

WHEN BLACK ANTS SCREAM

FOREWORD

What you are about to read is fiction based on real events. While the characters and certain events in this work are products of my imagination, I have in no way shape or form exaggerated or dramatically enhanced anything in this novel for the sake of creating entertainment.

And...no matter how unbelievable...shocking...or terrible any of this material will feel to you... I assure you...that based on personal experiences... personal experiences related to me by others... hundreds of hours of research and interviews with children, parents and educators...and what we know and have learned from history... that all of what you are about to read is as close to reality and the truth... either in the past... present... or the future...as it possibly can be.

I didn't have a whole of control while writing this. Many of the ideas simply came as I wrote. I first developed then moved my main character through various situations. Then, almost totally helpless, I could only sit back and watch as this character took over his own story. As the story progressed, spinning wildly out of control, I would feel icy terror at where it seemed to be heading....and I shudder still at what it ultimately became.

Thomas Brown

WHEN BLACK ANTS SCREAM

**From the desk of
Vanessa Samuelson
School Psychologist**

**Willow Middle School
Willow, Connecticut**

Mid-Term Interview with student:

Harold Taylor

Age 14

4' 7"

82 Lbs

Light brown hair, brown eyes

Gray plastic glasses

Eighth Grade Student – Willow Middle School

Grades: C's and B's

Hobbies: None known.

Proclaimed Interests: Reading Fantasy Novels, Playing Video Games, Writing stories.

School sports or extra-curricular activities: None

Peer Relations: Unstable. Not outgoing at all. Seemingly has no interest in making and maintaining friendships. Peers state that he is not well liked by fellow classmates.

Demeanor: Very quiet.

Home: Lives with widowed mom and younger brother. Mom is currently receiving federal aid, but is seeking employment.

Evaluation: Very quiet young man...has a difficult time making eye contact with adults. Seems troubled.

Recommendations: Additional evaluation session in three months.

Tuesday 6:12 PM

Today was better. Doug Davis was not in school. I suppose it is too much to hope for that he died or his family moved to Alaska. For some reason Buddy and Richie left me alone. Jesus I guess they need Doug to tell them how to do everything. It's a wonder they can fart or take a dump without written instructions from him. It was weird riding the bus home not rubbing bruises on my arms. It was even weirder

when Susan Johnson looked at me and smiled. Who cares. Everyone hates her too. I heard a rumor that she tried to slit her wrists last year but her mom caught her. Her little brother told everyone that there was blood all over the bathroom. Just from one quick slice. Jesus.

If I'm ever gonna kill myself...and believe me I've thought about it a lot...it won't be with any razor...I'll put a loaded pistol in my mouth and blow my useless brains right against the wall. I'd like to see Doug's face when that happens. Of course I wouldn't see anything happen...seeing how I'd be dead and gone from this lousy planet for good. Doug would probably laugh anyway. Jerks like him don't cry.

Tuesday 10:23 PM

I feel ashamed of myself...thinking about killing myself that way. My mom and little brother would cry themselves to sleep for a long time afterwards if I killed myself. I'm a bastard. I'm a heartless selfish bastard.

Wednesday 2:34 AM

I can't sleep. I keep looking over at Sean and wanting to cry. He's four and a half. He looks like a little baby curled up in his bed. He's a pain in the butt a lot of the time but he adores me. To him I'm something other than a skinny loser. I am jealous of him. He doesn't have a care in the world. The little creep is cute as hell and can run like a scared rabbit. School will be easy for him. Lucky little guy.

Wednesday 6:31 AM

I want to take my alarm clock and smash it to tiny metal and plastic bits. I am sick to my stomach as usual. Doug will no doubt be back today. Plus it's P.E. today. The feeling in my stomach is hot... and electric...and I can taste vomit in the back of my throat. Standing in the middle of my bedroom in my sweaty underwear...I start wishing I was dead...or at least could come down with some kind of disease that

would put my bony butt in the hospital for about a year. Sean wakes up and immediately smiles up at me.. Jesus how can anyone smile as soon as they open their eyes...especially on a school day.

Wednesday 7:22 AM

I stare down at the huge plate of waffles, swimming in hot Aunt Jenny...or Aunt Jehovah...or Aunt Jambo...or whatever her name is...syrup. Butter runs all over this mountain of breakfast. It looks good. If my stomach didn't feel like an entire team of sumo wrestlers were doing a break-dance, I guess I could enjoy it. I take three bites and then ask to be excused. Mom glares at me but she's getting used to my somewhat less than chipper attitude on school mornings. Thank God she doesn't ask why.

Wednesday 7:57 AM

Standing by the side of the front door, I quietly wait for the bus to come down the street. By the time it stops and picks up the Reynolds twins, I'll be out the door. Looking over at Sean lying in front of the TV without a care in the world, I wonder why we ever have to grow up. The familiar sight of bright yellow stops my philosophical meandering dead in it's tracks.

Wednesday 8:19 AM

A sharp stinging slap across my ear brings me to life. So much for my pre-school nap. I don't turn around. I don't need to. Who cares who did it. 'Whomever' is a depraved stupid butt-crack that 'gets off' from picking on others. As much as I want to take my English book and give 'whomever' a new twist on the commonplace enema, I don't. I'm a bullied wimp. I'm not an idiot.

Wednesday 10:46 AM

My stomach is churning. The second hand on the clock is moving too fast. I'm probably the only kid on the planet who dreads leaving a class. Mrs. Plank may be the most boring and ugly thing on two legs but I'm relatively safe as long as she is in the room. I'll take an academically induced coma delivered by a tall stick figure

with the charm of a frozen snot-ball over being beat up.... *Any* day of my life. There are seven minutes of security left....but I can't cherish this feeling of security... knowing that what's up next for me in my delightful day of learning, is the school version of hell....physical education class.

Wednesday 10:57 AM

The bench feels cool as I sit in my underwear waiting for the locker room dick-head brigade to give me back my gym shorts. Now I'm off the bench thanks to Henry Jones and none other than Richie Forbes...the Goodyear Blimp of Madison Middle School. Fat-ass Richie knows full well that he would be the one getting the crap beat out of him 'just for being fat' if he didn't turn traitor and join in on the misery of someone else. I'm so happy for his skills in 'fitting in' with the crowd.

Wednesday 10:58 AM

Henry just pulled my underwear down. The little idiot just let the whole locker-room in on the fact that I have a giant birthmark right across my left butt cheek.

...and that I have a lop-sided set of practically hairless balls.

Go-ahead laugh you bunch of asswipes...laugh yourselves sick. Apparently I was put on this planet to provide entertainment during your otherwise boring day.

Wednesday 10:59 AM

My face is red-hot, as other than our official P.E. t-shirt, I stand bare-assed in the middle of the locker-room floor. The laughter is incredibly loud. Richie Forbes is now leading a chorus of "Harold has deformed balls" which of course adds further enjoyment for the participants in the already quite joyous and customary practice of making Harold Taylor's life hell.

I imagine Richie has a body closely resembling a wrinkled blob of frozen Pepto Bismol...which probably would be a source of amusement for many in the room...but right now he has the luxury of being 'covered up' during this particular time of his existence on this planet.

Wednesday 11:01 AM

The laughter suddenly dies. Mr. Hunt, self-proclaimed as God's gift to physical education teachers, as well as the world of sports, has suddenly entered the room. I'm not surprised as to what happens next as I am not one of Mr. Hunt's favorite people. Angrily he orders everyone out of the locker room and then proceeds to stare at me making me even more uncomfortable.

Wednesday 11:02 AM

I don't think he's a fag. I just think he hates me.

Wednesday 11:03 AM

A full minute has passed and Hunt has said absolutely nothing to me as I stand there covering my genitals with my shaking hands. I probably look ridiculous. Right now I don't care. I don't care about much of anything. I don't care if right now a 747 crashes right into this locker-room and sends Mr. Hunt and me in a fiery ball to the Mojave Desert. I don't care. Right now I just wish I could find my underwear. Right now I wish that Mr. Hunt would allow me a few seconds of dignity and leave me and my lop-sided balls and the giant birthmark on my ass...alone... with enough time to find my underwear.

Wednesday 11:04 AM

Hunt stares at me for a few more agonizing seconds... then shaking his head...finally leaves. I think I hear the word "puss" as he walks out of the locker-room....but I don't care. F___ him. First I gotta find my underwear...then if I'm lucky...my shorts. F___ him...f___ him.

