he'd leave me... he'd make up stories about cheating on me, probably some true, some not so true... our life was chaotic. I had to take a leave of absence from my firm for a month. I was exhausted, physically, mentally. When my sister visited us, she took me aside. She told me I had to take care of myself. She said, "Brian, this is not good for you. You're falling apart. I know you love this man, but you have to love yourself first." She had divorced her own husband, a man who she loved, so she knew what I was going through. My own doctor warned me. He said, "Brian, you're going to have a heart attack if you keep doing whatever it is you're doing. So I hope whatever it is you're doing is worth it." My blood pressure was through the roof, literally. Peace, comfort, quiet... these words no longer registered to me. The see-saw of our relationship was taking its toll, on all aspects of my life. But whenever I was ready to call it quits, Daniel would go and do something, pick me flowers, sing my favorite show tunes... don't judge me... the point was he would redeem himself by showing me that side of him. That side I loved. He would take me to the brink of kicking him out, then he would win me back.

Paranoia, jealousy... that's what did me in. I paid our phone bills, and I would review his texts, his calls. I knew he was seeing other men. I knew he was sleeping around. In the beginning, it wasn't a big deal. I think we both agreed that if we needed to do that, it would be okay... but there had to be honesty. He told me about a couple, but by the end... there were dozens of other men. I could

tell men had been over during the day, while I was at work. Finally I hit a bottom with it all. I looked at myself in the mirror, and I had literally aged ten years. I looked so old. I said to myself, 'You can't keep wearing yourself out like this. It's crazy.' I started working with a therapist, and that really gave me the courage to stick up for myself. I had to set boundaries. I had given Daniel plenty of ultimatums. It didn't matter. So when I told him I had to ask him to leave, I don't think he was too surprised. He was drunk, but he wasn't surprised.

You must think I'm crazy for thinking this... but a part of me, a part of my heart, I kept the door open, for us making it work. I didn't call it a break up. I never did. I never wanted to stop seeing Daniel. That would have been too much. I needed space from him, but to cut him off forever... it wasn't an option. So I asked him to leave, and I helped him find his apartment in Waltham, a little studio his disability would help cover. We moved him in. I paid his cable bill still, so he could watch television and have the internet. He couldn't budget his monthly checks. He had no skills like that. Daniel never really grew up. But it made him so youthful, his personality. I would call it an innocence, a purity almost. He didn't worry about the things everyone else worries about. A career. A reputation. A plan. To Daniel, none of that mattered. So we moved him out, and I tried to help him get situated as best I could.

We still kept contact. I would come over, take him to dinner. We were still sleeping together, occasionally. But things were different. I would bring up the drinking, and he would tell me "Mind your own business. I'm not your responsibility." It was difficult to watch. You want so desperately to help... I tried, I tried so hard. He continued to see doctors, therapists, as part of

his disability, but none of that seemed to make a difference. He would fall into these spells, these depressions... he wouldn't pick up the phone. He wouldn't respond to me. I would have to drive over to make sure he was still alive. Sometimes he wouldn't even give me the courtesy of opening the door. It was terrible, watching him go through that, and knowing there was nothing I could do. There wasn't anything anybody could do.

For a while, it went on like that. Whenever I would try to cheer him up, he would find a way to get drunk. And when Daniel was drunk like that, it was all maudlin, full of self-pity. He would say "How could you ever love a piece of shit like me?" He would hate himself. It was awful. And the sprees lasted longer and longer. Now he would be drunk for a week at a time. I gradually saw him less and less. My life was getting better, work was getting better, my health, my sleep, my mood... but Daniel kept getting worse.

Then... it happened. I hadn't seen Daniel for about a month. I decided I would drop in on him, on a Sunday, and bring him some food, some flowers. I think I rented a DVD, with the intention of spending some time together, to talk, to catch up. I wanted to help. But when I got to his place, and he buzzed me in... I could tell right away, I should have left. Right when I saw his face, I should have turned around. I knew something was terribly wrong. The Daniel I saw in front of me wasn't the Daniel I knew. He offered me a drink, and I declined. He started cutting into me. He said horrible things. I won't repeat any of it... but I can still hear that voice, that horrible, evil voice. It wasn't Daniel. I was ready to leave, and I told him that maybe we shouldn't even see each other anymore. He told me to sit down. I stood up and refused. He turned to me, grabbed me, and threw me to the ground. He started calling me names, degrading, hateful names. Then he

walked into the kitchen, took out a knife, and brought it to his own throat. I was distraught. He kept saying that if I left then he would "do it." He kept shouting, "I'll fucking do it!" I wept inconsolably. I couldn't do anything else. And as I was crying, he walked over to me, and wham! He kicked me right in the head as I was balled up on the floor. He kicked me so hard, I blacked out. I was knocked unconscious. And when I woke up, the knife... he had the knife pressed to my throat. He had this horrible smirk on his face, this evil... it wasn't Daniel that night. He was possessed by an evil spirit... it wasn't him. It was awful. I didn't know what to do. I screamed, and he told me to shut up or he would "do it." He held me down there for ten minutes. It felt like an eternity. I begged him. I begged and wept and he stood over me with that knife. He said he was going to kill me, then kill himself. I begged him. I told him I would do anything, anything to make him stop. Finally, thank God, finally he let me up. The second he did, I ran out of his apartment. I didn't even grab my leather jacket, my shoes, my car keys... I just ran. I ran down the block to a convenience store and used their phone to call a cab. I had to get as far away from him as possible.

That next week was the worst of my life. Of course Daniel called, left me messages saying he didn't remember anything, that the neighbors had complained about yelling and he wanted to know what happened. He called and asked if I wanted my keys, my jacket back. He wanted to know what happened. He apologized. None of it mattered. I didn't respond to anything. I changed the locks on my door at home and for my car. I changed my phone number. I put my house on the market and was ready to sell it to the first bidder, literally. I didn't want him to ever be able to find me again. Whatever that energy was that took over him... I could never expose

myself to that again. I couldn't. The line had been crossed.

Most people would wonder why I didn't call the police... I didn't have the heart. And to be honest, the one thing I knew was that Daniel wasn't the stalker-type. Daniel wasn't going to hunt me down, pursue me. And I was right. After a while I stopped hearing from him. Things cooled down. I couldn't bring myself to see anybody else, but slowly time started to help heal the wounds. Weeks turned into months, and months turned into a year. Things got back to normal for me. I started seeing other men, and I moved on. Honestly, I tried my best to forget about Daniel. I knew I never would, but I tried. It was too painful, that last night in his apartment... it ruined everything about him for me. People make mistakes... trust me, if anyone understands that, it's me. But that mistake, that night... it was too much. It had gone too far. I feared for my life. It was the worst night of my entire life, worse than the night I found out he had passed.

Time went on, life went on. But then one day, maybe three months ago, I received a letter. It was a written letter from Daniel. I certainly wasn't expecting it. I didn't even open the envelope for a couple of days. A part of me wanted to throw the thing out. But another part of me... I always hoped, my heart always wanted for things to work out with Daniel. Love truly is blind. I was silly, I know... but finally I read his note. He explained how he had gotten sober, that he had begun to pursue his art again. There was a tiny sketch of us with the letter. He apologized for that night. He confessed he remembered kicking me, and using the knife... he said it was the worst thing he had ever done in his entire life, and he had done it to the person he loved the most. He was so genuine and sincere. I could tell he put so much time into the note. He left his number at the end of it, and said he would love to hear from

me, if I could find it in my heart to forgive him. I wiped the tears from my eyes, and I picked up the phone. He started crying immediately. We wept together. It was... it was a very powerful conversation. I knew our relationship could never be the same, but I still loved him. He still loved me. We will always love each other. Only someone who has been that deeply in love could understand it.

