

Chapter 1 - A New Morning

A ceaseless, droning beeping rouses you from your dream. It's morning. The first morning at your new school is approaching. You slap the alarm clock on your nightstand for it dragging you from your dreamworld. After silencing the loathsome machine, your eyes pass over your surroundings to ensure you're really awake.

Your room is about as mundane as bedrooms come. Featureless plaster walls, coated in a drab color of pale yellow paint with a white trim make up the bulk of your environment. Your bed, a pillow-top mattress with the sheets haphazardly strewn about. You've never been one for making your own bed. It's not like you have company over to impress. A beaten, soon-to-be firewood dresser drawer, survivor of countless cross-country trips from tactless moving company employees sits in a corner to your left. To your right, a cheap, Chinese constructed desk awaits, housing your only "friend": your custom-built computer. You've souped up that bad boy to be able to play any game for decades to come. But you spend the vast majority of time on it emulating games that came out 20 years ago and shitposting on anonymous imageboards. A single window, covered by the shittiest, most beaten-up shades you've ever seen, leaks the late Autumnal morning sunlight through the numerous cracks and slits. You won't be drawing that covering up any time soon anyway, though. Not just because the shades would probably fall apart if you touch them, but because the last thing you want is the world to see what you're doing to yourself in here.

Your father's job as a military contractor has dragged you out to some American Midwest suburb in the middle of nowhere this year. At least the last time you moved, there was the prospect of doing something fun in the big city. Not that you ever did. You sat in your room on your computer most of the time. But at least you had the option. Here, there was fuck-all to do, fuck-all to see, and you knew it from the very outset.

Most kids would piss themselves with fear over attending a new school, but to you, this is relatively mundane at this point. Your parents move around a lot due to the nature of their work, and it means you wind up at a new school every few months. However, this means that you can't really afford to make friends with anyone, since it's just going to make the inevitable goodbye that much more painful. You learned that lesson the hard way the first time you moved. This is School #6 for you at this point. That doesn't really make the dread of meeting new people go away, but it does cushion the fear of it all, since you know you probably won't see any of them again by next year anyway.

After finally wiping the crust off your eyes and falling out of bed, you stagger to the adjacent bathroom to perform your morning routine. Shit, hair, teeth, clothes, unplug phone from the charger before making your way downstairs for breakfast. And there was your mother, with her biggest grin, cooking up a batch of scrambled eggs and bacon, while Dear Ol' Dad was reading the paper, sipping on his coffee. ...Is what you'd like to see for once, but instead the house is empty, as usual. Dad and Mom are both at work, and the only breakfast item left available to you is some frozen generic-brand waffles. Huzzah.

Finishing your meager breakfast, you head for the front door, backpack in hand, and see a sticky note posted on it with a simple message for you: "Bus Stop: Maple Street & 33rd. 7:30". ...Not even a "Love You", or a crude drawing of a heart? Were you guys really in THAT much of a hurry? Damn. Double checking your pockets to confirm your inventory (Cell phone, keys, wallet, yep, everything's here), you lock the door and leave your lonely abode, heading towards 33rd. Wait, EIGHT BLOCKS away?! SHIT, DOUBLE TIME!

Severely out of breath, you barely make it to the corner just in time for the bus to come around and pick you up. Winded, you clamber aboard, and immediately you hear murmurs from the other kids. "who the hell's that" "never seen that fag before" "OMG look at that loser, he's all sweaty" Yep. Par for the course. "that ass tho" ...Okay, that last one was new. Avoid that kid at all costs. Back door's exit only, fellas. Pitter-patter aside, you're now faced with another dilemma: your stop is the last before school. There's no seats available. Shit. This was so much easier at your last couple of schools, just hop in a window seat and plug in your headphones to drown out the chaff. Not only is that luxury gone, you're completely new and are now at the mercy of whatever unlucky student is stuck having to deal with your dumb ass.

Your eyes rapidly dart through the seats, hoping and praying you don't get sat next to the designated school shooter or autistic anime nerd. As you have your internal meltdown, a voice rings out. A voice belonging to a girl of some sort. Or possibly a very feminine boy, in which case you can probably assert dominance.

"This seat's open! Come on!"

Surprisingly pleasant. You weren't expecting this. Maybe it's a ploy to prevent you from asserting dominance. Your eyes shoot towards the siren's call.

Sitting a few rows back, a bright-eyed, pink-haired creature is waving you over with a smile on their face.

You say "creature" not because of your terrible ability to connect with the opposite sex, but because this "girl" wasn't actually human. She had the head of an animal of some sort. She was coated in pink fuzz, with the only exception being a flesh-toned area around her jawline. Her nose was bulbous and black, her ears were like a cat's or dog's, pointed upwards, and freely wiggling with excitement.

And her eyes. Or, was it 'eye'?

What the hell, does she have only one large eye with two pupils? Or were they seperate at one point and fused together in a lab accident or housefire or something?

Yet, nobody else seems to acknowledge the fact that they're riding with this creature.

"SIT THE HELL DOWN, FAGGOT, WE'S GOTS SCHOOL TO GITS TA", The bus driver calmly stated.

Suppressing your bewilderment, you hurriedly sit in the only available seat next to the strange girl, keeping your eyes down to avoid staring at her, as well as to avoid making any sort of interaction with her.

"I've never seen you around here before. You must be new!", the unknown being states the plainly obvious. It's clear you won't get away from this ride without engaging in conversation.

Time for the ol' tried and true setting: Bare Minimum.

"...yeah. Just moved here a few days ago.", you answer, in a hushed voice.

"It's always nice to have an opportunity to meet new friends. My name's Sonia! Sonia the Hedgehog!", the bubblegum-colored being proclaims. Hedgehog? Aren't hedgehogs, like, half a foot tall or something?

Well, at least there's a name to append to this thing.

"...Anon.", you half-heartedly introduce yourself. "Sonia" responds to your dull introduction by beaming an overwhelmingly bright and charming smile.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Anon!"

...You feel like shit for not actually putting in the effort to meet her cheer, but it's all in the effort of sparing your feelings later. Just grit your teeth, soldier. You don't get to have friends.

"Are you nervous about your first day at a new school?" she asks. What a stupid question, of fucking course you're nervous. Every single person on Earth is nervous going someplace new.

Threats need to be assessed.

Escape routes need to be planned out should shit hit the fan.

There's a reason it's called a "Comfort Zone", because everything outside that Zone is UNcomfortable. Who would charge headfirst into that with no apprehension?

"...kinda.", you blankly respond.

You might be acting like you're dead inside, but you still don't have the heart to insult the only person who's at least acting like you're a human being and not a clump of turds stacked up to resemble a human being.

"That's okay. We all get nervous in new places", she says. No shit.

"...I guess. This isn't the first time I had to move, though", you reply.

"Oh? Does your family move around a lot, then?", Sonia ponders. You glance in the direction of the relentless bombardment of chatter to get a better look at the irritant.

She's wearing a kind of strange outfit, to be frank. Long sleeved purple gloves cover most of her hands and arms, leaving only her shoulders exposed.

Her legs are covered in similarly-shaded boots, though they have a red tip on them. Under them, she's wearing red stockings that lead all the way up her dress, which is also purple.

Her sleeveless top is the same shade of crimson as her stockings, and the ensemble is all tied together with a big, golden belt of some kind, with a white gem placed firmly in the middle.

She looks like she just stepped out of a bad Saturday morning cartoon from the early 90s.

Having said all that, it's not like it's a bad look for her. The get-up fits the contours of her body surprisingly well, showing off just a subtle hint of her femininity.

On closer inspection, your initial response of confusion/revulsion really wasn't warranted. From a distance, she could probably be mistaken for a normal girl.

Her hair is an even brighter shade of pink than the rest of her body, and it seems split into two noticeable segments: on top of her head, and the back of it.

Up top, a huge tuft of voluminous hair juts forward, gently wrapping around the curve of her face before ending at her rosy cheek.

Behind her head, her hair suddenly points backwards in the shape of two large spikes in a sort of V-shape.

But then your eyes finally meet hers properly.

Though the shape of her eyes might be weird, you can tell from her bright, focused pupils that she does have a kind, friendly heart.

And she's still beaming an adorable smile in your direction, her cheeks slightly blushing.

As the blood rushes to your face, you feel a compulsion to respond to her previous deduction.

"My dad's a contractor for the military, and mom's in marketing for this big chain store, so she can just hop around where ever dad has to go." Embarrassed that you just blurted out more topics to continue a conversation you desperately want to end, you force your gaze straight to your feet.

"Wow! That's really interesting, Anon! I wish my mom had a job as cool as your parents!", Sonia enthusiastically responds. Because of course she does. Because you can't shut the hell up.

"Hey, you should meet my brothers and friends when we get to school!", she continues.

More?

She wants to bring MORE people into your crappy, embarrassingly empty life? God damn it, why can't she pick up the hint that you want to be left alone?

You try to focus your gaze even further down between your toes, when you catch her move just outside of your periphery. Your eyes instinctively respond to the movement.

She's bending her entire upper torso over to try and make eye contact, pressing her cheek against the seat in front of you. Smile still as bright and cheery as ever.

This adorable gesture completely takes you off-guard.

You say the first thing that leaps into your stupid head.

"okay sounds cool"

FUCK NO WHAT ARE YOU DOING AAAAAAAAAAAAAA

"YAAAAAY!" cheered the chipper hedgehog. "Everyone's gonna love you, I just know it!"

END CHAPTER 1

Chapter 2 - The New Kid

After what seemed like an endless journey of you ignoring Sonia's prattling to internally self-flagellate, the bus finally pulls to a stop at the school.

"GET OUT YOU FUCKING FAGGOTS BEFORE I KILLS ALL A YAS", the clearly mentally stable bus driver gently requested. "TAKE YOUR MEDS, ASSHOLE" several students replied in a spritely fashion.

Filled with newfound dread, you solemnly march off the bus along with the others.

You're 95% certain the kid in front of you crapped his shorts. The remaining 5% is he deliberately sat on a brownie his mother made and smeared it all over himself in an act of rebellion.

The moment you step off the bus, something yanks you out of your stupor by your arm. The source is, of course, Sonia, no doubt dragging you to see her friends.

"Come on, Anon! Let's wait for my friend, Mindy! She should be coming any second with my brother", the salmon-colored ray of sunshine pleaded.

Clinging to your arm, she leads you off to one side before staring at the bus doors expectantly, watching the children going by, hoping to spot her friend. Whose name is Mindy.

Sonia's grip is like a vise. Accepting you have no chance to escape, barring chewing your own arm off (and that's your GOOD masturbation arm, you'd die before bringing harm to it), you stare blankly at nothing in particular, waiting for the agony to end.

As the students left on the bus come down to a trickle, a particular spectacle catches your eye. A gargantuan mound of blue struggles to sidle through the doors, its weight dragging the whole bus down with it.

On a closer look, this azure shape is actually another student, an extremely overweight one. You surmise that this kid has to weigh at least 700 pounds. You wonder if you haven't seen him before on some show on TLC.

Stifling your snickers/disgust/pity for the poor soon-to-be-diabetic, you glance over at Sonia, who surprisingly has dropped her usual cheery persona to look away from this sideshow.

You can't help but feel a hint of shame from her.

While you're curious about Sonia's behavior, the fat kid finally escapes his prison with a somewhat satisfying, unmistakably wet sound, like removing a massive clump of hair from a shower drain.

The bus, overjoyed at finally dropping that load, jiggles back and forth, its suspension squeaking in harmony.

The portly boy dashes (at least, what could only be described for someone of his immense size as 'dashing') off towards another part of the lot without even looking in your direction.

"Oh, Bartleby, my lover, please wait for me. Your little bitch is coming to meet you!" the rotund mountain of a child wheezes as he hustles away.

As you wonder about the exact nature of what you just witnessed, as well as how you managed to miss seeing that monstrosity during the ride, Sonia's expression perks up as she notices the next kid coming off the bus.

No doubt this was going to be Mindy at last.

Sonia giddily flags her friend towards us with her free hand, and you finally catch a glimpse at what Mindy looks like.

Swaggering up to the both of you was a blow-up sex doll of Jared Leto's portrayal of The Joker from the hit movie, Suicide Squad, with enormous fake breasts.

"Hey, big boy. You must be new. You want me to suck your balls?", the sex object asks in an undeniably sultry voice, before throwing on a sensual chuckle.

You blink your eyes in disbelief of what horror you're witnessing.

As your eyes regain focus, suddenly the horrible illusion dissipates, and what's left is only mildly more appealing.

Mindy is taller and more human-like in appearance than Sonia, with normal caucasian skin. Really, she looked just like a human in all but two ways: her nose was black, and her ears came to a point, like an elf's.

However, that humanoid appearance was buried under 80 pounds of makeup and plastic surgery. The first thing your eyes are drawn to are the two absolutely fucking stupidly large breasts planted firmly on her torso.

These gargantuan knockers could kill, and probably have killed, a medium-sized dog with a simple turn of her body.

The massive fake milkers were barely constrained by a scrap of cloth, no doubt supposed to be a bikini top, but the coverage would be embarrassingly small, even for modest sized breasts.

You manage to peel your eyes away from the gigantic tits in front of you to get a good look at her face. Though, to be frank, it's tough to make out her actual face behind the copious amounts of foundation and lipstick.

Her lips seem permanently puffed out in a mix between pouty and duck-face, coated in lipstick similar in color to Sonia's fur.

Despite your complaints about her appearance, however, hidden behind the falsehoods, you can definitely see some appeal to her.

Her hair is a bright orange, ginger color, thick and voluminous, somewhat wild, tied into a high ponytail trailing behind her.

What little of her body you can make out behind her big boobies is very well developed for a high-school girl. She'd honestly pass for a super model.

But what you find most appealing is her eyes. Beneath the lavender-shaded eyeliner, her deep blue eyes cast a piercing gaze right through you. It makes your heart skip a beat for a second.

"Umm...hello? I asked you a question, faggot", the seductress speaks again.

"I'm sorry, what?", you blurt out thoughtlessly as you shake off your analytical autism and struggle to remember what Mindy asked you previously.

"Ha ha, damn, girl. You don't even know his name and you're asking to suck his balls. You're crazy, slut", a young man's voice rings out from the school bus.

Swaggering up to the three of you is the Ugly Bastard from those Japanese porn comics you're so fond of reading. As he wraps his arm around Mindy's wide hips, you wonder why he glued grass to his head.

Wait. The Ugly Bastard wouldn't care about his male pattern baldness.

You rub your eyes, trying to refresh your focus on this new character.

What stood before you had a similar face to Sonia, but a much chunkier build to his body, he weighed somewhere around 250 pounds. His fur was also a shade of green, similar to grass, as you noted earlier.

The hair on top of his head was an absolute mess, spiked up but crooked and bent. Did he fall out of bed and just forgot to comb it, or is it deliberately styled that way? You're no fashion guru, so you ignore it.

Speaking of fashion, the hedgehog boy was wearing a tattered red vest of some indeterminate, yet unmistakably cheap material, yet no shirt underneath it, exposing his flesh-colored belly.

White gloves that cut off at the wrist, leading into spiked wristbands cover his hands, and his feet are adorned with pointed red running shoes, with white tips.

If you're wondering why you didn't describe what pants this young man is wearing, that's because he's not wearing any pants.

You choose not to dwell on it, because you've been called a faggot 7 times in the last 30 minutes, and you're not looking to continue that trend by looking at another boy's naked crotch.

"Hey, Mindy, Manic, this is Anon! He's new in town and needs some friends!", Sonia introduces you to the two new faces with her trademark peppy attitude.

So the green one's name is 'Manic'. Noted.

You sheepishly wave at the two of them as your gaze meets the pavement before awkwardly bleating out a weak "h-hi."

Sonia's two friends exchange looks at each other, no doubt wondering just what the fuck is wrong with you.

You needed an excuse to get out of this impending awkward conversation FAST. You glance around the area and see a huge crowd of people gathered over on the other side of the school's parking lot.

At this point, most of the kids have already headed inside the school, so this was an odd sight, to say the least. In fact, you could tell most of the people over there were adults, rather than children.

"What's going on over there?", you ask, desperately trying to draw everyone's attention to the brouhaha and away from you so you can slink away into obscurity.

"Oh, that's just the papparazzi. Ignore them", Manic says, as he coldly waves off the obviously hard to ignore phenomenon happening on school grounds.

Your diversion plan failed. Damn.

Actually, thinking back, that obese blue kid from earlier charged off in that direction. Maybe he's some sort of underaged reporter for the school newspaper or something.

"You're never gonna believe this! Anon's dad's a soldier and his mom's a CEO at some big marketing company!" Sonia boldly announces to her friends, interrupting your train of thought.

...That is not even remotely what you told her. You turn a suspicious glare towards the vivacious pink ditz as you seriously question if she was even listening to you earlier.

"Whoa! Like Captain Price in Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 (2022)?!" shouts Manic. You're confused as to why he said it like that, including the year, since both versions of the game follow the same story.

You think. You never actually played Modern Warfare 2.

"And a CEO? Damn. I bet you're about as rich as Bartleby, haha", chortled Mindy. Never mind that quip about that Bartleby guy, you had to tamp down this fire quick, before it spread out of control.

"Um, a-actually, that's not what my paren--", you begin to stammer, before a loud noise pierces through your correction of the story.

The school bell was ringing.

You needed to get to homeroom immediately.

And you had no idea where to go in this unfamiliar building.

END CHAPTER 2

Chapter 3 - Encounter With God

"Oh shit! We're late!", Manic cried as he hauled ass towards the front doors, dragging Mindy alongside him.

While chasing after them, you scramble through your backpack, sifting through the countless papers to find your schedule for the semester.

"OMG, Anon, hurry! You don't wanna be late on your first day!", Sonia called out to you while running past you into the halls of the school.

"W-WAIT! Please! I just need directions to my homeroom!", you loudly beg back at her, still searching for your elusive sheet.

Sonia stops in her tracks and turns back to you, jogging in place with a flustered look on her face.

"Tough shit, noob! If Teach finds out we're late again, he's gonna have me cleaning off Coach Johnson's crap from the faculty toilets with a toothbrush!", Manic shouts, as he disappears down one of the nearby halls, Mindy in tow.

All this damn paperwork, you fucking HATE joining in the middle of the semester. Wait. That blue corner. Could it be?

A grid of your various classes and times is laid out on the sheet of paper in your hands.

YES!

"Uuhh, which way's room 114?", you hurriedly ask.

Sonia's face turns from worry, to surprise, to joy. "Room 114? This way!", she yells as she dashes off down a hall to your left.

"H-HEY! WAIT!", you command as you grip your backpack and give chase. Why is she leading you there personally? Isn't she also late for her class?

You clumsily clamber down the hallway through the twists and turns, barely keeping track of Sonia as she breezily outpaces you.

The chase finally comes to an end as Sonia skids to a stop in front of an unassuming door, breathing heavily. You'd like to say you're doing the same, but 'wheezing' would be more accurate.

"What the hell, Sonia?", you inquire between gasps of air. "Why'd you lead me here instead of just telling me?"

"Because," she responds, also between breaths, "this is my homeroom, too!"

She flashes her characteristic bright grin, as her chest rises and falls, beads of sweat dripping from her face.

You feel your heart beating even faster now. A heart attack might be imminent.

The two of you sneak into the classroom. The teacher isn't here yet. Thank goodness. He must be taking a huge crap.

However, the air is filled with a palpable tension.

You ever see one of those cowboy movies, where a character enters a saloon, and all of the other patrons immediately stop what they're doing to give that character the evil eye?

That's what's happening here. Countless eyes are locked upon the two of you as you enter.

Well, you, at least. Sonia, unfazed by the sudden silence, skips over to her desk without missing a beat.

Your eyes pass over the room filled with other students, glaring at you in judgement. It's a mix of normal human kids and fuzzy creatures, similar to the few you met earlier.

Speaking of which, Manic and Mindy are also here. What a small world. Manic is leaning back in his desk, resting his legs on top, trying to look like the coolest kid here.

Mindy is simply browsing her phone with a bored look. She glances up at you briefly before returning to her scrolling and texting.

Sonia, having taken her seat, looks at you with a glimmer of innocence in her eyes, and her usual cute smile.

God damn it, why is this so fucking hard? You've been to new schools countless times before, you normally just take your seat and wait for the torrent of insults to ignore.

Wait, which one IS your seat? There's several empty ones, all of which are by the furies, which is your term for the non-human kids now until you properly determine what the hell they are.

As you stand stock-still, pondering your next move, the classroom door suddenly opens behind you. Spooked by the sudden movement, you jolt away from it with an undignified "GYAK!"