Wednesday 11:09 AM

My underwear is sticking to the wall like a bizarre demented modern painting. Pushing back tears, but I can't stop the shaking, I remove the disgusting things from the wall. They are wet....and there is something else too. Gulps come with every rapid heartbeat, as judging by the various color and magnitude of black and

brown streaks, I realize that various members of my ‘peers’ gleefully took turns wiping themselves on my Fruit-of-the-Looms.

Wednesday 11:15 AM

Wiping snot from my nose...I stand in the stall...hoping that nobody will be able to tell that I just cried like a baby for two minutes straight.

Wednesday 11:36 AM

I reel back in explosive wrenching pain as the blue rubber ball bounces directly off my privates. Before I can even react another ball slams the side of my face like a titan missile.

Nothing like being hunted during gym class. Dodge-ball...aka ‘license to kill.’ It’s the only part of the school day where a kid can get away with organized murder. You can’t belch during lunch but you can put another kid’s testicles into orbit. Considering the fact that I have no underwear on underneath my gym-shorts, the pain I am now feeling is hard to describe...but I’ll try anyway. No...never mind. Right now I gotta go throw up. Mr. Hunt’s booming voice orders me to stay...but screw him...his balls aren’t on fire right now.

Wednesday 7:02 PM

I sit in the bathtub. The water long ago stopped becoming luke-warm. It’s now cold. The soap is untouched. The cool washcloth provides some comfort for my bright red and still quite sore balls. I look up suddenly to the wide grinning face of a little brother peering through the crack in the bathroom door. Before I can even order him to leave me alone, he’s already gone. I start to shake again. I begin to cry again. A large black carpenter ant scurries along the rim of the tub. Angrily I try to smash it but it’s gone. My fist now hurts as much as my balls.

Wednesday 8:23 PM

Another typical evening in our house. Mom is sitting on the couch looking at a two-week old copy of People magazine and Sean is sprawled out in his Scooby Doo Underoos in front of the TV, giggling at The Rugrats. Mom looks up from her magazine and smiles at me. I smile weakly back. She really believes that all is well. Considering the fact that I tell her absolutely nothing about my school day, and

never have told her anything, what else could she believe? I'll never tell her anything. She wouldn't be able to handle it. She can't watch E.R. without requiring therapy. Knowing what her son endures most school days would send her over the edge. You can't tell your mom that you're bullied anyway. It's one thing to be a puss that everyone f___s with...it's quite another to be a narc or a tattletale puss that everyone f___s with.

Wednesday 11:43 PM

A kid could bring a bazooka to school...and no one would tell.

Thursday 2:07 AM

Aliens. I know they're real. We can't be the only living thing in this entire damn universe. There has to be other life out there. That woman on Larry King said aliens abducted her. Listen little green guys...you can abduct me any time...any place. Prod me...poke me...stick probes in me...do whatever you want to me...just don't bring me back ok?

Thursday 2:25 AM

C'mon you chicken-shit aliens...you big black-eyed dweebs...here I am...come and get me. That's what I thought. Nobody invites you...you just show up. Well up yours then.

Thursday 3:47 AM

I'm crazy. I have to be. No one dreams about shooting their mom and eating they're little sister. But I just did. Calm the hell down Harold...it was a dream...not real. You don't even have a little sister...and the mom in your dream... she didn't look anything like your real mom...so quit shaking. Your mom is asleep in her bed... and Sean...well he's right over there...sleeping like a baby. Look at that little belly...rising and falling...he's warm...safe. He's not dead. You would never kill him. You love him. C'mon Harold...quit crying...Jesus everyone dreams. Some people dream about taking a bath in Jello...you dream that you kill and eat people. So what.

Thursday 3:55 AM

Standing at the toilet I try to vomit but nothing comes out. I am sick. I am sweating like a pig and it's not even hot. In the distance sirens scream. There is a black carpenter ant running up my bare leg. I smash the little son-of-a-bitch...leaving a mess of sweat and little ant guts. Another carpenter ant stares up at me from the carpeted bathroom floor. He's obviously thinking twice about going up my leg. I smile as the sirens seem to be getting louder.

Thursday 3:58 AM

I sniff the air in quiet disgust. Sean's farts are gross. Mom should quit letting him have smores filled pop-tarts before bed.

Thursday 7:25 AM

Mom had to leave early. Her job interview is at 8. It's a job at the bakery three blocks down the street. If she gets it she'll make pretty good money and we'll have all the day-old doughnuts and rolls we can eat. Pretty good deal...if she gets the job. The hours will suck though. Midnight to seven. I'll be in charge of the rugrat until she gets home. Man of the house...picked on little wimp at school...but between midnight and seven...the MAN of the house.

Thursday 7:43 AM

Sean finishes his cocoa-puffs and leaves the table. He is unusually quiet this morning...unusually sober. I think he detects a change in his life. Doughnuts have shaken his sense of structure and normalcy. He looks up at me and sniffles...and with tears starting to form...he waits. I know what he wants. He is waiting for me to pick him up and hold him...like mom would do when he wakes up scared during a thunderstorm.

Thursday 7:44 AM

I pick him up. I hold him. I can feel his heartbeat through his warm pajama top. At first the beats are fast...then a little slower...and finally...steady. He's completely calm now...safe in the big arms of his older brother. For some reason I hug him...hard. Surprised...he kisses me on the cheek. Then he asks me why am I crying. I don't have to say anything. Thank God the babysitter is here....along with her three-year-old boy. Sean is elated. He gets to be the big brother for a few hours. The bus is coming down the street. It's coming early today.

Thursday 8:32 AM

I have forgotten my locker combination...again. Nervously I stand running various sets of numbers through my mind. 30...24....26....no....30....16....24....Yes...that's it! I'll make homeroom on time. This could be a good day after all.

Thursday 8:40 AM

Mr. James has finished with attendance. This morning we will stay in our homeroom until being taken for a morning assembly. Cool. Everyone's talking about the Christian rock band that's going to play for us. I've heard some kids say it will be boring. Some kids say they will go to sleep. Todd Hammersmith and Latisha Collins, our resident Christian students, said that if we all had Jesus in our hearts, we would find the assembly uplifting and inspirational. Of course they got slammed with insults. I felt sorry for them...but then again...nobody can bug me if they're bugging them...right? I still feel sorry for them.

Thursday 11:55 AM

Taking a bite out of school spaghetti I couldn't help but think about the assembly. It was shambles almost from the beginning.

The music wasn't too bad, but every time in-between songs one of the band members started to 'preach' about drugs...or pre-marital sex...or finding Jesus...some kids would let out a chorus of boos and laughs.

The drummer actually started to cry. Then Mr. Hunt, being the super macho-jock that he is, grabbed the pre-game assembly bullhorn and started threatening us with total school detention if we.....rather...they didn't settle down. But only the front row heard him....as Mrs. Scott...the combination librarian and audio-visual guru...had once again forgotten to replace the batteries. The look on Mr. Hunt's face when he realized this was so funny that I'm laughing all over again just

thinking about it. If I don't get control of myself I'm going to choke on a spaghetti noodle.

Thursday 11:57 AM

I'm not laughing any more. Doug just poured his leftover milk all over my spaghetti.

Thursday 11:58 AM

Not content with just ruining my lunch...Doug just pinched the holy-hell out of my arm.

I hold the ruined spot on my arm as he walks by.

Thursday 1:50 PM

I can't concentrate. Mrs. Lang is my favorite teacher and I can't concentrate. She is the nicest, most sincere teacher in this school and I can't concentrate on what she's saying. She has the coolest..most endearing teaching style of any teacher I've ever had...but I can't concentrate. I need to tell someone about this garbage at school...and she is the only one I can tell. But what will she say? How will she react? More importantly, will anyone find out? I have to take that chance.

Thursday 3:09 PM

I wipe sweat from the top of my head as I approach Mrs. Lang's desk. She looks up from her work and smiles. Suddenly I want to run. I stay.

Thursday 3:33 PM

I just left Mrs. Lang's room. It was a great talk. She listened just like I knew she would and she promised that she would help me. For the first time in a long time I felt like there may be some hope. I'm also scared to death that things may get much worse.

Thursday 5:25 PM

Mom is mad as hell at me. I think she has used the word ‘irresponsible’ three dozen times in fifteen minutes. I’m not helping matters any...not telling her exactly why I missed the bus on purpose today...not calling her...just walking all the way home... not thinking about anyone but myself in the process.