We made plans to meet for dinner, and I went to see Daniel that weekend. He looked so much better than I last remembered. He sounded so much better. Hope grew inside of me. I didn't get ahead of myself, and I didn't take him back... I didn't even make any promises or plans. But a tiny bit of hope grew inside of me after our dinner. We slept together that night, but I left in the morning. It was too much. My therapist thought I was absolutely crazy. After I told him, he wouldn't even look at me. And you probably think I'm crazy... but I just couldn't shut him out of my life. I couldn't let him back in, but I couldn't shut him out. We started talking again on a regular basis. He told me about his AA program, about the people he had met. He seemed to be doing so much better. I was so happy for him. Again, I didn't get too far ahead of myself... but a part of me held on to some hope it might all work out one day.

My last conversation with Daniel was the night of his death. He called me after midnight, at maybe 1AM. My dog, Perry, he starts barking at me like a little diva whenever the phone rings, so I woke up to a missed call. I called Daniel back, and I asked him how he was. Well- he told me that he had been drinking, that he was scared, that he needed to see me. I was, I was totally shocked. I know he had just celebrated one year of sobriety, so it was the last thing I expected him to say. But after all the years, after

all the times bailing Daniel out of this situation and that situation... all the times I let Daniel's drinking control my life... I had to be in the office for a conference call with a client at 7AM, and it, it wasn't an option. I could not open myself up to more pain, to more disappointment. I told him I had to be up early, that I couldn't drive over right then, but that after I finished up my work in the morning I would come over to take him to breakfast. He was pleading with me. He said, "Brian, you have to come now, you have to. I miss you. I need you to hold me. I need to feel you." It was extremely difficult. I loved Daniel. I never wanted to see him hurting. But there comes a point, and... I just couldn't do it. I had gone through my own healing process, hours in therapy, trying to heal myself after that terrible night, trying to be alright with where we were at. I couldn't just open myself up like that.

I suppose you think that makes me a coward, or responsible, in some way, for what happened to Daniel that night, but you don't understand where I was coming from. You don't understand what kind of trauma our relationship had caused me. Daniel was sick. I lived with him for almost three years. I dealt with his sickness, and I let it become a part of my life. That's what you do with people you love, I know, but... I just was not in a position to reopen myself to that. I couldn't. We talked for a little longer. He plead with me, he begged me... I told him again and again that I would be by before 11 the next day, that we would talk, that everything was okay. I told him to stop drinking for the night. I asked him if he was in his apartment, if the doors were locked... I made sure best I could that Daniel was safe. He promised me he would stay inside, and that he had poured the rest of the vodka down the sink. I told him to get in his bed. And then we talked dirty for a little bit,

I'll spare you the details, but I did it to relax him. I tried to calm him down. I tried to make sure he was safe. Then I told him I loved him, and I would see him in the morning. He told me I was the only person he ever loved, and that he couldn't wait for me to ring the buzzer to his apartment. We left the conversation like that. There was no threat of harm, I assure you. He never told me he was thinking about hurting himself or hurting anyone else in any way. There was no indication of anything like that. We told each other how much we loved and cared for the other person, and said goodnight. That was it.

Do I regret not going to his apartment? Not a minute goes by when I don't think about it. It will be the greatest regret of my life, without question. I will be haunted by the possibility I could have saved his life. The idea makes me sick to my stomach. I haven't slept since that night. I may never sleep well again. But how selfish would that be, for me, to tell his family and his friends? The way they all remembered Daniel, clean, sober, progressing forward... who am I to take their last impressions and memories of somebody they loved, and taint it with that information? I will take my last conversation with Daniel to my own grave. After I realized that nobody knew he was drunk the night he died, and that his mother had opted against a coroner's investigation... there absolutely is no need to bring it up to anyone else. I want Daniel to be remembered for his positive traits, for his smile, for his love. Not for some stupid mistake. Not for some stupid, impulsive, selfish decision he made while he was drunk. I couldn't do that to them, or more importantly, to Daniel. I want his legacy to be one of love. No... no, I can't. I decided right after I found out about the accident. You might not agree with my decision, but, it's not yours to make. I will carry that

information with me. It is my burden. Our relationship, mine and Daniel's, it was between us. And I have to believe if he were able to have a say in any of it, now, that he would want me to keep the details of that night a secret from his family and friends. In fact, I know that's what he would want. And that's why I haven't spoken a word of it. And I never will.

So... I called Daniel that next morning, and, well, of course he didn't pick up. I had a last minute appointment scheduled with a client, so I didn't go to his apartment for breakfast. I tried him again in the afternoon. No answer. Finally, when I got home from work, I called Katie. She didn't answer at first, but when she called me back, maybe ten minutes later, she was in hysterics. She told me what happened, and the moment she said "He's gone" I fell to the ground. I dropped the phone. I think I fainted... it's hard to describe, but I felt, physically, a part of my spirit leave my body in that moment. The part of Daniel, that I carried with me. The part I had traded with him, all those happy memories, all those late nights talking, all those beautiful moments between us. A part of me died when I found out. I felt it die inside of me. You might think that's over the top, but you just don't understand... Daniel carried me with him, and I carried him with me. Our connection was so deep. I finally composed myself and responded to Katie. We cried together on the phone. I asked how I could help... I did a lot of crying the next week. The wake, the funeral. His mother even approached me, and after a handshake, we hugged. I didn't say much to her, but there was an understanding. The whole thing... his death brought so many people together. So many people who were lucky enough to have had him touch their life. The sadness, all those people... we loved Daniel, and he loved us. I could never tell them about his last night, about the drinking. I

can't. I want him to rest in peace. And I want him to be remembered for who he really was. I want to remember his green eyes. I want to remember his lumberjack walk. I want to remember his hairy back in the shower, and how he would sing under the water. I want to remember his favorite GIRLS JUST WANNA HAVE FUN t-shirt. I want to remember his love of zombie movies. I want to remember how, no matter what kind of restaurant we were at, he'd ask if they served buffalo chicken pizza. I want to remember the way he would snap pictures with his fingers, pretending like he was behind a camera, when he wanted to cherish a moment. I want to remember his heart. I know I will see him again someday. I think about it. I see him in dreams sometimes, I... I know we will be together again. You might think it's crazy, but I know we will.

LAURIE FOLEY

I didn't think I would be able to do this. I told Dave that I wouldn't have the strength... you'll have to be patient with me. I'm not used to talking about my son in the past tense... I don't think I'll ever get used to it. I don't want to ever get used to it. I brought him into the world... I was the first person to hold him. I'll never forget that moment. It was the most beautiful moment of my life. I was so terrified, so scared, then... it was the happiest I've ever been. Seeing his blue eyes, baby blue, staring up at me. He didn't even cry. He was looking around, taking in the world, absorbing life, right from the beginning. He was such a smart boy. He was my little angel. Now he's my angel in heaven... I... you'll have to be patient.

Daniel made me a mother. He changed my entire outlook on life. He taught me about love. Right from the beginning. He was my everything. My life, my life wasn't my own anymore. To have

something so precious, so helpless, depending on you. I fed him. I clothed him. Having Daniel made me such a better person. He brought out the best in me. That is the gift of having children. They are able to wipe away your selfishness. I don't think I ever loved before I had Daniel, before he... before he loved me.

I was only 20 when he was born. I had just married Frank. I was so young. But I had purpose. That's what children do. Daniel gave me the gift of purpose. And even though Frank and I, it was never going to work out... and even with our problems, having Daniel made it all worthwhile. I never hated Frank after he left. He helped bring Daniel into my life. And in a way, when I was pregnant with Katie, and Frank left, I was happy. They were all mine. And they didn't have to grow up with seeing their parents fight, that toxicity... I tried to give them both, Daniel and Katie, a good home to grow up in. Like the home I was given as a child.

