

I'm really sorry for the long wait. I'm moving and trying to put in my last hours at work and such. Plus I've been really looking forward to writing this chapter and I didn't wanna fuck it up. This is my favorite chapter so far because it has several moments I've been itching to get out of my system. I think I'll concentrate on my supporting cast a little after this. I have a few ideas worked up for Ron, and I wanna kick-start Johnny's leg (innuendo only slightly intentional), and I'd like to build on Veronica a little. Here's chapter 14!

So the usual disclaimery stuff applies.

And also, I don't own Silent Hill or anything, I just obsess about it. Konami owns it. And the movie belongs to Silent Hill DCP. Inc.-Davis Films, although this book will have little, if anything, to do with the first movie.

Silent Hill – Vows of the Broken

By Eric Wythe

Chp. 14

I unlocked the door and shoved it open. It was fucking heavy and made a loud screeching noise as I forced it open. Eventually it gave way and I fell on my hands and knees, my breathing was scattered. I lifted myself up, my hands were scraped and my pants were wet. I heard a loud crash and flinched.

I looked up and it was raining hard. The ground was mostly grating but some of the asphalt was still intact, with a scatter of square holes in the grating. Some of the small trees in planters were still around, but they were shriveled up and bent to a very uncomfortable position of malnourishment. The rain made it look like they were dripped with blood.

This was the darkest I've ever seen the town, if I wasn't careful I'd fall into one of those holes. It's really hard to fucking think straight with all the sounds coming from nowhere though. The noises kept me on edge. The lack of light made me glance at pretty much everything I thought was moving. Most doors were rusted shut and some of the layout of the school was changed. I wandered aimlessly, dodging and shooting down a handful of dogs along the way.

I eventually stumbled upon (more like retreated) into the cafeteria. Although, it looked more like a giant tin box, the tables were all gone, there was wrecked up food counter in the corner, and there was a desk in the corner with a computer on it.

The roof was so high it just disappeared into darkness.

I walked slowly across the expansive area, it was really quiet in here and that unnerved me more than the loud noises that were heard outside. About halfway through

the area I felt a sharp pain in my temple, I flinched and stumbled back. I heard a crash and opened my eyes again.

I was sprawled out on the floor.

It was like with John's car in the parking lot. Only I the figures were more solid, and there were other people here. There were transparencies of the old benches we used to have. The people, and some of the things were all like they were ten years ago, but the rest of the caf stayed dreary.

I got up and rubbed my chin, across from me was Corey with a snide look on his face. Behind him were his goons and John was off the side with a conflicted look on his face.

I'll handle him. I remember saying.

"Oh! He gets up! I guess all faggots are gluttons for punishment. Say, how hard do I have to fuck you to get you to shut up?"

I just gave a yell and lunged at him, I landed a solid right hook to his nose. He recoiled and stared at me with a stunned expression.

"You..." He touched his nose. His look went from shocked to seething. He grabbed my neck and held me in place. He sent a punch directly into my jaw again and let me go right as it connected. I flew across the room like a rag doll.

I collected myself on my hands and knees; I saw my mouth working and spit out a clot of blood at the nearest foot available. I got up and lunged at him again. He caught my punch and held it like it was nothing. He pulled my arm to drag me towards him and gave me a low blow to my stomach. I doubled over and he sent another punch to my face and I went flying back to where I started.

Johnny ran over to me this time, but I pushed him away.

"I don't... I don't fucking need you!"

I remember this. I remember when I still resisting my feelings for Johnny... that I didn't need him to fight my battles... or to take care of me. This was when I was still bent on staying self-reliant.

Independent.

When I still thought I could do everything on my own.

I got up again. My face was battered, I was holding my side and I was slouched forward. I could barely stand but somehow I managed to limp over to Corey and lift my

fist up one last time. He shoved me away and I slid across the ground. I got up on my hands and knees and he walked over to me.

I looked up and he had a sneer across his face, he drew back his leg to kick, but faster than I even thought possible, Johnny moved in front of me, enveloped me in his arms and took the full force of the kick and didn't even budge from it. He didn't even grunt.