Thursday 7:07 PM

She’s calmed down now. Her way of saying “I’m sorry” is with a huge bowl of buttered popcorn. She places it at my feet, along with a big bottle of Pepsi. I thank her and look quietly down at the floor for a second. That’s my way of saying “I’m sorry.”

Thursday 9:13 PM

Mom and I are watching some guy named Bill O’ Riley. Jesus is this guy full of himself or what? Maybe he’s just set in his ways and doesn’t care about what people think. Maybe he really knows what he’s talking about. God I envy how he can put dick-head guests right in their place without even blinking. I need some of that. Some guy is on there talking about banning dodge ball! Wow...God is watching over me! Unfortunately this guest is not getting much support. I guess God is no match for the jocks in this world.

Thursday 9:17 PM

I don’t believe this. Some old bastard is on there putting his own two-cents in about dodge ball and bullying. I blink back a fresh tear as this dick-brain makes the statement that if we ban dodge ball and bullying it will be the further ‘sissifying’ of America. I’m doomed I guess. I guess I’m nothing but a big sissy then because it hurts when I get slammed with that damn ball and it sure hurts when I get pinched and punched.

And yes by God...the insults and put-downs DO hurt...so kiss my ass whoever came up with that ‘sticks and stones’ bullshit. I’m going to bed. F___ this stupid planet and f___ Bill whatever his name is for bringing assholes like that on his stupid f___ing show.

Thursday 11:46 PM

I can't sleep no matter how hard I try. For some reason I keep thinking about bumper stickers. I keep seeing the one in my head that says "My kid beat up your honor student" which I know is on at least a dozen car bumpers around here.

Thursday 11:49 PM

That old dried up prune that thinks that America is becoming a place of 'sissies' is standing at the end of a gymnasium. Circling in front of him is a dozen of the biggest meanest guys on the planet earth, each holding a rubber ball and moving it around in menacing fashion. The old guy is waving his arms wildly, trying to protect himself. It's useless. He's about to be slaughtered and he know it. Suddenly the balls are released hitting him everywhere all at once. His wrinkled old eyes are wide. bright...filled with absolute terror. His milk-white legs and chest are now covered with bright red splotches. He is crying.

The big mean bastards line up in front of him again...each sporting a shit-eating grin... He begins to plead for his life...and then he begins to scream as the balls smash into him with a force from hell. The sound of ruined flesh and breaking bones is echoing like Dolby Surround all over the gym now, drowning out his final desperate cries to please stop hurting him.

He looks rather pitiful sprawled out on the freshly varnished gym floor, writhing grotesquely in a widening pool of black-red blood. Suddenly the room fills with hundreds of spectators. They yell at him...they jeer at him...they laugh at him.

Then I'm there... staring down at this old man with the life flowing out of him. I slowly bend down and get real close to him... and then grinning demonically... whisper "sissy" into his saggy hairy old ear. The crowd then cheers for me. My mom leads the cheer, holding Sean triumphantly high above the crowd. Feeling the crowd's love and support I wipe wet tears from my eye. I am the President of the United States...I am Tiger Woods...I am Kevin Costner and I've just thrown a ball to my dad.

Thursday 11:56 PM

The sound of Sean's steady breathing shatters the fantasy. A sudden flash of white lightning illuminates the room. I look over toward the corner. The old bastard is still lying there...his dead body being swarmed over by large black carpenter ants. I smile as a huge rock of thunder shakes the windows. I look over toward the ants... who are smiling too... their black lips glazed with fresh bright red blood.

Friday 3:13 AM

I awake with a violent start. I am sweating profusely. My heart is pounding. Wildly I look around the bedroom. There is something very wrong. I can feel it. I can almost taste it. Maybe it's the aliens...maybe they came after me after all! No..it's not them...it's something else. Sean? He's in his bed sound asleep, his Tommy Pickles doll hugged to his chest. So what is wrong? Why am I scared shitless? Jesus...what is going on here?

Then...I hear the window slowly open...something plops to the floor. Oh Christ...oh shit...what the hell is this? Then my covers open slightly at the bottom...and I can feel something on my leg. Oh f___ it's crawling up my leg! Maybe it's a tiny alien...that has to be it! I sit up and bed not as scared now. Well yeah...I'm a little scared. With all the courage I can muster I carefully remove my covers.

On my bare leg is an absolutely huge black ant...with the grinning face of Doug Davis.

Friday 3:17 AM

I scream out loud, almost catapulting out of bed. It was a dream...a freaky nightmare. I am drenched in sweat. I hear Sean crying in the bed next to mine. I must have scared the little guy.

I reach over and turn on the light. To my horror it is not my little brother Sean in bed...

But the body of Sean with the head of a black ant.

Friday 3:18 AM

I violently sit up in bed. Sweat pours from me like an erupting volcano. The room is dead silent and sticky hot. I don't sleep the rest of the night. I lie absolutely still in the sweltering blackness...afraid to sleep...afraid to breathe.

Friday 10:58 AM

The locker-room is very quiet as Mr. Hunt stands surveying every nuance of the environment. His bottom lip trembles as he stares at each one of us. When he gets to me, of course he stares longer. He hates me. Then finally after what seems like hours...he speaks...and what comes out of his mouth next appears to be laced with wet concrete.

“I will say this only once. The next one of you that so much as looks at Taylor the wrong way will run laps until they die...do you understand that? I will NOT tolerate goddamn bullies in this school!

Then he looks away from ‘the bullies’ and ‘glares’ at me. No compassion...not a shard of understanding...just a glare.

With his sharp words still echoing all over the locker-room, he abruptly leaves. I do not know what to do. The silence in the room is electric. I can only stare down at the frayed carpeted floor. No one says anything...not even Doug. It is fat Richie that finally breaks the silence.

“You little cry-baby puss.”

Several of the boys shake their heads in agreement. But no one says anything.

It is my lip that is now trembling. I am going to throw up any second. Mr. Hunt’s booming voice ordering us to get the hell upstairs ends the event. Wiping the sour taste of phlegm from my bottom lip I join the others in the gym upstairs.

Friday 11:07 AM

The three of us sit silently in Principal Caldwell’s office. After what seems like an eternity he enters the room. He is a huge bastard and today he is a huge quite angry bastard.

Friday 11:44 AM

So this is what happens when you finally tell someone at school. You get the hell embarrassed out of you by the Principal. You sit in an office feeling absolute hatred all around you as the Principal first yells at... then dishes out in-school suspension to a couple of boys who probably want to kill you right now. I don’t think I’ve ever

seen Mr. Caldwell so mad. He was actually spitting through his teeth at Doug at one point. All I could do was cower in the corner as the room.

Friday 1:24 PM

The pimply faced peer-mediator stares at all three of us. Tipping his official Peer-Mediator cap slightly to the left he offers the hope that we will all shake hands and just leave each other alone from now on. I can't believe that he is so stupid not to see what is going on here. We have not said one word to one another for ten solid minutes. The small room is literally seething with anger and resentment.....and fear on my part... and this butt-lick thinks everything will be worked out with a handshake. They should change the words on his cap to "I'm a f__ing moron."

Friday 2:23 PM

Assistant Principal Donald Warbeck just got done telling me that instead of running and crying to my teachers all the time... maybe I should start taking up for myself and become a man.

Friday 2:24 PM

Maybe it's time I should just blow my brains out.

Friday 2:27 PM

Doug Davis whispers "you're dead... you little cunt" as I walk by him on the way to my locker.

Friday 2:37 PM

Timmy Flowers is flicking my ear on the bus. I pay no attention. I could care less. He gets bored and leaves me alone. Meanwhile my stomach is an absolute mess of swirling paranoia. I see Doug's face on every kid on the bus. Even the special-ed kids are Doug today. Even that tiny crippled kid Neal... is Doug Davis today.

Friday 2:40 PM

I try to ignore the whispering all around me. I know it's about me. I can feel their scorn.

I can smell their hot breath of disapproval for telling on one of the most popular kids in school.

Friday 2:43 PM

I look down in disbelief at the widening wet spot on my crotch.

Friday 2:54 PM

Thank the lord Jesus for homework. Quickly I grab my large History book and covering myself, race for the bus door. Ms. Jenkins frowns at me. We're never supposed to run. Sighing loudly she opens the door.