Daniel was such a happy little boy. He was such an adorable little boy. Other women used to stop me, when I would be out pushing him in the stroller, and they would say, "He is the most handsome baby boy." They would tell me to put him into baby ads, to have him be a model. The picture of him in your hands is from when he was two. Look at those curls! Those are from my dad. He had curly hair, a full head of curls, before he went bald. Daniel was always embarrassed by them, he would cut his hair short. But I loved those curls. My little curly cue, that's what I would call him.

Daniel started talking at eleven months. And I don't mean 'mama' and 'dada,' I mean really talking. He was so smart. I would read him books all the time. I would sit him in his little portable crib, we would have conversations all day. He was my little buddy. Even with me and Frank having our problems, my main focus was

always on Daniel. I thanked God every day for Daniel. I thanked God for bringing me such a beautiful, healthy boy. He was such a good boy. Eight weeks and he slept through the night. Eight weeks! My friends were so jealous of me. They would be complaining about the sleepless nights... Daniel was a perfect little boy.

He loved helicopters. I remember we could never buy him enough toy helicopters. He was so fascinated by the world. Dinosaurs, helicopters... he was so engaged in what was going on around him. It was the artist in him. He was full of such wonder as a little boy. He would ask me so many questions. He was so curious. He was... he loved being alive, so much, I... I'm sorry.

I can't help crying when I think of that little boy in his high-chair, eating Spaghetti-O's... when Daniel got older, when he started having the problems with the depression... I would ask God all the time, I would pray for that wonder, that excitement for life, to be returned to Daniel's spirit. I couldn't understand where it went. As a mother, as his mother, I blamed myself for everything. I truly believe God sends us our trials to strengthen us, to help us grow. But I couldn't... I still don't understand so much of it. I know I can't. I can't understand His plan. I want to, I so desperately want to... I never will.

Daniel was such a great older brother to Katie growing up. I think about that a lot. The first thing Daniel asked me, after I brought Katie home, was "Mommy, what flavor milkshake do you think she likes, from McDonalds? Chocolate, or vanilla?" That was Daniel's heart. He loved her so much. He loved me so much. After Frank left, he was my little man. It was the three of us. My folks helped out, they let us stay in the house, helped watch the kids... but it was our little unit. When I look back, I never once felt like I was

being burdened. I knew I was the woman to take care of those children. I knew it was exactly meant to be. I had a faith. I should have been so much more afraid... maybe I was naïve... but I knew. I knew I was destined to be their mother. It was exactly what God wanted from me. It's why I was put on this earth.

When Dave came into our life, it was a blessing. My dad had his first stroke, and it was a sad time. But Dave loved those kids from the moment he laid eyes on them. He wanted to be their father. He was their father. I thank God every day for Him putting Dave into my life. I needed strength, I needed help, and Dave stepped up. He filled that role, and he never once complained. Not when Daniel was older, not when the problems started happening. Dave never once said to me, "You deal with it, he's not my son." Not once. Dave has been with me every step of the way. They are our children.

I had everything I needed in life. I had two healthy, beautiful children. I had a loving husband. Even when my dad died, I knew that he could die knowing I was safe. That I was taken care of. I felt a lot of peace knowing that. We were in good hands. And life was good to us. I was able to go back to school, to graduate nursing school with a degree. I had a good job. Dave was always working. He worked so hard. He had two or three jobs, he always was working. He was such a good provider for us. We were able to always pay the mortgage, put food on the table. We were able to give the kids everything they needed. He built them this swingset in the backyard. Daniel and Katie would go out there and play make-believe for hours on end. They were always in castles, on quests... it really was a beautiful time. I would look back at those days, later on... there's so many memories I've been blessed with. They carried me through the difficult moments, through right now... I

keep replaying those days, to stay strong.

We would go to the beach in the summer, in Revere, we would pack up Dave's truck with a picnic lunch. I would have to put sunscreen on Daniel four or five times in the afternoon. He had skin like a little peach. But he loved the water. He would run around with his pail, his shovel. Katie and Daniel would beg Dave to bury him. They thought it was the funniest thing. They'd spend all this time digging a hole for Dave to lay in, then cover him all the way up to his head. Then Dave would break loose, he would pretend to be a bear or something, the kids would run away screaming and laughing. I'll never forget those trips. We would drive home and they'd be asleep in the back. Dave and I would talk about how great our kids were, how lucky we were... we were so happy. I was so blessed.

The family parties were such fun. My brothers all had kids, we would get together and barbecue. Daniel had loads of cousins, he always had friends to play with. He was such a social kid. He was buddies with everyone. And all the kids loved Daniel. There wasn't a cruel bone in his body. He would always follow the rules during a game, he always wanted things to be fair. He would cry sometimes, he would say, "Mommy, why doesn't everyone try to play fair? Isn't it important to play fair?" I think he had a sense of the world being a cruel place at an early age. He was a smart boy, and he was so sensitive. He would hate to see other kids bullied or picked on. And he was always one of the biggest, in his class, or with his friends... he would always stick up for the little-guy. He was a fighter for the underdog. It was such an endearing quality. No matter how I tried to explain it, Daniel could never understand why some kids got left out, or why kids were mean. It hurt him so much. He was so sensitive to others, how other people felt. He

wanted everyone to be happy.

Daniel went to school, but he didn't really do well in the classroom. The teachers weren't patient with him. He had so much energy. He wanted to learn about astronomy or meteorology, he didn't have time for math and history. It was clear early on Daniel wasn't a student. He created his own sort of curriculum. He would read books, he always loved to read, but it never involved his actual homework. I would try to motivate him, but it never took. I should have put him in one of those alternative programs, but we didn't have the money. We tried the best we could. He did alright, but it never was his thing. The format didn't work for him. He was too creative, too spirited.

The one subject that fascinated him was religion. I put the kids in CCD classes all through grade school, and he would come back... he loved the Bible stories. He would come home from CCD and tell me about Moses or Noah. He was so fascinated by the stories. Jesus was such a mystery to him. I remember his first communion, he would ask me all these questions about the host, about eating Jesus. He had such an inquisitive mind. He would be so scared of committing a sin. He would say "Mommy, I don't want to go to hell." It was that Catholic guilt we all had in my family. He would sheepishly ask me, "If I don't give Katie one of my cookies, is it a sin?"

I remember once, we were in the park... he must have been five or six. He looked up at me with his green eyes, and he asked, "Mommy, where is God?" I remember the question, but I don't recall exactly what I said to him, how I answered it... but, remembering now... God was in his eyes. God was in Daniel looking up at me in that moment. As a parent, your children... Daniel was a miracle in my life.

Grade school went by. He got bigger, but he was never interested

in sports or anything like that. All the other dads, they would ask Dave why we didn't put Daniel in football or basketball. The truth was Daniel never showed any inclination towards sports. He really loved his art. Around age 10, when we bought him his first set of pastels, and a little easel for Christmas... he was so talented, right away. He was a natural. He would draw these beautiful sunsets for my mother. By then she was living in a nursing home, and we would pick her up every Sunday, bring her to mass with us, then spend the afternoon together. Daniel would create masterpieces for her. And she would brag to all her friends, she would say, "My grandson did that! Can you believe that! What can your grandson do?" My mother... she loved Daniel so much. I don't think, as a parent, or as a grandparent... you don't pick favorites. There are qualities in each child that draw you in... but Daniel was special to her. She held him so dearly in her heart. When she passed away...