Corey looked bewildered. "Johnny, move! I wanna give this faggot what he's had coming!"

John slowly looked back at him and gave him the look I prayed to god he never used on me.

"Leave Corey. You're done." He said it with an icy cold steadiness that scared the crap out of me but made me feel incredibly safe at the same time. You could practically hear the period drop into place. And I was just witnessing this from afar.

The crowd around us pretty much backed off, very slowly, as if they were afraid of setting John off. Fuck, if he didn't have me in a steel grip I would've done the same.

Then the crowd faded into nothing. So did Corey and the tables. All that was left were the transparencies of John and I. He had me cradled in his arms and was staring into me, forehead to forehead. I was struggling to keep consciousness, and they were talking quietly. I walked right up to us and squatted down onto the heels of my feet to listen closer.

"Why?" He asked softly.

"I-I don't want..." I coughed a little. "... you to save me."

"Why?" He asked again.

"I don't want to need it."

John shook his head against my forehead.

"I've never had anyone reliable in my life. My dad hates me, my mom... she does her best, but, she always needs to lean on me. I've never had anyone to turn to but myself."

"And Ron?"

"He tries, but he never forces his help on me. I'm too proud to ever ask for it."

"Daryl--"

“John I don’t want you to think I can’t fend for myself. I can’t burden you with that. And you’re not always going to be the-“

“You’re wrong.” John stated.

I opened my eyes and gazed at the smoldering look returning mine.

“Don’t you *dare* ever think you’re a burden Daryl. It’s okay to need help... I’ll always be there. It doesn’t matter. I’ll always be there to protect you.”

“But-“

“Stop it!” He hissed. “You can’t make it on your own Daryl. No one can. Rely on me. I won’t *ever* let you fall.”

“I-if you s-say so...” I closed my eyes at that. I guess I passed out..

Johnny kissed my forehead and lifted me up. Cradling my legs over his arm while supporting my head, he walked through me, and I bent my head back to watch him slowly make his way through the door. I put my head in my hands and ran my fingers through my hair.

Fuck.

I let out the breath I’d been holding since I stepped into the room.

It was hard not to cry.

It was a foggy day....

Ch’yeah, like it’d be any other type of day.

School had just got out; John and I were going shopping in Brahms. I was looking forward to the sun, keeping any semblance of a tan in this town is like trying to break a window by throwing a rubber chew toy at it. John was still out on the football field and I figured I’d sit in the stands and do whatever homework I had while waiting for him to finish.

Occasionally I would glance at number twelve, and see him catching a pass or tackling some random dude. During any water-breaks number twelve would come over and check up on me. I don’t know why. He’s the one getting tackled and shit. I was just sitting here failing to understand geometry. Algebra I get. Geometry goes way over my head.

No lie.

At some point number thirty-six trotted over and harassed me. Something about staring at his ass, but his ass is like any given PSP game. Pretty to look at, but once you go beyond the graphics... it's like... there's not a whole lot else there.

“Dude, you’re boring. My *geometry* homework is more interesting than you, and I *suck* at geometry. Go away.” I looked over at John and smiled. He was waving at me.

Corey saw and got a weird look on his face then spat out. “You better stay the fuck away from him queer! The less he’s around you the better!”

I gave him a look and shook my head. I then looked back down at my homework. “Oh, I totally will, I mean, it’s not like John’s the one who follows me around or anything. It ever cross your mind that *he* isn’t staying away from *me*?” Corey gave a growl, huffed.

Apparently that was enough to spark the fight in the cafeteria.

Anyway, Johnny came over and shooed him away. Practice eventually ended and we made our way to his car. He opened the passenger side first (the gentleman!) and I reached over to unlock his door from the inside. After spending a couple minutes making out I snuggled up to him and we drove the hour trip to Brahms.

It was cold out, I folded my arms up to keep me warm. Johnny noticed and draped his letterman jacket over me. I put it on all the way and walked close to John. He wrapped his arm around my waist as we made our way into the store.