The tension has been successfully cut, as most of the classroom erupts in derisive laughter.

An adult human man enters the classroom. You hate that you have to describe people as "human" now, as if that wasn't blatantly obvious anymore. Fucking furies.

"I take it YOU'RE the new student around here, Anon", the man states with a slight tinge of annoyance. You quickly come to the conclusion that this is your teacher.

"Umm. Yes, sir", you quickly reply, before coming to a bizarre realization.

"Uh. Hhhhhhhow do you know my name, sir?", you hesitantly ask, bewildered by the man's apparent clairvoyance.

"Because you left THESE strewn all across the hallway", he responds, holding up several sheets of paper in his right hand.

Scrutinizing the evidence before you, you recognize a lot of that paperwork, and even see your name written on several sheets.

Your eyes quickly dart to your backpack to find it's open and almost completely empty. You forgot to zip it before chasing after Sonia. All the papers spilled out. Shit.

"Just take your seat, Anon. Third column, second-to-last row", the teacher tersely orders. You wordlessly comply, as the students snigger at your misfortune.

You walk between Manic and Mindy on your way to your desk. Manic points his finger at you like a gun with a smug look on his face as you pass by.

Let's see...third column, second-to-last row...right next to...Sonia. Of course. You internally sigh in defeat as you take your seat next to the bubbly fellow student with twinkling eyes.

What did you do wrong in life to deserve this? Fate is forcing you to make friends with an amazingly positive person, just to rip the two of you apart in less than a year.

Maybe it's punishment for a previous life. Maybe you were a pedophile before you were born. Or Black.

Well, you understand punishing YOU for that, but why put Sonia through this? She seems like a nice girl, she doesn't deserve to suffer through losing a friend she'll never see again.

"Psst. Hey, Anon", Sonia whispers, breaking your silent pleas to whatever deity is responsible for today.

"...yeah?", you eventually mutter back.

"Hi", she quickly replies before stifling her giggling as she looks away. Was she...teasing you or something? You don't really know how to respond to that.

You take a good, long look at your surroundings. This is gonna be your homeroom from now on, best to get a grip on the layout from the location you're most likely gonna be at.

You're located near the lower left corner of the room, three seats away from a window. So much for wistfully staring outside at anything but the sky.

To your left, as you've already figured out, is where Sonia is seated.

In front of her, to your upper left, is Mindy, still on her phone.

Manic sits right in front of you.

To your upper right, a girl, sort of like Mindy with pale-blue skin and white hair, is seated. As if feeling your eyes boring into her head, she turns to face you, and meekly waves before returning to her notebook.

Behind you is some hippy-dippy guy in square glasses, but you feel like you can safely ignore him as he's not that important for this stretch of your life.

Finally, the seat behind Sonia, and the seats to your right and behind that one are currently vacant.

Looking closer, the legs of the chair of the desk to the back-right are agonizingly bent out of shape compared to the rest. There's cracks on the floor beneath it, as well.

You took notice of this before, but every one of the taken seats nearby is occupied by one of those furies. Even seats two rows ahead of you are taken by those creatures.

Something's been bugging the hell out of you for the entire morning at this point. You're surrounded by creatures that aren't human and nobody gives two shits. Why?

After wrestling with finding the most tactful way to word the question, you build up enough nerve to simply ask:

"Uhm, I know this is probably gonna come off as racist, but...What the hell ARE all of you?", you question the surrounding students.

As expected, everyone stops what they're doing to look directly at you. You know it's insensitive, but if you're gonna be stuck here for the rest of the semester, you deserve to have at least that question answered.

"Have you really never seen a Mobian before?", asks Manic, who's craning his head as he leans further back in his chair to get a better view of you.

Mobian? You've never even heard of Mobians existing before today started. Yet this school, or at least this classroom, is filled with them.

"No, never. Every school I've been to has only had humans attending", you state patently. "Where did you guys all come from?", you continue, too curious to simply ignore your odd surroundings.

"It's kind of a long story, but we're from the planet Mobius", Sonia explains. "Our homeworld was taken over by the EVIL Dr. Robotnik and his army of goons, years ago"

"We did eventually take back our world, but because Robotnik left it in such shitty shape, we had no choice but to abandon it", Manic continues in place of Sonia.

"So you guys are refugees, like those muslims that are swarming all throughout Europe?" you inquire.

"Well, not quite. Mobians have actually been attending human schools on Earth off and on throughout the years." Sonia carries on.

"Yeah, we all actually took part in the student exchange program for our days in Kindergarten", Manic adds.

Why the hell is this the first time you heard about any of this? Alien creatures not only coming into contact with humanity, but exchanging students and knowledge with each other?

Oh wait, you know exactly why YOU hadn't heard about this, it's because you're a recluse who spends his days staring at a computer screen playing video games and masturbating to anime titties.

Well, at the very least, you have a name to call these furry fucks now: Mobians. You feel culturally enriched already.

"Anon, stop being racist before I've taken attendance", the teacher chides from the front of the room.

You sullenly slump in your chair quietly. You take notice of Sonia looking around the room with a concerned look on her face, before raising her hand to ask the teacher something.

"Excuse me, Mr. Davisen? Is Knuckles not here today?", she asks with a worried look.

"No, I just received a call from his great-grandfather about how he, and I'm quoting on this one, 'has come down with a severe case of diarrhea'", the teacher clarified.

With various snickering coming from the other students, Sonia simply responds with a dejected "Oh", before casting her saddened gaze to her desk.

"Now, then, I'll take roll", Mr. Davisen, whose name you just learned, proclaims. "When I call your name, simply stand up, say 'here', and sit down", he goes on.

The teacher then goes through the cavalcade of names, including yours, before finally landing on one of the missing students.

"Bartleby Montclair of Dresdin?", he calls out.

...That can't be right.

You might be a hermit, but even YOU have heard of Bartleby Montclair of Dresdin.

Bartleby is the richest, sexiest, and most powerful man on the face of the planet, why would he be in attendance at this school?

Clearly some prankster fucked with the class registry just to mess with the teacher.

You bet it was Manic, that grassy-headed fuck. He strikes you as a "Class Clown" archetype.

"Bartleby?", the teacher hollers again. You start to snigger at the teacher being so easily duped, when suddenly, the classroom door bursts open.

A glorious, golden light shimmers from the newly opened doorway. Its brilliance is nearly blinding.

You squint as hard as you can to try and make out what could possibly be causing such divine radiance.

As your eyes struggle to analyze the figure behind the light, you come to a stunning realization.

A man of impeccable beauty and strength has entered the room, his long, golden locks flowing effortlessly in the breeze.

His thick, sinewy muscles, glistening with sweat, reflect the fluorescent lighting overhead.

His lantern-like jaw that could cut diamonds houses his thick, pouty lips, spread wide across his face in a beaming smile of confidence, before opening his mouth and releasing the most dulcet tones ever heard by mankind from his throat.

"Ah ha ha, excuse my tardiness, professor", this living Statue of David chortles.

"Mowing down the paparazzi outside with my solid gold AR-15, personally monogrammed by Kyle Rittenhouse, which cost me fourteen trillion dollars, took me a bit longer than I expected", he continues, everyone waiting on his every heavenly word with bated breath.

"Not a problem, Mr. Montclair," Mr. Davisen chuckles. "I know how busy you and your personal bitch get this time of day"

Personal bitch? Did you hear that right? Under closer scrutiny, you notice this chiseled Adonis is clutching a chain in his right hand.

Following it, your eyes catch a glimpse of this 'personal bitch' previously mentioned before, with the collar around his neck attached to the chain.

Sauntering besides this golden god is the Ugly Bastard from those Japanese porn comics you adore reading so much, dressed in a Modern Sonic outfit.

Wait. The Ugly Bastard would know better than to dress as Modern Sonic. Everyone knows Modern Sonic doesn't deserve sex, consensual or otherwise.

You rub your eyes in disbelief, refreshing your focus to try to push past the overwhelming brilliance to get a better look at the creature.

What you can make out is an undeniably round, blue shape, sort of similar to Manic, but way fatter, with an industrial-sized set of asscheeks.

The only clothes the personal bitch is equipped with are a set of red running shoes with a thick, white stripe going across the middle of them, white gloves, and a leather collar wrapped around his meaty throat.

The collar is studded with diamonds, and has the word "BITCH" emblazoned on it in solid gold letters.

His "Hair", if you can even call it that, is shaped in several large spikes pointing backwards, with one particular spike set between his ears on top of his head, forming a sort of mohawk.

Wait a minute, you feel like you recognize this portly blue ogre. Yeah, you definitely saw him struggling to exit the bus earlier this morning.

In fact, you know you just made the comparison, but his face really does resemble Manic's and Sonia's. He must be a Mobian hedgehog, too.

Possibly a brother to the other two?

Wait, what the hell are you doing focusing on some fat blue turd when BARTLEBY MOTHERFUCKING MONTCLAIR OF MOTHERFUCKING DRESDIN just walked into your homeroom?

You can't believe it. Your eyes begin to well up with tears of joy. You share a class with the richest, sexiest man alive.

All of the bullshit you've endured, the taunting, the jeers, the judgement, the heartbreak, ALL of it had been leading up to this moment, and it

was ALL worth it now.
This is your one chance to make a lasting first impression of Bartleby FUCKING Montclair. DON'T SCREW THIS UP.

"I realize this might be out of turn, but could I please ask you to take your seat so we can continue the day's lesson?", Mr. Davisen gently requests.
"Ah ha ha. Of course", Bartleby responds. "Come, my bitch. Let us begin our scholastic adventure anew!", he then commanded to his azure concubine.
"Oh, Bartleby, of course, anything for you", the obese bitch reciprocates in a loving, subservient voice.
The two figures then meander in your general direction. Bartleby is getting closer. You're going to piss your pants in sheer joy.
The blue porker waddles his way through the desks, forcefully shoving them out of his way with his sheer girth before arriving at his seat, to the right of your rear.
You don't really notice this disturbance, though, because Bartleby, a seven-foot tall being of pure divinity, has taken the seat to your right.

Your eyes are beginning to bulge out of your skull, and your tears are flowing heavily down your face. This is the happiest day of your life. You know you should avert your eyes, it's like you're staring directly at the Sun, but you don't care, this might be the only opportunity you have to soak in every last detail of this deity before you go blind.
And then the unthinkable happens.

Bartleby's eyes meet yours.

"Oh? It seems we have a new student today", Bartleby notes, as he turns his face towards you.

Bartleby Montclair of Dresdin just fucking noticed you exist.

You feel your organs shutting down. Your brain has completely fried at this point, accepting, nay, DEMANDING you die at this very moment at the height of your bliss.

"Tell me, what is your name, my newfound colleague?", Bartleby inquires.

He asked your name.

You start panting, salivating, and sweating profusely as your now completely defunct brain desperately tries to piece together enough of a synaptic sequence to get you to say your name clearly.
After gulping down the drool pooling in your throat to try and moisten your vocal cords, you finally, proudly vocalize your name for his divine ears to hear.

"schhhhllubsfuggafpffffff", you spit, as your eyes roll into the back of your head. With your motor skills completely disintegrated, you flop over onto the floor, your consciousness quickly fading to black.

END CHAPTER 3

Chapter 4 - Road to Recovery

You begin to regain your consciousness in an unfamiliar area. As your senses slowly return, your vision makes out a pure white room, with bright lights droning overhead.
You hear a few muffled voices in the distance, arguing indistinctly about something.
"mleemf, hemme mee mph Anomf ih alright!" the increasingly familiar voice vaguely pleads outside of your vision.
"foh fah laft time, NO! Piss off, you pink bitch!" shouts a disgruntled, haggard voice, finally breaking through the fog over your hearing.

You loudly groan and rub your incredibly sore eyes and head. You thought for certain you were going to die. At this point, you still kinda want to.
You shake your head to clear your brain fog, before sitting up to try and get a better view of your surroundings.
Posters advocating for healthy foods like veggies, and slogans about taking care of your body adorn the pure white walls.
You go out on a limb and take a guess that you're in the Nurse's office.
"Barbleby?", you call out in a daze, still groggy from your near-death experience.

Your vision, still blurry, lands on the sole exit in this room, where two figures stand, bickering and blocking the way.
No doubt the source of the voices you heard as you began to regain your senses.
The shapes start coming into focus, forming to be more recognizable as human.
Well, as human as these two get, anyway.

A heavy-set white woman dressed in a nurse's gown is blocking a smaller girl in a red and purple outfit.
Wait.
Red and purple.
And the hag's voice earlier threw the insult 'pink bitch' around.
Don't tell me...

"Anon!", exclaims Sonia, with relief in her intonation.

Of course.

"...hi Sonia", you grunt out loud.

As the nurse is distracted by your no doubt miraculous recovery, Sonia takes the opportunity to squeeze past her large frame to bust into the room and take her place firmly at your side.

The second she sits down next to you, she starts relentlessly bombarding you with chatter.

"Omigosh Anon I was so worried when you passed out in homeroom I wanted to stay with you when they dragged you here but they insisted I return to class so I've been coming back between every period to make sure you're okay but this fat bitch kept saying you needed to rest and-"

Sonia was talking at such a rapid pace, you didn't even attempt to keep up with her prattling. You simply asymmetrically blink at her, waiting for her to come to a stop, or run out of breath.

Before either of those things happen, the nurse loudly clears her phlegmy throat, no doubt carrying a case of undiagnosed emphysema.

Sonia quickly flashes a shocked look at her, before turning it into a rebellious glare. She grips your left arm in both of hers.

Too disoriented to register the action as adorable, you turn your attention to the ogre in white.

"Listen, sonny. You came down with a severe case of BMPS during first period", the scratchy-voiced nurse explains.

"...BMPS?", you ask in response, hoping for clarification.

"Bartleby Montclair Proximity Syndrome", the nurse spells out. "It happens a lot with new kids getting anywhere near the richest, sexiest man alive", she then adds.

"Upon experiencing the bliss of Bartleby's attention, many people's minds simply shut down all bodily functions, perfectly content with death after experiencing joy of that caliber", the nurse drones on.

That certainly describes what happened to you in homeroom.

Sonia's face turns from rebellious to worried. "Is he gonna die?", she then asks, concerned for your condition.

"Frankly, most people do, but the fact that Anon here is able to sit up after all that is nothing short of divine intervention", the raspy voice responds with a rather stunning assessment.

"That said," she further expounds, "I want you to go home with someone supervising you for the next 24 hours. Because the school's closing up soon and I gotta get home to watch 'Judge Judy'."

Yeah, good luck with that. Wild dogs couldn't tear Mom away from her sales job, and Dad's probably on some military base doing God knows what, they'd probably shoot him if he tried leaving early.

"I don't really...have anyone to keep an eye on me for that long", you groggily reveal. The nurse simply rolls her eyes. Helpful. You hope Judge Judy bursts into flames the next time she sees her.

"Hey, Anon, I've got an idea!", Sonia declares excitedly. Here it comes.

"You can stay with us at my place for the night! It'll be like a sleepover!", the bouncy bubblegum babe offers, giddily hopping in place.

This day has paradoxically been both the least predictable and most predictable you've had in your entire life.

You are completely exhausted of options at this point, however, so you simply accept the crap-coated hand fate has dealt you.

"...yaaaaaaaay", you cheer in the most sardonic voice your addlepatated brain can muster.

You know, for having your brain overloaded from bliss, your internal monologue maintains a wealth of perspicacity.

You clumsily attempt to rise to your feet, but your legs act like a newborn calf's, wobbly and weak from your run-in with BMPS.

As you stumble, preparing to fall flat on your face, Sonia braces herself against you to keep that from happening.

Despite you being significantly heavier and taller than her, she forces her iconic smile through the obvious strain you're putting on her.

Taking your arm over her shoulders, the two of you limp towards the exit.

As you make your way out of the building, you're greeted by the two other hedgehogs you've met today, Manic, and Bartleby's personal bitch, whose name still eludes you.

"Wait, he actually LIVED?! Holy crap!", Manic cried out, utterly shocked by your continued existence.

"It's his own fault he suffered from BMPS", spat the corpulent cerulean hedgeHOG. "If he only stopped staring, Bartleby would never have noticed his ass!"

"Sonic, stop being a dick", Sonia spat back. Sonic the Hedgehog. You can't believe it took you this long to remember the name of Bartleby's personal bitch. It's been on every history quiz you've ever taken.

"Do you know how embarrassed Bartleby was that this little faggot almost died just from him greeting this guy?!", Sonic grills as he scowls at you.

"Bartleby left school early because of you! I-I hate you! I was gonna ride home with him in his limo, but now I have to walk home like some animal!", the sapphire-colored shithhead whines, before stomping his stumpy legs off in a huff.

...You almost died. You have no clue why he's throwing a tantrum at you of all people. A little exercise might help reduce those stretch marks, fat-ass.

You, of course, keep that quip to yourself, because if Bartleby found out you insulted his personal bitch, you can kiss everything you've ever loved in life goodbye as it's destroyed in a sea of flames.

"So, why ARE you carrying the new kid, my pink sister?", Manic asks, breaking the ice.

"The nurse says he needs someone to watch over him for the next day or so, but his parents are too busy", Sonia explains.

"Oh right, his dad's in Black Ops, like the hit video game from Activision and Treyarch, Call of Duty: Black Ops II", Manic recalls, even more incorrectly and stilted than before.

You forgot to clear up the misunderstanding from Sonia earlier. Fuck. You're too exhausted to correct the record right now. Well, maybe it won't spiral completely out of control by tomorrow.

"Yeah, so anyways, I offered to take Anon home with us so we can all keep watch over him, to make sure he doesn't die!" Sonia cheerfully continues.

"Sweet! He can tell us all about the people his dad's killed!", Manic replies, matching Sonia's excitement before taking your other free arm over his shoulders.

"C'mon, Anon! We've got a lotta walking to do!", Manic commands with a determined smile plastered across his face.

In spite of your best efforts, you somehow managed to make several good friends today.

Why can't anything go right for you?

END CHAPTER 4

Chapter 5 - Home Sweet Home

Flanked by two short woodland creatures to help stabilize your hopelessly feeble legs, you're marched across the neighborhood. Maybe Sonic had a point complaining about having to walk this distance. Even if you were at your peak physical condition, this trek would be exhausting for you.

Despite your severely hampered locomotion, the three of you eventually catch up to the missing Hedgehog sibling, profusely sweating, vomit flecked on the sides of his mouth.

As Manic calls out to his blue brother, Sonic glowers at you.

"What the fuck, sibs?!", Sonic shouts. "Why the hell are you still carrying that retard?!"

"You threw your little bitch-fit before I could explain" Sonia retorted. "Anon's suffering from BMPS and needs someone to watch over him for the next few days"

...You're pretty sure it's just one day. Sonia seems to hear only what she wants to hear.

"Well, I'm not helping!", Sonic huffed. "Everyone's going to avoid talking to Bartleby now because of that faggot almost dying! He already has a hard enough time making friends!"

"Come on, my blue bro!", Manic pleaded. "He could die without our help!"

"Well, good! He deserves it after humiliating Bartleby like that!", the tubby terror bellowed back.

This is clearly not going to get better without your input. You pull yourself away from the two siblings to try and stand on your own two feet, and confront the remaining one directly.

The act clearly stuns Sonic, as his furious expression turns into one of surprise. After all, Bartleby's personal bitch would probably know the effects of BMPS better than anyone.

You walking about on your own so soon after your encounter with Bartleby is a nearly impossible feat of willpower.

"Sonic, I'm truly sorry if my fainting spell caused Bartleby any undue distress or discomfort", you apologize, as you stagger forward.

"It was never my intention to make him feel like a danger to anyone. I was just so awestruck by his presence that I couldn't bear to look away", your plea continues.

"However, dying then and there would have made mine the happiest death in the universe. Bartleby Montclair of Dresdin acknowledged my presence", you go on.

"Therefore, if or when I recover, I'll gladly spend the rest of the school year telling everyone that BMPS shouldn't be enough of a deterrent to keep them away from befriending Bartleby", you resume.

Your emotional appeal causes Sonia's eyes to well up with tears of pride, and Manic is giving an approving thumbs up. Sonic's face has turned from shocked to remorseful, averting his gaze away from you.

"After all, countless men and women die without ever even seeing Bartleby's face on TV, let alone in real life. Dying after witnessing his visage is the best way that I can think of to perish", you conclude, as your legs begin to buckle.

Sonia and Manic quickly retake their positions to keep you from pratfalling. Sonic turns his back towards you.

You didn't really take it in the last few times you saw it, but Sonic's mega-sized asscheeks are incredibly appetizing.