I thought after Daniel and I, after our relationship had suffered... I thought my mother might be able to keep him on track. He had left our home, and we weren't talking much, when he was nineteen or twenty, but he would still visit my mother. I never tried to use her to bring us together, I didn't want to put her in the middle of that, or make her negotiate something... but I went to her for help. She always supported Daniel and his art. She always encouraged him. And he felt her love, he believed in his talents because she believed in him. So when he finished high school, I went to my mother with a plan. I knew Daniel would never go to school, to be a doctor or a lawyer or something, but I thought with the art, with his talent... Dave and I took out a refinance mortgage on the house, and we went to my mom with the money. We told her next time she saw Daniel, to tell him she had been saving

a college fund for him. Now my mother didn't have two nickels to rub together when she died. My brothers and I had to sell her house to pay for all of her care, for the home... but Dave and I gave her enough money to pay for about a year of art school for Daniel. We had her tell Daniel that it was her money, because he never would have accepted it if he knew it came from Dave and me. He didn't want anything to do with us by then. But we figured if he thought the money was coming from my mother... it ended up working. He got into art school, and he was able to go his first year with that money. Once she passed away though... the plan ended. We only got enough from the house to put him through a year's worth of classes. I thought maybe he could take out a loan, to keep going. I would sign him up for different programs, different ways to apply for academic financing, without telling him... I would research different banks and put his address on student loan services. But he never took the initiative. He only went for that one year. I thought if he got a taste of it, he would keep at it. If my mother wouldn't have passed away... we might have been able to work something else out. It was so sad. Her funeral... it was so sad. Daniel refused to talk to me. He didn't say a word to me. He started talking to Katie again, but he wanted nothing to do with me. We tried... Dave was so adamant about it, about trying to help him. It didn't work out. You can't plan for any of that. It's not our plan. It just isn't. If there's anything I've learned...

I'll be honest, by that point, I was so hurt by Daniel. His teenage years... everything changed in high school. He started to retreat. We stopped going to the beach as a family. He started refusing to go to mass on Sundays. He fell in with a group of kids that didn't grow up with the same values as him. They were from violent homes, homes filled with drugs and alcohol. For whatever reason, that

attracted him. I think it was the underdog idea... he always loved the outcasts, the people who weren't normal, who got looked down on. But that group of kids... he started smoking pot. He started ditching classes. I couldn't understand why... I would ask God, 'What love did I fail to give my son?' I was convinced I failed Daniel in some way. I tried so hard to keep our lines of communication open, to ask him about his life... no matter how much interest I showed, Daniel wouldn't let me in. That was what changed, in high school... we stopped being friends. We had been such good friends up until then. He would tell me all about his life, about school, about his friends... but he stopped talking to me. It was so hard, as a mother... I couldn't figure out what I did.

Depression ran in Frank's family, and Frank had his issues with drugs... I used to read books on the subject. I even specialized, while I was at the hospital, in the addictions and treatment field. I wanted to understand. I wanted to learn as much as I could about mental health, about how Daniel was feeling. There was a real change in him. The depression started taking my son away from me. It robbed Daniel from me, and from the world. It is a very real disease. I hear talk about it, talk about how people who are depressed don't have the moral fiber, don't have the work ethic... what a load of nonsense. People who say those kind of things have no idea what it's like to watch your son change in front of your eyes. They have no idea how real it is, how awful it is.

Dave and I, once we realized we couldn't give Daniel the help he needed, we started seeking out professionals. Dave was working three jobs to pay for the therapy, the medications. We tried everything we could. But Daniel resented us for it. He hated talking about how he felt, what he was going through. He just wouldn't open up. And every suggestion, every time we tried to

offer him an alternative, Daniel kept getting angrier and angrier. He would get so upset. By then, Daniel had gone from my gentle baby boy to an angry young man. He was in so much pain. He was angry at me. He was angry at the world. I was so hurt... my own child, my own blood, who I would give my life over... if I could trade my life for Daniel's right now, there would be no question... that is the bond of a parent to a child. But he wanted nothing to do with my love. The fights got worse. He was bigger than Dave, and Daniel would get into these huge fights. No one could control him. I prayed so much, I used to pray for peace to enter Daniel's heart... nothing seemed to be going right.

It tested my faith. I was ready to give up on God many times. I would be looking down at my rosary... I really wasn't sure about anything anymore. When your child is upset, when your child is hurting... you hurt right alongside them as a parent. You feel their pain. And poor Katie, we were giving Daniel so much attention... he was the center of all the conflict, all our energy was being spent on Daniel... I really regret that part of it, of not being there for Katie as much as I should have. It was so difficult to balance. You try your best, but at the end of the day I am just as flawed as any other person. I could have done better with that. I know Katie doesn't hold it over me, but we've spoken about it. It was such a hard time for our family.

All of our relationships suffered. All of my relationships, with Daniel, with Katie, with Dave, they were taking a toll. It was a very strenuous time for all of us. I had my own way of dealing with it, with my faith... but, it all was too much. And then we found out about Daniel being gay... now, I never was upset that my son was gay. I wasn't completely shocked when I found out. The way I found out was shocking... I won't get into it, but I wasn't upset by the

actual fact. The manner in how it happened... there were certain indications, looking back, and as a mother you notice things... but I never hated Daniel for being gay. I never told him that. I never said he was going to hell, or that I couldn't accept him or love him anymore... I never said anything like that to him. What hurt me the most about Daniel being gay was how I knew the world was going to view my son. What hurt me the most was knowing that he would be judged, that life was going to be harder for him as a gay man. You don't want your children to be judged, to be attacked by the world. I knew Daniel would have to face a much harder life as a gay man. That's why I was sad. I told him that... but he never believed me. He said all I cared about was my religion, was the church, was my own reputation... it couldn't have been further from the truth. It really couldn't have been. As a parent, as a mother, I loved my son unconditionally. There was nothing Daniel could do or say that could extinguish my love for him. Nothing.

The end of that school year, when Daniel told us he was gay, as the drug use got worse and worse... Dave and I reached a breaking point. We didn't know what to do. We had run out of options. We saw that Daniel was on this trajectory, and there was nothing we could do to stop it. Kids his age were dying from heroin left and right. We were scared. I remember a friend of mine, a good friend I grew up with, she had a brother who died from an overdose. I remember after her brother passed, my friend told me her biggest regret was not trying to get him help. She wished her family would have done an intervention, or put him in some kind of program. That's all I could think about. I thought Daniel was going to end up as another casualty. So Dave and I got some money together, and we arranged for him to go away for a summer to a sort of treatment camp out west. We ended up saving a couple thousand dollars, and

using the insurance I got from the hospital, to put him into the camp. We thought it was our last chance. I would have never forgiven myself if I didn't... if I wouldn't have tried, I couldn't live with that. The fact that when Daniel did pass, that he was sober, that he was healing, that he had found some peace with all of that...

So Daniel went away for that summer, and our house got back to normal. Things got better. We were able to talk to him on the phone a couple times, and he sounded good. I really thought it could change everything for us, for our family, for my son. But after he came home... when you're that age, your friends are everything. You think the parties, the friends you have at seventeen, eighteen... they mean everything to you. And when Daniel came home, he fell back into the same group. So many kids his age, like I said, they were making the same mistakes their parents made... the drinking, the drugs, the sex... one of the main reasons I tried to raise my children with a sense of faith, with religion, was to try to combat all of those traps out in the world. The area we grew up in, that I grew up in, that Daniel grew up in... so many lives are ruined by those pitfalls. I didn't want to see Daniel destroyed by all of that. I tried to protect him. But he was a kid, a teenager... he went back to his friends, to engaging in all that behavior... there was nothing anybody could do to change his mind.

After that summer, our family hit another breaking point. Daniel finally told Dave and I off. He said he was leaving the house, and... I, I can't... I didn't have the strength anymore to fight him. I let him leave. He had threatened us so many instances before that, he would run away... I had run out of energy. You can only do so much as a parent... so many nights were spent worrying about Daniel, if he was safe, where he was... I would drive all over

Waltham looking for him. I would bang on people's doors. I was crazy. I think there was a running joke in the neighborhood about me. I didn't care. I had to do everything I could... I wouldn't have been able to live with myself. But by then Daniel was eighteen, and he made the decision to leave our home. I couldn't chase after him any longer. I couldn't change his mind. It was going to happen sooner or later, and then it happened.