It was your average sporting-goods store. Lots of display cramped into each other, a couple salesmen helping other people out. I wanted a new Speedo. My old one was beginning to tear. John was looking at the free-weights as I was just farting around looking at snow stuff. We weren’t exactly in a hurry.

“So what do you play?” A guy asked out nowhere. I jumped in surprise. He was tall, and blonde, with a thin-build that suggested he ran track. It was okay, not my thing.

“Huh?” I asked dumbfounded.

“You’re wearing a letterman jacket, uh-“He looked behind me, to read the name of the back. “Harris, so what do you play?”

And literally out nowhere John appeared, scaring the shit out of me like the guy did. He was looking quite happy, walked behind me and placed his hands on my shoulders. “Football.” He stated.

“Cool, what position?”

“Quarterback.” John smirked.

I looked up at John. He seemed to be enjoying this.

“So you play for Silent Hill, huh? We haven’t played you guys yet. Oh, hey! You must be that crazy new QB they got for your school! Weird, I heard you were… well… bigger.”

I frowned and looked up at Johnny again, and asked. “Did you find your Speedo Daryl?”

“Yup, I picked out a few I like; wanna help me make a decision?” John looked over at the guy and asked pleasantly “You work here right? Can you show us to a fitting room?”

“B-both of you?” had I not been really confused, and kinda annoyed with Dar-I mean John; I would’ve thought the guy’s behavior was cute.

“Yeah, got a problem with that?” I decided to, uh, try and be intimidating and fold my arms and stuff. I think it worked because he tensed and started to lead us to the changing rooms.

As we entered the hall to the changing rooms, Kyle-the salesclerk-asked. “D-do you g-guys want any help?”

I looked up at Johnny and smirked. “Yeah sure.” I started to take off his jacket and he handed me the Speedo’s. Kyle was kind of dumbfounded.

“Wait… what’s going…”

I laughed, “Yeah. Dude? I got cold and Johnny just gave me his jacket. I would’ve gladly cleared that up, but this goofball” I jacked my thumb in John’s direction, “wanted to fuck with you. The Speedo’s are for me, he’s just a pervert.”

John shrugged “I can’t help it.”

Kyle just kind of… shook his head and laughed. He then just stared at me… I felt like I was being violated.

“You know… I really should go inside with you; fitting those might require a specialist. I’m trained to fit… uh, those.” He looked at John, “You should wait outside sir. Store policy.”

John’s brow furrowed, “I don’t think that’s-“

Kyle cut him off, “No sir I insist.” He grabbed my arm and started to drag me into the handicapped room in the back with a fuming Johnny in tow.

“Is it a problem if I forgot to wear any underwear?” I asked. Like seriously, sex with John has kinda made it an article of clothing I could live without. Kyle started to pick up the pace at that.

It all happened so fast, Kyle dragged me into the room and began to undo my pants, he fumbled too much and I kinda stumbled backward, and caught myself on the wall facing the opposite direction with my back turned. And before I even knew what was going on I heard a loud thump and Kyle was on the floor with a bloody nose.

John grabbed me and we were out of there with four pairs of Speedo’s I didn’t even get to try on. John had his arm around my shoulders the entire time and he gave a hard look to anyone who even looked slightly in my direction.

John’s version was the guy “ran into” a wall.

I let out a chuckle into the floor. For every not so great memory of me by myself I have a great one of me with John. I guess that’s what he meant. Or maybe he just thought he’d never leave my side or something... I doubt he could’ve foreseen this.

Either way... he can make me feel better... without even really being here.

I looked up. A small... orb... like... thing... the size of bowling ball was situated directly in front of me. It was a puke green color.

I stared quizzically at it, I didn’t even notice it here when I walked in. What, did it like, roll in front of me when I wasn’t paying attention?

It then made a noise.

The only way I could describe it was... bones crunching.

It made the noise again.

And the a few more times.

And a hand poked out of the top of it.

Maybe more like a claw...