Friday 2:57 PM

I roll my wet jeans and underwear in a ball and place it strategically near the bottom of the almost full wastebasket. I'm almost fourteen and I wet my pants. I hate myself.

Friday 4:57 PM

Mom is giving me 'that look,' as I lifelessly 'play' with my macaroni and cheese. I have no appetite. I am a death row prisoner and this is my last meal.

Friday 7:09 PM

I sit up in bed and rub my eyes. I have no idea what time it is. Peering at the window blinds I realize that it's either evening and I slept just a few hours or it's morning and I slept the entire night. The alarm clock next to my bed tells me it's multiple choice one.

I do not get up. I stay on the bed. Right now my mind is on being a man. Men do not piss their pants. Men do not cry. Men do not dread P.E. class.

Friday 7:12 PM

If there was a gun anywhere near me right now I would decorate the walls with my unmanly brain cells.

Friday 7:14 PM

I look out my window and make sure Sean is outside. He is, and mom is playing with him in the front yard. It is safe.

Friday 7:16 PM

With my jeans and underpants down around my ankles, I imagine Doug and Richie being hit face-first by a train, their Technicolor body-parts spewing into the air like a geyser. My body jerks violently as the fantasy dissipates.

Friday 9:34 PM

I have been engaging in a conversation with the giant ant for over an hour now. Actually he's a good listener, lowering his little black head when I start to cry... tenderly rubbing one of his bristly talons against my leg as I literally shake from 'venting' my anger and frustration. He's a good listener...a good friend...

...but he's not too happy with me for smashing his brother-in-law to bits the other night.

Friday 11:59 PM

That old 4-H camp song is playing over and over in my mind. "The answer my friend is blowing in the wind...the answer is blowing in the wind."

Saturday 1:32 AM

I have just had a rather silly dream, one involving me and Britney Spears on a Ferris wheel eating raspberry snow cones. She's in panties and a bra. I'm in Scooby-Doo underoos. I look over at the big ant sleeping peacefully in the bed next to mine. It has just about crowded poor Sean out of bed.

Saturday 4:44 AM

I sit on the toilet taking a much-needed dump. It is very quiet in the house. It's a quick one. Plop... plop... plop...and it's over... not one of those 'grunt and squirm for five hours' ordeals.

Standing up now... wiping my butt, I look down into the toilet...imagining Doug and fat Richie and Mr. Hunt trying to hang on for dear life, throwing their arms around one of the fresh turds for safety.

Laughing out loud I piss on them until they let loose of their life preservers and are thrown all over the place, they're heads busting open against the porcelain rim. Satisfied I pull the handle. But for some reason watching the blood and the broken bodies go down the chute...makes me feel really sad.

Saturday 4:50 AM

The ant...which apparently has been standing there watching me for sometime...shakes it's head in disapproval.

Saturday 2:12 PM

The creature looks at me in terror as if to say "what did I ever do to you?"

I hold it firmly...my hands shaking. I want to choke the living hell out of it. I want to snap it's little neck like a twig. I want to rip it's little head off. I want to jump up and down on it until it splatters all over the sidewalk. Even knowing what it knows, that the end is near, it's tiny pink sandpaper like tongue laps across my hand. I look at it for a few seconds...so small...so fragile...so terrified and helpless...and then I gently put it back down on the hot sidewalk where it scurries away in a matter of a second.

Saturday 2:14 PM

“You spineless little woosy!”

I whirl around to see the ant standing angrily in front of me.

“You wimp...that little bastard just took you for a ride.”

No it didn't.

“You fell for that ‘poor little sad kitty’ bullshit!”

I didn't.

It is standing directly in front of me now...it's eyes seething with anger.

“One little wet tongue across your hand...and you melt.”

Shut up.

“No I won't...the assistant principal is right...you need to be a man”

Shut the hell up. I'll squash you like a bug.

It grins now.....wide and toothy.

“ I am a bug... asshole.”

I swear to God I'll do it.

“Then do it.”

I'll do it.

“You don't have the balls.”

I am so pissed now that I can scream. I have to get away. Walking quickly, I head down the sidewalk. My heart racing, I look behind me. Whew...he...it... is gone. I slow down now, my heartbeat gradually becoming steadier. I stop to catch my breath. I walk over to a big tree in the shade. Wiping sweat from my face I sit down. Almost immediately I feel something rub up against my leg. I look down. It is that cat. Tenderly I pick it up. It doesn't struggle at all. It's wet tongue goes over and over the palm of my hand....the soft purring... loud and steady.

Saturday 2:27 PM

I unwrap the ice cream bar and take a large bite. It tastes great on a hot and humid day like this.

“Hey buddy...how about sharing?”

I whirl around. The bug looks up at me with a nod of approval.

“You're becoming a man Harold...congratulations.”

I smile back. It's nice to get a compliment once in awhile....but I'm not sharing my ice-cream bar with it. Every once in awhile it's kinda fun to be a selfish bastard.

“C'mon Harold...I'm your best friend.”

It is pleading with me...it's big black eyes widening. I smile warmly.

Ok...fine...here.

I reach down, extending my wonderful dairy-treasure to it's eagerly groping talons.

“You're a real pal Harold.”

I laugh.

And you're a con-artist... bug-friend.

It laughs, wiping ice-cream from it's black lips.

Saturday 2:28 PM

I am alone. The sky is darkening...the clouds thickening. Thunder rumbles. I need to get home before it starts to storm. I walk quickly down the sidewalk...passing Mrs. Johnson's house...and the post-office...the retarded kid Frankie playing in his front yard...and a large tree where lying at the foot of the trunk is a small gray and white cat...it's neck snapped like a Popsicle stick...it's little pink sandpaper-like tongue hanging grotesquely out of it's dead mouth.

Saturday 7:07 PM

Despite pleading from Sean, Mom has unplugged the television. The storm is intensifying and we already lost one TV a year ago...and we're not repeating that mistake. Sean storms out of the living room and into the bedroom, throwing himself on his bed in a crying fit.

Saturday 8:45 PM

The storm continues to rage. The lights have flickered three times but we still have power. Mom looks up from her crocheting and smiles with each flicker of electricity. This evening has been a crashing bore. Mom has made me check in on Sean every fifteen minutes.

"Get off your lazy ass and do it yourself."

Of course I don't say that.

Saturday 8:46 PM

We did have power.

Sunday 1:12 AM

I look out my bedroom window at the large yellow trucks parked outside. They've been at it for two and a half hours. Jesus...how long does it take to work on a pole? The house is stifling. We haven't had fans all evening...and I'm still completely dressed. Even my shoes are still on. Turning the flashlight on, I look over at Sean lying facedown on top of his flannel Rugrats sheet. I turn the flashlight off and crawl fully dressed under the covers, pulling the comforter up over my head. Shivering and starting to cry, I try to get the image of a gray and white kitten out of my mind.

Sunday 3:19 AM

“Harold wake up...c'mon wake up.”

I crawl out from underneath my cocoon. Sean is standing next to my bed.

“The lectric is back on...let's go watch TV.”

I want to kill him....but no. Instead I get up...and we go out into the living room where the lights are on. I grab a couple of pop's from the frig and sit down on the floor next to my wide-awake little brother.

Sunday 3:34 AM

Square Bob Sponge Pants has got to be the stupidest show in the history of television, and sitting close together, we laugh our butts off all the way through it.

Sunday 3:58 AM

As the credits start to run Sean jumps up on my lap and hugs me hard. I can't remember when I've ever seen him this happy. For some odd reason I'm happy too.

Sunday 8:12 AM

I wake up to a ringing by my ear. I pick up the cordless phone and groggily answer. There is nothing but dead silence on the other end. I place the phone back down.

Sunday 8:14 AM

The phone rings again. And again I answer. First there's silence...then unmistakably...the tiny sound of a cat's meow.

Click.

Trembling now, I place the phone back on the cradle.

Feeling the taste of vomit in the back of my throat, I continue to lie on the carpeted living room floor next to my sleeping brother.

Sunday 8:16 AM

The phone rings again. I don't answer it. My mom, who has just entered the living room, answers it instead. Seeing that I'm awake she hands it to me.

"It's for you Harold."

I answer. There is nothing on the other end at first...then the sound of a cat's purr...followed immediately by a 'snap.'

Leave me alone!

I scream into the phone. Then I slam it back down. Mom and Sean look at me like I'm nuts.

