

STATE OF INSANITY

“Hey, Amanda!”

“Hey, Brad!” Amanda shifted her eyes from the notebooks in her locker to the tall, broad-shouldered school-mate who was in her Algebra class. “What’s up?”

“Nothing much. You?”

“Nothing much here,” she adjusted a heavy gold chain reaching her chest. “Gotta go,” her interest in the conversation equaled the absolute zero.

“Okay, see you in class. Nice chain, by the way.”

“Ah, thanks. A birthday present,” the girl shook her head, letting her long brown hair conceal her face, and smiled.

“Yeah, it was your birthday on Saturday. Happy b’day, hottie,” Brad grinned.

“Thanks. You’re such a jerk!” She smiled and left.

Her choir class went as usual — Mr. Humphrey made them go through the warm-up, scales, etc., etc. Karen, her best female friend since the seventh grade, looked depressed and acted as if Mandy had stolen her iPod. *PMSing again*, Mandy thought going through the familiar choir routine. *Or, maybe, it's something else. I should ask her about—*

“So, how are you and Ryan?”

“Oh, just peachy!” Karen’s voice reeked of sarcasm. “You know how he is!”

“Broke up again?” Mandy whispered.

“Kinda... What’s this chain about?” Mandy shrugged.

“A birthday present.”

“From whom?” A shadow of a doubt appeared on Karen’s face.

“You know from who,” Mandy grinned.” From my uncle of course.”

“Holy shit! It must cost a fortune!”

“Dunno. But I like it anyway.”

“Who wouldn’t!?! Da-a-amn, look at this thing!” She extended her arm and lifted the chain with her forefinger - the intricately interwoven tri-color threads weighed heavily on the finger-tip. “Awesome!”

They were walking down a long school passage, with classroom doors on both sides and red lockers built into the walls. This or that student, that guy or that girl, would waive at her or say, “Hey, sexy!” to either or both of them. An advantage of being a high school sophomore, slim, cute, daring, and attractive...

The bell rang. Amanda entered the classroom and lowered herself at her usual desk; she dropped her backpack onto the floor.

“Hey, Mandy! Want to go to the movies after school?” The same Brad landed himself on a chair next to Amanda.

“Is it a date?”

“If you want it to be a date — it’ll be a date,” he laughed, running his eyes up and down Mandy’s tight sweater and what looked like low riders.

“Lemme think about it, okay?” She placed a text-book on the desk and a spiral notebook on top of it.

“Okay.”

“Well, if it’s a date, then — no.”

“Why not?”

“Just ‘cause.”

“You’re so mean to me! And you didn’t invite me to your b’day!”

“What, looking for make-up now?”

“Nah,” he paused. “Or, maybe, I do. But I’m just wondering.”

“Ah, okay. For a moment I thought you were jealous or something. And there’s nothing to wonder, it was just family and close friends.”

“Oh, I see! NOW I’m not a close friend, eh?” He sounded a bit angry.

“Just because we went out once, it doesn’t mean you’re my CLOSE friend.”

“I see. To be considered a close friend, I should have slept with you twice, eh? Fine!” He moved to another desk mumbling something that sounded like *What a bitch!*

The test was dragging on and on and on. Mandy was playing with her bangs, biting the tip of her pencil, bubbling the answers on the sheet. Her mind was somewhere, somewhere away from school, the test, and the winter outside the second-floor window overlooking the parking lot full of cars. She thought about the birthday party on Saturday, what presents she had got (the ‘Pirates of the Caribbean’ DVD from her Mom was a really cool present), the cake she had, about the friends who came...

“Who’s there?” Entering the house, Mandy heard her Mom’s voice from the bedroom on the second floor which she shared with her husband, Mandy’s step-father. Paul was a contractor and, a long time ago, he decided to renovate the house: For at least seven years, the inside looked as if a bomb had exploded in there. By now, all he had managed to achieve was a doubling of the size of the house and building a huge bed-room overlooking the backyard and

the street; any repairs to the rooms occupied by Mandy and her younger sister Kristen were totally disregarded.

“It’s me, Mom!”

“Okay. How’s school?” Another question came from the bed-room. Her mother was confined to her bed — fibromyalgia with acute pains allowed Diana to leave her room only a couple of times a week. Paul was buying food and whatever was necessary for the household. “Is Kristen home?”

“Haven’t seen her yet. And school was O.K. I had another test today. Math,” Mandy entered what was called the kitchen, a converted old sitting room furnished with Paul’s desk, a dresser, a fridge, a table with a microwave oven and a pizza warmer, and an aquarium. There were three more doors in the kitchen — to the old bed-room of her mother and Paul, her own bedroom, and the third opened to a narrow staircase leading upstairs to her sister’s room and the new bed-room. “Anything to eat?” She yelled filling the cats’ bowls with dry food and water.

“Check the fridge!” Came from upstairs.

There was nothing in the fridge except a half-finished pizza and a couple of Hot Pockets boxes. In her room, a paper plate in her hand and a bottle of water between her feet on the floor, Mandy sat down on her bed with no headboard, actually a mattress resting on a box spring. She was sick of the renovations; she was sick of not being able to entertain her friends properly. The girl scanned the small bed-room that only contained her bed serving as a couch if necessary, a narrow desk, a wicker chair, and an old big wooden cabinet TV-set. She gazed at the light brown veneered walls with posters cut out of the popular and music magazines, the posters depicting the stars Mandy liked... *Wish I could live with my Dad. His girl-friend is a bitch. Her two kids are real brats... And what do we really have for our room in his house? Two beds in a converted basement...*

She pulled one of the green desk drawers open and took a pink notebook out. She stretched on her belly, placed the open notebook in front of her; her teeth bit into the tip of her pen. Mandy sighed and wrote:

November 21st, 200_

It 's been a year since I have seen my cat Jack. I miss him very much. In the past year a lot has happened in my life. My cats have had many litters of kittens. I have had to watch 2 cats die. My house is still not done and probably will never be. My dad went out of business, broke up with his gf Katie, got a new gf, Lisa, and moved us in with her and her 2 kids. My mother needs a new husband. What did she ever see in Paul?

The bell rang. Another test — this time, in English. Mr. Lee was handing out the booklets and the answer sheets, while Mandy's thoughts were wandering elsewhere.

"Amanda McLeod, please report to the school office," she heard the loudspeaker and looked at the teacher quizzically.

"You may go, Amanda."

Slowly, she descended the narrow stairs to the first floor, approached the school office by the main entrance, and entered it.

"Amanda McLeod?"

"Yes, ma'am," Mandy looked at the principal's assistant. "What did I do?"

"Nothing, as far as I know," Miss Schmitt, a tall, skinny, blonde woman in her forties, looked straight at Mandy. "Somebody wants to talk to you. Please go in."