More cracking noises, the claw began to extend out into an arm.

It began a long series of loud crunching noises that got so loud I had to cover my ears, the longer the noises went, the longer the arm became, eventually the ball unraveled into no more than limbs and a torso. When the noises stopped, the creature was well over twice my height. Its long gawky limbs hung at its sides, it seemed to just stand

there. It was thin as a small tree so if I wanted a good shot at it I'd have to get close to it, but I don't particularly want to do that. It may not have a head but the thing is... breathing.

I held steadfast with my gun braced for what might happen. The room was dead quiet save for the body's breathing and mine. In the distance I could hear a soft clicking sound coming closer. The clicking sound circled around the room; I kept my ears open but didn't move my eyes from the Imposing Figure. The clicking eventually stopped somewhere between the distance of the figure and I, the room became quiet once again, my shoulders became tense.

A loud cry came from the space between us and the creature from the office crawled through the floor and climbed up the tall figure. It reached its shoulders and bit onto the small nub of its neck. The creature dug into the figure with its claws. One of the figure's hands moved up to the head and flexed its fingers. The head turned to face me and began to walk forward.

As it got closer it swiped its long arms at me and jumped back to avoid getting slashed. It didn't seem to have a very good footing because after trying to swipe at me it fell over. I lifted my gun to shoot it, but it reached out one arm and grabbed my foot. It pulled and I fell down and dragged me over to it. It used its other hand to grab my neck, the figure's claws began to dig into my skin from its tight grip. It braced itself up and kneeled over me without breaking its chokehold.

I was losing air fast, it held down one of my arms and its thin frame was surprisingly heavy, I couldn't budge. I held whatever breath I had left and stopped moving.

The creature noticed this and I guess it figured me for dead. It let up its grip on my neck and released my arms. It dragged a single claw over my face and I felt it cut a couple inches of my cheek. It kept it kept its claw over my face for a second.

Once it removed its hand from my face it got up and began to walk away. Still holding my breath I lifted my arm and aimed for the back of the things head.

I fired.

The figure stumbled forward and dropped to its knees. With a loud thump it fell to the ground, the smaller creature loosened on the body. They were both motionless. I got up and gave a swift kick to the body and the punted the smaller thing clear across the room.

Uh, for good measure.

As I reached the other end of the room my phone made a beeping sound. Low battery. I looked to my right at the computer in the corner. I dug out my USB charger and

let my phone sit for a few minutes. A long beep sounded and the computer screen went red, like back at the hardware store. I felt the strange sensation again in my head. Another long beep sounded and computer flipped off by itself. I shook my head.

I don't think I'll ever get used to that.

I grabbed my phone and pushed open the double doors.

I looked at my map and the back up again. This should be the quad...

Not a hallway.

It was made of brick... from what I could see. The walls were covered with papers. All of them notes, most of them were scrawled out to the point of not being legible. Some of them just had one word on them.

Names.

Mine and John's.

Mine were usually... crossed out or scribbled on. John's was written with meticulous cursive or very artistic old English print. All of the papers were soiled and crumpled as if someone just took them off the ground and slapped 'em on the wall. In the distance I could hear this short and shallow laugh. It sounded more like a sniffle, but it had this demented twist to that made it sound like a laugh.

I walked forward slowly. The hallway was a lot longer than it looked. The laughter would come from different spots of the hallway and echoed softly throughout. It was unnerving. From my map I guessed it was taking me to the gym. When I reached the end of the hallway I was faced with quite an unusual door. It had two circular depressions about the size of a nickel where the lock would be. Written in straggled rust on the door was a quote.

My blood for love, locked away-

Placed next to my heart-

Denied, my offering feels

... A Haiku? 'Kay.

I slowly brushed my fingers over the words, contemplating their meaning. The laughter stopped. I turned around and drew out my gun. I held my back against the door. It felt... warm. No... hot.

More like fucking searing!

“Fuck, ow!”

I jumped back and fell on my ass... a reoccurring theme I notice. The locket I found fell out my pocket and slid against the door.