The image of a pair of perfectly spherical, spankable blueberries, each the size of your desktop monitor, speckled with chocolate between the divide, twinkling in the sunlight commands your attention.

"Well,", Sonic finally speaks, "I'm still not going to help carry you."

"But...I guess you can stay at our place for a bit, until you're better", your newfound cerulean savior announces, turning his head to show his smirking face.

It seems he's finally forgiven you. Thank fuck, if he went to Bartleby to fix this, you'd REALLY wind up dead.

"C'mon, sibs! Race ya home!", Sonic chipperly challenges his brother and sister.

The blue ball happily bounds off in the direction the rest of you were heading, and his two siblings drag you along after him.

After about five blocks of traveling, Sonia and Manic limp you up the walkway of an unassuming two-story suburban home.

You three passed Sonic about two blocks back as he ran out of breath again. As you carried on, you overheard the blue bowling ball lament

and seethe over his weight problems.

"God damn it, I can't lose this race to a cripple, I'm Sonic the Hedgehog! I'm the fastest thing alive! Way Past Cool people don't lose races!"

were the last words you heard from Sonic as the three of you left him in the dust.

"Here we are!", Sonia proudly announces. You're not sure why, but you expected their home to be less mundane than this.

A hole in the ground, a lavish manor, ANYTHING would be more notable than yet another McMansion identical to the countless ones you've passed by on your long journey.

You don't really have room to complain, though. That's just what Suburban America is like.

You decide to closely evaluate the hedgehog's natural habitat to try and discern any identifying characteristics.

Various kinds of withering flowers line a rockbed near the front porch. It seems they haven't been watered in weeks.

Perhaps the impending coming of Winter has deterred the upkeep of the yard, seeing as it's going to be covered in snow and ice before too long.

A black SUV sits in the driveway to the left of your current position. Its vanity license plate reads "HEDGEHO". Yeah, character limits are a bitch.

Although, why didn't they just cut out the 'E' instead? "HEDGHOG" would at least be more dignified and easier to understand.

You spot a broken-down swingset in the back yard, bent horribly out of shape and rusted into disrepair. No doubt the work of Sonic's blubbery ass years ago.

Beyond those things, not much else stands out to differentiate this house from the other countless doppelgangers that line the block.

Only a wooden sign hanging from the front door with the words, 'Hedgehog Family Home', and a cute image of four hedgehogs, one larger than the others, burnt into it catches your eye.

By 'hedgehogs', you mean the ones actually native to Earth that you're familiar with, not the Mobian kind which you've only just been introduced to today.

You, Manic, and Sonia finally trudge up to the front porch, and as you clumsily wipe your feet on the scratchy Welcome mat, the pink sibling opens the door ahead of you.

"Mama! We're home!", Sonia calls out, as the three of you enter the abode.

It appears the exterior of the house was a clever facade, concealing the absolute fucking warzone contained within.

Children's toys are strewn about haphazardly throughout the rooms visible to you, several of which seem more suited to toddlers than teenagers.

The ceiling has clearly had slapdash repairs done on it several times, as if some heavy objects have crashed through from the story above.

Sonic.

And finally, the overwhelming stench of cigarette smoke permeates the air. Which would explain why every visible smoke detector sits busted on their mounts.

"Kids? You're home awfully late", calls out an unfamiliar, somewhat dignified female voice from deeper in the home, no doubt 'Mama' Hedgehog.

She was right, the Sun was already starting to set by the time you got here. It's gotta be close to 6PM by now.

"Yeah, we missed the bus and had to walk", replied Manic. "Sonic should be here soon", he added.

"You've missed it before, but were usually back an hour earlier than this", the voice remarked. "Dinner's almost ready, and--"

The matriach of the household rounds the corner from the room down the hallway ahead and catches you in her sights, interrupting her train of thought.

The hedgehog's mother bears a remarkable resemblance to her children, and is almost as tall as you are, coated in a shade of royal purple fuzz.

Her hair is a much darker shade than her fuzz, almost black in color, wild and unkempt, covers most of her head and runs down to the small of her back, leaving only her ears exposed.

She's wearing a violet long-sleeved sweatshirt, similar in color to her fuzz, and a blank beige apron over it, save for some indeterminate dried stains splattered on it.

Black, form-fitting mom jeans and sneakers complete the ensemble.

Her face is wearing an expression somewhere between 'shock' and 'anger'.

The bags under her eyes display a sort of exhaustion that wasn't going to go away with a single good night's rest.

Her mouth hangs slightly agape as she stares you down, before she finally regains her composure to ask, with the same dignified intonation as before:

"Who the FUCK are YOU?"

END CHAPTER 5

Chapter 6 - Dance With Death

Caught off guard by her incredibly defensive about-face from her motherly vibes earlier, you sputter and stammer, trying to explain the situation.

However, BMPS, fear, and anxiety make a horrible cocktail with the effect of hampering comprehensibility in your speech.

"How did you get in this house? What are you doing with my kids?!", the mother's grilling intensifies.

"Damn. I knew she'd throw a shitfit", Manic grumbles. Did nobody seriously let this woman know you were coming? Why would everyone just assume she'd let a complete stranger in her home?

"Mama, wait! He's our friend from school!", Sonia cries, trying to defuse the situation.

"Bullshit! He's a pedophile trying to snatch you up!", the deranged matriach concludes. You curse your ill-timed growth spurts causing you to tower over a crazy woman's kid's despite being the same age as them.

"CHARLES! GET THE GUN!", the woman shouts towards the interior of the house.

"What are you dealing with", an unknown, masculine voice rings out from somewhere in the abode, "Pedophile, or Flash Mob?"

"PEDOPHILE.", the mom responds.

"Got it! Be right there, Aleena!", the male voice echoes, before stomping can be heard approaching your position.

This went from zero to five thousand in a blink of an eye. You shoot a terrified look at the two siblings flanking you, trying to get them to come up with something, quick.

"Mom, seriously! This guy isn't some pervert, he's really just the new kid at school! He's the same age as us!", Manic desperately tries to convince his paranoid mother.

"Christ, these pedophiles get younger every year", Aleena, whose name you learned from the voice earlier, somehow surmises.

The loud steps finally reach the crazed woman's location, and "Charles" arrives on the scene.

Drunkenly staggering into view is the Ugly Bastard from the Japanese porn comics you partake in with glee, wearing a big bushy gray mustache and an acid-washed Modern Sonic costume.

You unfortunately don't have the time to reassess the obviously incorrect vision in front of you, as you're now staring down the barrel of a Smith & Wesson .45-70 BFR.

"Kids. Get over here, NOW", ordered the purple parental figure. The twin siblings hesitantly leave your side, causing you to lose your balance.

Now on all fours, you stare up at the Hedgehog family with a no-doubt pitiful look on your face, wordlessly pleading the woman with a gun drawn to show mercy.

"Any last words, before I blow your perverted brains out?", threatens Aleena, as she cocks the hammer of her revolver.

The adrenaline pumping through your blood finally busts through your vocal apprehension, allowing you to shout out one string of coherent words:

"I'M NOT A PERVERT, I JUST HAVE BMPS!!!!", your cry echoes through the humble abode. Aleena's death stare remains unflinching behind her gun.

"BMPS?", 'Charles' pipes up. "How could you possibly kidnap any sexy kids after suffering that?", he inquires. You don't know how to tackle the 'sexy kids' comment.

"He's new in town and was sat next to Bartleby in class", Sonia speaks, finding the words to explain the situation at last. Aleena finally breaks eye contact with you to look at her daughter.

"He managed to survive, but needs someone to watch over him until he fully recovers", the pink daughter pleads.

"Why can't his parents take care of this? He's THEIR kid", Mama Hedgehog asks, her weapon still pointed straight at you.

"His parents are too busy to keep watch 24/7", Manic interjects. "His dad's out killing people as a soldier, and his mom runs her own company", he continues the misunderstanding from earlier.

"PLEASE, mama. He needs our help", Sonia begs her mother, putting on the biggest, saddest, tear-filled doe eyes you've ever seen.

Aleena stares at her daughter's pitiful face for what feels like ages.

The silence is deafening. Sweat is dripping from every pore in your body.

Eventually, Aleena closes her eyes, and takes a long, slow, deep breath.

An incredibly loud bang suddenly erupts, piercing the silence. You let out the single most shrill, girlish wail you've ever emitted in your entire life.

Every part of your body is clenched in terror. Eyes, teeth, fists, anus, you've almost literally puckered yourself inside out from being startled.

It then occurs to you that you are unharmed. Tears start leaking out from your eyes from the relief as you nervously laugh to yourself.

You turn your attention to the source of the noise.

The front door to the house was kicked open by Sonic, standing behind you, pouting.

"Oh, there you are, sweetie", Aleena says to her blue son, as if she wasn't about to execute you in cold blood. "How was your day?", she inquires.

"It sucked, leave me alone", Sonic huffs, before slamming the front door shut and stomping towards the stairs.

"Oh for fuck's sake, what's wrong NOW?", an exasperated Aleena asks.

"He's just salty he lost the race home", Manic quipped.

"NO I'M NOT, SHUT UP!", the blue balloon furiously denies as he waddles up the nearby staircase, his every step met with a painful creak from the wood beneath his feet.

"I want a plate of chicken nuggets in my room in 5 minutes, or I'm crapping all over the bathtub again!", Sonic ordered.

"Sonic, we're having Mac and Cheese tonight", Aleena sternly declared to her bratty son. "It's almost ready right now"
"DID I FUCKING STUTTER, BITCH?!", the pudgy wretch snarled before disappearing out of view upstairs.

Aleena finally points her gun away from you as she buries her eyes in the palm of her hand, sucking air through her gritted teeth in a display of frustration.

"God damn it I don't have time to deal with this shit", she groans, before turning her attention back to her only daughter.

"...How long?", Aleena asks her, defeated.

"Just a few days, honest!", Sonia answers. "T-TWENTY TWO HOURS!", you frantically append, hoping the shorter timeframe would be more enticing.

Refusal after this absolute ordeal was unacceptable, no sense in being greedy.

"...Fine. But I don't have enough food prepared for him, so he's missing dinner", Aleena coldly agrees. Sonia's excitement spreads across her face.

The stress being lifted from your shoulders causes your arms to turn to jelly, making you simply flop onto the floor, like a puppet whose strings have been cut.

Aleena shoves the firearm she's holding into her front pocket before returning to the kitchen. Charles follows after, holding a can of beer he picked up during the confrontation.

Manic and Sonia return to your side to get you back on your feet, and lead you to the living room.

"Y-you guys go have dinner", you urge your comrades, as you're seated on the nearby couch. "I need to let my parents know I'm here, anyway, I'll be fine"

"Okay. We'll be back for you as soon as we're done!", Sonia confirms. "Take it easy, Anon", Manic says, patting your back as he bids farewell.

The two then leave the room, disappearing further into their home to enjoy their meal. You hear them indistinctly chatting through the walls.

You bury your face in your hands, heavily panting while wiping away the excessive amount of sweat pooled up over this agonizing event.

You've narrowly escaped death two different times today.

So much for a mundane first day of school.

It occurs to you that your parents most likely are completely unaware of your current condition, or that you need to be supervised at all.

You have no idea how you're going to word the message. They're probably freaking out right now, wondering where you even are.

No, wait, that's how normal parents would feel about this. YOUR parents hardly even know you exist.

Instead of struggling with getting the details right, waiting endlessly for a response, and potentially getting shot down for another idea far too late, you decide to keep things simple.

You pull out your phone, and send a single group text to both your mother and father with a plain, vague message:

staying at a friends house tonight
be home tomorrow
love you

Send.
It's 5:57 PM right now.
Let's see how long it'll be before one of them gets back to you.

As you put your phone away, a nearby door bursts open from further into the house, and Aleena comes rushing around the corner with a paper plate in hand, steam rising from it.

"SONIC, I SWEAR TO GOD, IF YOU'RE CRAPPING ANYWHERE OUTSIDE OF THE TOILET UP THERE, I'M SHOVING THESE PIPING-HOT DINO NUGGIES STRAIGHT UP YOUR BLUEBERRY ASSHOLE", Aleena shouts as she races upstairs.

You have a feeling this wild night's only just begun.

END CHAPTER 6

Chapter 7 - Dinner and a Show

Ten minutes have passed since everyone else went to have their dinner. Sonic toddled downstairs and rejoined his family to have his share a little bit after the rest.

You really hope he was bluffing with that whole 'bathtub crapping' ultimatum he issued earlier.

Considering how quick Aleena had his nuggets ready, however, it's clear she had experienced something like that first-hand before.

You've been sitting silently in the Hedgehog's living room, taking in your surroundings, but your vantage point doesn't yield much information about the house as a whole.

From what you've seen since you entered, the first floor is laid out something like this:

From the front door, the entryway splits off into two areas. On the right is the living room, where you're currently seated.

To the left is a sort of waiting area, with a staircase along the far left wall leading upstairs. You found out there's an old grandfather clock over there a few minutes ago, when it went off at 6 PM.

A hallway divides the two areas, leading further into the house, where, behind a swinging door, rests the kitchen or dining area, you assume.

It's where the others disappeared in order to eat, you feel like that's a safe bet.

Upstairs is probably where the bedrooms are, as Sonic demonstrated earlier during his tantrum upon his return.

Beyond that, the house is still an enigma, and it's likely to stay that way. Not only has BMPS drastically reduced your ambulatory functions, you REALLY don't want to piss Aleena off by overstepping your boundaries.

You lean back in the aged brown leather couch you sit in. You're positioned in the left-hand side of it, cradled up against the arm.

Cracks have formed all across it from age and lack of upkeep. It's missing a few buttons in the upholstery. It also reeks of years' worth of flatulence and possibly worse.

And, most noticeably, it's sagging horribly in the center.

But right now, it's the comfiest seat in the world. After the absolute hellish day you've gone through, just sitting down with nothing to worry about killing you is liberating.

You close your eyes and just enjoy the tranquility.

The muffled chatter of the hedgehog family amidst the clatter of their flatware is all that reverberates through the house.

You take a deep, calming breath.

In through your nose. Ignore the stink of ashtrays and farts.

Hold for a few seconds.

And release.

Peace.

A horrid gurgling noise breaks through the calm, snapping you out of your trance. You frantically look around at what could possibly be emitting such a racket.

Nothing nearby seems to fit the sound emission, though. It's only when the noise occurs a second time that you realize what's going on. It's your stomach growling.

...When was the last time you ate?

You were passed out for the duration of school, so you didn't eat lunch there. You didn't even stop for a snack of any sort.

Oh Christ, all you've had was that crappy frozen waffle 12 hours ago, you're fucking starving.

And Aleena said you're not getting any of their dinner tonight.

You start panicking internally. This BMPS shit is no joke, the last thing you want to do is face it while malnourished.

But what can you do? Order something? You fish for your wallet to see how much money you've got on you.

A single picture of George Washington stares back at you from your billfold. A whole dollar. You honestly wish you had nothing instead, at least that'd be funny, in a cosmic sense. Maybe a little moth would fly out.

You feel completely lost, and your stomach sounds like it's eating itself. You slump forward in your seat, sulking about your newfound rotten luck.

Suddenly, a small bowl of macaroni and cheese is shoved into your field of view under your nose.

"Hey, Anon", said Sonia, just outside of your vision. "I made you a bowl in secret while mom was busy getting Sonic his chicken nuggets"

You peel your gaze away from the meal to give a teary look at your pink savior. She winks and shines her trademark smile at you in return.

You take the bowl, filled with what looks like the most appetizing meal ever in this moment, without saying anything.

Not because you aren't thankful, but because no words could properly express your gratitude.

You wouldn't say you're a big fan of Mac & Cheese in the first place. There's barely anything nutritious about it.

The cheese sauce is kinda gritty and tastes weird. Kraft fucked up their recipe ages ago and haven't gotten it right since.

But you don't care.

You simply fucking demolish the food in front of you. You didn't even bother taking the fork Sonia had in her other hand.

After devouring the last of the noodles and slurping the last remnants of sauce stuck to the bowl, you wipe your face with your sleeve and hand the empty bowl back to your ally.

But not before uttering a simple "Thanks" as you gasp for air after the rather barbaric display.

Sonia gives a quick nod, and rushes back to the kitchen, no doubt to hide the evidence of your transgression.

Shortly afterwards, the Hedgehogs all pour out of the kitchen, save for Aleena, who is most likely on clean-up duty. This includes Charles, to whom you haven't properly introduced yourself.

Charles is carrying some sort of folding chair in his left arm, and clutching a can of Bud Light in his right. He moves to the open space next to where you're sitting on the couch and unfolds the chair without setting down his beer.

An impressive feat.

"You're gonna wanna move over here", Charles says to you curtly. You don't understand, did you offend him or something?

Maybe this is how they treat all their guests.

Well, best to comply. You don't want a repeat of the one-way Mexican standoff from earlier.

You struggle to lift yourself off the sofa, before awkwardly finagling your way to the significantly less comfy rusted steel chair.

Sonia immediately takes your previous spot, Manic takes the opposite end, and Sonic takes up a massive portion of the middle. His weight

causes the two ends of the sofa to raise off the ground, slightly.
This would explain the sagging.
Charles takes his seat in the recliner on the opposite end of the sofa from you, sipping his beer before letting out a belch. He then grabs a remote off the nearby table and turns on the TV to some outdated Hollywood schlock.

Now that you have a moment to look closely at the newest member of the hedgehog family, you realize he looks almost exactly the same as Sonic.
The few key differences are he's closer to you in height, slightly less heavy-set (most likely just distributed better due to his size), sports a bushy, silver-colored mustache, upturned at the edges, and his fur is a significantly more pale shade of blue, almost gray in some spots. Charles even wears his 'hair' in the same fashion as Sonic, and has the same style of footwear. You ponder who's copying whom in their fashion sense.

You decide now is as good a time as any to introduce yourself to him.
"Um, thank you, sir", you say after clearing your throat. "My name's Anon, by the way. Uh, nice to meet you."
"Yeah, I heard all about it from those two over there a little bit ago", the mustachioed hedgehog replies, motioning towards the kids on the couch. "Call me 'Uncle Chuck'", he introduces himself.
'Uncle' Chuck? That's a little too uncomfortable for you. Though, truth be told, you don't even remember if your parents had any brothers or sisters.
If they did, you haven't been invited to any of the family reunions.

"So," Chuck says, cutting off your internal monologue regarding your dysfunctional family, "Manic tells me your dad's a military man."
That's about the closest anyone's come to being correct regarding your father's job today. It's still off, but at least it's not him being in Black Ops.
"I think that's pretty cool", Chuck compliments, before returning to nursing his light beer.
"Yeah!", interrupts Sonic. "I mean, killing people and being called a hero is every boy's dream!"
Okay, you've had enough of this idiotic misunderstanding. You had to clean up this mess, NOW.

"Oh, for Pete's sake, my dad hasn't killed anybody!", you shout in frustration. You know it will disappoint them, but it's better they know the truth before it snowballs into something worse.
The reaction you get, however, isn't quite what you expected would happen. Instead of disappointment, it's more akin to indignation.
"WHAT?!", bellows Manic. "The only reason I helped your gay ass was because I wanted to hear stories about how your dad killed people!", he griped.
Taken aback by the unexpected backlash, you merely utter a thoughtless 'uhh'.
"Yeah, you're telling me we're helping a LIAR recover from BMPS?!", Sonic adds.
"Not if I have anything to say about it!", Chuck chimes in. He crushes his now empty beer can and tosses it aside to reach down beside his recliner for something.
The distinct jingle of a metal buckle heralds the introduction of a thick leather belt the eldest hedgehog produces as he returns to an upright position.

Your eyes quickly pass over the room to assess the situation.
Chuck is rising to his feet, belt in hand.
Manic is cracking his knuckles as he gives you the stink eye.
Sonic points at your face menacingly before gesturing towards his ass.
Jason Statham grunts in british-flavored emphysema on the TV screen before unloading a hail of bullets on some fool.
Sonia...has been staring at you this entire time with her iconic adorable smile. She seems completely oblivious to what's happening around her.

You had to think, FAST. How could you possibly defuse this ticking timebomb in mere seconds?
They glorify mindless violence under a paper-thin veil of patriotism.
Just like Call of D--
...THAT'S IT!!

"W-WAI-WAI-WAI-WAAAAIT!", you desperately cry out as the male hedgehogs descend upon you.
They stop their advance, but keep their brows furrowed. You have the floor, but you better get this in one shot.
"U-uhm, th-the reason my dad hasn't k-killed anybody yet", you stammer, your voice palpable with fear. "Is because, uh..."
You trail off as your mind races, urgently attempting to come up with a believable explanation. Finally, you nut up and say the only thing that comes to mind.