Mandy smoothed her baggy sweater, knocked on the door, and entered the principal's office. The principal, one of the school counselors, and a woman she didn't know sat at a round table in one of the corners.

"Ah, Miss McLeod. Thanks for stopping by," Mr. Stekker waived her over to one of the chairs. "Take a seat. You know Ms. Brown of course?" Mandy nodded. "And this is Mrs. Wayne from the Social Services."

"Social Services?"

"Yes, Amanda," Mrs. Wayne injected. "May I call you Amanda?" A nod of agreement, and she continued. "I'm here to talk to you."

"About?"

"We are concerned about your welfare, Amanda."

"Why?" Mandy sounded genuinely surprised. "What's the matter?"

"May I ask you a question?" Another nod. The woman's blue eyes pierced the girl like two knives. "Where did you get this chain?"

"How is it your business?" Mandy asked sharply, even though it wasn't her intention.

"There's no need to be rude, Amanda," the Principal said softly. "Mrs. Wayne is here for your benefit."

"What benefit? What's m-m-m-my benefit h-h-have to do with m-m-my chain?" Amanda started to stutter, as she would always do when agitated. "What do you want from me?"

"Amanda, please calm down," came from Ms. Brown.

"All right, all right..." Mandy took a deep breath.

"So, where did you get this chain?"

"Why do you want to know?"

"We're just concerned about you, Amanda," another piercing glance.

The girl shrugged. "My uncle gave it to me for my birthday."

"Your uncle?"

"Yeah, my Uncle Robert. Is there a problem?"

"Not really," the blue eyes showered the girl with suspicion. "But don't you think you're a bit young to be getting such expensive presents?"

Mandy shrugged, kept silence for some time. "He always gives me presents like—" She paused, gulped. "I guess he can afford it."

"And what does he do by the way?"

"He's. .. Um... Well... He owns some property. A house. I mean, houses..." She ran her tongue over her dry lips. "And has tenants I believe."

All three nodded in unison; a silence hung in the room. Mandy could hear the ticking of the watch on the Principal 's wrist.

"You said he always gives you presents, right?"

Mandy nodded. She felt sick to her stomach. Perhaps, she shouldn't have mentioned the presents... *What do they want from me anyhow?*

"What kinds of presents?"

"I dunno. .. Um... Why does it matter?"

"Because it's not natural for a grown man to give such expensive presents to a fifteen-year-old female, Amanda."

"He's my UNCLE!" she exclaimed not comprehending the situation.

"You do realize that this chain is made of gold and, possibly, platinum?"

"I don't care," big tears started to roll down Mandy's high cheekbones, down her cheeks, dropping onto her sweater. "I don't care."

“But *we* care,” another piercing glance. “We do care when an adult showers a young female with presents.”

“Why?” Amanda whispered.

“Because of the welfare of that young female, Amanda,” Mrs. Wayne paused. “Tell me something, Amanda. At any time, did he... errrr... touch you inappropriately?”

“Like what?”

“Your private area? Your breasts?”

“No... Not really...”

“Not really?”

“NO! HE NEVER TOUCHED ME INAPPROPRIATELY! NOT THIS WAY! LEAVE ME ALONE!”

And she stormed out of the Principal’s office, and onto the street. She was walking away from school, past the parking lot chain-link fence, past the gas station/car shop on the corner. She crossed New Pinery Road and entered the Walgreen’s. Her thoughts running through her mind, Mandy was wandering aimlessly along the aisles. *I want to go home... No, the Burncoat Road house isn't my home. What used to my home is now in repairs... Something is missing in it... The feeling of my previous self?*

October 12th, 200_

Uncle Robert,

Hey! How are you doing today?

Even I've told you this a million times, once more never hurt — I love you so much! You are so awesome and I don 't know what I would do without you. You mean the whole world to me. I really wish that words

could express how I really feel. You remember I called you that night when one of my cats died and you were comforting me until I felt better? You are so kind to me - you know exactly what to say and when to say it. You satisfy my every need - physically, mentally, emotionally - EVERYTHING! I could never repay you for all you have given me. I would be willing to go through any pain for you. I would run in front of the gun if it was aimed at you I would die for you. Really, I would do anything for you. I am going to get a job! I really need one! I am going to take that paper route - both of them. Or maybe I'll call that modeling agency in Chicago. I need to save for my car! WOW! I must seriously need to fill my life - with a job or something.

I'll call you later.

Love,

Mandy

(I love when you call me Mandy in your soft low voice.)

"It's me, mother!" Mandy yelled entering the house.

"You're early!"

"I'm not feeling well. And I'm having a headache! I'm going to bed!"

"All right, honey!"

A loud knock on the entrance door woke her up. Then she heard a couple of male voices introduced themselves as Detective Karn and Detective Schoenke, of the Tanchorage Police Department. Diana called Mandy on her cell phone asking her to come upstairs. A splitting headache, Mandy slipped in her jeans and climbed up the dusty stairs; then, down a narrow littered passage, through her sister's windowless room, and into her mother's bedroom.

"Amanda, it's police," Diana motioned at the two men who stood in the center of the 40x50 foot unfinished room. "They've come to talk to you. What is it they want?"

Mandy shrugged, mumbled, "No clue."

"I'm Inspector—"

"I know who you are," Mandy interrupted the taller man. "I heard your voices from my room."

"Amanda!"

"Mother?"

"I think we all should calm down and have a talk, ma'am. We're here to ask you and your daughter some questions."

"Regarding?"

"Regarding the present your daughter allegedly received from her uncle."

"What seems to be the matter?" Diana cast an incredulous glance at both detectives. "I'm fully aware of the presents my daughter gets from my brother."

"Ma'am, you do realize that this is an expensive—"

"Are you telling me what my daughter may or may not receive from her uncle? What are you implying?"

"Ma'am, what I'm saying is that the Social Services are concerned with that present and your daughter's welfare."

“My daughter’s welfare is MY business!”

“Not only yours, ma’am.” He looked around. “This house is—”

“What’s wrong with the house?” Diana interrupted him. “It’s not a police business or a concern for the Social Services!”

“Ma’am, we’ve been notified by the Social Services about their concern. And we’re here to investigate,” Schoenke said. “We would appreciate your co-operation.”

Diana sighed, ran her hand over her fake blonde hair, and looked at her daughter.

“We’ve also run a check on you, ma’am,” Karn pulled a manila envelope file folder out of his brief-case. “Here I have a warrant for your arrest, ma’am. You know what is it about?”

“You tell me,” Diana uttered with a challenge in her voice. “Couldn’t you have told me about THIS before you made me call my daughter up here?”