Wait...

I looked to the depressions in the door, then to the locket, then to the haiku on the door, then to the locket again.

I let out an obligatory “Oooooohhh.” in realization.

I lifted myself up and grabbed the locket. I split it open and pushed the nickel-sized halves into the depressions on the door. A complicated series of noises sounded from inside the door. It mostly sounded like a chain unraveling around several parts of the door until an indefinitely loud ‘click’ that sounded more like a ‘clunk’ came from behind the door-handle.

I brought my hand up slowly and just let its weight drop onto the handle. It fell only slightly. I steeled myself and pushed through.

The grating on the floor sounded out my steps as I walked into the large room of what used to be the gym. It was much like the cafeteria, in the sense to where it became a giant tin box. The bleachers on either side had caved into themselves. The baskets had all collapsed and were hanging off the wall in twisted heaps. Streamers of various colors hung across the room, there were a few balloons in the corners too.

A person was standing in the middle of the room; I walked quietly over to him, keeping a few feet between us.

“Corey.” I said, not all that surprised.

Ten years didn’t do a whole lot for Corey. What used to be purely blonde locks turned into a dirty-blonde rat’s nest. His face was covered in dark smudges, mostly around his eyes; you could see the outlines of the path tears had taken. It all looked rubbed in. He was wearing a tuxedo with an open collar, a green tie hung loosely around his neck. He tucked his hands into pockets.

He grunted. “Not who I was expecting, but either way I’ll get what I want.” He looked down at his hand and clenched his fist. “I always get what I want.”

I sighed and closed my eyes. "Corey, what's going on? What's this all about?"

He scoffed, "Why's it matter? You're not gonna be alive long enough to care."

I opened my eyes and glared at him. "If you think you can kill me, you're a moron. More so than usual." I waved my gun in the air. "I am the one with the gun after all."

"I almost did it once." He smirked, but then became serious. "But he's not here to protect you this time, so it should be easy now."

I was taken aback a little, "What? You honestly thought that little tiff we had in the cafeteria almost *killed me*? Wow, you give yourself a lot of credit for a concussion."

His small smirk returned, then grew into a full-blown grin and I jumped a little when he burst out laughing. He stopped suddenly and whispered with a mischievous rasp, "Oh, that's right, you don't remember that do you?"

"Remember wha—"The sharp pain flew through my temples again and I flinched. I opened my eyes. Once again I was staring at myself. Corey was standing inside his own image. Seeing his messy face contrast with his perfect features from those years ago was interesting. What made it creepy was that while young Corey had this intense anger displayed on his face, the older one had this wide grin on it.

I was bracing myself on Corey's shoulder; his fist had dug into my side. He pushed me off him and I flew to the center of the room. I was wearing a tuxedo... In fact, so was everyone else in the room. Johnny, who had his back turned apparently, swiveled around and was at my side in an instant. He picked up my head placed it on his thigh. My face was white, so white that the blood veins in my face seemed to pop up to the surface of my skin. You could see them so clearly it was freaky.

"He isn't good enough..." Corey began. The young and older Corey's spoke in unison, the younger in an alcoholic drawl, the other in the low, chilling whisper. "He was never good enough for you!" He spat.

John just sat there, stroking my hair with a look of desperate concern. Veronica was shouting into her phone, pacing back and forth, flailing her arms in her beautiful ivory-silk one-piece. Ron was standing slightly to the side of us, braced to pounce on a single word.

"Why-why couldn't you pick me?!" Corey shouted. "I'm better than he is!" Tears were rolling down his face. "I l-love you! I could be..." he dropped to his knees on the floor. "I want to be..."

"You can't." John stated quietly.

John stood up, picking me up with him. He turned to his sister. “Fuck it Veronica, I can drive him there faster.” He looked at Ron and nodded to the door. “C’mon.”

“Please!” Corey wailed. “D-don’t! If he’s gone you can have me! Please...” Corey crawled a few paces towards John. But he was never even acknowledged. John just kept walking towards the door.

