

SOMETIMES I WONDER WHAT HE IS THINKING WHEN THESE things happen. I wonder how he feels as his world slowly crumbles around him in a landslide of lost hope. I wonder how he feels when he puts the pipe to his lips, and if that pipe grants him the escape he seemingly needs to survive. Does it help him tell the difference between thieves and friends, between a lost cause and a healthy alternative to the future? I wonder what his future looks like. Is it the white smoke he inhales and the alcohol he guzzles down? For the future is just that unless you prepare for it and make it something better. Your vision will always stay in front of you, and unless you grab it, it will never emerge, like the horizon and the setting sun.

I wonder what he dreams of, and if he thinks they will come true. Or if he dreams at all. I wonder how different his dreams are from mine, or if they are any different. I think that maybe, when he does dream, it is just a reflection of his life—a nightmare.

There are times when I'm with him that we are both high. That, I no longer wonder about—I know. I know how he feels because I can see the fire burning out in his eyes. During these times, sitting on a dark curb on some street in the middle of the fairytale town we live in, it seems inevitable that we will all end

up in the same place. That we will all someday step in line and walk amongst the dead. No one is getting out alive.

The story of Chris Walker and his friends is a story told in a hurricane of lies and set in a town that doesn't exist, but a town that every young person passes through at some point. It's a quest to discover what they believe in and where they want to go, although nothing is ever resolved. This is not just the story of my life, for it is not from my point of view but everyone's, which is why I think this story is important. I have taken it upon myself to tell it for whoever wishes to listen.

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Nyle hopped out of the window of his room and landed softly on the mud below. His room was on the first story of the house and faced the back yard, so it was easy for him to get out at night. The only light being emitted from the dark room was his alarm clock, which read 11:15 p.m. As soon as he got out of the house, he quickly made his way to the side yard, and out to the front. When he reached the road, he stopped and massaged his arm. It was extremely sore from the crash earlier in the day. He managed to ignore the pain, however, and started walking down the street.

Nyle was a walker. When he was worried and wanted to think about something, he would take walks. Tonight was no different, and he had an immense amount of things to think about. His Adidas trudged along the wet pavement, and a slow, dreary mist fell continuously from the sky. It was an unusually cold night for the beginning of September and Nyle was not prepared for the weather. He was sporting blue jeans, a white shirt, and a gray jacket. He had the jacket zipped up halfway, and one of his arms was in a blue sling underneath it. His empty sleeve flapped in the breeze and his hood protected his

blue Yankees hat that sat on top of his mat of blond hair. He had a young face and a tall slender frame that made a minuscule shadow as he passed under each streetlight. He pulled a pack of cigarettes from his back pocket, slipped one out, and clenched it between his lips. He had picked up the habit a few months ago and he used to do it only to calm himself down every once in a while. It wasn't until recently that he had become addicted and now he smoked every day. Holding his lighter to his cigarette, he flicked on the flame. He puffed and let out a stream of smoke. As he continued down the street he tried to clear his thoughts or at least try and make sense of the things that had been happening.

It was a very confusing time, a time in which everything seemed to have changed. Dave had been right, Nyle thought. Everything does change, no matter what, and there isn't anything you can do to stop it. His mind switched over to Chris and what was to happen with him. He wasn't sure if the events that had transpired over the past two days would change his way of living or the way things were with his mom and his brother. He had no idea how Chris felt. Their lives were so different. But, at the same time, he could relate to him easily. To some extent, all of their lives were the same. Jamar, Dave, Chris, and himself. They were four guys who had been best friends for the past five years. However, as their lives started to change and they started to experience their own separate dilemmas, they had begun to drift apart.

Earlier in the day, all four of their lives that had been muddled with confusion, drama, and ridiculousness came together with a crash. All of a sudden everything that had been mysterious became clear. Everything that had separated them brought them back together in one violent act of fate. Nyle paused beneath a streetlight, trying to make sense of it all. Trying to make sense of Jamar's reasoning for writing off their

friendship so quickly, and why things were different between them now. He wondered if Jamar would be okay, as he was spending the night in the hospital. How could the universe have placed all four friends together in the right place and the right time for such an awful, eye-opening experience? In fact, how does the universe work at all?

Now, Nyle was more of a witness to his friends, as he, by chance, was not as deeply involved as they were. He wished that everything could be better. However, he knew there was a chance that things could take a turn for the worse with all of his friends. The story that had been playing out before Nyle's eyes over the past few days weighed heavily on his mind.

Nyle looked off into the distance, toward the direction of Chris's house down the street. He wasn't sure if he was home, for he hadn't seen him after the accident, but he made up his mind to go there anyway. With a heavy heart, tired legs, and an uneasy mind, he began walking again.