“Well, ma’am, apparently, you’ve issued some bad checks, and—”

“OH MY GOD! OH MY GOD!” Amanda covered her face with her hands. “Are they gonna take you to jail?” She was sobbing openly.

“Mo-o-o-m! I’m home!” Kristen slammed the front door. “Whose car’s in front?”

“Come up here!” Diana raised her voice. “Now!”

“Oh my god! Oh my god!” Mandy was whispering incessantly. “Oh my god!”

The sound of footsteps up the stairs, the door opened letting the short, a bit plump, Kristen in. She stopped abruptly and stared at the group in the room.

“Mom, what the blip is going on?” The girl inquired, her brown eyes opened wide. “Why’s Mandy crying?”

“They’re taking Mom to jail!” Mandy screamed backhanding the tears off her face. “They are! OH MY GOD! It’s all my fault!”

“What?!”

“Kristen, calm down,” Diana said in her normal voice and lighted a cigarette. “And stop crying. Both of you!”

“Ma’am, we have grounds to believe that your brother has been having a relationship with your daughter Amanda.”

A knock on the door. Another one. Robert crossed the room and peeked through a crack between the curtains: Two blue uniforms stood on the front porch, their hands on the holsters. He opened the door.

“Yes, officers? What can I do for you?”

“Mr. Wilson? Mr. Robert Wilson?” said the one with a Kampf nametag.

“Yes, it’s me.”

“Can we ask you a couple of questions?”

“What about?”

“May we come in?”

Robert waived the officers in. They lowered themselves on the couch and on one of the arm-chairs.

“Well?”

“Please take a seat, Mr. Wilson.”

“What’s the matter, officers?”

“A routine questioning, sir. Do you know an Amanda McLeod?”

“You’re not talking about my niece? Anything happened?” He flipped his cell phone open.

“Hold on, Mr. Wilson.” Kampf warned Robert. “There’s no need to make any phone calls. Do you know her?”

“Of course, I know her. She’s my niece. But what’s happened?”

Kampf rose to his feet and walked towards a low glass curio cabinet with framed pictures on top, scanned them briefly with his eyes. “Nothing’s happened. When was the last time you saw your niece?”

“At her birthday, of course. What, she’s run away?”

“No, she didn’t. Did you give her any presents?”

“Yes, I did. Why?”

“By the way, who took this picture?” Kampf picked up one of the photos of Amanda and Kristen, a couple of years younger, in their underwear, standing on the porch, a lake at the background.

“I did. Can you tell me what the matter is?”

“In a minute, Mr. Wilson. What did you give her for a present?”

“Why does it matter?”

“Please answer my question.”

“A chain. I gave her a chain,” sweat broke on his forehead.

“I see,” Kampf approached Robert. “Mr. Wilson, please stand up and turn around. You’re under arrest for sexual assault of a child,” Kampf and the other officer swiftly handcuffed and patted Robert over, and pushed him slightly towards the front door. “You have the right to remain...”

Thirty minutes later, the police cruiser entered the carport of the county jail on Jackson Street. A search, a wait in a single cell with a metal bunk (a blue mattress on it) screwed to the concrete floor; then, booking in. Then, a rough blanket, a pillow and sheets in hand, Robert entered his first cell. The one he would share with the other twenty-seven detainees till—

“Karen? Can you come over? Please? Please? Please?” Amanda was chocking with tears.
“I do need you right here.”

“Okay, okay, Mandy. I’m on my way,” Karen plugged a hands-free device into her cell phone and hurried out of her house. Then, down Pine Street, towards Burncoat Road, towards Mandy’s house. “What’s happened?”

“The police were here! Asking me about my Uncle Robert!”

“Shit! What did they want to know?”

“They think he and I have been having sex!”

“Wow!” Karen opened the front door and entered the house. “Hello, Mrs. Stevenson!
“What did you tell them?”

“Hello, Karen! Mandy ’s in her room!” came from Diana.

“Let’s have a walk,” Mandy hugged her friend and put her coat on. “I can’t stand this place!”

The girls walked down Burncoat road to the Cattail Park and sat down by the baseball diamond fence.

“I told them we never had sex. And that he did give me that chain. Oh my God! What an idiot I was to wear it to school!”

Karen put her arm around Mandy’s shoulders. “It’ll be all right, Mandy. I don’t think they meant any harm to you or your uncle.”

“His cell phone doesn’t answer,” Mandy sobbed. “And there’s nobody at his place, either. I’m so worried, Karen,” she whispered.

“He may be in his car. Somewhere—”

“I have bad feelings. . .” Mandy interrupted her friend, brushed tears off her face.

“Oh, come on! What can happen to your uncle? I’m sure it’s really nothing!”

Mrs. Winston, Mandy’s English teacher, approached her during one of the breaks.
“Amanda, the school Counselor wants to see you.”

“When? Now?”

“Right away. She’s in her office.”

Mandy turned around sharply and headed towards a narrow staircase leading onto the first floor, walked through the passage with lockers, and approached the Counselor’s office. She hesitated for a second and knocked on the door.

“Come in.”

“Good morning, Mrs. Brown. You wanted to see me?”

“Yes, Amanda. Please take a seat.” Mrs. Brown opened a file folder. “How are your today?”

“I’m fine. I’m worried. I couldn’t sleep last night...”

“It’s only natural, Amanda.”

“Natural? To go through all that crap? To be questioned by the police? To have your mother nearly taken to jail? THAT’S n-n-natural?” Amanda started to stutter again.

“But your mother didn’t go to jail, did she?”

“N. .. No, sh... she did not.”

“That’s great. Amanda,” she leaned back in her office chair and tented her bony fingers.
“I wanted to talk to you about something.”

“Is it about that stupid chain again?”

“Yes and no, Amanda,” the Counselor looked at the page stapled to the folder. “I understand you’ve been questioned by the police.” Her intonation rose, as if she asked a question.

“I. . . I g. . . g. . . guess you know I h. . . have b...b. . . been.” Amanda raised her voice. “Oh my God! H. . . how long are you g. . . g. . . gonna do all this crap to me?”

“Amanda, it’s just a concern about your welfare. What did they ask you?”

“W. . . w. . . why wouldn’t you ask THEM?”

“I will. How are your grades?”

“Bs... Cs... Sometimes, As... English, mostly.”

“Why Cs?”

“‘Cause it takes me a lot of time to understand what that crap’s about?” Amanda balled her hands. “Y. . . you don’t really c. . . c. . . care about my grades.”

“Yes, I do. My notes say that you never wanted any extra help with your classes, right?” Mandy nodded. “Why not?”

“‘Cause I didn’t want any help.”

“Would you like some help with your studies?”

“Not really. I c. . . c. . . can manage all b. . . by myself.”