"b-because people keep stealing his kills?"

Anon, you're a fucking idiot.
There is absolutely no way in hell that anyone's going to--
"KILLSNAKES.", Manic grunts through gritted teeth, clenching his hand into a fist in front of him.
"There's nothing worse than someone else stealing a kill you had claimed", Chuck solemnly declares. "Your father has my condolences."
"Yeah, the only thing worse than a killsnake is a screenlooker", Sonic pipes up. "MANIC.", he then loudly adds, shooting an accusatory glare to his green twin.
"Bro, don't EVEN go there", the emerald-hued hedgehog angrily snaps back. "You're worse about screen-looking than me!"

The twin males continue bickering as Chuck leaves the room, presumably to get another beer.

It's official: You're now part of the lie.

Once again, you sigh in relief. This fucking day has to have aged you at least ten years. As you slump forward in your folding chair, catching your breath, you feel a pair of eyes burning into your skull. You look up to see Sonia is STILL gazing at you, not once moving from the position she was in since she took your spot.

"What?", you finally ask the rose-colored hedgehog sister. Instead of answering you, Sonia licks her thumb and rubs it on your cheek.

"You missed a spot", she states as you shoot her a flustered look. You then avert your eyes as your face turns a shade of crimson.

END CHAPTER 7

Chapter 8 - Slumber Party

For a while, things seemed to have ultimately calmed down. The Hedgehog boys' bickering led them to challenge each other to playing some milsim First-person Shooter game you weren't familiar with. The matches eventually devolved into the two of them trying to 360 quickscope each other, with neither one succeeding for forty minutes straight.

Chuck had downed at least 5 cans of Bud Light at this point, drunkenly urging the twin boys on to 'rip each other a new asshole'. Aleena, having removed her apron since dinnertime, simply watched on from the hallway, taking drags off her Marlboro Reds. She kept her eyes on you like a hawk. At one point, Sonia had to escort you to the first floor bathroom, because you realized you hadn't gone all day. She attempted to join you inside, but Aleena forced her to leave you alone to fend for yourself at that point.

Truth be told, even though you've narrowly cheated death more than once in this house, it was actually starting to feel somewhat cozy to you. Maybe it was a stupid idea, considering how fucking nuts some of the family was, but you actually felt like you could finally relax.

Eventually, you hear the old grandfather clock herald the arrival of 9 o'clock.

"Alright, kids", Aleena finally spoke, after puffing one last drag from her cigarette. "Time for bed." Upon hearing those words, the brothers groan in disappointment, having failed to successfully perform their stunt before their time ran out. You struggle to rise to your feet from your rusted throne. Though you're slightly more stable on your legs than you were when you first rejoined the world of the living, you still require support to actually stand and walk. However, as Sonia's about to help you once more, Aleena actually jumps in to take her place.

"Sonia, sweetie, you've done enough for today", the hedgehog mother says. "You get ready for bed, I'll handle this" Aleena then takes your left arm over her shoulder, bringing you in close. The pungent stench of tobacco smoke emanates off her.

The lady of the house, being quite a bit older and taller than her daughter, treats your weight as much less of a burden, letting you move faster. Sonia and Manic race upstairs easily, Sonic barely scrapes through as his fat rolls catch on every baluster of the handrail, and you and Aleena bring up the rear. Once upstairs, you finally get a view of the layout therein. It's actually fairly simple:

After climbing the staircase, you follow along a balcony towards the right-hand side of the house, becoming a hallway that eventually turns left to head deeper inside. Along the walkway are several doors on the left and right sides. The first door on your left is actually visible from the waiting room, but everyone seems to ignore it for now, so you have no clue what lies behind it. The first door on your right is when the balcony becomes a full hallway. Again, no one enters it, so it remains a mystery. The next door on your right, however, is where you see Sonic waddle into, right before the hallway makes a turn. The light inside was already on as he did so, which means it's probably where one of the other kids entered as well. Aleena leads you to the lit room the hedgehog siblings entered, and you're predictably greeted by a bedroom.

Inside sat two distinct beds. One, on the right side of the room, sat a huge, extremely comfy looking queen-sized bed, adorned with pink, frilly sheets and a massive, ornate headboard. On the left side of the room sat a hopelessly dilapidated bunk bed, with the bed's frames bowing to a horrifying degree from no doubt years of duress under an impossible amount of weight. You could take a guess at whose bed belonged to whom. Near the bunk bed, along the left wall, close to the bottom-left corner of the room, a sole window peers out over the street corner. The light of the street lamp shines dimly outside, peeking through the drawn curtains. Centered between the two beds is a nightstand of some sort placed against the wall, with a digital alarm clock on it. 9:05 it currently reads.

As you look around your lodgings for the night, you spot Sonia digging through a dresser stowed in the lower-right corner of the room, colored in a disgustingly saccharine shade of cotton candy pink, before pulling out a set of pajamas and leaving the room. Your eyes follow her as she enters the door closest to the stairs which you passed earlier. You then spot one last room at the end of the hallway.

Manic has tossed his vest and shoes off and is fitting himself into a baby-blue onesie that still somehow fits him. Sonic sheds his shoes in kind and dons a pink one matching his brother, though his blue flab is clearly peeking through several spots in the seams.

Aleena, clearly having enough of your burden, leans you up against a nearby wall and lets out a sigh of relief. As you slide to the floor helplessly, you meekly utter "thanks". The purple matron places her hands on her hips and stretches her back, some oddly satisfying pops and crackles being heard as she slowly swivels her head from side to side.

Sonia then returns to the room, having changed her clothes to a pale pink silk pajama outfit with white trimmings. The legs seem a bit long, as they drag somewhat along the ground. With the siblings reunited, Aleena begins laying out the plan for everyone. "Alright, Manic, you're giving up your bunk tonight for Anon", she orders. Manic's indignation flares up immediately. "Aw, WHAT?!", the green hedgehog cries in disbelief. "Why do I have to give up MY bed?!" "Because I refuse to have Sonia sleep in your farts, and Sonic sleeping in your bunk would completely destroy the frame", Aleena responds. She actually thought this out decently enough. "This fucking blows!", Manic loudly whines. "He could have just slept on the couch and let Uncle Chuck watch him!" "You know as well as I do that Uncle Chuck legally isn't allowed to be alone near sleeping underaged boys", Aleena retorts. You REALLY hope there's another explanation to that response than what you're thinking of at this moment.

"Come on, baby bro", Sonic says to the grassy-headed hedgehog, as he places his hand on Manic's shoulder. "We haven't slept in the same bunk in ages. This'll be a great way to bond as brothers!" "Ha ha, well when you put it that way, bro,", Manic chuckles, as he turns to face his brother. "I guess I can put up with it for one night" The two hedgehog boys embrace each other in a strangely intimate way, tugging at each other's collars. The odd display makes you uncomfortable, causing you to look away. Sonia squints at the two with a look of suspicion on her face.

"Right, then, Anon, time to get into Manic's bunk", Aleena commands, as she bends down to lift you by your arm.

Oh shit. How the hell are you going to climb a ladder when your limbs are completely paralyzed? This fucking day just will not let up. Finally rising to your feet, you're led over to the bunk bed's ladder, where you clutch one of the rungs as if your life depended on it.

You huff and puff, trying to internally hype yourself up for the task in front of you. You can do this. If you can't do this, you're going to be a cripple all your life. Okay. Moment of truth. You lift your right leg with all your might to try and set your foot on the lowest rung. It catches underneath the rung. You pull your foot back to try to clear it. You bump your foot against it. Almost there. Just a little bit more. You just need to get your toes over it. Your perspiration reaches its peak with the strain you're putting yourself through. COME ON! JUST... ONE... MORE... INCH!

Your right foot finally slides atop the bottom rung. You did it. Looking at your marvelous achievement, you start to laugh triumphantly. You CAN come back from this debilitating disease. For once, things seem to be going your way.

"Oh for fuck's sake, we'll be here all night", Aleena exasperatedly groans, rolling her eyes. She then marches towards you and grabs you by the back of your collar and waistband. She then launches you upwards towards the upper berth. Your arms flail helplessly through the air before you land on the railing of the bed with your abdomen. You sharply let out a pained groan. She's surprisingly strong when agitated. Noted.

As you weakly worm the rest of your body into the bed, you come across an unsightly scene. Manic's mattress has a massive hole in it. As in, you can actually clearly see down into Sonic's bunk. You could stick your whole head through it

with room to spare.
From the location of the pillows, and calculating Manic's size, the hole is precisely where Manic's asscheeks would rest, so long as he's laying on his back.
You figured you'd be stuck with less-than-ideal sleeping conditions, but this is just ludicrous.

You eventually manage to crawl your head into the pillows. It seems every cushion in this house reeks of farts. This bed, the pillows, the couch downstairs, all of them and probably more act as prisons for flatulence.
Well, whatever. Any place to lay your head down seems like a heavenly cloud at this point.
The two hedgehog boys cling to each other tightly in the bunk below you, and Sonia has crawled into her much more massive and well-made bed.

With everyone tucked in for the night, Aleena turns off the light to the room.
"Good night, boys", she says to your side of the room. "Night, mom", responds the twins below you.
"Good night, Sonia", Aleena then says to her daughter on the other side of the room. You may be mistaken, but her voice had a much more sultry tone to it this time.
"Night, Mama", Sonia innocently replies.

Before the mother can leave the room, a thought occurs to you, and you pipe up.
"Um, wait a sec. Isn't someone supposed to keep an eye on me?", you ask, concerned for your safety.
"...Don't be a bitch, Anon", Aleena coldly replies to you. "Just focus on not dying", she says, before closing the door behind her and walking down the hall.

It suddenly occurs to you that you probably could have just gone to a proper hospital to have them take care of you instead. Why the hell did you come here?

You try to ignore the feelings of dread and doom welling up within you and decide to try and sleep through it. Even if someone watches you, there's still every chance you'll just die in your sleep.
You silently pray to whatever deity will listen to allow you to survive the night, before gently closing your eyes.

You focus on your breathing getting slower. More relaxed.
You WILL wake up tomorrow. You WILL be okay. You WILL get through this.
With these thoughts repeating in your head, you finally drift off to sleep.

...

...

...you felt something just now.

...it's tugging your leg. You can barely feel it, but there's definitely something there right now.

You groggily open your eyes to see what's causing the problem. Manic has climbed the bed's ladder and is pulling at your leg, trying to drag it out of the bed.
"Manic, what the fuck are you doing", you ask, dazed. You glance down towards the alarm clock towards the middle of the room. It's 11:08.
"I changed my mind. I want my bed back", he responds.
"W-Why?", you ask, completely confused by his heartless action.
"Sonic crapped himself in his sleep again. I'm not dealing with that shit", the viridian menace explains as he continues trying to pull your limp legs out of the bunk.
"Manic", you plead, "I will SHARE the bed with you. PLEASE don't do this"
"Or else what?", he retorts mockingly. "You gonna have your dad come here and have someone ELSE kill me?"

Completely dumbfounded by Manic's change of heart from the friendly boy who helped limp you to his house earlier this afternoon, you lay in stunned silence.
He then grabs you by your shirt and starts to pull. You feebly try to resist, but it's no use, your arms and legs won't respond in any meaningful way.
Your shoulders graze over the railing of the bed, and you're sent plummeting to the floor below, screaming all the way down before landing in a resounding THUD.
As you lay writhing in pain, Manic scrambles into his bunk, and, just as you surmised earlier, leaves his asscheeks visible through the hole in his mattress.

"KIDS!", Aleena screams through the walls. "STOP HORSING AROUND IN THERE AND GO TO FUCKING BED!"
You're in too much pain to vocalize anything more than a weak moan.
As you lay helplessly on the ground, tears of pain and frustration start to well up in your eyes.
Fucking WHY?
WHY WILL THIS DAY NOT END?!
Unable to even pound the floor in vexation, you simply start sobbing. This has been the worst day of your life.
Can something good happen for ONCE today?!

"Anon?", the single most welcome voice you've heard today quietly rings out from the darkness.

You open your tear-filled eyes and see Sonia standing over you.
"What happened?", she whispers, concerned.
"...Your brother's a dick", you flatly reply.

"Manic!", Sonia angrily hisses towards the top bunk. Manic replies by simply waving his middle finger at her before returning to sleep.
"Come on, Anon", she sighs as she tries to bring you to your feet once more. As you clamber to a standing position, you catch exactly what happened to cause Manic to abandon Sonic's bunk.
Manic wasn't joking about Sonic shitting his bed, it looks like a can of Hormel chili fucking exploded from within his asshole. The sight and smell cause you to gag in your throat a bit.
You understand why Manic didn't want to sleep in that literal shit. That doesn't justify him throwing you out, but it does explain it.

After eventually being stood upright by Sonia, the two of you limp towards her bed, where she sets you down.
"You can stay with me tonight", Sonia kindly offers. You feel like you're gonna cry again, but from joy.
Sonia climbs into her bed from the other side as you straighten yourself out on it. You feel like you could fall into a coma just laying on this mattress.

...Maybe don't think that when you're struggling with a disease with a 98% mortality rate.

When you get into the position you're most comfortable in, Sonia tosses the covers up over the two of you.
Cozy, and exhausted, you're finally ready to let the sandman take his hold of you.
Just as you feel your eyelids becoming heavy, however, a strange sensation assaults your midsection, setting off alerts in your head.
A squeezing sensation.
Alarmed, you look down at the source.

Sonia is hugging you tightly on your left side.

"...What are you doing, Sonia", you ask in a hushed voice.
"If I sleep with you like this, I can hear your heartbeat and breathing", she tacitly explains. "Now I can monitor you AND get some sleep!"
While that makes sense, any sense of comfort you had has been completely overwritten with bewilderment.
Now you can properly assess exactly what the fuck is going on right now.

You're in bed with a cute, sweet girl hugging you, hoping you don't die.

aaaaaaaaaAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
HOW DID THIS HAPPEN TO YOU OF ALL PEOPLE?

You lay in the pink bed, eyes wide open, as you struggle to comprehend the feelings swirling about in your skull.
You keep your arms as far from Sonia as possible, to avoid any potential inappropriate touching and fondling.
She's nestled up tightly against you. You're pretty sure you can feel her modest breasts pressed against your ribs.

Exhaustion finally begins to grip you after almost an hour like this. You're about to fall asleep, accepting this day is finished in the single least expected way possible.
Then, a buzzing comes from your pants.
Fishing your phone from your pocket, you see a new text message has arrived. Who the fuck is texting you at this hour? Or at all?
Oh, wait, shit, it's probably one of your parents. No doubt they finally received word from their only son for the first time today and are worried sick. Let's see what this text has to say.

You (5:57):
staying at a friends house tonight
be home tomorrow
love you

Mom (11:56):
K

...
You stare dead-eyed at your phone's screen until it fades into sleep mode.

Your last thought before passing out is wondering whose family between yours and the Hedgehogs is more fucked up.

END CHAPTER 8

Chapter 9 - The Long Walk

The most comfortable sleep you've had in ages is interrupted by an unusually catchy j-pop song blaring from incredibly cheap and shitty speakers, making the vocals even more unintelligible.

Your eyes peel open to try and ascertain the source of the noise. It's the alarm clock on the nightstand. It reads 6:55. The dawn's daylight is peeking through a nearby window into the bedroom you fell asleep in last night. You survived, somehow.

You rub your eyes, trying to clear the crusty buildup, as the Hedgehog siblings rouse from their slumbers. Sonia stretches her back and arms before shaking her head back and forth, causing her hair to fall into the same shape it was yesterday. Manic yawns loudly before scratching his ass as he sits up with a drowsy look on his face. Sonic rolls over into the mess he made last night. "O-Oh no, not again", the fat blue bastard whines, covered in his own dookie.

Manic, the green bunghole, climbs down from the bunk he stole from you and shuts off the clock's alarm, and grabs a shirt and pants he finds on the floor. His sister has left her bed to fish another outfit from her pastel nightmare dresser, and his brother has wriggled his way out of his shit-stained mattress on the lower bunk, and begins toddling off towards the hallway, hopefully to the shower.

You inch yourself to the edge of the bed, pondering how much progress your nerves have made in recovering. Taking a deep breath, you attempt to stand on your own two feet. And you succeed. You're a little shaky, but you don't feel like you're going to collapse immediately. Hell yeah. Now comes the next part: Walking. You try to raise your right foot to move it forward. The incredible amount of numb tingling warns you that you're already pushing too hard at this point, but you actually manage to put one foot in front of the other. You're on fucking fire this morning. Almost literally, it feels like. You try once more with your left foot this time. Yet another success, though the numbness still remains, it's much more tolerable than yesterday.

"Hey, guys, look! I'm walking!", you exclaim excitedly. "Cool beans, Anon", Manic says, acting as if he wasn't a complete asshole last night. "Maybe I can actually go to school like this", you wonder out loud.

Sonia approaches you with her chosen outfit for the day under one of her arms, and pokes a single finger into your solar plexus. With an embarrassingly low amount of force, she pushes you back until you lose balance and fall on your ass. "Nnnnnnope, sorry, Anon", Sonia cheekily says, rebuking your optimism. "Nurse's orders: No school for another 9 hours" "Why would you even WANT to go to school, anyway?", Manic asks, having changed into his outfit, a dirty white wife-beater and loose black shorts. "Homework sucks", he adds with absolutely no argument from you.

"So, wait, if you guys are all going to school, who's going to help me?", you ask, as if you didn't already know the answer. "Why, Mama, of course!", Sonia cheerily responds. Oh, goody.

As you roll your eyes, you spot a certain purple someone waiting in the doorway of the bedroom. Aleena, wearing a baggy plain white t-shirt and cadet blue sweat pants, leans against the door frame, with a coffee mug in hand, steam rising from the insides of it. The mug has '#1 Mom' printed on it. She stares coldly at you as she silently brings the mug to her lips.

Oh.
GOODY.

"Kids, breakfast is ready", Aleena says to her progeny, maintaining eye contact with you. "Alright, Anon, we gotta get ready to go!", Sonia tells you in her usual spritely way, completely oblivious to the dread building within you. "Have fun here with mom, while we go to learn, ugh, MATH", Manic grunts as he squeezes by his mother. Sonia then follows suit with her day's outfit in tow, leaving you still on the floor.

With the rest of the hedgehogs gone, your attention returns to Aleena, still in her same position, holding her mug with the ironic saying on it. You attempt to force yourself off the floor, but your legs still don't have the strength to push you up from your current position. You lean forward to try and get a better angle, but nothing works. After a few more failed tries, you meekly look up at the amethyst matron with pleading eyes, holding out your hand. "A little help, please?", you timidly ask. Aleena's steely gaze is transfixed upon you for a few more moments, then, as she sips on her coffee once more, she simply walks down the hall as if she didn't see you.

OH.
GOODY FUCKING GUMDROPS.
This day was going to be a fucking GAS, you could already tell.

You twist your hips to flop your belly on the floor, and crawl to Sonia's bed, the nearest stable thing to help you pull yourself to your feet. Maybe it was the realization that you weren't going to get shit for help today, but you find yourself actually managing to rise to a standing position surprisingly quickly. The numbness that had spread to your limbs yesterday was slowly fading, leaving a significantly more painful burning, stinging sensation, but at least it was any sensation at all. If you've ever tried walking on a leg that's fallen asleep, this was a very similar feeling, only worse, as it was like all your extremities had fallen

asleep all at once.

After putting your self in a standing position, hunched over the bed, using it as support, you attempt to worm your way towards the nearest wall.

Pins and needles assault your every step. This tingling would have driven you mad if you had tried to go to school today.

You press up against the wall furthest from the exit, and begin to slowly meander your way around the perimeter of the room, hoping your paralyzed limbs acclimate to moving before too long.

By the time you've make it to the bunk bed, you've begun sweating excessively. You lean against the ladder, eyeballing the feces-covered sheets on the lower bunk, as you catch your breath.

The stench emanating from it is unmerciful. How the hell did Dino Nuggies and Mac & Cheese turn into that SLURRY?

After regaining your stamina, if only slightly, you continue your limping around the perimeter, clutching and pawing at any surface along the way to keep you from falling.

You make it almost halfway around the left-hand side of the room, and you come across the window. You peer out at the sea of nearly identical homes in the neighborhood.

You spot a couple of other children leaving their homes, no doubt heading to school, like the Hedgehogs will be in moments.

Normally, you loathe going to school. Homework, social anxiety, bullies, possible molestation, forced conformity, you hate all of it.

But right now, there's no place you'd rather be going. At least it would feel normal.