Sunday 6:11 PM

Mom is washing clothes in the basement. Sean is taking a bath. It has been a great day today. We all went to the movies and then to Chuckie Cheeses for pizza. And we had a ball. It was a celebration of sorts. Mom learned that she got the job at the bakery. She starts work on Wednesday. She promises that we'll be getting an air-conditioner out of her first paycheck. This is has been one of the happiest days of my life. .

Sunday 10:08 PM

Nothing like thinking about an upcoming school day to screw up someone's happiness and sense of security. There are a number of scenarios that can happen tomorrow. Doug and Richie will tell everyone to leave me alone from now on. While I'll be hated for the rest of my school life, I'll be left alone and I can deal with that.

Then again, starting with the first time I am in the hall in-between classes, it could be pure hell. Face it Harold...you don't know what the hell is going to happen tomorrow. Icy fear and deep-dark dread has taken over this particularly sunny happy day.

Sunday 10:43 PM

I wipe the vomit off of my chin, holding on to the cool toilet bowl for comfort. The eruption that just came from my mouth was explosive....racking my body with every wave.

"Harold....are you alright?"

**Yeah mom...It was just all that pizza...I over-ate I guess.
I'm ok...I feel better now.**

She leaves me alone. My head is thumping like a Metallica drum solo. I don't feel better..not in the least. In fact I don't know if I've ever felt this bad. Looking on the bright side of things maybe I'll die tonight.

Monday 12:32 AM

I just finished watching the episode of Andy Griffith where this little kid who demands his lunch money every day bullies Opie. Opie doesn't tell his pa or Aunt Bee. Smart kid. Even back then kids didn't tell. But Andy finds out anyway. He takes Opie fishing and talks about the time he had to deal with a bully. Of course

it's all bullshit and we know it. Characters on Andy Griffith always lie and bullshit...but it's for the good of whomever they're bullshitting. Of course Opie is strengthened by his pa's story and sets out to take up for himself...scared of course...but no longer wanting to feel ashamed for not taking up for himself. The show ends with a happy excited Opie entering the courthouse. His clothes are all torn up and he has a black eye..but he beat the shit outta the bully. Andy is proud of Opie and hugs him tightly.

Monday 12:36 AM

I wonder what Opie's bully looks like now.

Monday 12:39 AM

I'm a little ashamed to admit this but sometimes when I watch Andy Griffith, I imagine Andy and Opie's face as Aunt Bee comes to breakfast wearing purple hot-pants and topless, her big boobs bouncing up and down as she excitedly enters the kitchen. That thought always makes me howl.

"You scumbag."

Huh? I whirl around. Of course it's my friend the giant ant.

"How could you?"

How could I what?

"How could you destroy an American institution like Aunt Bee?"

C'mon lighten up. I didn't destroy anything. It's a joke. Aunt Bee running around with her big hooters hanging out. I think that's funny.

"It's not funny. Bee Taylor is the symbol of womanhood."

You're kidding me...right? Why does a f__in' ant care about Aunt Bee for God sakes.

"Why?...did you ever on any episode see her step on an ant?"

I shake my head.

“That’s what I thought. She was a good woman. Neither Andy nor Opie ever gave her the kind of respect she deserved.”

I’ve gotta be dreaming this...but of course I’m not. Like he’s been all along, the ant is real.

“You need to be slapped.”

Oh...give it a few hours...I’m sure I’ll get slapped soon.

The ant stops it’s tirade.

“Yeah...you’re probably right...I’m sorry...it probably is going to be a bad day for you at school, but I’ll be with you. I won’t be able to do anything for you...and I won’t be able to help you...but I’ll be there in spirit.”

I know...and I appreciate it. I gotta go to sleep now.

“Ok buddy...nighty night....but no more Aunt Bee crap...ok?”

I nod my head.

“How about a hug?”

I embrace the bug. This would make quite a picture; a teenager standing in his underwear in the middle of a room hugging a giant black ant.

Monday 12:54 AM

I cannot sleep. For the first time in a long time I'm thinking about my dad.

He's been gone for about two years. He was suspected to be messing around on my mom, got caught in a hotel room by mom's psycho brother, and then on his way in a hell-bent hurry out of town in his Volkswagen Rabbit, was broadside by a Chiquita Banana truck....and that's all she wrote folks. I heard they were still putting pieces of him in plastic bags an hour later. I was eleven and a half years old when I was told the news. And I only cried for a few minutes. I hardly knew the pathetic loser. Neither Sean nor I went to his funeral. We stayed with our cousins in Cleveland. I would have had more fun at the funeral. My cousins would lose in the 'what has more intelligence...a paper clip or Harold's cousins' contest.

Monday 6:54 AM

As I slowly dress the inside of my stomach feels like it's been scraped away with a razor-blade knife.

Monday 7:09 AM

I stare down at the stunning cheese omelet mom has lovingly prepared for me. She makes incredible omelets. Today it's a stringy shit omelet stuffed with baby vomit. I couldn't eat it if I tried...but practically gagging on every mouthful...to please her...I eat it anyway... every single bite.

Monday 7:55 AM

As I climb on the bus my stomach is heaving.

Monday 8:21 AM

No one has said anything to me all the way to school. Even the 'ear flicker' has left me alone.

Monday 8:27 AM

So far so good. No hallway ambushes any put-downs no anything. Doug has passed me in the halls twice...and not a word. Maybe I'm in the Twilight Zone.

Monday 8:42 AM

Homeroom period went without a hitch. Practically 'on air,' I walk down the hall towards my first class. Suddenly my body is violently slammed sideways...and into a locker. I knew it was too good to be true. Holding my shoulder in pain, now looking up, it is not Doug or Richie or anyone in my grade that shoved the hell outta me.... just a high school student in a hurry to get to his first class. I breathe a sigh of relief.

Monday 10:07 AM

I cannot believe how smooth this morning has gone. Could it be that Principal Caldwell succeeded in scaring the living piss out of these guys? Is it remotely possible that I'm finally going to be left alone? Is it too much to hope for that I'm actually going to be able to concentrate on my schoolwork instead of worrying about the next assault at school?

Monday 10:25 AM

The answers will soon be coming. Up next...gym class.

Monday 11:13 AM

Gym was actually enjoyable today. We didn't play dodge ball. We did relay races...and being the skinny little guy that I am...I actually did well for my team. At one point I actually think I saw a smile of approval coming from a classmate.

And neither Doug nor Richie has said one word to me.

Monday 11:20 AM

Feeling somewhat confident and very sweaty, I take my shower without hesitation.

Monday 12:09 PM

Lunch thoroughly sucked today. Where does cafeteria pizza come from anyway? It can't possibly be made from real ingredients. My guess is that it is recycled camel meat piled on top of stale dough. I eat two bites and give up. The pears are delicious however, saving this abomination of a lunch.

Monday 12:16 PM

I lie sprawled out on the floor.... laughter literally resonates throughout the lunchroom. I am a clumsy idiot. Trying to laugh at my own coordination problems, I stand up and loudly proclaim "for my next trick." Humor is always recommended in times like this and several kids laugh with me. I try to stand up again...but my feet slip on the splattered milk and I go right back down on my ass again. This time it hurts....it really hurts. Lying on my side, I see Doug Davis standing at the far end of the lunchroom. He does not smile. He just stares...and stares...and stares. I pick myself up off the floor and look over toward where he is. But he's not there. I'm starting to feel sick to my stomach again.

Monday 1:10 PM

It's our weekly homeroom activity. Today we're seeing a video about drugs...or should I say ANOTHER video about drugs. All the classrooms are equipped with monitors and we settle back for another boring multimedia experience. Mr. Thompson the health teacher introduces the video by way of the p.a. system. His ten-minute introduction is coma inducing and I fight staying awake. It's too soon after lunch and it's too hot in this room to expect us to watch a stale damn educational film. I don't do drugs...I've never done drugs. I don't give a damn about this video. The screen goes blue...followed by distortion and a rolling picture.

Finally the image stabilizes....and for the next twenty-five minutes I, along with everyone else in the room watch in disbelief as an animated dog tells us all about walking away and saying no to drugs. It's all I could do to keep from laughing out loud. I couldn't have been the only one in that room trying hard not to howl at this dumb-ass film that would be better suited to third-graders. The end of period bell rings and we all start to get up. Now...already...a full six feet from my desk....Mrs. Lang orders us to sit back down. We all walk back to our desks. And when I do my ass is attacked by what first feels like a dozen hornets. I

look down at a pile of carpet tacks...the ones that are not firmly entrenched in my quivering butt that is.