“All right,” Ms. Brown stole a glance at Mandy. “Now, I want to ask you about something totally different. And please be as truthful as possible, okay?”

“Okay.”

“What’s your relationship with your uncle?”

“Oh, crap! N. . . n. . . not again! I’m sick of that! How is it business of yours? Just ‘cause he gave me that fucking—”

“Watch your language, Amanda!”

“F...f...fuck you! And fuck your fucking questions! L..l..leave me alone, you fucking bitch!”

Mandy jumped to her feet and, trembling, left the office. She was running down the street, towards her house. Under the railroad bridge, she took her cell phone out of her pocket and pressed a couple of buttons. *Hey! You know what to do! Talk to you later!* She heard the familiar voice, with the beginning of the ‘Jump, jump, jump around’ song as the background. “Uncle Robert? It’s Mandy. I c...c...can’t reach you and I must... MUST... t..t..talk to you... Please, please, please, call me back... Love you...”

Another message had been left... She couldn’t recall which one in a row...

Where IS Uncle Robert?

“You’re such a slut! Fucking your own uncle, eh?” Brad pushed Mandy on her chest. “Now I know why you trashed me, whore!”

“What are you talking about, jerk?”

“As if you don’t know!”

“Don’t know what? What am I supposed to know?” Mandy slapped him on his hand. “What I know is that I’m late for my next class!”

“Hey, Justin! Do you have that newspaper with you?” He reached out and, grabbed *The Daily Register* opened it. “What, you haven’t read that?”

Mandy’s eyes caught the *Uncle Charged With Sexual Assault of His Niece* heading splashed all over the front page.

“What’s that crap about?” She couldn’t believe her eyes. “It can’t be Uncle Robert!”

“Wilson! You have a visitor!” A garbled voice came through the cell intercom.

“Coming, coming!” Robert got up from his bunk and approached the bulletproof-glass-and-steel door. A click, and he walked down the passage and took the elevator down, to the first floor. A brownshirt met him at the elevator and escorted him to a narrow interrogation room with a long collapsible Formica table with eight chairs around it, and a phone set mounted on the wall.

“Mr. Wilson?” A tall, blondish man opened his brief-case and pulled a manila envelope out; he fished a portable tape-recorder out of his pocket and opened the battery compartment. “Take a seat.”

“Who are you?”

“Detective Karn, Tanchorage Police Department. I believe you know the nature of the charges against you?”

“Sort of.”

“Before we start, I’ll read you your rights.” And he proceeded with reciting the Miranda from a type-written sheet, pushed it towards Robert. “Are you waiving your rights? If you do, sign here.”

“No. But you can start asking questions.”

“You’ve been charged with a second-degree sexual assault of a child, child pornography possession, child enticement. There may also be federal charges filed against you.”

Robert nodded. Then, he saw Karn taking out what looked like a picture — he recognized it immediately: one of the photos from the curio cabinet top, his nieces at his cabin.

“Mr. Wilson, would you tell me when—”

“I need a lawyer,” Robert interrupted the Detective.

“Very well,” Karn shoved the folder back in his brief-case. “Press this red button.”

Robert placed his hands on the table top: “I... never... had... sex... with... Mandy...”

Karn left the room; Robert in his wake. In the passage by the jail office, Karn looked at Robert down from his six-foot-something height: "I would like to see what Amanda has to say when I tell her that now you say you two never had sex." Robert kept silence, looking up at Karn, who continued: "I'd love to have a look at your computer. People like you always have all kind of stuff on their computers."

Robert turned around and walked towards the elevator.

"Mandy, your dad called. He's picking you and Kristen up at five-thirty," Diana peeked in her daughter's room.

"Mom! It's already five o'clock!"

"I forgot, honey. I'm sorry."

"I don't have time to take a shower! And I don't feel like going to his house at all."

"It's his week-end you know."

"I bet Lisa will be bitching about Uncle Robert!"

"Don't pay attention to what she's saying. It's none of her damn business. All right?" Diana mussed Mandy's hair and quietly closed the door.

Mandy heard a car horn outside the house. Feverishly, she stuffed some clothes and underwear, even though she had enough stuff at her dad's house, in her backpack, yelled to Kristen to hurry up and ran towards her dad's van.

"Hey, Mandy," Mike hugged her and, then, her sister. "How are you girls doing?"

"Don't ask, dad. Please?" Mandy made herself comfortable on the seat behind her dad, her backpack on the floor. "I feel terrible. Just terrible."

"Is it because of that son of a bitch Robert?"

“What do YOU think? And don’t call him that!” They were crawling at ten miles per hour through downtown Tanchorage; then, on Route 16, Mike picked up speed. The familiar Dairy Queen, Piggly Wiggly, and a Family Dollar store were passing Mandy by.

“How’s school, girls?”

“Horrible, Dad. I’m having a headache,” Mandy rested her head against the headrest.

“School’s just awesome!” Kristen picked up the lead. “You know, we have a new teacher...”

Shut the blip up, Mandy thought.

YahooID: DevilAmanda554

Password: *****

You have 4 new messages.

CrazyInMadison: Hey sexy

Boutilicious15: Hey Mandy

MSN ID: DevilAmanda554

Password: *****

You have 5 new messages.

KarlLager678: Hey slut!

Who the fuck is Karl? Mandy thought signing in on the Tagged. Started typing:

I’m upset — my uncle has been arrested and charged with sexual assault. Police say he assaulted ME. How? When? I’m so confused...

And she clicked on the ‘Post New Message’ button.

“Amanda! Don’t stay on the computer too long!” Lisa’s voice came from upstairs. “You have fifteen minutes! Other kids want to use it, too!”

“Okay, okay!” *Fifteen minutes! In my house I used to spend hours online! Why did Mom have to take the computer to her room?*

“Who are you chatting with?” Kristen peeked onto the screen. “Anyone I know?”

“Nonya! Leave me alone!”

At dinner. Lisa was very talkative. About Uncle Robert of course. And about Amanda of course.

“It’s beyond my comprehension!” she smoothed her dishwater hair. “How can a grown up man. an uncle...”

Mandy switched herself off.

“So, you were dating your own uncle, Amanda?” Alisha and Sam, Mandy’s so-called female friends, sat down at a next table in the school cafeteria. “How gross!”

“Fuck off!” Mandy was alone at her table alone. Nobody wanted to sit with her. Or, so it seemed to her.

“Don’t you ‘fuck off me, bitch!”

“Bitch, eh?!!! At least, not a whore like you two are!” Mandy continued eating her salad. *I should add more money on my lunch card*, she thought cutting off the noise of the room. “Leave me alone!”