Instead, you're stuck in an almost complete stranger's home as a cripple, being "cared" for by someone who clearly doesn't like, trust, or even know you.

Someone who almost blew your brains out with a fucking .45.

That being said, you WERE trespassing in her home without her permission. It's not like she was COMPLETELY in the wrong.

No, wait, she thought you were a pedophile trying to nab her kids. Even though you're the same age as them. She's absolutely in the wrong.

Maybe you won't tell Aleena about Sonic's crapped sheets. It'd serve her right.

...Nah, she did let you stay here. And you got to sleep with Sonia because of that.

...Don't word it like that.

"Bye, kids", you hear, muffled, coming from below you. "Have fun at school!"

Your eyes drift down towards the street corner. Aleena's waving her kids off as they leave to catch the bus.

"Bye, Mama!", Sonia replies, as she excitedly skips off ahead of her two brothers. Sonic and Manic are shuffling along with much less vigor.

"Take good care of Anon!", the pink daughter tells her mother. "Oh, don't worry about him", the purple mother responds. "He's in GREAT hands", she continues, ominously.

You glance over at the alarm clock once more. 7:15, it reads. You've been crawling around this room for a quarter of an hour?

Damn you, time dilation.

You return your attention back to the departing Hedgehog siblings.

You wave your left arm, hoping to catch their attention to see them off, but they all continue down the block before turning out of view.

Seems they didn't notice you. You let out a sigh as you hang your head for a moment.

After the disappointment subsides, you continue your journey around the bedroom, until finally making it to the door.

You clutch the door frame and, with wobbly knees, exit into the hallway.

With no windows and the lights turned off, the hallway is surprisingly dark. Fortunately, the light from the front rooms shine the way for you.

You stagger weakly down the hall, leaning against the walls as you pass the doors lining the way.

You stub your toe on a small drawer along the way. The pain shoots through your leg like someone blew it off with a grenade.

"MOTHERFUC--OW!!!", you shout with a strained voice.

Wait.

You FELT that.

God damn, you're a trooper, getting the feeling back in your feet. You feel proud over your grand achievement of bumping into shit like a clumsy oaf.

With pride overwriting your agony, you sidle by the drawer and eventually stumble your way into the light ahead of you, onto the balcony of the waiting room.

As you lean on the railing overlooking the room, the realization of what the next obstacle you're about to face is dawns on you.

Every cripple's natural enemy.

STAIRS.

Your pride from earlier completely obliterated by your newfound dread, your legs begin to feel like lead weights once more.

Still, you soldier ahead towards the danger. You can't stay up here all your life. You'll have to pee eventually and you're NOT about to piss your pants in Sonia's home.

As you come to the top post of the stairwell, your dread has become exacerbated. That's a lot of fucking stairs for you to descend.

Maaaaaybe peeing your pants here is actually within the realm of possibility.

Nervously, you grip the nearby post with all your might as you push your left foot forward into the air above the first step before you.

You then gently, GENTLY lower your foot onto it.
Okay. Halfway there. Now the right foot.
You hesitantly start sliding your right foot towards the edge of the top step. Then, placing all your weight on your left foot, you swing your right ahead slightly, causing it to drop onto the step your left foot rests on.

You did it! One down...
uhm...
Oh fuck, like, TWENTY to go. Uuuuugh.

You repeat the agonizingly slow process several times, continuing your descent downwards.
During this snail-paced schlepp, you noticed the handrail is actually somewhat unstable. It wobbles out of place when enough weight is put on it.
God fucking damn it Sonic, why are you so fucking fat?

Stowing your fear and frustration, you keep up your pace, declining further down towards the waiting room.
After what feels like hours of anxiety and apprehension, you finally make it to the bottom landing. Just two more steps to go, and you'll be free from your upstairs prison.
Wheelchairs can suck it, you've conquered the apex predator of the disabled.
Proudly, you swing your left foot forward. Fuck it. You'll skip a step. You've got this.

As your left foot comes down, your right leg buckles. You most certainly DON'T got this.
With your right leg giving up the ghost, your left leg also gives way to the sudden, massive shift in weight.
Your body drops like a sack of potatoes, ending with you landing squarely on your face, right leg in the air.

You really don't have anyone else to blame for this. You got overconfident and ate shit because of it. That frustration and pain is all YOUR fault.
...Fuck that. Gravity's the REAL fucker in this scenario.
You lift your face off the floor, groaning in pain, when suddenly, the grandfather clock goes off.
Wait, it's seriously 8:00 already? Going downstairs from the bedroom, a task that would have taken anyone else less than a minute, took you a full fucking HOUR?!
...You're starting to lose hope that you'll ever be back to full functionality of your limbs before the school year's over. You might be like this forever.

NO. God damn it, you ARE getting better. This is just a minor setback. You'll be running after the bus by tomorrow, just fucking wait and see.
You twist your body and roll over onto your back. Huffing and puffing, you then sit up straight, and begin pushing against the floor with your hands to raise your butt off the ground.
For some reason, your arms are functioning much better than your legs. Maybe their shorter length allowed them to recover from the nerve damage faster?
Whatever the case, your plan is working. Your lower half is raising up slightly, giving you just enough leverage to swing your feet beneath your ass.

You're in a very similar position to the one after Sonia knocked you down this morning. But this time...
THIS TIME. YOU'RE GETTING THE FUCK UP.
You force as much feeling into your legs as you possibly can, and with every ounce of energy you have, you push and strain to rise up off the floor.
By some miracle, through sheer willpower, you start to rise. You grip the nearby baluster for added stability, but you can feel your legs are finally starting to work.
With one last warcry, you reach a full standing position.

No support.
No one else helping you.
You're drenched in your own sweat, but you're standing on your own two feet.
In that span of a single hour, you managed to improve this much.
You feel like you could take on the world right now.

"Could you keep it down over there?", a dignified, familiar voice calls out from the living room.
The wind taken out of your sails, you desperately stumble to the nearest wall to hug, before your legs give out once more.
Stabilized, you begin your journey anew, heading in the direction of Aleena's voice.
You pass by the front door, and catch a glimpse of where the violet maiden is.

She's currently seated where you (and subsequently Sonia) were last night, on the left side of the couch.
She has exchanged her coffee mug for a wine glass, filled with a red substance.
The big box of wine on the table tells you exactly what the substance is.

END CHAPTER 9

Chapter 10 - Queen of a Dead World

Shakily entering the living room, you take a seat on the recliner near the opposite end of the couch Aleena's sitting on. You sink into the unusually thick cushions. A pungent whiff of methane assaults you as it's freed from the confines of the chair. As you're catching your breath from your pain-stakingly long trek, you observe the matron's surroundings and behavior.

The best way to describe Aleena's posture is 'lounging'. She has both feet on the couch, almost like she's riding it side-saddle. Her right leg is slightly more extended towards the center of the sofa.

In front of her, on the table, is an open pack of Marlboro Red cigarettes, a neon pink Bic lighter, red glass ashtray with several cigarette butts already in it, and a huge box of Walmart-brand red wine.

"Compare to Pinot Grige!" is printed on it proudly.

Something tells you that's the last thing they should have put on that box.

Aleena is staring ahead towards the TV, but it's not even on. You see the reflection of both of you on the screen instead. You can't see a hint of emotion from Aleena at all.

You were planning on bitching out the neglectful mother for just abandoning you when you really could have used help, but the tension in the air is so thick, any anger you had is gone.

Instead, all you feel is anxiety. Like you should apologize just for bothering her. Or thank her for being so generous to let you into her home.

You struggle to find the words you want to say first. The silence is maddening. All you hear is the ticking of the grandfather clock in the other room.

TICK.
TOCK.
TICK.
TOCK.
TICK.
TOCK.

You had to break the ice. If you didn't, you were going to have a heart attack. "U-umm", you meekly stammer out.

"DON'T.", Aleena sharply says through gritted teeth, immediately cutting you off. "...talk to me right now", she finishes, slightly less agitated.

Her sudden interruption catches you completely off guard. You sink even deeper into your seat, hoping to hide from her ire.

"O-okay, sorry", you quickly stutter out, before returning to dead silence. Aleena takes a sip of wine from her glass, swirling it about after removing it from her lips.

TICK.
TOCK.
TICK.
TOCK.

"...thanks", you timidly utter. Aleena sighs in annoyance.

"I'm only helping you because my daughter begged me to", she explains. "You should be thanking her. If it were up to me, I'd have planted a bullet between your eyes", she goes on to say with a chilling lack of emotion.

"Y-yeah", you cravenly reply after gulping. "Y-you must really love your daughter to put up with a total stranger on her behalf"

"Sonia means the WORLD to me", Aleena states. "YOU aren't going to screw that up", she coldly adds, before returning to her drink.

Back to silence once more.

The entire time you've been talking with her, Aleena hasn't looked your way even once. This isn't going to work, you need her help, and she's refusing to acknowledge your existence.

You struggle to think of anything to try and get her to open up to you, until you just ask about the first thing you see.

"Uhh, is that wine any good?", you thoughtlessly query.

WOW. That's not insulting at all, bringing up her daytime drinking. Fucking smooth. That's describing your brain, not your "charismatic" approach. Idiot. She's gonna kill you.

"I wouldn't know", Aleena surprisingly replies. "I don't even taste it anymore. Why don't you find out for yourself?", she then asks.

...Did--

...

Did she just offer you a drink? You're a minor.

"S-seriously?", you ask, puzzled by her bizarre generosity.

Aleena motions her head towards the kitchen. "Cups are in the top-left cupboard. Help yourself", she instructs, before nursing her wine once more.

You've never had an alcoholic drink before. Curiosity, and desperation to keep this conversation going at any cost, spur you into taking her up on her offer.

You begin to get up out of your ch--

...Oh. Right. Shit. You're still weak in the knees.

Judging from Aleena's lack of reaction to your struggling, it's clear she wasn't going to help you up or get the glass for you.

To hell with her, you can do this on your own. You made it down STAIRS, Anon. You can go to the kitchen.

You return to a standing position with a significant amount of effort, before clumsily clambering your way out of the living room into the hallway.

Leaned against the right-hand wall, you sidle down the way towards the swinging door. On your way, you pass by another door that you couldn't spot earlier on your left.

A slight, cold draft leaks from the bottom of the newly discovered door. It must lead to the basement.

Well, no sense focusing on that, you're near your destination. With a slight tinge of expectation, you enter the kitchen for the first time.

Upon entering, you're greeted by a rather mundane kitchen/dining area. Oh, boy, new surroundings! Time to soak it all in.

Taking a central position in the room is a large, wooden circular table. From the way it's segmented in half, it probably comes apart to add some table leaves for guests.

Lining the left-most wall is a long, gray marble counter. Or maybe it's actually wood with a marble facade. A number of drawers sit beneath the countertop, no doubt housing various kitchenware.

The sink sits prominently in the middle, with a large amount of dirty dishes still sitting within. You spot the bowl you ate Mac & Cheese out of last night. What was Aleena even doing in here if she wasn't cleaning up?

In the upper-left corner of the kitchen sat a large, black stove. Stains of various kinds pepper the poor appliance.

Across from you on the back wall is the fridge. From how voracious Sonic is, you wonder how much food is left inside.

Nearby the refridgerator sits a door, probably leading to the back porch.

The right wall was mostly taken up by a surprisingly large bay window. The view of the yard outside is slightly veiled by thin, white curtains.

The bottom right corner of the room housed one more door, leading to the downstairs bathroom. But that's not what you're here for, so you ignore it.

Instead, you turn your attention left once more to the cupboards hanging above the counterspace.

Aleena said the cups were in the top-left cupboard. You stagger your way towards the designated cabinet, reaching up to open it.

What awaited you was an absolute mishmash of drinking glasses haphazardly strewn about with no care whatsoever.

Coffee mugs, mason jars, old containers for large-sized tubs of ranch dip, you even spot some sippy cups for babies in this pile. Why do they still have those?

Shaking off your bemusement, you reach for the closest chalice: a plastic tumbler, colored a shade of dull turquoise.

Having completed your quest, you close the cabinet door and journey back to the living room without a second thought.

As you lurch into the room, you decide to take your seat on the opposite end of the couch Aleena's sitting on. It may be dangerous, but at least she won't have to get up to accomodate you.

It seems she's already polished off more than half her drink.

Winded, you reach your cup out, hoping she'll at least fill it for you.

Finally taking notice of you, Aleena glances your way before putting down her glass and taking yours. She pours enough to cover the bottom of the glass.

Well, that makes sense, you are a minor after all. A sip is probably all you can handle. Plus, it's her wine, she's probably not willing to share that much with a stranger.

Aleena hands you back your drink before grabbing hers once more.

Excited at your milestone, you raise your glass in celebration.

"Cheers! To my first drink!", you proudly say.

"I've heard worse excuses to drink", Aleena responds in a deadpan fashion, lazily raising her glass in kind.

The two of you then knock back your drinks in unison.

As soon as the liquid passes your lips and lands on your tongue, it begins brutalizing every single one of your taste buds.

An unfathomably bitter, nearly caustic taste assaults your senses. Every single braincell is telling you to spit this disgusting poison out.

However, your self-preservation instinct chimes in, reminding you that Aleena is right next to you. If you spit wine all over her furniture, she's going to kill you.

Against your better judgement, you force yourself to swallow this awful concoction. The burning sensation travels all the way down your throat, causing you to wretch, gag, and cough pitifully.

You glance at the box on the table to make sure that it's wine and not anti-freeze.

"Pansy", Aleena scoffs before taking yet another sip of the horrid ambrosia. You simply gawk at her ability to down this toxic sludge without even flinching.

You catch your breath once more before setting your cup down, having lost any appetite you had.

The good news in all of this: you probably won't wind up an alcoholic.

The bad news: the silence returns yet again. You're back to scrambling around for a topic, hoping to finally cut through this tension.

You look around at your surroundings once more.

You spot several family photos placed along the walls and shelves. Judging from them, the Hedgehogs seem like a pleasant, well-adjusted family.

Several photos are from various Christmas get-togethers, unless they wear those ugly sweaters year-round.

Gathered around the Hedgehog family are several other Mobians.

Wait. Mobius. You don't know shit about Mobius.

And Aleena's a Mobian, too. Maybe having her tell you stories about her homeworld would be a good way to break the ice and learn more about them in the process.

"H-hey, um, y-you guys came from the planet Mobius, right?", you inquire sheepishly.

Upon hearing the name of her planet, Aleena stops swirling her glass about.

"B-because I'd never even heard of the place before yesterday, and was...kinda wondering, and it's fine if you don't want to talk about it", you hesitantly continue stammering out.

"B-but, maaaaaybe you could...tell me...a bit more...about...", you say, trailing off as Aleena's steely gaze slowly turns towards you.

Oh.

Anon. You fucking moron.

They're REFUGEES. They had to ABANDON their homeworld, you absolute fucking BUFFOON.

The LAST thing she'd want to talk about is her doubtlessly painful memories regarding her former home.

"Um, n-nevermind, stupid idea, sorry", you quickly stutter out, shifting your eyes directly downwards out of shame.

Aleena's gaze returns forward, away from you.

The unbearable silence returns once more. You have no clue what to do now. You didn't just step in shit, you dove head first into it.

As you accept your fate that you're probably never going to get her to open up to you, Aleena startlingly breaks the silence herself.

"I was her Queen, once."

Stunned at both the revelation and by her willingness to speak about such an obviously sensitive matter, you shoot her a look of befuddlement, thoughtlessly blurting out "Wha?"

"I was once known as Queen Aleena Hedgehog, Lord High Regent of the Planet Mobius", she expounds. Her gaze has shifted to the glass she holds in her hand.

THIS woman was a queen? I mean, you could tell she had a dignified tone of voice, but her actions really don't strike you as how royalty should act.

"R-really?", you apprehensively ask. It seems Aleena could pick up on your skepticism in your voice, as she shoots you an annoyed look.

"S-sorry", you hastily apologize. "But, you kind of have to see why I'd be skeptical of that", you justify.

Aleena glares at you for a moment longer, then returns to looking at her glass, clearly deep in thought.

After a few seconds, she downs the remaining wine and sets her empty glass on the table in front of her before standing up.

"Wait here", the amethyst Mobian orders before marching off to head upstairs to the bedrooms.

Well, you weren't about to go anywhere like this anyway. You sit quietly for a few minutes.

Then the anxiety kicks in again.

What if she was going to get her gun?

Oh, fuck, you can't hope to run away like this. You're not even able to toddle around unaided.

As your internal meltdown commences, you hear footsteps once more, this time approaching from upstairs.

She's returning.

Oh no. Oh fuck oh no oh please God spare this young lamb from this absolutely insane person's wrath.

As she descends the stairs, you gaze towards your potential murderers approach, praying she'll have mercy on your pathetic soul.

What you're greeted with, however, is something you couldn't have predicted.

Aleena had changed her outfit from her basic sweatpants-tshirt combo to an elegant white gown. The style is somewhat alien, unlike anything you've ever seen.

There seem to be plates or segments to emphasize her breasts from the rest of her upper torso.

Her waist was adorned with a large golden belt, with some sort of purple gem embedded within it.

The dress had a segmented trail leading downward from her hips into an odd golden decoration, shaped almost like a crown or a three-headed diamond, appended near the hem of her dress, close to where her knees are.

Draped around her neck and shoulders was a long, flowing yellow cape, with a lucrative looking brooch clasping it together. You could spot a strange emblem emblazoned on the back of her cloak.

Finally, atop her head sat an unbelievably lavish crown or tiara, adorned with three large, diamond-shaped gold pieces, the center housing a gem completely unfamiliar to you.

You stare bug-eyed at the sight before you, mouth agape.

"Believe me now?", Aleena asks in a somewhat haughty voice. She then struts past you to return to her seat, and refills her glass of wine.

There was no doubt about it any more. At the very least, Aleena was nobility of some sort. You feebly nod your head, answering her question.

She smirks slightly before taking a drink from her newly filled chalice.

"So, would you tell me more about Mobius, then?", you ask, too curious to consider her feelings on the matter.

Aleena sighs deeply, before swirling about her glass once more.

"It all started after my children were born."

END CHAPTER 10

Chapter 11 - Recollection

"As Queen,", Aleena began, "I ruled over a peaceful kingdom. The land was rich and plentiful. The people kind, the cities affluent, the skies clear."

"It was a paradise unlike any other", she says wistfully. "Truly, we knew no troubles under my dominion."

"However", she continues, "There was one detractor to my kingdom. A malicious madman named Dr. Robotnik."

"Robotnik was a genius robotocist and scientist, I'll admit that much", Aleena goes on. "A truly brilliant mind, but one warped by dreams of tyranny and cruelty"

"Why'd he want to take over your kingdom?", you ask, curious.

"The reason still eludes me to this day", she responds. "Maybe he was just a faggot or something. I did outlaw gay marriage after all"

You're conflicted by that last sentence. On one hand, that's based as hell. On the other, that would have interfered with the Bardonic ship. You're not gay, but Bardonic IS cute as fuck. Who is she to deny that?

"Anyway", Aleena continues, after taking another sip of wine. "Robotnik may have been a lunatic, but he did have a few advantages over our kingdom: Numbers and technology."

"He had built a massive army of robots to do his bidding unquestioningly", she elaborates. "On top of that, he had enlisted the aid of some of the most cutthroat mercenaries in the galaxy."

"Our soldiers, with their poor excuses for weaponry, stood no chance against such a terrible force", Aleena sighs remorsefully. "It was a massacre."

"My husband, the king at the time, led the charge to defend the castle against the final assault", she went on.

"Your husband?", you ask, hearing about him for the first time.

"Yes, he was a human from Earth, actually", Aleena shockingly reveals. "His name was--"

"WHOA WHOA WHOA, Wait a minute!", you shout, cutting her off. "How is that possible? Didn't this happen on Mobius? How'd an Earthling wind up there, married to royalty, no less?", you grill the queen.

"Ah, yes", Aleena replies, realizing she skipped over some details. "That all happened years before the fall of Mobius", she then starts to fill you in.

"My father, King Kevin Hedgehog IV, began an interplanetary exchange program during his rule", Aleena states. "He had told the council it was a means of broadening our horizons and experiencing new cultures."

"That's what he told the council?", you ask. "I feel like you're about to tell me he had an ulterior motive here", you surmise.

Aleena furrows her brow. "His real reason for doing so was to, and I quote, 'bring in some hot, underaged earthling trim to play around with'", she reveals through gritted teeth.

She then takes a deep, long drink from her wine. You look away awkwardly.

"Anyway", she says, after the glass parts from her lips, "I was sent as an envoy to Earth at one point to get a taste of the local cultures and habits of its residents."