Corey was right. I didn’t remember any of this. I thought I just got sick on prom night... I didn’t know we were actually there. John knew about this all this time and never told me about it? Why-why would he do that?

The figures disappeared again, leaving me with Corey in the cold room. I turned to him. His expression hadn’t changed from his demented grin, but he had tears down his eyes, cutting into the grime as they trickled down his face. I began to fidget with my engagement ring.

“My punch punctured you appendix. If he had waited for the ambulance you would’ve died.” He paused. “He was supposed to be *mine* Daryl. But you took that away from me. *I* was supposed to have him. *Me. Me. Me!*” He punctuated each ‘me’ with a poke to the chest with his thumb.

“Then you wouldn’t be with him long.”

Corey gave me a curious look. “What?”

“John doesn’t belong to anybody. Either you belong to him or he moves on. He’s kind of primal like that.” I crossed my arms and shook my head. “If you didn’t know that then you wouldn’t ever have had a chance with him. Even without me in the picture.”

He became angry and stood up. “W-what do you know?! I just need to get rid of you, and then he’ll be mine!”

I paused. “Corey, I belong to him.” I raised my gun and aimed for his head. “That’s what I know.” I squeezed the trigger and sent a bullet straight through his head. Corey took a couple steps forward then collapsed face first onto the floor.

I replaced my gun and began walking to the other side of the gym. As I walked by Corey’s corpse, its arm grabbed my ankle. Corey’s corpse began to laugh hysterically as he lifted himself up. He pulled my ankle and sent me tumbling onto my back. I looked to his face and blood was pouring out of every orifice. He was laughing so loudly I had to cover up my ears. His gaze drifted to me, he stared at me intensely, as if he were trying to drill into my skull.

Black smoke suddenly exploded out of Corey’s body and flooded the entire room. It was pitch black, I could still breathe, and I couldn’t hear anything but the sound of my own breath. I turned on my flashlight. I couldn’t see more than two inches in front

of me. The smoke was trying to cover up everything. It was as if it was alive. I drew out my gun and began to walk forward, looking for anything that might do... something.

Some strange force pushed me forward, I stumbled and would've fallen but the same force pushed me back. It was like a cold wind without the breeze, it left a cold tingle on your skin. I fell onto my back and force pressed down me, pushing out all my air, cutting off any circulation. Just when I thought I was going to pass out, the pressure relieved itself. I put a hand to the floor to lift myself up, but I was pushed into the air, and then slammed onto the floor face first.

I couldn't move, I felt my conscious slipping through my fingers. I gazed out into the darkness, thinking the last thing I would see was nothing. But there was this little red light right in front of my eyes. This itty-bitty red light that barely even pierced through the dark smoke that filled the room.

I laughed internally.

If I was going to die in nothing, then I might as well make sure there's nothing. I had enough strength to sit the gun upright on the floor; I was still strong enough to lift my wrist against the pressure pounding on my back. I aimed and shot.

I missed.

I laughed internally again and let my limbs hit the floor. I lifted myself up again and took another shot.

Nothing.

I hit the floor again. I had one last shot in my gun. I had no room to breathe and my lungs were empty. My muscles ached and I had to fight to keep my eyes open. I gathered everything that I had left and shot.

The little red light extinguished and the smoke dissipated as Corey was sent flying through the air, landing on his back on the other side of the room. The gym reverted back to how it was when I entered it. I coughed as I felt air return to my lungs. While I was having my fit I looked over to Corey. He had his hand up in the air, as if trying to grab at something. The look on his face was a look of defeat and serene bliss.

“He told me; after prom that he didn’t want you knowing what happened.” His head turned and he looked at me. A drop of blood slowly trickled down the bullet wound on his forehead. “That he never wanted to burden you with me any further than he had already. He told me that I had to basically cease to exist to you. He told me, that if he could help it, he’d keep you from having any bad memories. That’s why. He just wanted you to think you got sick.”