At first I am in shock. Then wobbly legged I stand...my stomach lurches violently... hot vomit filled with egg...cheese.....hamburger...tomato sauce and pears...sprays from my mouth like Niagara Falls, hitting three girls in my row, causing them to stop laughing and start screaming.

As I burst from the room I am sobbing. Not just any kind of crying...but loud racking sobs. I continue to sob and run down the hall...at least ten of those f__in' tacks still stuck to me like glue...I run until I see the back exit door...and once into the bright sunlight...I continue to run and run and run...until I trip over a brick and fly five feet before hitting the ground on my stomach, knocking the wind out of me something fierce.

After 'coming to,' still crying ...I reach down and pull those black bastards one by one out of my throbbing butt.

Monday 1:43 PM

I am back in school, brought here by Assistant Principal Warbeck. I am in the nurse's office. Ms. Grant is the fattest woman to ever live on this planet. They probably use her panties for curtains at home. But she's kind to us kids. Kids overlook the lard for the love in her case. Anyway I am lying on the infirmary bed....a cool compress is lying across my swollen belly....and my pierced ass feels considerably better. Nothing like Shamu the school nurse applying a soothing ointment to your bare ass cheeks to liven your day.

Monday 2:03 PM

Principal Caldwell sits behind his desk studying me carefully. I don't think he really knows what to say at this point but I can tell he's trying to come up with something intelligent, something that might make me feel better.

Suddenly his office door opens and Mr. Hunt and Assistant Principal Warbeck lead Doug and some kid I don't even know into the room.

Monday 2:17 PM

They had to apologize...and they did...but of course it was all bullshit. The kid I didn't know was a Junior...Greg Barnes...Richie's cousin. He supplied the carpet

tacks...right out of his dad's tool-box. Barnes is a member of the National Honor Society and pitcher on our very competent champion baseball team. When Mr. Caldwell told Barnes that he may actually be suspended or expelled from the team for his part in all of this, he looked right at me and glared. I'm fairly certain I heard a hiss coming from his mouth as well.

Monday 2:26 PM

After they dismissed Barnes with word that he would be told later as to how he would be dealt with, Caldwell tore into Doug with a fury. He got a week of after-school detention and warned that if a prank like this is ever played again, he would be out of school on his ass. Some adults use cuss words to let a kid know how angry they are.

Prank? Somehow it seemed a tad more than that. After all these weren't f__ing thumb tacks.

Monday 2:34 PM

Mom has arrived to take me home. Thank God...there is no WAY I can ride the bus this particular afternoon. She just got out of a meeting with Mr. Caldwell, Mr. Hunt and Mrs. Hummer, the Conflict Resolution / Peer Mediation advisor.

Mom is red faced and madder than hell and she tries to spit out words but she's crying too hard to make her words sound remotely intelligent or coherent. She needs to shut up. She sounds like someone who has just received electroshock treatment and is embarrassing the crap out of herself.

Monday 4:09 PM

Our neighbor Trudy Maxwell shakes her head as mom re-tells of the incredible events of that day. Trudy already knew. Word got around fast.

Trudy is on the parent's advisory board and they are having an emergency meeting tonight to decide if further action should be taken. But the main focus of the meeting

is what to do with Greg Barnes. After all he is an honor student AND more importantly a star member of the statewide famous championship baseball team. Our town lives... breathes and farts sports and our baseball team is the source of a lot of town pride...always has been. I sit and listen to the two women flap their lips without comment or emotion. I just don't care. I don't care anymore.

Monday 4:13 PM

“So hombre...what are you gonna do now?”

The black insect studies me thoughtfully. I say nothing.

Monday 4:14 PM

Trudy and Mom are done with their conversation. Sean, who has been playing upstairs with Trudy's five-year-old daughter, comes into the room. He is crying. Apparently Trudy's daughter smacked him. Of course she denied it...but I'm pretty sure I saw her smirk as she stomped off. The little brat. She knows full well what she did.

Monday 5:21 PM

We're at my Uncle and Aunt's now. Jesus...how many friggin' people is mom gonna tell? I got an idea...let's call up the television station and give them a report. or better yet we'll call CNN...Jesus mom...shut the hell up about this. It's embarrassing enough as it is. Aunt Jenny thinks we should sue the school.

Yeah...that will work.

Monday 5:34 PM

I am in Aunt Jenny's den in the basement. She told me and Sean to help ourselves to a can of pop. Uncle Tom's den is really cool with lots of high-tech toys and a way-cool stereo system.

Monday 5:41 PM

Mom and Aunt Jenny decide that are going to the meeting at the school tonight. I'm staying home and babysitting Sean.

Monday 5:51 PM

I don't say one word all the way home or at dinner. Mom understands, stopping every once in awhile to smile at me in that 'loving mom' way. As I help her clear the table she tells me that everything is going to be alright. I smile and nod my head in agreement.

Monday 6:20 PM

Mom has left for the 6:30 meeting at the school. Sean is watching television. I fall asleep watching tv with him.

Monday 9:39 PM

Mom and Aunt Jenny enter the living room. I'm in my bathrobe watching TV. Sean is still dead to the world on the floor. Mom asks me to come to the kitchen. She and Aunt Jenny want to talk with me.

Monday 10:48 PM

I stare at the two women who are obviously having a harder time with all of this then I am. So what the meeting went like shit. So what that the advisory group felt that this was just a boyish prank and nothing to get that upset about. So what that I had been getting bullied at school...they told my mom that all kids get bullied now and then...it helps prepare them for life...it is a normal part of growing up.

And so what that Greg was put on probation. As long as he never has a part in anything like this again, he can remain on the honor society and his position on the team is secure. So what that his mom is on the school board...and so what that they recommend that mom get some counseling for me and additional sessions with the Peer Mediation team.

So what that Mr. Kilroy suggested that I needed to learn how to take up for myself...and so what that the meeting ended on a positive note...talking about the all important playoff game with Greenbridge tomorrow.

So....the....f___...what.

Monday 11:13 PM

Aunt Jenny just left. Mom is sitting at the table drinking coffee. I come in and sit down at the table with her.

Tuesday 12:23 AM

The telephone rings. I know what this is going to be about.

The room is dead silent.

I look over at the sleeping form of Sean...the little guy that adores me. Suddenly I begin to sob uncontrollably into my Martha Stewart pillow.

Tuesday 4:57 AM

I close the refrigerator door as softly as I can. Careful not to drop anything I place the lunchmeat, cheese and mustard on the counter top...then I make my sandwich. Everything is cold when I bite into it but it tastes delicious.

Holding the sandwich in one hand and a can of Mountain Dew in the other, I walk into the darkened living room and sit down on the couch. As I finish my late-night snack I notice something crouching in the corner of the room. I can barely see it's red eyes....but I know they're there.

“Feel better?”

I look over in the darkness.

Yeah....kinda.

“Big day tomorrow huh.”

I say nothing.

“Scared?”

Not as much as I probably should be.

“You got more guts than you give yourself credit for sometimes.”

Oh yeah...I’m a regular mountain of guts.

“Seriously....give yourself some credit man!”

Listen...I’d like to eat my damn sandwich in peace if you don’t mind.

“Harold....who are you talking to?”

I don’t know how long she had been standing there.

Just thinking out loud mom.

The light comes on in the living room. Mom stands there staring at me in my sweats, a white t-shirt and mustard all over my chin. She smiles.

“I’m surprised that meat is still good....it’s been in there for a week Harold.”

Tastes fine mom.

Then she does what I was silently praying that she wouldn't do. It's time for one of those snuggly mom and son things. She sits down close beside me. Fighting tears I put my head on her warm shoulder.

Across the room the ant yawns sarcastically. I grin and flip it off...and then return to this important meaningful moment between mother and son....which is suddenly interrupted.

“Hey you guys...whaddya doin?”

It's Sean...clutching his animal. Mom laughs and tells him to sit down with us. Of course he does that immediately...thrilled to be part of this warm scene. I imagine this would make a nice picture...two boys and their mom...all together...nice and comfy on the couch.

Nobody goes back to sleep the rest of the night. Sean is wide awake now...it's useless to even think about going back to bed. It's almost morning anyway. Mom gets out the scrapbook and we have a ball sitting on the couch making fun of each other in various old pictures. Sean lets out a howl when mom turns to the page in which I'm about two...sitting in my high-chair with macaroni and cheese all over my face and in my hair.