We didn't talk for a long time after that. In some ways, I think it was healthy. He wanted to leave so badly, and he had to go out on his own. I thought maybe he would realize our home wasn't as awful as he made it out to be. Eventually he did come to that realization, but not right away. He still thought I hated him for being gay, that I was exiling him for all of that. But... it had to happen the way it did... it just wasn't a good situation with him being at home anymore. Katie needed us to start giving her some of our time, Dave and me. She deserved it. We all deserved a break. Daniel, too... I think it was good for him. But I couldn't totally let him go... I never felt like our relationship was over. It was a break, but not an ending. I never thought of it that way. I knew God would bring us back together. I would call his friends' parents, to check in on him. I would cook a meal and send it over to a house he was staying at. I tried, in little ways, to stay connected to him, to let him know I still loved him, as my son. But he was out on his own. I thank God my mother was still a part of his life then. She kept him together through all of that. She made him promise to finish high school. She got him into the art program. She really was my connection to Daniel through all of that.

Then... like I explained, after her passing, after art school... he lost his sense of direction. Daniel started working a job... it must

have been two or three years after my mom died before we spoke again. I prayed for him all through it. I knew it would work out, but... I have so many regrets as a parent. I will never feel like I was good enough for my children, for Daniel or Katie. I wish I would have done so many things differently. I was guilty of pride. I was stubborn. I should have tried to reach out to him sooner... but eventually... well, Katie had her daughter, Samantha, and that brought us all back together. Little Sammy... she is another one of my treasures. When she was born, she saved my relationship with my son. Sammy saved our family. Her purity, the little angel... Daniel started coming back around to see Katie and Sammy, and one day, while I was at their apartment, he came by. It was such an emotional outpouring. We looked at each other, and both of us began to cry. We cried and cried, we didn't even speak. We embraced each other and tears flooded us. It was truly a miracle. It had been everything I was praying for. In one moment, we were able to put aside so many years, so many difficult moments. We forgave each other. I, I... I can't explain what it was like to have my son back. I can't put it into words. I can feel it, right now talking with you...

For the first time in so long, Daniel looked at me as his friend. He opened up to me about his depression, about art school... I never told him about what Dave or I did, but I encouraged him to continue with it. But the depression... he was stuck. At least, though, he was letting me back in. I tried to set him up with another therapist, another doctor... but by then, he really... he just had given up on himself. Reconnecting with Daniel was such a blessing, but at the same time, it was so difficult to see him in the shape he was in, and not be able to do anything. I tried everything, but it became apparent no matter how badly I prayed for him to get

better, how much I wanted him to get better... it didn't matter. At least we could see each other, I could visit him, we could be a part of each other's lives... and there were beautiful moments. Daniel's laughter... Daniel had the best laugh I have ever heard. It was this hearty, howling chuckle. It was so genuine. And to be with him was to laugh with him. He brought humor everywhere he went, when he was in a good place... and none of it was malicious, he never got a laugh at the expense of another person... he would just say these silly things... he knew exactly how to make me laugh. He delighted in it. He delighted in laughing with others... in sharing joy with others. He had such a gift for bringing warmth to the people in his life. He really... it...

But the depression had its way with my son. I was helpless against it. I did whatever I could to keep him close, but it kept pulling him away from me. For years Daniel worked at his job, lived in Waltham, and he just didn't do much else. He was a part of the family, we would include him in everything, but he was stuck.

And slowly, over time, his drinking began to pick up. He told me he had stopped smoking the pot, but he replaced it with the booze. He was searching for a way to feel better. I heard an analogy in a book I read, that alcoholics are trying to fill a hole in their heart... a God-shaped hole. Daniel was searching for answers, for fulfillment, and he fell into the bottle. It got worse and worse. Katie and I would bring it up to him, but he didn't want to hear anything about it. He explained to us that the booze was the only thing holding him together. He couldn't see how it was really destroying him.

I think meeting Brian... when Daniel told me he left his job and had moved in to this man's house in Newton... I don't think it helped

Daniel at all. Brian was an enabler for Daniel's drinking. Brian took advantage of Daniel. He lured my son in, with his money, with his status... he gave Daniel free reign to drink exactly how he wanted to. At least when Daniel was working and paying for his own rent, he had responsibilities. When Brian started paying for everything... Daniel thought Brian was taking care of him, that Brian loved him and wanted him to be happy... I was very skeptical of the whole situation, and I don't, to this day, think it was a good thing for Daniel. We saw less and less of him. I always told Daniel that if Brian wanted to come to my home, he was more than welcome. In all the years they were together, the man never once came to my home to meet me. That's not right. I don't care who you are, or what your views are, or what your religion is... it wasn't right. I didn't think it was a good thing for Daniel, and I told him that on more than one occasion. He would become upset, or he would say 'Mom you don't know what you're talking about. Brian loves me.' It's not that I didn't want my son to find love. Of course I did. But there is a difference between true love and... lust... loving someone is not giving into them, giving them their way because it is easier, because you might get something in return. That is lust. Love... love is difficult. Love is telling the truth. Love is doing what's best for somebody, not doing whatever they want you to do. It takes courage to love. And I didn't see that with Brian. I didn't. I don't mean to judge the man... it was what I saw, during that time.

And things went on like that, and Daniel drifted away from me again. More time passed... by now he was a grown man. But in some ways, as a mother... I never felt like I was done raising my son. I never felt like I was done taking care of my son, or either of my children, Katie or Daniel... my work is never finished, not until

they bury me in the ground. I knew Daniel had to live his life, but... it was difficult. Dave really helped me out during that... he really kept things together for both of us. He would tell me to have faith it would all work out. Even as Daniel's drinking would get worse, Dave would try to talk to Daniel, try to help him.. Dave's brother died from cirrhosis at twenty-nine. Dave knew how to handle it all much better than I did. He really did everything he could.. I'm so lucky to have him as my husband, still, to this day after almost thirty years...

When Brian and Daniel split up, I saw it as a good thing for Daniel. I know it was very difficult for him emotionally, but he needed to be on his own. Dave would explain to me that eventually the drinking was going to cause Daniel enough pain that he would seek help. But he needed to have a bottom to get there. Dave had so much faith... he kept my faith through all of that. So I would visit Daniel... by then he had moved into a studio not too far from where I lived, so I would stop by and check on him a couple times every week. I think Daniel would try to put on his best for me, or at least try to keep it together when I came by. I would bring him groceries, take him outside for a walk... little things. I was upset that he had gone on disability, because it meant he didn't have to work anymore... I thought the responsibility would have been good for him, to get him moving... but Dave kept saying he would hit his bottom quicker.

I want to remember my son in many different ways... that baby in my arms, the little boy on the swing-set with his sister, the kid asleep in his car-seat after the day at the beach... I have so many beautiful images of Daniel I will carry with me, forever. But the image that sticks out in front is Daniel as a sober man. Daniel as an adult, sober, working to improve his life. Courageously fighting

his battle with depression. The man who told me, "Mom, I can never thank you enough for everything you did for me. I can't imagine how hard it was to love me." When Daniel got sober, he said that to me. You know what I told my son... I... I told him, 'Daniel, I can never thank you enough for teaching me how to love.' My son... Daniel, the last year of his life... that is the Daniel I will have at the front of my heart. When he stopped drinking, started painting again, he came back to us... really, he came back to us a new man. It was like Lazarus. I know my son still fought. He still suffered. He still carried that mental illness with him, at times... the darkness would creep in... but the light was beginning to shine through. It really was. Missing his one year anniversary in AA... I had to work that night on the late shift, at the hospital... he showed me his coin. I was so proud of him. I really thought...