“Why’s that?” Sam sneered. “So that you’d be thinking of your uncle? And how much you just lo-o-o-ove to be fucked by him?” She made some moaning noises.

“He never fucked me!”

“Yeah, right!” Alisha turned towards Mandy, an apple in her hand. “You’re saying the newspapers are lying?”

“Leave me the fuck alone! Mind your own business!”

“It’s our business as well, you whore!” Brad jumped into their conversation from a nearby table. “Don’t you think he’s kinds old for you?”

“It was a good one, Brady! Exactly my point,” Sam grinned and adjusted her skirt. “Tell us, how does it feel to be fucked by a grown-up man?”

“Why wouldn’t you go and fuck your father, bitch?” Mandy was aware that Sam never knew who her father was. “Oh yes, you’ll have to go and fuck half of Tanchorage to figure out who your father is! And you, Brad, why wouldn’t you go out and screw your buddy Greg? He’s your type I presume!”

“Slut!”

Mandy stood up, left the tray on the table and ran outside, into the winter air full of falling snow. She inhaled deeply and slipped her hand in her black jeans pocket, found her inhaler. The cold air did minimize the asthma attack; the spray added to the effect. The bell rang. She continued standing on the sidewalk by the main entrance. The snow was covering her hair and her dark blue knitted sweater with a thin, white layer.

She recalled a poem she wrote for her uncle’s birthday.

June 18th, 200_

My Dream

*I see you in my dreams
You're always in my thoughts
I long to feel you, your hands in mine
To have your lips caressing my skin*

*I get lost in these thoughts
They 're dreams they're wishes,
I hope some day they might happen
But for now you are only a dream.*

How old was I? Thirteen or fourteen? Yes, it was last year... In my uncle 's cabin on the lake... His birthday party was awesome—

“Amanda, get inside, or you’ll catch a cold,” Ms. Schmitt held the door open. “The Counsel wants to see you.”

“Again?” Mandy sighed, looked around at the snow-covered field of the neighboring middle school, at the visitors’ cars across the narrow driveway. “When?”

“Right now. I was looking for you, by the way. Someone told me you were outside.”

“Thanks.”

“Have a seat, Amanda.” Ms. Brown waved her hand. “Let me introduce you to Dr. Beatrice Alexander, a psychologist.”

Amanda looked at the woman sitting in one of the arm-chairs — she liked the short, stout psychologist, her warm gray eyes, her thick lips, her pleasant smile. “A psychologist? I don’t need a psychologist!”

“Maybe you do, maybe you don’t. All I know is that the Social Services have sent Dr. Alexander here to talk to you.”

“Fine! What do you want?”

“Amanda,” Dr. Alexander started, “I know what you’re going through and how hard it is when your own uncle—“

“He didn’t do anything to me!”

“I never said he did. I meant him being in jail...” She paused. “I understand. You’re in a denial...”

Mandy woke up and sat up on her bed. The room was filled with a bright moonlight reflected by the snow; the light outlined the furniture and cast two bluish rectangles on her blanket. The minutes on the green display of her stereo changed. The girl shivered. Her orange pjs and her hair were soaked with sweat, her palms felt damp. She slithered out of her shirt and the bottoms leaving her bikini underwear on; she flipped the switch and pulled a note-book out of the dresser drawer.

December 6th, 200_

Uncle Robert has been arrested and charged. Does that mean I'll spend X-mas and the New Year's without him? Without his jokes? Without our usual trip to Madison? Without his presents? And my present for him? I was told he had his initial appearance (not sure what it was) and a no contact order was issued. No contact with me? His own niece? I see a sycholog. every day. She tells me I'm his victim and I'm in a denial. It's past two in the morning and I woke up after horrible nightmare, sweating. I could hardly breath! Now I 'm writing this and I don't know what to do. Inspector Karn talked to me at school today—

“Hello, Amanda,” Karn entered the school conference room; Amanda was sitting at the table, her talk with the priest over. “How are you doing today?”

“Miserable.”

“I understand how you feel, Amanda,” he lowered himself on a chair across the table. “How are your sessions with Dr. Alexander?”

“I don’t really care,” Amanda shook her head. “I’m sick of it! I’m sick of everything!”

“I understand, Amanda,” Karn said.

“You do? I don’t think you do! In addition to my uncle’s being in jail, your fucking Social Services want me to live with my Dad’s sister! And she’s a bitch!”

“It’s for your own good, Amanda. As far as I know, her house is closer to school, is it not?”

“Who cares!”

“We care. Now, Amanda, I’ve stopped by to ask you a couple of questions.”

“Again?”

“Yes, Amanda. We’re investigating and I want to know as much as possible.”

“Why? So you could put my mother in jail?”

“Whatever you tell me, Amanda, your mother is not going to jail. I promise.”

“What about that warrant?”

“We’ll have it dismissed. Or, she may get a fine. Or something.”

“You sure?” “Yes, I’m positive. Now, about your uncle—“

“Oh my God! Not again!” Tears started rolling down her cheeks. “All I do now is think about my uncle!”

“And what do you think about him?”

“How nice and caring he is. And how he should not be in jail... And about all those charges.”

“Charges are substantiated. There’s enough evidence.”

“But he never assaulted me!”

“Are you sure?”

December 7th, 200_

I want my old life back, I would break every bone in my body to have it back. I want my uncle back, I want to be in the cabin by the lake, in his house... That will never happen and I know that no one can give it back to me...

“I’m sure,” she paused. “I’m sure.”

“All right. Have a look at this picture,” Karn set a framed photo on the tabletop, turned it towards Mandy. “This picture was on the cabinet top in his house.”

“So? I know this picture. Uncle Robert’s had it for I don’t know how long. What of it?”

“Don’t you think that your and your sister’s outfits are a bit inappropriate for your ages? You’re what in this picture? Twelve? Thirteen?”

“I think, twelve. No, thirteen.”

“And you’re posing in nothing but your underwear?”

“I don’t mind.”

“All right. Now, have a look at these pictures.”

As if he was putting down the cards of some weird solitaire, Karn placed several pictures in front of Mandy. Kristen and Mandy in the shower; changing on the lake shore; laying on the floor watching TV, their tee shirts rolled up to their—

“Where did you get these pictures?”

“I take it you’ve never seen them.”

“Nah,” she paused and giggled. “But I think they’re awesome.”

“You think so? You think it’s awesome when your uncle’s spying on you, taking all—“

“I don’t care!” Mandy felt short of breath. “I d. . .d. . .don’t fucking c. . .care!”

“Well, what about this picture? Is it you?”