While mom and Sean break up at every snapshot I look over towards the back of the room. It's gone....at least for the time being.

Tuesday 6:21 AM

Listening to the laughter coming from downstairs I stand in the bathroom shaking uncontrollably.

Tuesday 7:08 AM

Breakfast is unusually good this morning. I even ask for seconds, which makes my mom happy. She's very proud of me this morning. Her son is going to bite the bullet and go to school. He's going to ignore anything said to him and he's going to sit down with the Peer Mediation group and the bullies and get everything worked out...and by gum...he's gonna start standing up for himself.

Tuesday 7:40 AM

It's a nice day. I want to wait for the bus outside. I kiss my mom on her soft cheek. I can feel the tears starting to form...but with everything I got...I hold them back. Then I say goodbye to my little brother, patting him on the head. He asks me if we can throw the Frisbee when I get home from school today. I nod my head and get the hell out of the living room as fast as I can.

Tuesday 8:02 AM

“Hey tattletale”

“Hey narc”

“Hey tacks up the ass”

I've heard it all on the bus this morning...and I don't care. With every comment...with every sick put-down...I turn around and smile. It's getting quieter now. I think I'm starting to freak them out.

Tuesday 8:25 AM

I'm standing at my locker. Just about every kid that has walked by me has something to say...mostly about how I am going to get the hell beat outta me by every kid on the baseball team.

And I make sure each and every one sees me smile right back at them.

I think I'm starting to creep the whole school out. It's called *ignoring* them.

Tuesday 8:29 AM

I stand staring at my reflection in the bathroom mirror. The kid that stares back at me in his weird plastic glasses...bright flashing eyes and dark stringy hair...is not me. He's that weird little dick that nobody likes. I smile at him...hoping that he'll smile back. But he doesn't smile. Instead he lets out a long....slow....silent....scream.

Jesus...what the hell is wrong with him? I didn't say nuthin! I was trying to be nice! Shit...with that attitude..no wonder he gets picked on.

Dick.

Giving him a last dirty look I dry my hands and leave the bathroom.

Tuesday 8:31 AM

Our homeroom teacher has yet to enter the room. It is the usual morning chaos. Most of the kids are still standing around...talking to their friends...some look at me and grin...one kid...Justin Majors gives me a 'finger in the mouth gag' show, which cracks everyone up. Well everyone except Doug. If he's not the one that is the center of attention, he's not happy. Trying to 'outdo' Justin, Doug pulls the chair from behind me, just as I start to sit down, with my little bony ass crashing to the floor. He stands waiting to see what I do next. Sighing heavily I pick myself up and quietly...emotionless...dust myself off.

Greg Barnes enters the room as I silently sit back down. Without a word he puts his hand out to me. I guess he wants to kiss and make up. Or maybe he wants to make everyone think he's really sorry...or maybe the big idiot just wants to make sure he gets to play in a couple of very important upcoming games. I don't care why he does it. I accept his extended hand of apology...

...and that's when he punches me unbelievably hard right in the arm...and then leaves as quickly as he came in. Fighting tears I rub my arm.

Doug sneers.

"It's not a good idea to cross him anymore fag. He's got a lot of buddies. And if you think anyone in this room...in this entire school...is gonna tell on him...on any of us...you are f__ed in the head. You're the only pussy crybaby tattle-tale in this school."

I gulp...and continue to rub my throbbing arm. Everyone in the room is staring at Doug and me. This is grand entertainment for them...a cool post-game show after yesterdays main attraction.

With Doug's piercing eyes drilling right into me... I calmly reach down for my gym-bag and with him watching curiously...I pull the zipper down.

"Whaddya gonna do puss...hit me with your shitty underwear?"

The class thinks that's very funny and erupts into laughter.

I laugh too as I pull Uncle Herman's 357 from the bag. It takes Doug exactly one second to realize what is about to happen.

I don't even hesitate. I aim the gun right at Doug's stomach...then I pull the trigger...blowing a hole in him the size of a pool ball...immediately knocking him backwards against the black board.

I now have the attention of every one in the room.

Yesterday it was laughter as I sat down on a bed of carpet tacks... that was deafening in this room...today it is the sound of children screaming.

Richie makes a dive for me. Stupid fat dumb-ass. I shoot him in his crotch. His scream is ear-splitting as he tumbles to the floor.

Caldwell and Warbeck rush into the smoky chaotic room. Laughing and crying at the same time I aim for Caldwell's head, but miss, destroying the electric clock above the door.

Warbeck isn't so lucky. I shoot him in the neck.

Then I don't care who I shoot...I just shoot.

Dawn Hunt.... Head cheerleader and mouthiest little bitch in the school gets it in the left tit.

Marsha Collins who has never been a problem to me...got hit as well....in the leg.

The last kid to get shot is Ryan Hamilton. Little kid... smart...like me. Ryan was supposed to be in the fifth grade... but he's too smart. His scores got him placed in Middle School. There was a big article about his promotion in the newspaper.

He never hurt no one.

Then it's over.

Huge hands throw me to the floor...but I get 'whomever' in the calf as the gun flies out of my hand.

"Whomever' is Greg Barnes.

Things are kinda fuzzy now. There is a lot of smoke...and crying...and screaming. I think I see about two dozen people in the room running around trying to help people here and there.

Students and teachers come in from all directions... for the common good of man I guess. Like I said it's very fuzzy. As I lie face sideways on the floor...Mr. Hunt's large frame pinning me securely...I can see a lifeless Dawn Hunt being lifted off the floor. I can't even see Doug and Richie.

Ryan is sprawled out on an overturned desk...his arms and legs twisted grotesquely. I can't see his face....but I heard someone say that it had been shot off.

There are at least ten people in the room vomiting intensely.

One by one...tears drip from my eyes and land on the cool blood-soaked floor.

Tuesday 11:05 AM

I am sitting in a chair. Cops are all around me. I don't say a word. They have read me my rights and I am in handcuffs. I can see a television monitor on the wall in the

office next to me. I can see my school in the background on the TV. I can see classmates being interviewed. Now I see some big kid being led out on a gurney...oh shit...it's Greg Barnes. A reporter is talking him to as they lead him away. I can hear someone behind me saying that Greg is a hero.

Hero on the field and hero in life. He'll be on Oprah soon I'll bet.

Someone in the room says that Harold is scum and should get death.

Who the hell is Harold?

Of course...I'm Harold. In all this excitement I kinda forgot.

Tuesday 4:54 PM

I'm still sitting handcuffed in this chair. Well I haven't been here all day of course.

They tried to talk to me in a room. You know what I mean...asking me "why" questions and "how could you do this son?" type statements. I feel kinda sorry for them. They really wanted me to say something important...provocative. They even sent in this nice non-cop guy carrying a large yellow tablet. He didn't get to write anything on it however. Feeling dejected that he had nothing cool to tell the press he left me alone.

Tuesday 7:08 PM

I finally got something to eat. Grilled cheese. Not bad. Mom makes it better of course. It's Sean's favorite thing she fixes. Pausing a second...then gulping down the last bite...I start to cry. It's the first time since being brought here that I've cried today.

"Yeah kid...cry you little asshole...if I wasn't wearing this badge....I'd make you really cry."

The big cop looks at me in disgust as I put my head up, tears streaming down my face.

Tuesday 9:04 PM

They make me take a shower...all under the watchful eye of a guard. As I dry off I think I see a smile on this guy as he stares at me.

Of course I may have imagined it.

He marches me bare-assed into my holding cell, where I am given a one-piece orange jump suit to put on.

Tuesday 9:55 PM

I can see the guards watching television down the hall. My school...my face...is all over the screen. Fascinated I watch it with them, I can't hear it too well of course, but I can see everything. Over the course of about three hours I can see some of my teachers...of course more students...a couple of cops...some people I've never seen before...lots of men and women who seem to be arguing back and forth...and then...my mom...holding my little brother. Aunt Jenny is standing besides her.

She looks like she's been run over by a truck....her face red...and worn...and remnants of gallons of tears etched into her pretty face. Sean looks cute and cuddly in her arms. Poor little guy. He's probably wondering when his big brother will get home so they can play with the Frisbee.

Not this time little guy.

Feeling like I just swallowed a quart of sand I throw myself on the bed, grabbing the army blanket tightly.

"I'm proud of you Harold."

Yeah.

“No really I am....you’re finally a man...you finally took up for yourself”

I wipe away a tear.