"I still remember it as if it happened yesterday", she reminisces. "It was a cold winter night. It was nearing Christmas, a tradition I'd picked up from my time spent on Earth."

"Though, at the time, I wish I hadn't", the violet woman says. "Seeing the young couples and families clinging to each other so happily made me realize how lonely I really was"

"As I passed through the snow-covered streets, I bumped into a young man by accident", she goes on. After saying that, she gives you a quick once-over with her eyes.

"You know, you vaguely remind me of him", she then states plainly. The comparison catches you off-guard a bit, allowing Aleena to drink of her cup once more.

"Now, then", Aleena continues her story. "After bumping into each other, we both issued awkward apologies to each other left and right. It was so embarrassing, I'm blushing just thinking about it"

She was right, her cheeks are becoming a little rosy. Though the 400-proof alcohol might have something to do with it, too.

"He then offered to take me out to dinner as an apology", Aleena continues. She has a genuine smile of fondness on her face right now.

"It was magical", she says, blissfully. "He was a true gentlemen, despite not coming from royalty. For the first time in a long time, I was truly happy to be with someone"

"I knew right there and then that I loved him", she continues her trip down memory lane. "Despite leaving a disastrous first impression with my father, eventually, he relented, and allowed me to marry this human"

"Thus, the new king and queen of Mobius were coronated", she finishes this sidestory, before taking another drink.

"So, your husband, the king, led the charge against Robotnik, right?", you ask, reminding Aleena of where she left off before you interrupted.

"Mmm, yes", she then goes on. "He wasn't exactly a warrior by trade, but he had hoped to distract the evil Doctor long enough for us to make our escape"

"However", Aleena appends, "he went missing during the assault. I have no clue what happened to him or where he even is. No body was ever found, and Robotnik had no recollection of him at all"

Aleena's eyes show a glimpse of unimaginable pain when recalling this.

"I can only hope he died gloriously in combat, because the alternative...", Aleena trails off, possibly to suppress her feelings before continuing.

"The alternative, would be that he abandoned Mobius in its darkest hour", she continues after composing herself. "That he abandoned me."

You can't find the words to express your sorrow and pity. You simply sit quietly, hoping that getting this story off her chest will be some small consolation to her broken heart.

"I had every intention to join him in that battle," Aleena continues, after another hefty downing of wine. "However, our seer, the Oracle of Delphius, pulled me off to one side and warned me of a prophecy"

"The fates demanded I give up my children to separate families, to maximize their chances of survival", the purple queen goes on. "They were but newborns, but I loved them dearly. Part of me didn't want to let them go"

"Unfortunately, the cold-hearted truth was, that the fates were absolutely in the right", Aleena resumed, sighing. "With a heavy heart, I donned a red cloak to conceal my identity, and placed each child in baskets and left them upon the doorsteps of complete strangers, praying their goodwill would keep my children safe."

"That was the worst day of my life", the Hedgehog mother says, somberly. "I lost everything. My husband. My home. My Kingdom. My children. I had nothing left", she says, staring deep into her glass.

"Nonetheless", Aleena continued, "the fates were at least kind enough to offer me a ray of hope. The prophecy foretold that my children and I would reunite one day, forming the Council of Four"

You internally scoff at the lackluster name.

"So I stayed incognito for over a decade", she resumes. "Watching over my children from afar, ensuring their safety without ever once revealing who I was to them. It was tough, not being there for their formative years"

"Eventually, they would join a band of resistance called the Freedom Fighters", continues the queen. "Their abilities and willpower proved to be extremely helpful in damaging Robotnik's empire"

"Their adventures continued for what felt like years, and eventually, they proved themselves capable enough for me to finally rejoin them", tells Aleena.

"At last,", she goes on. "we began our assault on Robotnik's main base, built on the remains of the capitol city. My former home."

"We had pushed our way to the center of the stronghold, and finally confronted that fat despot", recalls the plum-colored matron.

"Unfortunately,", she utters, her tone getting darker. "We had underestimated just how petty Robotnik would be in his last moments"

"Foreseeing his reign of terror coming to an end,", Aleena resumes, after taking one more sip of wine. "Robotnik ordered his drones to destroy, pollute, and corrupt every single square inch of Mobius still under his control"

"After issuing that edict, Robotnik fled the planet before we could make him face justice", she continues. You worry that Aleena's gripping her wine glass too hard as she says that.

"The devastation was far too much for our forces to fix", she laments. "We simply didn't have the manpower left."

"And so", she goes on, "I ordered every survivor of this miserable war to board the few spaceships we had left. We had to abandon Mobius."

Aleena's expression contorts with regret and pain. "This time,", she speaks, "there was no ray of hope left to us. We left her to die."

The lilac-shaded monarch takes another long drink of her wine. She's already down to the last quarter of her glass.

"However", she resumes, "at least I was able to leave together with my children. A small consolation, maybe, but it wasn't unappreciated."

"We took our ships to the one planet that would have us. An ally that we've held dear for many decades at this point", Aleena went on.

"Earth.", you finally speak, finishing her thought. "Precisely", she responds.

"Initially, the Earthling leaders were kind to our plight, and offered us housing and refugee status", Aleena says.

"Regrettably, though", spoke the Hedgehog mother, "my title as Queen of Mobius meant very little here on Earth. My wealth was worthless"

"I even tried selling my royal clothes for some money to jumpstart our new lives," she continues, "but they said the only people who'd wear it were 12-year-old girls for Halloween"

"Damn", you utter in disbelief and pity. Aleena sighs before imbibing yet another sip of wine.

"So, I had to get a desk job, working in some god-awful cubicle, all to start from scratch so I could support my family", she states. "I assume the other Mobians did similarly."

"I did it all for my kids, though", Aleena continues. "It would all be worth it when my kids grow up big and strong"

"And that brings us to the present day", she declares. "And how my children have turned out so far."

Her tone of voice has become a bit more...manic? Sarcastic? You could tell this wasn't going to be good.

"Sonic developed an eating disorder from his adoptive parents overfeeding him garbage", Aleena states plainly. "And on top of that, he fell in love with an aristocrat named Bartleby Montclair of Dresden"

"Yeah, everybody knows that", you reply. Aleena shoots a quick look of disgust at you.

"As much as I want to be happy Sonic found his love", she goes on, "the two of them can't have children. Sonic's a genetic dead-end, and a gargantuan mouth to feed on top of it"

Aleena starts drinking at a faster pace, and her expression becomes angrier. "MANIC, that grassy-headed turd", she spits, "began simping for that absolute HARLOT, Mindy LaTour."

"Any chance of babies coming out of THAT is slim to none", Aleena complains, "since she's either going to abort anything that grows in there, or make Manic raise a child that isn't his, since she fucks anything with a pulse"

You lean deeper into the arm of the sofa, trying to shrink away from Aleena's fury.

"And SONIA...", she yells, before trailing off. Aleena's face becomes regretful. "Sonia...is so innocent and sweet. I can't bear the thought of ruining that by telling her how children are made."

Aleena takes one last drink of wine, emptying her chalice down her gullet. Once the glass is empty, she sighs deeply and sets it down on the table in front of her.

She then stares straight ahead. You think she's looking at her reflection in the TV screen, still turned off.

"...So," she says after a long pause. "Here I sit. Queen of a dead world on a soon-to-be-empty throne."

"I failed to save my homeworld", Aleena continues, emotionlessly. "Mobius fell under my watch and I had to abandon her in the end."

"And my children are all essentially dead-ends", she goes on. You feel that's a bit too harsh, but you keep quiet for now. "They'll most likely leave me with no legacy"

Aleena buries her face in her palms.

"...I'm an abject failure", she says, muffled by her hands.

Hearing her say that makes your heart sink. Aleena's face rises from her palms, with tears in her eyes.

"I failed as a ruler...", she proclaims. "and as a mother", she finishes, choking on those last words before breaking into silent sobs.

Every part of you wants to give this poor woman a hug. However, the memory of her holding you at gunpoint just yesterday pops into your head, causing you to hesitate.

You just look down at the table, filled with regret. You feel like shit, drudging up these painful memories of hers for your morbid curiosity.

After a few moments, Aleena sharply gasps, trying to compose herself once more. Her eyes are bloodshot from tears, and are darting around, searching for something.

They land on her empty wine glass, which she reaches for.

Knowing what she's going to do next, you instinctively reach for your plastic tumbler.

When Aleena finishes filling her glass of wine once more, you wave your cup in front of her, grabbing her attention.

"You shouldn't have this drink alone", you say, as she looks at you like a deer in the headlights.

Her expression softens just a little bit, before she sets down her full glass and takes your empty one.

After pouring you a healthy portion of the sickening knockoff Merlot, she hands it back to you.

You then raise your glass once more.

"To Mobius", you toast.

Aleena smiles slightly, and raises hers in kind.

"May she rest in peace", she finishes.

Your chinese-made plastic cup plinks unsatisfyingly against her wine chalice.

The two of you drink deeply in unison once again.

Huh.

That's weird.

That drink wasn't nearly as bitter as the last one.

END CHAPTER 11

Chapter 12 - Reunion

Following her somber soliloquy, Aleena started warming up to you at last. She became much more willing to answer your questions about the various photos around the living room.

Every single one had some sort of insane story behind it, even the most mundane looking ones wound up being engrossing tales of heroism and chaos.

The less chaotic stories were more heartfelt, like how Sonia won a participation trophy during some soccer match, and treated it like it was the greatest accomplishment of her life.

Having the time filled with these anecdotes was nice. A lot nicer than just sitting awkwardly in silence. You even felt the house getting warmer just from talking with her.

After she finishes up her last story, giggling about how she mowed down a group of SwatBots to save Manic once, she sighs deeply, seeming somewhat deflated.

"Something the matter?", you question, concerned about the sudden downturn of her emotions.

"I just...wanted to apologize", the purple hedgehog replies. "For...well, everything leading up to now. For almost killing you, for ignoring you when you needed help, letting you see me in such a pathetic state, all of it"

"Oh, no worries", you hastily utter. Well, it WAS actually troublesome, but you weren't about to sour the mood by complaining. "I'm just glad we're on friendly terms now"

Suddenly, the grandfather clock rings out once more, snapping the two of you out of your conversation. Aleena gets up to get a better look at it.

"Oh, hell, is it that late already?", the matron inquires. "It's already noon!", she exclaims, shocking you.

It seems you two were gabbing for almost 4 hours straight. Time flies when you're having fun, as the saying goes.

"You want something to eat, Anon?", Aleena asks you. "Uhm, y-yeah, sure!", you eagerly reply back, caught off-guard by her newfound hospitality.

You forgot you hadn't eaten at all today. This tendency to miss meals is starting to worry you, though considering the circumstances, it's understandable.

Aleena approaches you and offers you her arm to help you up, which you gladly take. After straining a bit, you rise to your feet with her help. Your legs are significantly less weak than they were a few hours ago. Instead of feeling like they're asleep, it's more akin to having returned to land after being out at sea for 3 weeks.

You're still wobbly, but you're making progress. You still rely on Aleena's help to remain stable, though.

The sleeve of her gown is weirdly soft and pleasant to touch.

...Stop being weird and just walk with her.

Aleena leads you to the kitchen, where you take a seat at the circular table in the center of the room. Aleena saunters over to the counter and reaches up to one of the cabinets nearby.

She pulls out two paper plates, a loaf of Great Value white bread and a jar of That's Smart! peanut butter, before heading to the fridge to retrieve a jar of grape jelly, no doubt some other generic version.

With the items together, the grape-colored queen fishes a butter knife from a nearby drawer, and proceeds to slather a meager serving of the two toppings on twin slices of bread.

She slaps the two coated pieces together to form a sandwich, and repeats the whole process once more to create a doppelganger of the snack.

She then places each sandwich on a plate, and brings them over to the table, serving one to you and one for herself.

A PB&J sandwich.

Not the most sophisticated meal you've ever had, but a welcome sight, nonetheless. You take the chow in front of you and bite into it.

Aleena really went light on the Peanut Butter and Jelly. Most of that bite was bread.

"So? How is it, Anon?", queries Aleena.

...It's a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. A child would have to struggle to fuck it up.

"It's very good, thank you", you respectfully lie through your teeth. She really should have added more peanut butter. However, you're not about to insult her...um.

...would this count as 'cooking'? Or maybe 'confectionery skills'?

"Why, thank you, Anon!", Aleena responds to your compliment as if it's the first one she's ever heard. "You really are a gentleman"

...That's all it took to get a response like that out of her? This poor woman really is underappreciated. You take another bite of your sandwich out of courtesy.

"So, Anon", Aleena says as you chew your food, "I told you all about myself and my kids. What can you tell me about yourself?", she asks.

You stop chewing as soon as the question leaves her lips. The one topic you dread discussing has come up. The one thing you hate more than anything.

YOURSELF.

You nervously swallow the half-chewed chunk of white bread to try and clear your mouth. It doesn't really do you any good, however.

It's not like you can just come out and say "Yeah I spend all my free time masturbating in my room alone", it's not exactly the best icebreaker.

You learned that the hard way back in middle school.

You struggle to think of anything worthwhile to say. After hearing Aleena's tales of glory and adventure, it made you realize exactly how little you've bothered living life.

"...I...really don't have a lot to tell", you eventually mutter. Aleena takes a healthy bite of her sandwich with a look of mild concern on her face.

"I just...go to school and go back home most of the time", you admit. "I'm nowhere near as interesting as you guys, honestly", you say.

"Sonia told me you move around a lot", Aleena notes, her mouth still full. "Surely, you went to some interesting places", she adds before continuing her chewing.

"Yeah, I guess", you reply half-heartedly. "I didn't really bother experiencing them, though"

"Why not?", the purple matriarch inquires.

"What's the point of getting attached to anything if you know you're just going to leave it behind before the year's over?", you answer her question with one of your own.

"...Do you feel that way about my family?", Aleena ripostes. You had no counter for that.

"...All of this just...happened all at once by random chance", you hesitantly justify. You get the sense you're walking on some serious eggshells here, so you're picking your words carefully.

"I sat next to your daughter because her seat was the only one available on the bus", you start rattling off.

"I was placed between her and Bartleby in class because that was the only seat available to me", you continue.

"Sonia was the first person I saw after I contracted BMPS, and she offered me the only means of care available to me at the moment", you go

on.

"If none of that happened, we wouldn't be having this conversation", you finish listing off your grievances. "I'd be in my room, away from everyone else, like usual"

"...Is that what you really want?", Aleena casually asks after a moment of silence.

A simple question with a surprisingly difficult answer.

It's been so long since you've made friends with anyone that you've forgotten what it felt like to have them. It's a weirdly refreshing feeling. But the ever-looming threat of your parents inevitably leaving keeps hanging overhead, spoiling any good times you might have with them.

"...I don't know what I want anymore", you grunt, hanging your head and slumping your shoulders.

You've effectively ruined the good mood you struggled so hard to build this entire morning.

As you wallow in self-pity, Aleena lets out a sigh.

"You're not going to be a kid forever, Anon", the violet mother states. "Before you know it, you'll graduate from school and be out there, living your own life, not being dragged around by your parents"

"You shouldn't be so terrified of making memories while you can,", she goes on, "because the day will come when those memories are all that you'll have left."

You don't have anything to say in response. You stare at your half-eaten sandwich quietly, lost in thought from her words.

"Well, maybe that topic is a bit touchy for you", Aleena says, finally breaking the silence. You look up at her, still somewhat moping.

"You're the same age as my kids, right?", she probes. "When's your birthday?"

Well, it's something else to talk about. You plainly tell her your date of birth, but something odd occurs.

The moment your birthdate leaves your mouth, Aleena's eyes widen in shock, and the sandwich she was holding has fallen out of her hands.

"...Something wrong?", you ask, worried about the surprised expression spreading across her face.

"...That's the day that Mobius fell", she responds, astounded. The coincidence stuns you in kind. "The day my husband...", she trails off.

"Oh, shit. Um...sorry?", you hastily apologize for coming into existence on that dreadful day.

Aleena's eyes have drifted downwards towards the table, and she's clearly lost in thought. The silence has come back.

It might just be you, but you swear you can hear that damned clock in the other room.

Finally, Aleena, twiddling her thumbs, reluctantly breaks the quiet once more.

"Anon...this might be weird to ask, but...do you believe in...reincarnation?"

She's right.

That IS weird.

The strange question only causes you to mutter a confused "huh?".

Fortunately, a distraction from this conversation comes in the form of a sudden knock at the front door.

"Oh, that's probably Charles", Aleena surmises as she rises from the table. "I'll go let him in."

The hedgehog matron then exits the kitchen to let Chuck in the house. You take the opportunity to munch down on the remainder of your sandwich.

Aleena quickly returns with the mustachioed hedgehog in tow. It seems today, Chuck's wearing a stained-up white wifebeater and faded blue jeans.

"Sup, Anon", Chuck greets you, waving his hand. "I see you're up and about pretty early"

"...It's past Noon", you tell the faded blue hedgehog in rebuttal.

"Charles usually recovers from his hangovers around 1PM", Aleena chimes in.

Yeah, he was hitting the Bud Light pretty hard last night. You're pretty sure you saw half a dozen empty cans in the living room this morning, and that's just what was visible.

"Speaking of", the plum-colored queen appends, "I think that wine this morning's catching up to me"

You notice Aleena's stance is significantly more woozy than normal. You hope you didn't cause her to drink that hard, making her go through her traumatic past.

"Charles, could I ask you to keep an eye on Anon while I go nap?", the plum lady asks Chuck.

"Sure!", he responds. "We'll have a blast, right Anon?", he then asks you.

"Uhh", you thoughtlessly blurt out, trying to raise an objection.

"Great, thanks, Charles, I really appreciate it", Aleena remarks, cutting you off. As she begins exiting the room, she passes by your seat once more.

As she does so, you feel one of her fingers trace its way up the back of your neck, causing you to shiver in surprise.

You flash a flustered, utterly confused look to her. "Have fun, Anon", she teases with a wink before exiting the kitchen.

Leaving you alone with 'Uncle' Chuck.

You felt a strange wave of dread wash over you.

END CHAPTER 12

Chapter 13 - A Fun Outing With Uncle Chuck

Your eyes remain locked on the door Aleena just left through for a while, hoping that she was just kidding and didn't just dump you into her creepy brother's lap.

Your hopes begin to wane after a few moments as the door remains still. It was clear she wasn't coming back.

Your vision slowly, nervously pans over to the adult male hedgehog, who has taken a seat across from you at the table.

You can't see his mouth through his big, bushy mustache, but his cheeks show him beaming a friendly smile in your direction.

You meet his demeanor with a sheepish smile in return, for a moment, before quickly dropping it to show your previous feelings of apprehension.

For some strange reason, you could feel something terrible was about to happen. Every instinct was telling you to run away from this person.

You have no idea why, you didn't have this same reluctance when you met Chuck last night, but right now, alarm bells are ringing in your head.

At last, Chuck breaks the ice with a simple question:

"You know how to drive a car yet, Anon?", asks the middle-aged Mobian innocently.

The alarm bells have become full-blown klaxons at this point. Against your better judgement, you decide to dignify the question with an answer.

"...N-not really, no", you nervously stutter out. Truthfully, you're about that age where kids are allowed to drive, but because of your absent parents, you never had the chance to learn.

"You wanna learn how?", ponders Chuck.

You need to stop responding to him. He's up to something, and it's going to get you in trouble. Trouble with the law, trouble.

Instead of just rudely ignoring him, however, you come up with a believable excuse to get out of this.

"Mmmaybe after my legs start fully working", you respond. That should get him off you.

"You'll be fine as you are, come on", replies Chuck, as he gets up from the table and approaches you.

Oh, fuck, it didn't work, he's grabbing you by the shoulders and forcing you up out of your seat.

Chuck starts dragging you towards the front door before stopping at the waiting room with the grandfather clock. Chuck begins to yell up towards the upstairs bedrooms.

"HEY, ALEENA!", he shouts, trying to get his sister's attention.

"CHARLES, WHAT THE FUCK IS IT NOW?!", roars Aleena in response. "I'M TRYING TO...SLEEP", she continues. There was a distinct pause before that last word came out, like she was about to say something different by mistake.

"WHERE ARE YOUR CAR KEYS?", Chuck loudly inquires. "ANON HERE WANTS TO LEARN HOW TO DRIVE AND I'M GONNA TEACH HIM"

You feebly try to break away from Chuck, but his grip is way too tight on you, plus your legs being so weak certainly doesn't help the situation. You're stuck.