I... it's so hard to talk about. I don't have... I struggle so hard, immensely, trying to make sense of it. I really cannot... I haven't been right since I found out. That's not even... there's no words to describe where I am at. I am lost. I feel so hollow inside, like the life... I was so sad at first, overcome with grief... but now, there is a void... a profound emptiness. I feel so empty. I feel like I died with him. I... the hardest part is, I watched him begin to change. I watched my son begin to grow. Daniel would tell me about his goals, about getting back into school, about assembling a new portfolio of work, about finding a job, about the life ahead of him... he would joke with me and call himself a 'late bloomer.' He found a new optimism for his life. He found a reason to live. For God to take him away, just as he was starting to come back to us... but that is too selfish of me. It wasn't about Daniel coming back to me. It was about Daniel coming back to Daniel. He was starting to find himself. He finally had a chance to begin to

understand who he was, what he wanted to do with his life. It was his turn to start getting something out of life... for God to take him before... I...

My parish priest... I have been meeting with him lately... he told me something very important the last time we sat down together. He asked me if I believed God loved Daniel. I couldn't answer him... I just... I am struggling... but he asked me to describe my love for Daniel. I told him nothing could ever measure my love for my son, there was no end to what I would have done for him... and my pastor, he explained to me that my love for Daniel was exactly the same as God's love for him. God is taking care of my son. My son... he was in so much pain. For him to take his own life... it breaks my heart to know he had to live with that pain, that the night he passed away, he was in... he felt like there was no way out... but he is at peace. God is with him, and he is with my mother, my father... I know he is at peace. Daniel has found what he was looking for all those years, that hole has been filled. He is being cared for. I know it. For as empty as I feel, that one bit of faith, that part of me that knows my mother is with him... it is my only solace. It has been my saving grace... when your child passes before you, as a parent... I have so little will to carry on. I haven't been able to go back to my work, taking care of patients... I haven't been able to go back to my own life. Nothing feels right. But I am able to get out of bed in the morning because I know Daniel is okay. I know he is okay.

About a week after it happened... I'll tell you a story, to end... Sammy and Katie were at my house, and the three of us and Dave were in the living room. It was one of those moments... there, was nothing to say. We were so exhausted from the wake and the funeral, all the arrangements... we were just sitting together, in quiet. And

Sammy, out of the blue, she turned to Katie and said, "Mommy, will we ever see Uncle Danny again?" She's just a little girl, and... I was about to break down, again... after so many times that week... but before I did, something happened. Right after my granddaughter asked her question, the television turned on, on its own. It just popped on in front of us. It was a sign.

And the next day... so, after my own mother passed away, I remembered when I was a little girl, she told me once that when people die sometimes they come back to visit us as little birds, to sing to us, to let us know we will be alright... after my mom passed, that week, I was out doing laundry, and a cardinal, a beautiful red cardinal, came and set itself down right on the line. It chirped, so beautifully... it sat there on the line and I watched it for a good five minutes, the two of us... I knew it was my mother, letting me know. And the day after Sammy's question was answered by the television coming on, I was outside sitting on my porch... and... out, out on the fence... a cardinal, came down... it sat right there on a fence post, and looked right at me... it started chirping. Just like when my mother passed... I... I know he's okay. I know my son is okay.

ANONYMOUS

It was a Wednesday night. I had been at the office working, finishing up my recommendations after a round of interviews... I had never worked so late in my four years with the company. The one night... it was well after midnight before I left. But my boss needed the offers on his desk at 7AM, so I finished up the paperwork to have it ready for him. I had called Caroline, I let her know I wasn't going to be home and to go on to bed without me. We have been married six years. We just had our second child, Annie.

There were hardly any other cars on the road. My commute back home

from work was relatively easy, 20 minutes or so. I remember I had the radio on, the news. I was decompressing from the day. I was looking forward to being in bed with Caroline. I wanted to be home and be asleep. I remember thinking too how glad I was to have accomplished what I did that day. I was happy about my work. I was happy about doing my job... I felt accomplished. I felt good. That's all I was thinking about.

Driving through... after downtown Waltham, through Main Street, there is a turn that opens up to the highway ramp... it is a blind turn, you swing a right, there's thick trees on both sides, one last house and a driveway... there's a long fence that runs up to the driveway... you could sort of kick out of the turn, and from there it was a straight shot back home. I never... I remember taking the turn, and all of a sudden... when it happened, it doesn't seem real to me. It still... it was, it sounds so clichéd, but it was like a dream. The whole thing. It's not like time slowed down or anything, but, there was this distance between myself and what was happening... almost out of body... I took the turn, and right as I was about to come out of it... my headlights caught the face of a man... he wasn't looking at me, his head was down... he had lunged out from behind the fence, dove out into the street... there wasn't any time to stop. I couldn't react at all. He must have timed it perfectly... right as he moved out onto the road, he flashed on my right hand side... the car hit him instantly. There was no time to react, to brake... he flashed in my headlights for the briefest moment... I'll never forget his body, diving out... he didn't look up at all. It was... who would ever expect anything like that to happen? In all the miles I've been behind the wheel of a car... you would never expect anything like that.

Immediately there was a huge thump, a crash... this noise... I can

hear it, but I can't describe it. It was awful. It haunts me. It will come when I am quiet. I'll be laying in bed... I still hear it. But after the thump, my car spun out to the left... I lost control instantly... there was a second thump... by then I had slammed on the brakes... it was so sudden. My car had come to a stop on the shoulder of the other lane, facing the opposite direction, so immediately I moved back over. I hit my caution lights, I checked my rearview mirror... but it was like I wasn't even there, like I wasn't consciously doing anything... but that's when the realization hit. At that moment, seeing his body in my rearview... I've never felt so... I can't even describe the feeling. It was horror, fear, sickness... all I could think was 'What have I done?'

Nothing in your life prepares you for a situation like that. Nothing. There wasn't any... I didn't consciously process any of my decisions, if that makes sense... I didn't think to myself, 'What do I do next'... it was like a dream, like being on auto-pilot and just watching it all happen from somewhere else. I had the car pulled over, and the lights on... I swung the door open and ran. I ran as fast as I could to the body in the street. About five feet away, though, I stopped. There was... maybe I thought I could do CPR, or try to... once I saw, though, I knew immediately there was no chance... it was over. The body was caved in, part of the skull... once I saw he was dead, I stopped. He wasn't breathing. There was no life, I... I couldn't move any closer. The flashing caution lights, they were reflecting... the light was pulsing... it's an image... you never expect to see something like that. The blood, the organs and bones... no person should ever end up like that. Nobody deserves... it was awful. I stopped and I knelt down, and at that point I sort of fainted... I don't know what happened... I threw up, and then fell... all I remember then is the headlights of another car, the slam of brakes...

a girl screaming... she was with her boyfriend, the two of them... the kid ran out of the car over to me. He kept asking me what happened, and I... again, everything was auto-pilot, it's like I wasn't inside myself at this point, I was only watching what was swirling around me... I grabbed this kid, he couldn't have been more than a year out of college or something, I grabbed onto him and hugged him. I started crying. I don't know. He kept asking 'What happened?'

He had to be confused... I was confused. He called the police first, then... I couldn't move. I was going to call my wife, but then the question struck me... 'What was I going to tell her?' What had even happened... I stayed on the ground. I didn't really say anything... the kid stopped asking me what happened. He had seen the body... the police arrived. I don't remember the conversations, except for one officer... he said to another officer, I heard him... he said "It's always a semi-truck when they do it... 100% of the time... this is so weird." The police eventually asked for a statement... they took me back to the station, took down all the information. They called my wife... I couldn't talk to her. When she got to the station, she was in hysterics, crying... I couldn't process any of it. I kept rerunning it all over in my head... it wasn't like I was texting on the phone. I wasn't distracted. I had both hands on the wheel. I wasn't drinking... I did everything right... after a couple of hours, the police let me go.