“Oh my God! W. . .w. . . when did he take THIS picture? I don’t even remem—“

December 7th, 200_

I came home with a headache, sick to my stomach. I looked through my diary, my notes to my uncle, his notes and cards to me. ‘I love you, (signed) Mandy’. ‘I love you, (signed) Uncle Robert. ‘... I ‘m confused.... I don’t know what I should do. .. My dad advised me, and I stopped by the police later today and gave Inspector Karn most of the notes and the presents he has given me...

“You know, Amanda, your uncle has pleaded not guilty,” Dr. Alexander leaned back in her chair. “What do you think of that?”

“I don’t know what to think anymore. I’m confused. Inspector Karn insists my uncle’s assaulted me. Lisa says the same. And most of the people around...” She sobbed. “I c...can’t stand it anymore! It’s all m...m...my fault! I sh...sh...shouldn’t have worn that fucking ch. . .ch. . .chain to school!”

“It’s not your fault, Amanda. Your uncle was buying your feelings, your affection. You’re an affectionate female, and he has exploited it. He took advantage of you, of your age, of your vulnerability.”

“I’m not vulnerable.”

“You’re still a child, Amanda. At least, the law considers you as one,” she stopped for a moment. “And the law protects you.”

“By putting my uncle in jail?”

“He put himself in jail.”

“How?” Mandy sounded confused. “By molesting you all those years.”

“I’m confused...” She was twisting her long hair around her fore-finger, untwisting it, twisting again. “I know nothing anymore...”

She woke up with cold sweat all over her body. The memories of that day’s morning came back to her. The court room, flooded with sun; her uncle, in an orange jumpsuit, disheveled hair, unshaved. His hands were handcuffed to a wide black belt on his waist. She could hear a thin metal sound when he moved his legs.

Mandy felt a chill crawling up and down her body - she had never seen Uncle Robert dressed like that, or looking like that before. He had always been neat, clean shaved, and always in smart clothes. He said he was not guilty, was Mandy’s recollection. She sat on the chair in the row against the back wall; her mother, her dad, Lisa and Mrs. Wayne of Social Services, flanked her. The preliminary hearing had been postponed until March.

Inspector Karn was sitting closer to the judge, at a separate table, with that woman from the DA's office. Paige Short was her name. He talked to Mandy after her uncle had been taken out of the court room...

"Hello, Amanda," Dr. Alexander greeted Mandy with a warm smile. "Come in and take a seat. How are you today?"

"Depressed... Pissed off..." Mandy sighed. "I can't sleep at night..."

"Want to tell me about it?"

"Not really... Oh, well, I wake up at night thinking of what's happened. You know, it's been... Like what? Almost three weeks since my uncle—" She started to sob. "Three weeks! I miss him so much!"

"You miss him as an uncle or as a person?"

"I don't quite understand you," Mandy smoothed her short skirt and looked at the psychologist.

"What do you miss more — what he was doing or what he was saying?"

"Both, I guess. We had so much fun. All our outings together and going shopping and playing pool and bowling, and..."

"And what?" "He had— I mean, he has a wonderful personality."

"He does?"

"Yes, he does. He is loving and caring and fun to be around." Dr. Alexander leaned forward a bit, adjusted a pad on her knee. "A couple of days ago you said something about your relationship with your uncle. What did you mean by that?"

"I said that?" Mandy paused, obviously looking for some sort of recollection. "I don't remember saying that..."

“And you also said something about how much trust there was in that relationship.” “I did?” The girl’s eyes opened wide. “I don’t recall that.”

The psychologist kept silent, looking at the girl’s face: A shadow of a doubt, a frown, then, it brightened a little. “Yes, I guess I did say something like that. I trusted him a lot,” Mandy stopped for a second. “Ah, and under a relationship I meant an uncle-niece relationship, of course.”

“And now you don’t trust anybody?”

“Um... Kinda, yes. And kinda, no. It’s complicated... People who I thought were my friends, now diss me all the time, saying I was screwing my uncle—“

“Is there anybody left whom you still trust?”

“Yeah...” she scratched her nose. “My mom, my sister, my dad... You, I guess...”

“Me?”

“Of course. .. I think you’re trying to help me...”

“That’s exactly why I’m here,” Dr. Alexander smiled, as if encouraging her. “I was thinking of something for us... for you... to do today. A couple of days ago you said you’d tell me the truth about your relationship with your uncle...” she paused.

“The truth? What truth?”

“What really happened. So, I thought maybe you could also put it down on paper.”

“But there’s nothing to put down.”

“At all?”

“It’s so confusing. .. So difficult...”

“I understand you’re still in denial.”

“Denial of what?” Mandy looked at her incredulously.

“The truth about your relationship with your uncle. That he molested you.”

“But he never—“

“Are you sure?”

“I don’t know... NOW I don’t know... It’s so confusing... Police... His arrest... You are telling me all this stuff... Detective saying that he’s. .. And my mother nearly went to jail.”

“Nearly?”

“Yeah... I thought you knew about it.”

“Detective Karn mentioned something to that effect, now as I recall,” she looked straight in Mandy’s eyes. “You see, Amanda, even psychologists have a very bad memory.”

“Uh-huh,” Mandy’s face brightened a little. “You think it might help me and my mother? I mean, writing about it?”

“Most definitely!” She handed Mandy a pad and a pen. “Want to talk about it before you start writing?”

“Uh-huh,” Mandy placed the pad on the desktop. “Lemme start it, okay?”

Mandy wrote:

I am going to try to recall all of this information as well as I remember. However, it is very difficult for me to remember the exact days. Also when I say we had sex, I mean his penis in my vagina.

I’ve known Uncle Robert all my life. He was always around helping my mother, my sister, and me as much as possible. Always helpful and nice. When I was eight or nine, he bought a cabin on the lake. My mother, my sister Kristen,

and I would go there and stay as long as we wanted to. When my mother got married to Paul, she apparently didn't have enough time or didn't want to go there anymore, so my sister and I would go to the cabin with my uncle and his girlfriend when and if he had one.

“Who would initiate those outings?”

“I don't get it.”

“Was it your mother who'd want you to go there? Or, was it your uncle who suggested that you and your sister spend some time at the cabin?”

Mandy recalled: *Moo-o-om! Can we go to Uncle Robert's cabin? Please? Mandy climbed onto Diana's lap, looped her thin arms around her mother's neck. It's so boring here! Paul doesn't know how to entertain us!*

I don't think he's supposed to! Diana replied, half-laughing.

May I call Uncle Robert? Please? I could go fishing on the lake! I's fun! Moo-o-om?

All right! But you really should stop bugging my brother about going to that cabin every week. I also have to have some time with you, her mother laughed.

Mandy resumed her writing:

My uncle would call my Mom and ask her if she and my sister and I would want to go to the cabin. It became a sorta routine: He would call, and Mom would say we could go and he would pick up the two of us at our house in Tanchorage.