"...WHY THE HELL DO YOU NEED TO DRIVE RIGHT NOW, CHARLES?", the Mobian Queen queries, rightfully suspicious of her brother's behavior. "JUST THOUGHT IT'D BE A FUN WAY TO PASS THE TIME", he yells back. "SHOULD I COME UP THERE AND LOOK--"

"N-NONONO, NO!", Aleena frantically refuses, cutting off Chuck's request. "TH-THEY'RE IN MY COAT, HANGING BY THE FRONT DOOR", she acquiesces.

"SWEET! THANKS, ALEENA!", the creepy uncle gleefully replies, having gotten what he wanted. Chuck heads towards the coat rack near the front door, leaving you leaning on the nearby post.

"JUST BRING THE DAMNED THING BACK IN ONE PIECE THIS TIME", Aleena shouts as Chuck fishes through the pockets of a dark, fuzzy coat hanging up with the others.

The mustached Mobian retrieves a set of keys before grabbing you once more and dragging you outside towards the parked black SUV.

As the two of you approach the vehicle, Chuck hands you Aleena's keys, saying "You're driving" somewhat curtly.

Chuck leads you to the driver's side, and makes you clamber in behind the steering wheel, before heading around to the passenger side and climbing in.

You stare at the dashboard and steering wheel blankly, praying this is some nightmare you haven't woken up from.

As your hands hover helplessly, unsure of what to do next, Uncle Chuck taps you on the right shoulder, grabbing your attention.

"Remember: first thing you do is...", Chuck says, trailing off as he taps the seatbelt stretched over his chest.

...Is he seriously just teaching you how to drive? You feel the anxiety fade slightly after seeing his surprisingly responsible advice.

You glance over your left shoulder to find the safety belt, and fish it out to stretch it over your chest in kind, before buckling it.

"Very good!", praises the pale blue Hedgehog. "Now, adjust your mirrors, so you can see properly", he then instructs.

You proceed to follow his orders, fixing the rear-view and side mirrors to ensure your vision is unobscured on all sides.

As you fidget and finesse, the stress from earlier seems like a distant memory. You really weren't sure what you were worried about at all.

"Okay", says Chuck, "Now, turn on the engine, then shift into reverse", he orders.

Alright. Moment of truth. You insert Aleena's keys into the ignition, and turn it over.

With a few attempts, the great metal beast roars to life, its engine humming and gently rattling the vehicle around you. You nervously chuckle at the development, before glancing down to your right to spot the shifter. It's one of those kinds where you press the button down before pulling it to the setting you want. Nice and simple.

You sheepishly reach for it to shift down to 'R', no doubt standing for 'Reverse'.
"Keep your foot on the brakes before you shift", Chuck pipes up as you're doing this. Wait, shit, which pedal was brake?
"The left one!", Chuck quickly tells you, as if he could read your mind. You hastily press your foot down on the corresponding pedal before beginning your shifting anew.
You press the large button on the shifter down with your thumb and pull it back into gear. You feel the SUV jolt a little bit upon shifting.

"Good, now slowly let off the brakes", the Hedgehog Uncle dictates. You comply, nervously letting off the left-most pedal. You feel the vehicle slowly lurching backwards towards the street.
"Check your mirrors", reminds the mustached man. Your gaze quickly darts between every mirror, ensuring nothing's in your path or oncoming.
You continue this process for a few seconds as the SUV slowly creeps down the driveway. Just before reaching the street, Chuck pipes up once more with directives.
"Once your back tires hit the street proper, you need to cut the wheel all the way to the right", he says. Following his words to the letter, you begin to do just that.
As if you've been driving for years, you expertly manage to escape the driveway without so much as a scratch. You put on the brakes after fully turning, awaiting Chuck's next orders.
"Alright, now straighten 'er out, put 'er in drive, and let's roll", says Charles. You nod confidently, and perform his instructions. The two of you take off down the street, leaving behind the Hedgehog abode.

"So, where are we heading?", you ask. You probably should have figured this out before going along with this.
"I'll let you know when we get there, relax", assures Chuck in response. That doesn't assuage your concerns at all.
"Take this next right here coming up", he then orders. You anxiously obey and perform his task.
"Take those turns a bit slower, Anon", Chuck lectures. "S-sorry", you apologize, your eyes darting all over, trying to absorb everything going on at once.
Checking your mirrors, watching the roads, watching the speedometer, watching for pedestrians, it's all starting to get to you.

As your meltdown is about to commence, Chuck places his hand on your right shoulder, causing you to glance over at him.
"You're doing fine, Anon", he reassures you, beaming a gentle smile your way. "The most important thing to do when driving is to RELAX", he states, emphasizing that last word.
Hearing that completely dissolved any tension you were feeling at that point. You take a deep breath to calm your nerves once more, and your eyes confidently snap to the road, and you continue your lesson once more.
After several blocks of travelling, following Chuck's instructions for each turn, you find yourself heading down a major thoroughfare for the city.

Your nerves begin acting up again, as you flinch every time someone passes you on the highway. Chuck takes notice of your apprehension.
"What's the matter, Anon?", the critter with facial hair asks, concerned.
"I-I'm just worried someone's gonna clip me, or I'm drifting too far out of my lane", you explain.
"Ah. I got a handy tip for that", Chuck replies. "You see those lines in the road?", he then asks, pointing ahead.
"Which ones? The dotted lines, or the solid ones?", you query in response, hoping for clarification.
"Either, really", he says back. "If you line those lines up with the bottom left corner of your windshield there", he explains while moving his finger to the described corner of the windshield, "You'll never be out of your lane"

Huh. It's that easy? You proceed to do as he says, and sure enough, your driving has stabilized significantly. You can even go up to the speed limit comfortably and not have to worry.
You're honestly dumbstruck. You weren't expecting this trip to go as smoothly as it has, but it really seems like Chuck actually just wanted to help you learn something. You feel silly, having worried all this time.
"Oh, shit, Anon, our stop's coming up, get ready to turn off", Chuck warns you. You snap out of your feelings of wholesomeness and steel yourself for the next instructions.
"Okay, turn into this parking lot on the right", Chuck commands as he points towards a particular sign on your right-hand side.

A sign that says "Phil's Liquor Mart".
...Oh.

You pull in, somewhat deflated at discovering the true purpose of this trip. Chuck just wanted someone to give him a lift to buy more beer. As the vehicle pulls up to the front of the store, Chuck has you stop right by the front walkway.
"Keep her running, I'll only be a minute", says the mustachioed Hedgehog, as he unbuckles his safety belt and climbs out of the SUV. He then puts on one of those surgical masks. You shoot him a puzzled look.
"COVID rules are still in place here. You know how it is", he elucidates.
You shift into Park and sigh dejectedly as Chuck enters the store. You feel dirty and used.

...Maybe this isn't the right way to look at things. Let's count the positives here.
You're behind the wheel of a large automobile, and you drove it down here with hardly any help outside of advice from Uncle Chuck. You didn't cause any damage, you actually learned a few things, hell, this is probably the most positive experience you've had today. Maybe

this whole week.
You need to stop being so tense and negative. Smile, today's going great.

...What the hell is that yelling?

You glance over towards the sounds coming from the store, and see Chuck burst through the front door, a case of Bud Light in his hands. Indistinguishable, yet unmistakably not English shouting comes from behind him.
"GO, GO-GO-GO-GO GO!!!", frantically screams Chuck as he hastily clambers back into the vehicle, tossing the 24-pack between the two of you.
"Whu-huh?", you blurt out, as you stare at him, utterly confused at the turn of events.
"Drive, you fucking idiot, DRIVE!!!", screams the once wise-sounding uncle, as he slams the door shut behind him. As soon as he does, a distinct noise rings out from the walkway.

The sound of a shotgun cocking.
Chuck wheels his head around to the source of the sound, before immediately ducking down, revealing a rather distressing sight.
An indistinguishable, yet unmistakably brown person has shouldered a Mossberg 590A1 and is pointing it directly at your face while scowling.

Oh FUCK
You immediately tuck your head as far between your legs as your spine will allow you to go as the disgruntled clerk unloads a hail of buckshot through both front windows of the SUV.
"SHIT!!!", you cry out in terror, as you claw at the shifter manically, still hunched over as you pull it into drive and slam your foot down on the accelerator.
The vehicle screeches into motion as you tear ass out of the parking lot, the clerk still firing on you.
As you careen down the road, catching your breath after returning to an upright position, your eyes dart over to Chuck, who has begun enjoying his prize already.

"DID YOU SERIOUSLY FUCKING STEAL THAT CASE OF BEER?!", you furiously shout at the fuzzy bastard.
"Of course I fucking stole it!", he shoots back. "Do I look like I can afford to BUY this shit?!", he asks.
"I knew it. I fucking KNEW it!", you start shouting to yourself. "Every fucking fiber of my body was telling me 'don't go along with this, he's up to something!', but did I listen? NOOOOO"
"Anon, RELAX", Chuck says, trying to soothe you. "Are you hurt?", he asks, almost as if he knows the answer.
"Uh-b-th-NO?", you stammer out, flummoxed by his strangely considerate question
"Then what's the problem?", he then asks, completely blowing off any sense of responsibility he had in this ordeal.

"YOU ALMOST GOT ME KILLED, YOU--", you begin to scream, before noticing the bullet holes lining Aleena's SUV.
"Ohhh my God, Aleena's gonna fucking kill us when she finds out about this", you moan as you fall into the pits of despair.
"You ain't tellin' Aleena SHIT, you got that?", Chuck orders between sipping his beer.
"Chuck, look around you!", you hysterically protest. "The glass on the dashboard, the windows that are fucking disintegrated, the fucking BULLET HOLES, she's gonna notice that shit!"
"You made a wrong turn and pulled into a bad neighborhood", the mustached Mobian starts explaining. "Before you knew it, some black motherfuckers pulled up beside us and performed a drive-by, got it?"
"...There's no fucking way she'll buy that", you state plainly.
"I said, 'GOT IT?'" , Chuck repeats, as he lifts his tanktop to reveal a glock he's been carrying in his waistline this whole time.

"...un-fucking-believable", you grumble, shaking your head as your attention returns to the road.
You remain silent for the rest of the return trip. Chuck reminds you of the turns you need to make, and you wordlessly comply, not even looking in his direction.
You pull into the driveway of the Hedgehog home, place the SUV in park, shut off the engine, and remove the keys.
"Hey, Anon", Chuck says as you unbuckle your seatbelt. Your eyes shift towards his direction, showing him holding out an unopened can of Bud Light.
"A reward for my getaway driver", he proudly says, as he pops the tab. You glare at him for a few moments as your thoughts race through your head.

You want to smack the can out of his hand. You want to take a drink and spit it in his face. You want to dump it out in front of him and throw the empty can back at him.
But more than anything, that beer sounds really good right now. You mechanically take the can and bring it to your lips before downing the whole thing as fast as possible.
It tastes like warm piss. He didn't even steal chilled beer. Fucking hell.

You climb out of the vehicle and robotically walk towards the front door. Chuck swaggers up alongside you, still clutching his ill-gotten gains. The two of you enter the house, and you immediately notice Aleena hopping up from the living room couch. She's changed from her royal Mobian clothes to her previous get up of a plain white tee and Cadet Blue sweats.
"So, how was the driving lesson?", she asks expectantly. You remain silent. All you do is gently place her key in her hand and stagger towards the recliner.
"It went pretty good, I'd say!", Chuck chimes in, acting as if nothing was wrong. "Anon here's a natural! I bet he'll be driving for NASCAR one day!"
"Oh, really?", Aleena responds, pleasantly surprised. "I guess I was worried for nothing th--", she continued, before stopping as soon as she

looked out the window and beheld the obvious damage.

"What the FUCK happened to my SUV, Charles", Aleena sternly grilled her brother.
"Oooohh, yeah, right, that", Chuck replied, pretending to remember something. "Uhhhhhmm...what was it, Anon?", he innocently asks you, placing his free hand on his hip, where he's hiding his gun.
You glare in his direction quietly for a few moments, internally seething at his pathetic act, before returning your eyes straight forward, averting them away from the two elder Mobians.
"...I took a wrong turn and wound up in a bad neighborhood", you tell, emotionlessly. "Before I knew it, some black motherfuckers came up and started shooting at us"
"Yeah! That's what happened, yep!", Chuck pipes up, as if that would verify this moronic tale.
"...Where did you get the beer, Charles.", Aleena asks, obviously not buying this bullshit.
"Found it", he bluntly responds. Aleena buries her face in her palm out of frustration.

Suddenly, a loud knocking comes from the front door, catching everyone off-guard.
"POLICE! OPEN UP!", shouts a voice from behind the door.

Oh no.

END CHAPTER 13

Chapter 14 - Turnabout Is Fair Play

You feel Aleena staring daggers into you from behind the recliner. You don't have the courage to face her directly. Instead, your head sinks deeply into your shoulders out of shame.
"Well, you know the drill", Chuck quickly states as he scuttles further into the house with his case of stolen beer.
"No, I don't!", Aleena shouts back at her mischievous brother. "What the hell am I supposed to tell them?!"
"I don't fucking know, make something up!", retorts the criminal uncle. "This is strike fourteen for me! I can't go back to the fucking can! They'll rape my fine ass for sure!", he yells before escaping to the kitchen, opening yet another can and slurping it down.
Aleena groans in frustration before marching over to you to face you directly. Your posture stiffens as she stares you down.

"Anon, you tell me exactly what the fuck happened NOW", she sternly orders, gritting her teeth.
"Chuck made me drive down to Phil's Liquor Mart and he stole a case of beer", you tearfully tell Aleena. "He didn't tell me his plan until he'd already done it. When the clerk opened fire on us, I sped away because I was afraid he was gonna kill me"
Aleena stares at your pathetic face for a moment before taking a deep breath through her nose.
Another loud knock comes from the front door.
"WE'RE GOING TO BREAK DOWN THIS DOOR IF YOU DON'T OPEN UP IN TEN SECONDS!", shouts the voice from behind the door. "10! 9!", the disembodied voice begins counting as Aleena returns to fling open the front door.

As the door opens, you spot two police officers decked out in black body armor.
"What the hell do you want?", the purple queen asks, annoyed.
"What took you so long to respond, ma'am?" asks one of the officers in response.
"I was taking a shit", Aleena crudely states. "This better be important enough for me to skip wiping"
An odd thing to lie about, but maybe that's a sign she's not going to just hand you over to them? You nervously get out of your seat to watch from afar.

"Ma'am, is that your SUV parked over there?", asks the other officer, pointing to the bullethole-ridden vehicle you drove.
"It is, what of it?", replies the plum matron, still in an aggravated tone.
"I'm afraid you're gonna have to come downtown with us for questioning", orders the first officer.
Your stomach is twisting itself in knots over the thought of Aleena getting arrested in yours and Chuck's stead.
"I'm not going anywhere", retorts the Hedgehog mother as she crosses her arms. "Ask whatever moronic questions you have now so I can get on with my day"

"Where were you at approximately 1:20 PM today, miss...?", asks the other officer, trailing off, hoping for Aleena's name.
"Hedgehog. And I was napping", Aleena states plainly. "Anon over here can corroborate my story", she says, pointing towards you.
You're taken aback by the sudden inclusion. "Huh? Me?", you timidly ask, pointing at yourself.
"No, I call the turd in my pocket 'Anon'", Aleena says sarcastically. "Is there anyone else here with that name?"
Ignoring the crude remark, you hesitantly approach the front door. You get a better look at the policemen grilling Aleena.

Two male humans in full cop gear stand outside on the stoop. One is Black and the other Caucasian. They're each equipped with a tazer, pepper spray, and a standard-issue 9mm glock.
The ensemble makes you realize how deeply you stepped in shit. You begin to sweat profusely.
"Uh-y-yeah, th-that's what sh-she was d-d-doing alright, ah, yep", you stammer out. Oh, way to go, THAT performance was sure to convince them.
"Are we to assume you're this woman's son?", asks the black cop.

"You can, if you're retarded", quips Aleena. "Does he LOOK like my son?", she then asks.

Too frightened to find her response hilarious, you glance at her and frantically swipe your fingers across your throat, gesturing for her to cut it out.

"Why aren't you in school, son?", grills the white cop.

"Uh, I'm suffering from BMPS, sir", you state after clearing your throat. "I needed Miss Hedgehog here to watch over me since my parents couldn't as they were too busy."

"Bartleby Montclair Proximity Syndrome?", the black cop pipes up. "How the fuck are you still walking?"

"Whatever,", interrupts the white policeman. "Where were you at 1:20 PM this afternoon?", he then asks.

Oh, no. You were at the scene of the robbery. You were the getaway driver, even if it was unwittingly, you're still an accessory to the crime. Your eyes dart about as you struggle to think of an alibi.

Aleena rolls her eyes, sighing.

"He was with me", the Mobian queen declares. "We had just finished having hot, steamy sex, and he was in the bathroom, freshening up"

The unusually lewd false alibi startles you. "A-ALEENA?!", you frantically cry out in confusion, as your face turns as red as a strawberry. Aleena grabs you by your collar to bring you down to eye level with her.

"Would you rather go to prison?", she whispers to you.

"...yes, I am her lover", you monotonously announce, too frightened by the prospect of assrape to consider telling the truth.

The black cop leans in close and begins sniffing. The action confuses and slightly disturbs you.

"...Is that alcohol on your breath, boy?", he asks after finishing his smell test.

Oh crap it is, fucking Chuck's beer, why did you have to look so tasty after that harrowing escape?

What else could explain the stench of alcohol on a minor's breath?

"...it's mouthwash", you bluntly reply after some thought.

"That's right", Aleena chimes in. "He ate my pussy, I haven't cleaned up down there in some time, are we done here?", she rattles off in a huff while tapping her foot. You glance away from everyone out of embarrassment.

Jesus fucking Christ, Aleena. You don't need to go THAT hard. Then again, you don't have any other better stories. Maybe it's best to let her cover for you.

"Look, we're not leaving unless someone here's in handcuffs", declares the black cop.

As he proclaims that, you hear loud footsteps stomping from behind you. As you peek back into the house, Chuck has staggered his way towards the front door.

"Yyyyoouuuu fffpfpfucking pigsh ain't got SSSHHIT for evidensh", slurs Uncle Chuck, barging his way through you and Aleena as he points aggressively at the two law enforcement officers.

His stance is incredibly loose and unstable. Just how drunk is he right now?

"Go ahead! TEAR THISH HOUSH INSHIDE OUT!", challenges Drunkle Chuck, as he dramatically gesticulates towards the home. "You won't find aaaaaany fuckin' Bud Light!"

"...we didn't say which brand of beer was stolen", says the white officer. Chuck blinks asymetrically towards them. You can see the gears in his head grinding.

"Oh thosh black motherfuckin' NIGGERSH", the mustachioed Mobian garbles, as he shakes his fist. "Firsht they shhhoot up my shishtersh ESHYUBEE and NOW they shteal shome beer"

"What the fffuck happened to thish neighborhood?", Chuck tearfully asks, as he places his hand on the black cop's shoulder, either for comfort or stability.

"It ushed to be you could leave yer door unlocked at night but now you cashabable a GOOD pfuggin zagn", he continues slurring until it becomes completely incomprehensible both due to drunkenness and crying.

Well, so much for avoiding prison time. Your anus had a good run.

"Where the hell was he at 1:20 PM today", grunts the white cop to Aleena as Chuck continues breaking down.

Aleena is at a complete loss. To be fair, I think convincing anybody that a clearly drunk Chuck wasn't guilty of stealing a case of beer would be impossible for all but the most accomplished shysters.

"I,", Chuck pipes up as his drunken rant ends. "Wuzh in the shed. Makin' a birdhoushe. GETTIN' WASHTED WHILE DOIN' IT", he loudly announces. "Izzat a CRIME?!"

"Considering you're on parole, yes it is", replies the black cop.

"You're not my parole offisher!", Chuck retorts, wheeling around to the policeman with the afro.

"Yes, I am. I was just in the neighborhood when we got the call", the black cop plainly states in response.

Chuck squints at him cock-eyed, before his eyes widen in surprise.

"Oh, shit, it'sh WILKIIIIINSH!", he cheers, raising his arms. "What UP, my nigga?! Give me shum SHKIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIN", Chuck loudly calls out with his right arm raised high above his head.

As he swats at the air, hoping to high-five the officer, Chuck loses his balance and falls flat on face, ass in the air. He then begins loudly snoring a few seconds after the impact.

The two cops glare at Aleena and you.

You're doomed.

As you begin to consider just crying and telling the police everything, hoping they'll show mercy, an unexpected voice rings out to your left.