While they were doing paperwork, I overheard one of the detectives trying to get a hold of the family... I'll be honest, at first, I didn't want to know anything about who I had hit. I didn't want to... I felt like the victim. For being chosen, to do something so horrible... to carry that guilt, even though I had done nothing wrong. I wasn't at fault, I knew that... but my car, I had been chosen to end another person's life. My wife kept saying "It's not

your fault." She kept repeating that... I knew it wasn't my fault, on a cerebral level... but my emotions were shot. I was angry, I was upset, I was... my emotions were shot.

We had my car towed, and my wife drove home. I didn't even want to get in the car. She actually had one of the police officers lead us back to our house... it was the only way I could be convinced to get in a car. I just... I didn't want... my emotions were shot. I didn't know that it wouldn't happen again.

When I got home, I couldn't sleep. I had to call my boss the next morning, explain everything. My wife wanted to stay up and talk about it, but I told her I wanted to be alone. I needed to be alone. I poured a couple of drinks and sat in the den, on my couch, and sort of... I was blank. Everything was blank. The anger had cooled down. I wasn't scared. It was strange. So I didn't go to work, didn't sleep... I sat on the couch and sort of stared off. After a couple days of that... I couldn't even look at my daughters. I didn't want to talk to anybody... my parents called, Caroline's parents... a couple of friends called... I didn't want to talk to anybody. There was nothing to say. I think I wanted to forget the whole thing. I couldn't bring myself to eat with my family at the dinner table.

After a few days of isolating, blanked out, I finally slept. And that was horrible. I had nightmares. I heard that sound... the thump... it was disturbing. I couldn't get it out of my head. His body, on the road... my boss said I could take off all the time I needed. My wife let me alone, she would cook me a meal... she was crying a lot. I refused to leave the house. I... she wanted me to talk to somebody, to see a psychologist... it had been three days. I had no interest in that either. But after the third night, I started to formulate

an idea... I thought about my life. I reflected over my entire life. I relived so many moments... I took real stock of who I was, where I was at. I had... it was like a white light moment or something, I can't really describe it. But there was this realization, that one day I would die too, and that I needed to do more with my remaining time. I called my wife in, I told her to bring the kids... I hugged them, kissed them... we all cried. My daughter, Alyssa, she was cute... she was crying and asked Caroline, "Mommy, why are we all crying?" And Caroline said "Sometimes when you love somebody so much, you just cry with them. It's okay to cry sometimes."

I had been... before that night, my priorities in life were selfish. I justified everything with being a family man, a provider, an earner... but I was greedy. I wanted more money. I was a workaholic. I wanted a nice house, a nice car, the vacations, the portfolio... I thought all these material things, I put so much value in the externals. But I realized that third day, after that moment... with my family in my arms... I understood, for the first time in my life, what the purpose of being here was. It wasn't about the money. It wasn't about the country club, or the bonuses, or the recognition, or the status. A profound sense of gratitude came over me. I was grateful to be alive, and to have love... love was the answer. The love of my daughters, of my wife... the love I could give to them. And finally the love I could bring to everyone I came into contact with, a love I could carry out into the world.

Everything has changed since then... my brother, Neal, he told me a story... Neal was different than me growing up, we took different paths... but when I described this project to him recently, he said what happened to me reminded him of what it was like the first time he took LSD... that I had experienced a total psychic reintegration. That I had been given the gift of insight. I never

took drugs, but he said it was like I had a psychedelic experience. I suppose it is a metaphor... it doesn't matter, really, the explanation... I can't explain it. All I know is I had to act, I had to change things, immediately.

So I quit my job. Caroline was in full support... it had been years of 50, 60 hour weeks. It was time. We put the house on the market, we're moving out into the country, in Connecticut, next month. A smaller place. We have started plans for running a non-profit. But even the major changes... now I kiss my daughters as much as they'll stand it. I tell the people in my life 'I love you' as often as I can. I call my siblings, my mother, more often. I talk to the mailman. I hold doors open. I wave cars in front of me on the street. I enjoy each meal. I take in each moment. I try to be present in each breath, in each conversation. I try to live more fully, more harmoniously, if that makes any sense...

I decided I had to transform what happened that early Thursday morning in February. I had to do something... I couldn't run away from what happened. I knew I had to find a reason why it was me, driving in my car that night... it could be a tragedy, a loss, or there could be redemption. I had to choose what to make of that night. So I chose to learn about Daniel. I know people will call this therapy, call it catharsis, call it attention seeking behavior, however they want to categorize it, it doesn't matter. What I did was for me, initially. I wanted to make sense of what happened the night of February 24th. I wanted to understand why my car was the one Daniel chose. I am not a religious man, and I have lived long enough to know that sometimes life happens without any rhyme or reason. But at the same time, because I have lived long enough, I also don't believe in chaos or in random chance. Life is full of paradox. And ultimately, as human beings, we have to

manufacture what we make of our lives and how we interpret the story of what happens around us. We have to interpret the world around us, and determine how to interact with that world. We have to inject meaning into our existence. And writing that letter to Daniel's mother, that first night when I decided what to do, was my way of injecting personal meaning into this situation. Selfish? Absolutely. I did this for myself, first and foremost. I was not sleeping well. I was having waking nightmares, scenes of his body LAYING on the asphalt, the sound of my tires... I couldn't go to work. I couldn't do anything. It had been months, and I wasn't moving past... I was stuck. Finally I reached out to his mother, then his sister... Caroline had the idea of memorializing Daniel's story. She was giving our daughters a bath, and as they played in the tub, she began to think... what if one of them became depressed? What if one of them grew apart from us, and died before we did? What if we couldn't put together their story? She had the vision of bringing Daniel's story together... of giving him a voice through the voices of those he loved, those who knew him. And what a voice it turned out to be.

So I approached the people in his life, one by one, with a digital recorder and my part of the story, and I asked them for theirs. Some were hesitant at first. Some wanted to know what was in it for me. I told them the truth. I told them I wanted Daniel to live on. I told them I wanted to give them a chance to help him live on. To raise awareness, about depression, about suicide, about alcoholism... about love, about dreams, about life. Though I was driving the car that night that killed Daniel, I wanted to be the man who gathered his story together, so he could live on, in some respect.

I want to end by saying this is not meant to be a grand statement about Daniel, about depression, about suicide, about alcoholism, about anything. This was not meant to be a lesson, or an analysis. The only conclusion I can draw is that from what I learned about Daniel, I would have liked to have known him myself. I would have liked to have called him a friend. I would like to have been able to change what happened that night. But since I can't go back in time, all I can do is move forward. All anyone can do is move forward, to continue on, and to have the courage to change what they can. Change what they should. To make the world a little better. To bring a little more love into the life of another. To bring light to the darkness. And to remember how lucky we all are, for this moment, alive, right now.

POST SCRIPT

At this point the voice recorder has been turned off. It was turned off several times through the interviews I conducted with Daniel's friends and relatives. There were portions of our conversations I left out. There were portions I was asked not to share. There were portions of our conversations I was adamantly asked to include. No two conversations unfolded in the same way, but each one of them began with me explaining who I was, and what I intended to do (save for Gus Scarpetti, who I interviewed on a whim pumping my gas one afternoon and did not fully disclose my agenda- I simply took out my recorder, played the part of a journalist, and asked if I could get an interview about the history of Waltham... it just so happened that he knew who Daniel was... it was one of those moments where the universe was almost confirming I was on the right track). Everything I included in the sections above is directly from the source. Nothing is paraphrased or altered. I did edit out my own

voice, when I prompted them with question prompts, or any tangential rambling. I tried to keep myself out of their stories as much as possible.