“So, he would pick you up and—“ Dr. Alexander said peeking at the paper.

“He would pick us up closer to the sunset. He has some property in the Dells, in Madison and wherever. He’s busy most of the day, you know,” a nod from Dr. Alexander. “Then, we would arrive there and start his BBQ pit. He’s an awesome cook, you know. Ah, he has a satellite dish over there. Five hundred channels! Cool, eh?” Another nod from Dr. Alexander. “Kristen and I would watch the Cartoon Channel or Nickelodeon or whatever...” She paused.

“And?” The psychologist nodded.

“And then I ’d give my sister a bath and take a shower myself. And we would go to bed.”

“Did your uncle give you or your sister a bath?”

“Um... Nah. I don’t think so,” Mandy shook her head vigorously. “He is that type of a guy that says: Mandy, you can take care of you and your sister all by yourself! I’m not helping,” she giggled. “And then he would go to that small room he called his office and start his computer. Or, he would go onto the porch to have his... um... ah, nightcap.”

“So, he never gave you a bath?”

“Nope.”

“Positive?”

“Uh-huh.”

Mandy continued writing:

Every time we were there (I mean, the cabin), my uncle would give my sister and me a bath. When we got older and could take a shower, he would be around during that time. He would always find a reason to enter the bath-room, asking us if we had enough towels or soap, or we wanted

something to drink before bed-time. The same happened when we stayed over in his house in Provincetown.

“So, he would be elsewhere during your bath-time?”

“Yep. I guess he had some issues with um...” Mandy blushed lightly. “Um...”

“Your nudity?”

“Yep. I remember one time I saw him sitting on the porch staring at the sunset and,” she giggled, “it was after my shower. So, I ran towards him in my underwear...”

“What did he do?”

“He got all pissed off and yelled at me, saying something like: ‘Where’s your robe? Where’s your robe? You can’t run around my cabin in your briefs only!’” Mandy bit her knuckle and giggled again. “And I was like: ‘Why not? It’s too hot!’”

“And he?”

“Well, he said something like: ‘I don’t care. Go and get dressed.’”

“I see,” the psychologist nodded. “Was it the only episode?”

“Um... yeah.”

“What about the picture?”

“The picture? Ah, I asked him to take this picture one morning. I told him it’s for my scrap-book and to show my grand-kids how silly their grandma was as a girl.”

“Interesting. Is it a secluded area?”

“Not really. There are other cabins along the lake shore.”

“So, there were other kids to play with?”

“Yep. There were kids around. Boys and girls.”

“Did you have a boy friend at that time?”

“Yep. Billy. He lived pretty close. I could actually walk to his cabin. I mean, his parents’ cabin.” *He was a wild kid*, Mandy thought.

That summer, when Mandy met Billy at a cook-out given by one of the neighbors, Robert bought two hammocks and fixed them between the pillars on the back porch. He had also installed retractable screens to protect the girls from the mosquitoes. Mandy loved to sleep in her hammock listening to the sounds of the lake and to the buzzing of the bugs that couldn’t reach her. She would spend a lot of time with Billy swimming and fishing. Five days into dating, and she considered Billy her boyfriend. There was a lot of bear hugging and kissing and touching and skinny dipping at night.

“He was a wild kid you said?” Dr. Alexander leaned back in her office chair.

“I did? Oooops,” Mandy smiled. “Yeah, he was.”

“Wild as in what?” “Well, you know, like in games, um... Well, we kissed, went skin--”
“She stopped abruptly.

“Skin what?” The psychologist gave Mandy a smile. “Skinny dipping?”

“Um... yeah. Is it wrong?”

“Not at all.”

“Cool. We went skinny dipping at night. Sometimes, during the day... If my uncle wasn’t around, or we could find a... well... you know... a secluded spot.”

“Your uncle was against skinny dipping?”

“Definitely, he was! He insisted on our wearing bathing suits while sunbathing or swimming in the lake.”

A nod from Dr. Alexander, and Mandy went back to writing:

Later when I was about ten, my uncle started to give me bear hugs and pat me on my butt. Also, he introduced all kinds of games when I had to kiss him and touch his private area. He also wanted my sister and me to go skinny dipping in the lake. It didn't matter whether it was a day or night. On several occasions, he joined us.

“So, that’s how it was with him,” Dr. Alexander wrote something in her note-book “Did he ever touch you inappropriately?”

“Yeah, he did.”

“Your uncle?”

“NO! Billy. I said that he was a wild kid,” Mandy giggled. “Especially, the following summer.”

“What happened the following summer?”

“It’s too embarrassing...” The girl blushed. “Oh, well. I remember one day... I mean, one night we went skinny dipping and after that we had our tee shirts on. So, I was like, *Billy, you think I’m flat?* He said, *No, you’re not.* And I’m like, *I AM!*” Mandy giggled. “And we were kissing while talking, okay? And then I was like: *Okay, look how flat I am.* And I pulled my shirt up. And he was like, *Wow! And THAT you call flat?* And I was like: *Wanna touch ‘em?* And like: *Uh-huh.* And later he would be fooling with my shorts zipper or pull my bottoms down or slap my ass.”

Mandy looked at the pad and continued writing:

When I was eleven or twelve, my uncle started to touch my breasts and my belly. I never allowed him to go lower, meaning my vagina's area. On several occasions, he pulled my underwear down to my knees and did touch me on my vagina.

After each visit to the cabin, I would get an expensive gift - a chain or a pair of ear-rings. I realize now that this was his way to try to impress me.

“And that was all you ever did sexually?”

“Um... With Billy?”

“Yes.”

“Um... No.” Mandy blushed. “We um... well. I gave him my virginity.”

“So, you had sex? With Billy?”

“Yes...” Amanda lowered her eyes; her fingers were running along the hem of her short skirt. “With Billy... On the lake shore...”

“And with your uncle?”

“Never. Uncle Robert never touched me. He and I never had sex,” Mandy paused. “I also had sex with my other boyfriends, here in Tanchorage and in Provinceville, after school, mostly. I remember it really hurt when Billy stuck it inside me. Ah, several times he also brought his friend Jacob with him. And Jacob and I... Well, I kinda liked Jacob. A little,” she whispered.

“Hey, David,” Mandy whispered keeping an eye on the teacher. “Want to come over for a movie?”

“Yep, yep. Right after school?”

“Yup. You can walk me home,” Mandy grinned.

In her room, Mandy and David accommodated themselves on the bed, their clothes scattered all over the floor. The movie was running, but forgotten. A torn square packet rested by the pillow... Abandoned...

“Happy b’day, hottie,” Brad gave Mandy a bear hug.