"Momma?", asks a familiar pink hedgehog with concern in her voice.
You and Aleena snap to the voice down by the corner and spot the Hedgehog siblings approaching the scene.
"Kids?!", Aleena shouts, confused. "What the hell are you doing home so early?"
"Some kid shot himself at school and they let us out for 'mental health' reasons", Manic explains, high-fiving Sonic as the twin brothers pump their fists in excitement. "Early out, bitches!", Sonic cheers.
"Oh my god!", you cry out in shock, covering your mouth at the distressing news.

"What's going on? Did Uncle Chuck hit you again, Momma?", asks Sonia.
The two cops glare at Aleena and you once more. Aleena groans while rubbing her head in frustration.
This REALLY isn't the time for that, Sonia.
"Alright, get up, Chuck" says Officer Wilkins(h?) as the two cops bend down to drag Chuck to his feet. The jostling wakes the elder male hedgehog up from his drunken stupor to grunt inquisitively at the two.
"We're going downtown", says the Caucasian copper.
"You meanies!", shouts Sonic. "Let my creepy uncle go!"

Suddenly, an idea started to form in your head. It was a long shot, and probably wasn't worth attempting, but damn it, you're out of options.
"Officer, wait!", you cry out, grabbing their attention. The two policemen look your way, annoyed at the obvious attempt to stall.
"W-what was the description of the robber?", you ask with hesitation.
"Well, it was hard to understand the clerk through his goatfucker accent", the unnamed white cop begins explaining, "but he said it was a fat, blue Mobian hedgehog with red running shoes"
"No other identifying characteristics?", you inquire, rubbing your chin.
"No. Where are you going with this?", Wilkins asks.
"I-I'm just saying, that there's more than one person that fits that description", you state.

Chuck staggers to his feet and wrestles his way out of the cops' grips.
"THAT'SH RIGHT!", he shouts. It seems Chuck's caught on to your plan. He turns around dramatically and points towards Sonic.
"HEEEEEEE'SH THE ONE THAT DID IT!", the mustached ugly bastard loudly reveals. Sonic is taken aback.
"W-what? What's going on?! I'm so frightened!", Sonic cries out, confused and scared.
You're a little disgusted with yourself, but you hold on dearly to your plan, praying that it works.
"He shtole the beer, brought it to me, and I duh-RANK it without question 'cuz I don't know no better!", Chuck pieces together, wagging his finger with every word.

The two cops approach Sonic menacingly. "Alright, son, you're going downtown with us", says the white cop.
"No! Help!", cries out the younger blue hedgehog. "Mommy! Bartleby! Save me!"

As soon as Sonic's cries for help leave his lips, you hear a loud impact on the concrete to your right. Everyone, including yourself, turns to face the source of the noise.
You spot a seven-mile long limousine made of solid gold parked across the street from the Hedgehog abode.
...How the fuck did you not notice that until just now?
Standing beside this behemoth vehicle is BabaBAbABBBabarbArba
BahaAArrababbalba
BARBALAGGGGHFUCKINGGGGGGFFFFFFFFFFFFRRRRRRRRRRRRGHGHGHGHGHGHGH

It was a completely ordinary fellow student who just happens to be the richest, sexiest man alive

You clench your eyes shut, breathing deeply, desperately convincing yourself of the previous statement, because you weren't about to suffer BMPS once more after all the shit you've gone through in the last 24 hours.

"I can see why they call police officers 'brave'", declares [THE COMPLETELY ORDINARY FELLOW STUDENT], "seeing as you're placing your hands on my personal bitch."
"[REDACTED]! My lover!", proclaims Sonic. The two officers are scared shitless. Trembling, they release Sonic as he runs over to [SCHOOLYARD CHUM]'s side.
"[ORDINARY STUDENT]?! Oh shit! I didn't sign up for this!", the white cop shrieks in terror.
"U-uuuhh, w-we'll j-just l-l-let him off w-with a w-w-w-warning this t-time", stutters out Officer Wilkins, shrinking back towards the nearby cop car.
[ACADEMIC ASSOCIATE] narrows his eyes threateningly at them.
"Um, Okay, w-we'll arrest that store clerk! Haha, nobody's gonna care if some Muslim prick goes to jail!", nervously shouts the black policeman in response.
The two cops quickly hop in their car and speed away.

The threat has passed. Your plan actually worked. Your shoulders slack in relief as Chuck drunkenly staggers towards you and places his hand on your left shoulder, rocking you back and forth in celebration.
Your feelings of relief are short-lived however, as [FELLOW SCHOLAR]'s massive shadow approaches and looms over you and Chuck menacingly.
"Now, which one of you tried framing my perfect blueberry baby for a crime he didn't commit?", he sternly asks as he stares you down, his mouth downturned into a wide scowl, showing his anger.
"Because they're about to get the wettest, nastiest beef stew I've ever given anyone in my life", he then announces. You had a distinct feeling

he wasn't about to produce a piping-hot bowl of Dinty Moore from somewhere.

You and Chuck exchange looks. Chuck seems surprisingly confident in the face of utter doom. He stumbles forward, shakily holding his finger up as if to announce something. Fortunately, years of playing video games and not binge-drinking have polished your reflexes far beyond what Chuck could hope to match. "It was Chuck", you quickly mutter, pointing at the elder hedgehog before he can say anything. Chuck's eyes widen, as if having been found out. "Anon, you SON OF A B--Mmph!", Chuck begins to shout as he draws his hidden pistol, before his speech is cut off by [CLASSIFIED]'s massive mitt of a hand clutching his face. Chuck drops his handgun as he's yanked towards his demise.

In a flash, [PLAIN PUPIL] drops trow and places Chuck's face firmly between his thick, sinewy asscheeks. As soon as his victim is clenched by his glutes, [SCHOLASTIC COLLEAGUE] unleashes a cacophony of flatulence the likes of which you weren't even aware was possible. The ground beneath you begins to quake. Your ears begin to ring. Car alarms two blocks over are going off. And the smell. THE FUCKING SMELL. You fear your fingernails are going to peel upwards from the horrific stench coming from [EDUCATIONAL COMRADE]'s colon. It's like a sewer being set on fire. With every fart that rings out, Chuck's body helplessly flails about like a flag caught in a hurricane. Sonic watches on with a lust-filled look on his face. His nose is bleeding. After concluding Chuck's punishment, [PEDAGOGICAL COMPANION] tosses his body aside onto the lawn. Chuck lays there, having lost consciousness from the dreaded Beef Stew. You feel kind of bad, selling out Chuck like that after you went so far to bail him out of prison time, but you write it off as karmic retribution finally catching up to him.

"So, am I supposed to know you?", asks [THE GUY WHO'S NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ALMOST KILLING YOU WITH A GLANCE YESTERDAY]. "I-I-I'm the n-n-nuh-new k-ki-kid in ssssschool, s-sssir", you stammer out hesitantly to your hero. "Didn't see you in class today", he replies, not believing you. "U-um...I was out sick b-because I almost d-d-died f-from l-looking at y-you", you timidly explain. "...Yeah, gonna need a better hint", Bartleby responds callously. "You...you can't tell me you don't remember that", you say in disbelief. "Homeroom? Yesterday? You left early because you were humiliated by that", you attempt to clarify.

"No, I left early yesterday because I had to take a fucking dump", the golden god ripostes. "The school's pathetic plumbing can't handle the volume of my stinky poopy, so I went and bought another Great Lake to use as my personal toilet" "Wha...really?", you ask, dumbfounded. "While I was out, I attended the grand opening of my 225 million acre golf course, which was formerly Venezuela, and rented out Ronald McDonald as my personal bitch's birthday clown", Bartleby proclaims. "Oh, Bartleby!", squeals Sonic lovingly. "You treat me so well! You didn't have to do something so extravagant!" "Oh? Then I'll cancel his appearance", replies the Mobian Mogul. "No wait, Bartleby, I didn't mean--", the azure Hedgehog attempts to salvage the situation. "Too late, I've already decided", Bartleby harshly responds, before returning his attention to you. "Now, do you expect me to remember every single shit I've ever taken?", he asks you.

Hearing Bartleby list off all the crazy shit he did yesterday made you realize how insignificant your near death experience really was by comparison. "So, who told you that obvious lie of me being humiliated by your near death?", Bartleby inquires. "Sonic", you thoughtlessly blurt out as you point to the other blue hedgehog. Bartleby's ire-filled gaze lands on his lover. "But Bartleby, I--", Sonic begins to explain, before being cut off by Bartleby clutching Sonic by the face and giving him the same punishment he gave Uncle Chuck. Like, the EXACT same punishment. You have no clue how he could have any more farts of that caliber left in his body after the first go-around, but he's really pulling out all the stops on this. Maybe he's able to invert his intestines at will or something. Upon executing Sonic's punishment, Bartleby tosses Sonic's unconscious body aside, right beside his nearly identical uncle.

"Now get out of my way, I have to fucking piss", Bartleby orders as he pushes past you and enters the Hedgehog abode. ...You just realized you've been able to see him as 'Bartleby' for the past few minutes instead of the blinding god-king from yesterday. You don't think BMPS will be an issue moving forward.

Manic and Aleena follow him inside. Sonia hops up in front of you. You didn't get a chance to notice her wardrobe had changed since you last saw her this morning. She's wearing a light pink windbreaker with a white hood and trim, and a pair of jeans and stark-white sneakers. She also has a yellow backpack that seems weighed down by copious amounts of homework and books.

"So, how was your day, Anon?", she chipperly asks you. As if you could possibly answer that without getting sent to the psych ward. "...it was okay", you bluntly mutter, too exhausted from the absolute insanity of today to properly explain everything. Sonia seems to ignore your response and pushes a single finger into your solar plexus again. This time, however, you manage to put up some resistance and stay on your feet. "W-What are you doing?", you ask the bubblegum-colored girl, flustered. "Hey! You're all better!", she proclaims.

...What?

You look down and realize that she's right.

Your legs haven't wobbled once for a few minutes. You slightly squat up and down to test yourself. No numbness, no tingling, your limbs are restored to their former glory.

Plenty of rest and lots of fluids be damned, the real cure was crippling anxiety and alcohol.

END CHAPTER 14

Chapter 15 - Cause For Celebration

You enter the Hedgehog house along with Sonia, still enamored with your recovered legs, watching their every bend with wide eyes. Sonia giggles a bit at your exaggerated movements, which snaps you out of your fixation, causing you to chuckle in response, embarrassed. You reflexively almost ask about how Sonia's day went, when you remembered the reason why everyone came home early. Apparently, a fellow schoolmate shot himself while you've been gone. Certainly not news you were expecting to hear today. However, despite this distressing event, none of the other kids seem phased by it in the slightest. Perhaps it was best to get more info.

"So, how are you guys holding up?", you ask, gingerly tiptoeing into an obviously sensitive topic. Sonia just raises an eyebrow and cocks her head slightly, confused by what you're asking.

"I mean, one of our fellow students just died today, that's kinda fucked up", you tack on, abandoning the gentle approach when it became clear Sonia was unaware of what you were talking about.

Despite the morbid topic, Sonia simply smirks, rolls her eyes, and says, "Anon, relax, it was just Carlos."

"Who?", you ask back. You'd never heard of this Carlos character before.

"Boy, isn't THAT the million-dollar question", Manic sarcastically quips, having overheard the conversation. "He was some Mexican faggot that nobody liked", the emerald brother then explained.

"Jesus, dude", you exclaim, somewhat shocked at Manic's completely callous and harsh description. "That's how you talk about someone who was so bullied that he killed himself?"

"No, Anon, you don't understand", his pink sister chimes in, catching your attention. "Carlos was actually planning on shooting up the school, not just committing suicide"

"...Oh", you reply, completely unsure how to feel at this point. "Is everyone okay?", you ask, concerned for your schoolmates.

"They're all fine", says Sonic, as he limps through the front door, having recovered from Bartleby's punishment braps earlier. "That faggot Carlos tripped on his shoelaces and blew his own brains out on accident"

You hear Aleena stifle a snicker at the deceased student's misfortune from the living room. Jesus, even in death, this Carlos kid can't catch a break.

"So, he was gonna Columbine the school? You're sure?", you inquire, dumbfounded by the development.

"Yep", Sonia responds. "The police found his manifesto in his backpack. It said he was sick of nobody finding him funny or likeable"

"Why'd everyone think that way?", you query. "Because he was unfunny and unlikeable", Sonic piped up. "Seriously, Anon, don't defend the prick, you didn't know him"

"Oh my god, remember his 'class clown' phase?", Manic asks. Sonic retches in his throat a little at the memory. "Bro, don't make us remember that shit"

"Why? Was it cringy or something?", you quiz, too curious to ignore this trainwreck of a human.

"He kept making jokes about George Floyd and how he was a 'knee-gro', like that was the funniest joke in the whole fucking world", recounted the blue hedgehog.

Well, it's KINDA funny, but it's not really something that would elicit anything more than a scoff or nasal exhalation from you. It's shocking, but it's humor that a child acting out for attention would use.

"Oh, and don't forget how much he simped over Flora of all fucking people", Manic says. "Flora?", you ask, unsure of who he's referring to.

"The blue bitch that sits next to me in homeroom. You saw her", the grassy-haired hedgehog explains. You do vaguely recall someone fitting that description from yesterday.

"I'm pretty sure Carlos tried raping her one time", Sonia shockingly recalls. You can only mutter "Fuck..." in disbelief. As awful as it makes you sound, maybe it was a good thing this kid died.

"If it was anyone else, I would just laugh about it", Sonic replies, "but that faggot Carlos didn't deserve anything he wanted"

"So, basically, a lifetime of being a little shit ostracized this kid and made him a social pariah", you summarize. "I don't know what that means, but it made him a complete bitch", Manic responds.

"Mindy was actually by the principal's office when they had to call his parents to tell him the news", Sonia reports. "You wanna know what they said when they heard?", she then asks you.

You nod your head, too enthralled to ignore the juicy gossip any longer.

Sonia, trying to suppress her laughter tells you, "they said, 'Can we at least get the guns back? They cost us like two hundred bucks!'", to which everyone in the nearby vicinity explodes in laughter.

Even you're caught up in it. You know you're going to hell for it, but, fuck, that's just hilariously cruel.

Even Chuck, who finally recovered from his punishment earlier, lowered his gun trained on you to join in on the fun.

"Yes, that's just the perfect ending to a miserable wretch's life if I've ever heard one", a familiar, dignified voice rings out from upstairs. Bartleby has left the upstairs bathroom and is now sashaying down the stairs towards the ground floor. Everyone's eyes are locked on this marvelous being during his elegant descent. You, in particular, take in Bartleby's wardrobe. He's currently wearing his iconic brown suit with a bright white silken cravat, tucked neatly into the breast of his jacket. There's a noticeably large wet spot on the crotch of his pants. You weren't about to point it out, though. He's also wearing a set of Antonio Vietri Moon Star shoes, glinting with his every stride as the overhead light hits them at just the right angles. Truly, you're blessed to witness this divine creature.

"It's a death that's well-deserved for someone so self-centered", the blonde bombshell continues. "Self-centered?", you ask, hoping for clarification. It's totally cool if he doesn't clarify, though, it's your fault for being ignorant. "Yes, you see, everything he did had to get everyone's attention", Bartleby responds, causing to squeal internally. "It wasn't enough that he was good at something, he had to be better than someone else" "He started his dreaded 'class clown' phase because he had to be funnier than Manic", the duodecillionaire continues. "He had to have Flora to prove his love was better than the love between me and my bitch" "He even started drawing to supplant the illustrious Tamers Twelve Thousand Three Hundred and Forty Five", Bartleby goes on to say. You weren't aware of who the other artist was, but for some reason you chose not to ask out of fear it may alienate you from everyone else. "It was never about producing beauty for everyone else's sake,", says the richest man alive, "but purely for his own selfish desire to be loved unconditionally"

"What an asshole", you reply, having made your decision about Carlos.

"Can we please stop talking about him?", asks Sonia, somewhat distressed. "I just want to forget he existed and move on with my life" "Yes, this isn't a day for him to ruin any longer,", Bartleby declares, "But rather, a time of joyous celebration! Come, my friends! To Olive Garden for their unlimited supply of breadsticks!" Surprised by his generous offer, everyone cheers as Bartleby leads Sonic towards the front door. As the rest of you begin to follow, however, the mood suddenly turns.

"Hold the fuck up", Bartleby commands as his head snaps towards the group following him and his bitch. "Where the fuck are all you shitstains going?" "W...with you?", Manic speaks up, confused as to this heel-turn of generosity. "You invited all of us as 'friends'?" "I meant to say 'friend'", Bartleby explains. "And by 'friend', I meant 'personal bitch'. What, you think I can afford to feed all of you?" ...Is that a trick question? Well, whatever, your relationship with Bartleby as 'friend' was a pipe-dream anyway. Everyone mutters and grumbles as they walk away, leaving Bartleby and Sonic to exit the house unabated.

"Oh, hey, Anon, I almost forgot", Sonia pipes up as she takes off her heavy backpack. "I picked up all your homework for you from the last two days!" Sonia fishes out several text books and papers with various problems on them and hands them to you. Oh. Yippee. You forgot you'd started school already. Well, at least you won't be behind, hopefully. "Thanks", you grumble flatly. "If you want, I can help you finish it", the pink hedgehog offers kindly. Manic sniggers at the proposal. "Yeah, that's rich, a GIRL helping anyone with homework", the viridian brother mocks. "You might as well just draw a big fucking 'F' on your sheet. Save the teacher some time" "Manic, stop being sexist towards your sister", Aleena scolds from the living room. "Last I checked, your grades were worse than hers" "That's only because homework is for fucking nerds and faggots", Manic quips back. "I won't need math when I'm a fucking pro gamer, smoking bitches at Fortnite and getting paid for it"

Manic dashes upstairs to the kid's bedroom after his declaration, no doubt to practice his craft. You'd consider joining him, but the stack of homework weighing your arms down makes you reconsider. "...If you want to help, that'd be cool, Sonia", you say to your cotton-candy colored friend. Sonia flashes her trademark smile in return. You feel like you're blushing a little. The two of you enter the living room and see Aleena flipping through channels on the TV, smoking her Marlboros. It seems she's been busy, considering the empty ashtray she had this morning has been filled with over a dozen butts. You take a seat in the recliner and set your massive stack of books down beside it. Sonia takes her seat on the sofa closest to you and digs out a few Lisa Frank brand pencils and hands one to you. After taking it, with dread setting in, you grab the first book from the top of your pile. Math. Ugh. You hate math. "Oh my God, I had to get that from Mr. Stevens today", Sonia groans as you eye your textbook. "He's the fucking WORST"

Oh, great, as if you didn't already have apprehensions about this subject, she had to open her adorable mouth. "Is he really that bad?", you question. "Uuuuugh, he just hands out these impossible problems one after the next", the hedgehog sister complains. "He IS a bit of an asshole", Aleena chimes in, still flipping through various daytime trash TV shows. Of course. You get stuck with the most hated teacher in school for one of your weakest subjects. Par for the fucking course. Well, there's no use putting it off. You crack open the arithmetic tome hesitantly and flip to the assigned page of problems.

1.) 4 + 7 =

...what.

Okay, fine, first problem of the semester, of course it's gonna be easy. You scrawl '11' down on your corresponding worksheet and move on to the next problem.

2.) $2 \times 3 =$

Is this a fucking joke.

You skim through every page of your textbook to see if there's anything even remotely challenging. Variables, exponents, square roots, fucking parentheses, anything advanced.

This is fucking remedial math. Division isn't even introduced until the very last chapter.

You were in Algebra last year. You hated it, but you dealt with all those a's and b's and x's and shit.

...Math just became a free subject this semester. Fuck yeah.

You breeze through the problems that a 5 year old could solve with the greatest of ease. After finishing in just a few minutes, you close your textbook and get ready to move on to the next one, when you glance up.

Sonia's mouth has gone slack and her eyes are as big as dinner plates.

"Anon...Are you some kind of fucking genius?", Sonia apprehensively quizzes. You simply shrug before moving on to your next assignments.

English just dealt with adverbs.

History was about which presidents are on the dollar bills.

Science was about what temperatures water melts and freezes.

Literature was just about Jack and Jill going up a hill and getting water. It didn't even cover the latter half of the tale yet. Must be tomorrow's assignment.

...Were you enrolled in a retard school by accident? The bus you rode the other day didn't SEEM short.

You complete all of your homework in less than thirty minutes. Even the stuff from yesterday. As you close up your last textbook and place it beside you, you notice Sonia is still as enthralled by your performance as she was earlier.

"...Did you want help with YOUR homework, Sonia?", you offer to her.

She simply nods, unblinking, mouth still agape.

END CHAPTER 15