He coughed and blood began to leak from his mouth. He turned his head to face the ceiling again. "My love for him... was never anything compared to his for you. He-he wanted to make the world perfect for you. Only you. You could see it every time he was around you. It used to make me sick. Jealous. I would resent you for it. But now... now, I see it was absolutely beautiful."

A siren rang in the background and metal began to groan and shift back into place. Paint strips and flakes of wood began to fall from the ceiling and place themselves onto the floor and walls. The bleachers rebuilt themselves and the gym began to look normal again. A melancholy light filled the room, grayed by the fog.

Corey let his head drop to his chest. His breathing stopped and his eyes had a blank look to them. I sat across the room regaining my bearings. Once I thought I was ready I stood up.

The door to the locker rooms was ajar; I figured I'd look in there next. I passed Corey's corpse. He was holding something. I had to tug a few times to get it out of his clutch.

Like I thought, it was the rest of the letter.

John,

I've held it in too long. I have to tell you this before you waste anymore of yourself on him. Ever since I first met you, I've been trying to impress you, make you notice me. Lead you in the right direction. Get you to know the right people. You have to be in with the in to survive in this town.

At first, I thought you were just a cool guy, and that I wanted to do those things because of it. But as I began to see you draw to him, I felt something... grow in me. Something that I only felt when I was around you, it was an incredible high. I wanted to be near you all the time and I counted the minutes until my next chance.

But then it stopped. He was always there, so I couldn't be. I... hated that... He kept me away from you. After a while whenever I saw you... with him... that feeling I used to have would be swallowed by something else... I became infuriated... I would strike out against those closest to me. Why would you choose someone who obviously wasn't worthy of your affections?

So then I thought I'd get rid of him! If I can't have you neither can he! But every time I tried, you were there... Then came prom. It was then I realized how far jealousy had taken me... I'm sorry for I did to you...to him. You made it perfectly clear that you wanted nothing to do with me. And I don't blame you. I'm not worth anything anymore.

So I'm saying goodbye. To you. To everyone. Chances are you'll never even see this letter. Don't remember me when I'm gone, John. I couldn't bear it if you did.

I figured that if I could show you my love by doing what you asked. To leave you alone, then I wouldn't have been an entire waste. Be happy with him John. I know you will, but I still want to say it.

*I don't regret loving you.
Corey*

I looked over from the letter to the body lying near me. I bent down and moved his shirt collar away from his neck.

Red marks, most likely rope burn.

I looked at the letter, crumpled it up and tossed it in a nearby trashcan.

I'm kind of glad Johnny never told me about the prom.

And... I don't think he'd hold it against me if I never said anything about this to him.

The locker room had that same old stale sweat smell it did ten years ago. The lights were working in here and everything looked spit-polished shiny. I trailed my fingers along the row of lockers. Everything was as it was.

I wonder if Johnny's been here.

I slipped off his jacket and placed it on the bench behind me. This was the very place I first gave myself to John. The first time he claimed me as his. He took me, and hasn't let me go. Even now my skin feels like it'll jump off me if I don't put the jacket back on.

I knelt down to the locker in front of me. It's shiny red exterior surrounded by its black frame. The tiles under my feet gave off a chill that I always missed. It reminded me of getting into a bed that's been left alone for a few days. Cool, smooth, waiting to be warmed again.

I reached my hand out to the round lock keeping me from whatever it was I was sent here for. I held the back of the lock in the palm of my left hand and held the knob of the dial in between the fingers of my right.

I turned the dial to the right circling around fully once, and then landing on 22.

My ears picked up on the lack of sound. It thought I could hear the sounds of the inner workings of the lock.

I turned it around left twice, landing on 47.

My eyes strained on the numbers under the tiny arrow etched into the cast-iron.

I went straight to 16.

My heart was beating frantically in my chest.

I pulled the lock; the slight click of the release calmed my nerves as relief washed over me.

I carefully threaded the bar of the lock through the handle of the locker. I placed it gently to my side. I grasped the handle of the door and slowly pulled open the compartment.

“Oh... Johnny...”