“Thanks, honey,” she opened her present wrapped in a colorful paper with a huge bow on top. “Wow! Lingerie! My favorite colors! Black and hot pink! You’re so naughty and silly! Lemme put it on. Don’t stare!”

“Looks hot on you,” he stepped closer and ran his hand down her front. “Or, you look hot in it,” he winked. “Want another present?”

“Which is?” She slipped her hand in his pants. “We’ll need a square packet.”

“Uncle Robert, I totally forgot that I’m having a basketball practice tonight. Is it fine with you if we have dinner another time?”

“It’s fine, Mandy.”

“Tomorrow?”

“Yes. I’ll stop by to pick you, okay?”

“Okay. Love you.” She hung up and pressed a speed-dial button on her cell phone. “Hey, Andon. Wanna stop by my house?”

“A square packet as usual?” She giggled and rolled on her back, letting her skirt slide up her thighs, ”Uh-huh.”

“Justin, I’m bored. Come over and bring your Dance Revolution. Okay?”

“The one with a square packet?” They both laughed. “Yup, yup.”

“David, I’ve rented a movie. Wanna watch it together?”

“Why not? What movie is it?”

“Square packet,” she laughed loudly.

Mandy continued writing:

Later, when I turned fourteen, my uncle and I would have sex several times a day, every time I stayed over at his house or cabin. The first time it was his birthday present for me, besides a platinum bracelet that he gave me. He never forced me into anything I didn't like or want to do.

All this time I have been blind as to the nature of our relationship. I realize now that the sex we had was a wrong thing to do and it was not an uncle-niece relationship. It was Statutory Rape. Nothing more.

I hope Uncle Robert is never able to do this to anyone else. It was a really hard lesson to learn.

“All right, Amanda. Would you sign it?”

“Yep.”

And she scribbled: *Amanda McLeod.*

“Dr. Alexander,” Mandy hesitated. “Is my mother going to jail?”

“I can assure you, she is not.”

When Mandy left the office, Dr. Alexander picked up the phone and dialed a number.

“Is Detective Karn available? ... I’ll wait.”

“Karn,” a familiar voice barked.

“Hello, there!”

“Oh, hello, Dr. Alexander.”

“I have her statement. Written and signed.”

“Great job, Doc!” Detective Karn exclaimed. “That’s all I need. Thanks so much!”

“Wait a second, Mark. There’s something else I wanted to talk to you about.”

“What is it?”

“Well, Amanda is worried about her mother going to jail. I recall you said something to the extent that she wouldn’t go. So, I kind of promised that to Amanda.”

“It’s fine, Beatrice. As I told you about two weeks ago, her mother’s case is nothing and we can let the woman go. But her uncle — it’s a totally different thing. He’s a big case. With a capital B. You see what I mean?”

“Yes, Mark. It fell on him like a truckload of bricks.”

“He deserves it. Between you, me and my inkstand, I still can’t forgive him.”

“What are you talking about?” The psychologist sounded surprised.

“That prick of her uncle stole my prom date. Remember Becky O’Connor? She called me the day before the prom — and I had everything lined up! — a limo, my tux, fucking flowers, all that crap. So,” Karn tilted his chair back and forth, “she tells me that she was going there with another guy. Robert, of all the schmucks around!”

“Oh, I see now,” Beatrice giggled. “And he didn’t recognize you?”

“She ditched him the next day! He never learned whose girl she was.”

“Nice. We should also thank jealous and pissed-off ex-boyfriends of our students. If it wasn’t for Brad what’s-his-last-name, you wouldn’t have had this case. By the way, Markey, how are you going to present her statement?”

“How?” He smiled. “The way I always do in this kind of cases. I’ll just stick it in the pile of reports, charges, complaints, the so-called evidence, and all that junk, and write in my report that she gave this statement to me. Is it dated?”

“No, it’s not. And I don’t think she’d recall a lot about it. She’s very confused. And I hypnotized her a little.”

“You did? I knew you were more talented than you wanted me to think. A lunch on me.”

“Make it a dinner, handsome.”

“The BirkenHouse?”

“Exactly. On Route 16, as usual.”

December 15, 200__

Sufficating Silence

This silence seems as if it could never be broken
The kind of silence that makes you want to scream
Sometimes silence is a peaceful thing
But this time there is that awkward feeling
You want to just run away but you can't
Because you know that you do
It will only be worse the next time
You know you should say something
But what? What is there to say.
You know you are trapped unless you speak
No, you are too selfish to try
So there you stay and proceed with this
sufficating silence

Mandy closed her note-book, switched the light off and slipped under the covers, next to Bryce, her school-mate, her ex-boyfriend, who stayed over once in a while. He stirred in his sleep. She put her arm across his chest, snuggled closer to his big body, and closed her eyes.

State vs. Wilson Trial Transcript:

THE COURT: As we've settled this issue, the Prosecution may continue questioning the witness.

Q: Thank you, Your Honor. So, Amanda, when was the first time you had physical contact with your uncle?

A: As in what?

Q: As in sexual intercourse.

A: Umm... When I was thirteen or just turned fourteen. I don't remember...

Q: And where would you usually have intercourse with your uncle?

A: Either in his house in Provinceville or in his cabin.

Q: How often?

A: What do you mean?

Q: How many times a day or a week or a month?

MR. PERRETT: Objection, Your Honor. A leading question.

THE COURT: Sustained.

Q: How often did you have sexual intercourse?

A: Probably, every day when I was over there. I don't remember.

Q: 'Over there' means what?

A: His house or his cabin.

Q: And this kind of relationship with your uncle lasted for how long?

A: Umm... Until he was arrested.

THE COURT: The Defense Attorney Mr. PERRETT may question the witness.

A:

Q:

A:

Q: Detective Karn, I understand you were the leading investigator in this case, right?

A: Yes, I was.

Q: In the sexual assault cases, isn't it customary to obtain some evidence?

A: Customary, yes. But it all depends on the case.

Q: And in this case you didn't bother to collect any evidence. Do you know what a sexual assault nurse examiner is?

A: Yes, I do.

Q: Did you have a SANE nurse exam Amanda?

A: No, I did not.

Q: Did you collect any evidence from her underwear? Or sheets in Mr. Wilson's house and/or cabin?

A: No, I didn't.

Q: May I ask you, why not?

A: Because I believed I had enough evidence to convict the Defendant.

Q: Are you aware of the fact that Mr. Wilson, after the injuries sustained in a car accident in 1999, has a severe case of erectile dysfunction disorder?

“...this Court sentences you, Robert Wilson, on counts twenty-five, twenty-six, thirty, and fifty-five for twenty years of imprisonment, with 15 years of initial confinement and 5 years of extended supervision...”

Despite the absence of physical evidence, all of his appeals were denied.

Welcome to the State of Insanity.