Laurie Foley was the first person I contacted but the last person I interviewed. Laurie played a key role in helping me locate candidates for the piece. Without her none of this would have been possible. It was important, also, for me to secure her permission in moving forward with my work. If she would have told me she was uncomfortable with my idea I would not have continued. Her approval was crucial. And she was on board from the beginning. It had been four months after Daniel's death when I reached out to Laurie. The idea came to my wife Caroline not too long after the accident, but I knew I had to wait before I started. There was really no proper way to go about it. The wounds would always be raw for the people in Daniel's life, and to be honest at first I doubted Laurie would ever want to open up for me. I did not have any expectations after I wrote her a letter, indicating my idea. I included my contact information. A week later, I received a phone call from her. She told me she had spoken with her family and they decided they wanted to help me. Laurie and her daughter met with my family for dinner at our home. Caroline wanted to cook a meal for them so they could meet our family. Katie's daughter played with my girls (to this day they still continue to have play dates) while the four of us grown-ups talked at the table. It was an emotional night. I will never forget it. Eventually a list of names was created, and Laurie said she would call all of them for me before I reached out directly.

Laurie and Katie were adamant about this piece becoming a way to help other people struggling with depression, or families who had lost loved ones through suicide. I sent Laurie a copy of the final

draft, but she wrote back to me saying she could not bring herself to read it. It wasn't for her, she said. I completely understood. She said Daniel's story, in this work, was for the rest of the world. She had her own version she would carry in her heart.

I met Albert Cox for coffee in Belmont on a Saturday morning. I met him the night before, at his 'usual Friday night meeting.' He approached me, actually. He asked if it was my first time at the group, if it was my first AA meeting. I told him it was. He immediately asked me how I was doing, how much 'time I had.' He was somewhat confused by my response. The way he adjusted his pea-coat, kept shuffling through his pockets as I explained myself, my reason for being at an AA meeting and not being an alcoholic... for a moment, he thought I was putting him on. Because Laurie did not have Albert's phone number she was not able to 'warn' him about my project. So I told Albert I was looking to put together the story of one of his friends who had recently passed away. He first asked if I was a detective, an investigator for Daniel's case. Finally I told him my role in Daniel's life. He didn't know how to respond. His face turned to stone. There is no easy way to tell somebody you were driving the car that their friend killed themselves with. Albert told me he didn't know what to say. I asked him if he would be willing to give an interview of sorts, to tell Daniel's story, to tell his version of Daniel's story. Albert agreed. We exchanged phone numbers before he confirmed one last time that I did not have a drinking problem. I assured him I didn't.

Albert's story, as presented here, was essentially unedited. His was my cleanest interview. He hardly required any prompting, and we only took one break for him to have a cigarette. I kept the voice recorder going, and he ended up finishing his take outside

a Dunkin Donuts. Albert consented to me using the information I provided, but made sure his name would be changed were anything to ever be published. Anonymity was an important consideration for him. I assured him it was for me as well.

Albert believed everything he told me. He believed deeply in recovery. It was important for him to explain to me AA in detail, the process by which he met Daniel, and the gratitude he felt towards the program for saving his life. He was adamant about his sobriety. Albert may have been a preacher in another life, and I say that with utmost respect.

I met Frank Marsden in his apartment in Watertown. It was a Sunday morning, and Frank appeared at the door red-faced and puffy. He slurred his words a bit, but after I brewed us a cup of coffee and gave him some time to explain himself, we began to talk about his son. Frank would stay on subject for a couple minutes, light another cigarette, then trail off... Frank's grief had a profound impact on me. He might have been drunk. He might have been stoned. But he certainly was deeply hurt by losing his son. He had tears in his eyes for most of our time together, for which he asked if I could leave that detail out. I did not offer him a definite guarantee.

Cheryl Ennos invited me to see her on campus at her office. Several student interrupted us, and we had to pause while she reviewed proposals and answered questions. It was midterms and she appeared very busy with her students. I asked several times if we should reschedule, but she told me that the rest of the month was booked. Cheryl was very kind and courteous, and offered to illustrate any pictures should I choose to go that route after publication. Her eyes were warm, grey, and welcomed me from behind a pair of thick

glasses. She was to me one of those rare people who fits entirely into the world around them... she had found her niche and wore happiness without any pretension or put-on.

Eric Kaplan was another interviewee I deceived, initially. I asked Laurie to lie to Dr. Kaplan and tell him I was a family member, and that I was putting together a biography of Daniel's life, as part of the healing process. I did not inform him that I had been driving the car which Daniel had been hit by... quite frankly I did not want to be the subject of the questions. After introducing myself, Dr. Kaplan had me sign a waiver that nothing would be considered on the record and in the event of a legal or professional inquest, he would be able to deny anything he said. He was a short man, thin, black hair, but was very assertive. He sat up straight behind his desk. He answered me calmly, in an even tone, especially towards the end of our session when he was not pleased by the line of questioning I was headed down. Dr. Kaplan did not provide any information without being prompted. We sat in silence for nearly a minute before I finally started off the formalities.

My interview with Regina DeMarco was a project unto itself. She was by far the hardest person to get a hold of. After exchanging text messages for nearly a month, finally we met at a bar in Waltham, the Mad Raven, and I found her half in the bag on a Thursday evening. She ordered us a round of shots when I sat down, then another. I didn't have to ask her any questions about Daniel. She talked for two and a half hours. We didn't get up, not even to use the bathroom. We didn't order food. We sat. We drank. She talked. I listened. She chose the Mad Raven because it was a 'classy bah' where none of her friends would see her. She spoke to every aspect of her life... at times it was more about telling her

story rather than Daniel's. But I didn't stop her. I didn't try to redirect anything. By then I had found out how therapeutic the process of being interviewed, being asked questions, being listened to, being important... every single individual who I spoke with told me they 'felt better' after our time together (except for Dr. Kaplan, he politely told me to leave).

I met Brian Fleming at his law office in Back Bay. It was his lunch hour. He stood up from behind an organized desk in an organized office, motioned for me to be quiet, all while completing a recording of his own, a dictation for one of the secretaries to transcribe while we spoke. I told him I could wait outside, but he had me sit down and listen to him complete a motion of some sort that needed to be filed. Brian's responses, his reactions... it was difficult to read him. He swung from animated to reserved... he seemed full of affectations, then genuine... he would seem aloof, then look fiercely into my eyes for a long stretch. I will confess... I did not disclose to Brian that I had a voice recorder in my pocket switched ON. I... I don't know why I didn't tell him. I just didn't. I feigned by jotting down notes, general responses... when he told me about the night Daniel died, I wasn't sure what to do. He didn't make me promise to never say a word. He didn't seem concerned that he told me, a perfect stranger... it was shocking, that he spoke about something he would take to the grave, then blurted it out.

It was difficult, afterwards, having to face Katie and Laurie with new information. I reflected on it for a long time. My wife was very helpful... Caroline really helped bring this all together. We decided to include Brian's revelation for a couple of reasons: first, it was important to remain true to the process, and to respect each individual's story. Second, we had to admit that just

because Brian said it didn't mean it was real.

At the end, I had made the commitment to seeing Daniel's story through. Being truthful to Daniel's life, to the stories about him from his friends and family... bringing Daniel back to life... that was my concern. I finished putting the stories together and began to work on finding a publisher. But then, months later, rereading the work as Katie and I sorted out the right publisher, I began to reflect... had I learned anything about the real Daniel Marsden?

What makes up an identity? What makes a person? Are we simply the stories other people have of us? Or are we a trail of receipts, transcripts, text messages, bills paid? Is it a combination of the physical and the mental? How do we live in the minds of others? How much of those stories are fabrications? How much of our 'true self' do we impart on others? What is our 'true self'? Are we really who we think we are? Why is there so often a difference between what we think of ourselves as opposed to what others think of us? How does that gap occur? Is it important how we live on in the minds of others, when those impressions aren't really complete? Is it more important how we live in our own mind? Is there such thing as an individual, or is every person a cobbled picture put together by their friends, family, enemies, lovers?

Who was Daniel Marsden?

Who am I?

Who are you?