I sat back, stretching my feet to rest against the locker with my back pressed against the bench.

It was a picture.

Of us.

I reached forward and grabbed it. I leaned back against the bench. The picture was of us. Both in tuxedo's, I wore a red dress-shirt, and for some reason, a black tie. I fucking hate ties. I had a look of pure joy on my face. Johnny had his arm wrapped around my shoulder; he had a white shirt and blue tie. Even through a picture, the proud smile on his face made me feel warm inside. He was probably proud of himself for getting me into a tie.

I let out a chuckle.

He... he kept this? After what happened? He even framed it. Wouldn't this just remind him of all the bad stuff whenever he looked at it? Wouldn't it just remind him of another time he had to save me, another time of when my pride got in the way of things? Wouldn't he... wouldn't he...?

“Wouldn't he have shown me?”

I tilted my head back and closed my eyes. I felt a tear slip down my face. I looked down at the photo again. I turned it back, taped on it was a key to the music room. I took it off and slipped it in my pocket. I opened up the backing and took out the picture.

All my fears and questions were quelled. Written on the back was something... I wrote, of all things.

‘Our love is like the sun.’

... It's a lyric I wrote to a song for us.

And you know what? Our love *is* like the sun, because only the sun itself could challenge the brilliant smile that Johnny had on his face.

I felt relaxed... walking down the halls. I don't know. Something just felt... different now. This overwhelming sense of calm had spread through me after seeing the picture. I found what I came here for. The school had returned to normal, the fog became less intimidating. I didn't have anything else to fear.

And as I held the key in the door-handle, wondering what awaited me, I knew for sure that whatever it was, I wouldn't turn away from it. I twisted the key and pushed open the door.

I stopped short of the doorway.

“J-Johnny?” I whimpered.

He was here... in his tuxedo and blue tie. Exactly like in the picture.

I scurried up to him and tackled him, wrapping my arms around his neck. He chuckled, and I just concentrated on basically clinging onto him to make sure he wouldn't leave again. I rubbed my hair into his chest and wrapped his arms around my back and squeezed me harder into him. I inhaled, hoping to breathe in his calming scent.

But there was nothing.

I froze. “You’re not him.”

He tensed, then relaxed his grip a little and sighed, “No. No I’m not.”

My heart lurched, I felt tears fighting their way up to my eyes and my throat tightened up. I tried to push away, but he just held me in place.

“Who... What are you?”

He sighed. “I’m... not sure. All I know is that... I want to... dance... with you. We never got to.”

“We?”

He shook his head. “You guys, sorry.”

“That’s okay.” I nuzzled into his chest out of habit. “You lead.”

We began to just step in time to a tune only we could hear in our heads. We never lost contact. I stayed bundled up to him the entire time. His body lacked the warmth I so craved; his body didn’t have the scent that would sedate me.

The jacket I was wearing gave off small hints of his scent and kept me warm like he would if he were embracing me. I nuzzled my face into the neck of the jacket as we swayed along the dance floor. His strong arms made me feel safe. His touch was the same. And he held me like he was the real John. And... just for a second.

I almost forgot he wasn’t.

So, what would you guys think about a story about John and Daryl and their lives in New York? I wouldn’t abandon this story, I wanna finish it before I move on to something else, but I want to keep writing with those two. I have a bunch of different situations for them to work through. Like, John becoming a pro-football player, John and Daryl adopting kids, Daryl getting a record deal, etc.

I mean, would you guys read that? It would have absolutely *no ties* with this story *at all* because I want to put this in a different section than the celebrity section. Like, the most you’d get out of me would be *very vague* references that could mean anything. There’d be guest appearances by Ron and V, yeah, I mean, they’re still in their lives and stuff, but it’d be mostly one of those ‘Make you feel warm and fuzzy inside’ stories that you don’t find too often on Nifty.

I want to write a story that doesn’t need an endless amount of drama to make a good story, y’know?

But I’m not done working this story through my system yet, so it won’t be for a while.

Tell me what you think at eric.wythe@gmail.com.