Get out.

“Sorry that’s not gonna happen...you’re stuck with me.”

I said get out!

“Nope.”

Get...the...f__....OUT!!!

“No way Jose!”

Please...I’m begging you...leave me alone.

“I’m sorry old friend...I can’t do that...it’s you and me...friends till the end...kinda like that Chucky doll.”

Then it giggles.

Harold sighs.

You’re not funny at all. You never were.

The ant stops smiling.

“F___ you...you sick kid killer.”

F___ you...you’re not even real.

Tuesday 10:12 PM

“Hey Frank...the little cocksucker is talking to himself...crazy as a shit-house rat...crazy as a motherf___ing shit-house rat.”

The lights go out in the fourteen year old’s cell.

“I gotta do that interview with Fox News at midnight...then it’s MSNBC at 2:30...CNN at 3:00... shit this is gonna be a long f___ing night.”

“Hey Frank...what’s wrong buddy...why ya crying...Jeez.”

“I knew that Richie Forbes and his mom. That kid never hurt anyone. They moved here because he got bullied so much in his last school...

and then he runs into this psycho.”

Frank wipes the tears from his eyes.

“Yeah Frank..I know...I’m sorry man.”

Ed turns off the television. He has had enough of all this for one day. On the counter-top, lapping up sugar off a glazed doughnut is an unusually big black carpenter ant. The burly police officer smashes the bug with his fist. He hates carpenter ants.

A little voice in a holding cell thanks him.

But he never hears it. He has left the room.

Fox News, among scores of other media, awaits in the overflowing entry hall.

AFTERMATH

Just like it has happened after all of the school shootings, for the next several days, the small community of Willow, Connecticut was put on the map. There would be proclamations of heroic deeds, hospital interviews with Greg Barnes, statements on the part of school officials, Principal Caldwell would tell the world that he had programs in his school to deal with angry confused students, Harold Taylor's mom would try to be interviewed to no avail as she would usually break down, Harold's Aunt would tell the world that her nephew was a good boy but an angry tormented boy, a few students would come out and say that Harold was picked on a lot but nobody paid attention to them, townspeople would be practically stalked by the media for interviews, local, state and national child psychologists would be asked for their opinion and President Bush would declare Harold Taylor a shameless coward.

The funeral's of Douglas Davis, age 14, son of Mr. And Mrs. Matthew Colby...and big brother to sister Eileen...Dawn Hunt...13...daughter of Mr. And Mrs. Lloyd Hunt...little sister to Bowling Green student James Hunt...Richie Forbes...14...son of Mrs. Colleen Forbes...and Assistant Principal Donald Warbeck, age 37, husband of Polly and father of six year old twins Kyle and Trevor, were held exactly one week after the massacre.

Ryan Hamilton...11...son of Lori and Thomas Kramer...was buried in his mom's hometown of Lake Forest Illinois. Singer Billy Gilman appeared at the service singing "One Voice." CNN was given exclusive rights to televise the event live.

Sales of Billy Gilmans's albums went up 36%

On June 3rd, student Francine Graham and a delegation of 7 students appeared at the Willow Board of Education school board meeting proclaiming that Harold Taylor was continuously bullied, including by Greg Barnes, and some teachers saw it happen and did nothing about it.

The five girls and three boys were declared troublemakers and ordered out of the room.

On June 26th CBS “Sixty Minutes” did a fifteen minute segment on school violence and school shootings. The segment spent 1 ½ minutes on the bullying connection to the problem. Francine Graham got her moment of fame making the statement that Harold Taylor got picked on a lot. Unfortunately she took quite a ribbing from some of her friends over the summer, as the word ‘picked’ on came off on television sounding an awful lot like ‘pricked.’

Janet Wilcox, whose published poem “Who Will Cry for Harold?” caused a storm of controversy, appeared on the “O’Riley Factor” where she was scorned by the host for five minutes, until finally breaking down in tears and helped out of the room by an assistant producer.

Upon learning that Harold Taylor, like many if not all of the school shooters down through history enjoyed playing video games in his free time, Willow Police removed “A Bug’s Life,” “Crash Bandicoot 2” and “Rugrats in Paris” from the Taylor household.

On July 9th the Willow Wildcats High School baseball team finished first in their league. Greg Barnes, still recovering from the shooting, was brought out onto the field where he was presented with a special trophy and the keys to a brand new P.T. Cruiser by Golf legend Tiger Woods. A representative from Microsoft was there as well, presenting Greg with a complete Pentium 4 computer system and a hand signed letter from Bill Gates. After a special fireworks ceremony held that evening at the Willow field, a special taped message from Vice-President Chaney was played. On behalf of himself and the President, Greg Barnes was declared a national hero.

On July 10th Greg Barnes presented his twelve-year-old cousin Raymond with his computer...knowing absolutely nothing about computers...not caring to know anything about computers...having a history of openly declaring all computer-savvy kids as retarded faggoty-assed geeks.

On July 17th, Willow Mayor George Freenberger received a phone call from MJJ Productions. Michael Jackson was interested in doing a special commemorative concert for the Elementary School in the upcoming fall. The Mayor put the concert proposal in front of City Council where the resolution was defeated with just one yes vote.

For the next three months there would be much debate on giving child murderers, especially school shooters, the death penalty.

For three weeks you couldn't turn on a talk or panel discussion show without hearing educated people debate the subject of the death penalty for child murderers. Not surprisingly a bill was introduced and passed. Children who murder could be put to death before legally becoming adults.

On November 11th Harold Taylor was the first school shooter to receive the death penalty for pre-meditated murder in the deaths of students Douglas Davis, Dawn Hunt, Ryan Hamilton, Richie Forbes and Willow Middle School Assistant Principal Donald Warbeck.

Two years later...after his lawyer lost his appeal for a life sentence...and the 'last-minute reprieve' from the Governor 'just never happened'... Harold Taylor was put to death by lethal injection. He was sixteen years old.

On the day of his death every national news organization and television broadcast system ran interviews with family members of victims and lucky journalists chosen to witness the execution. For eleven and a half hours the world got to hear over and over again that sixteen-year-old Harold Taylor cried...shook...and emitting a final sigh....left this world at 8:32 A.M. Many witnesses declared that this young man, truly small for his age, indeed appeared remorseful.

Many witnesses cried during their account of the execution. Much to the chagrin of the swarming national and international media, no member of Harold Taylor's family attended the special event.

President Bush would go live on television that very night telling the nation and the world...that ALL crimes involving murder...regardless of being committed by children or adults...would be dealt with via the death penalty. When asked what would be the age limit for a child being put to death...President Bush paused for a dramatic five seconds....then declared

that “there would be no age limit...if a child can kill...a child can then die for that crime.”

Three and a half weeks later CBS announced that they were producing a mini-series about the tragedy.

Thirteen days later CBS announced at a news conference that the “Willow School Massacre” production was cancelled... out of ‘respect for the dead’ and perhaps because of the 2,457,439 letters of protest they received.

The next day Fox Network announced at a news conference that they would make a more sensitive non-exploitation film about the tragedy.

The film “ Psycho-Sniper at 14” aired nine months later. It was one of the highest rated television movies of all time, easily defeating “Survivor in Antarctica” for the ratings that week.

Four years...and one month after the Willow School massacre, nine year old Sean Taylor did something that his brother Harold, infamous school killer and the first child to be put to death by the legal system, never did. After being called ‘brother of a psycho’ and then shoved to the ground by fellow student Sid Sawyer, Sean stood up and hit Sid square in the nose, breaking it on the spot. The triumphant nine year old then stomped off sobbing and waving his bloody fist at the kids that had gathered on the playground to watch.

Because of the school’s zero-tolerance policy Sean was suspended for one week. No one saw Sid do anything, although fellow students Benji Hamilton and Frieda Small tried to tell the playground teacher that Sid hit Sean first. The two students were told to go play and leave her alone.

Three days later...on the third evening of his out of school suspension...his mom took him to Pizza hut. It was to remember Harold and celebrate his birthday. He would have been eighteen today. He tried not to look at his mother who was crying softly at one point. Watching her cry would make him cry which he was ready to do at any second anyway.

A family sitting in the booth near theirs paused every second or so to stare at the women and her boy. It had been like that since the shooting...being constantly

stared at. Some people looked sympathetic and some....well...they looked kinda angry.

7:07 PM

Sean looked down at the table... fixing his gaze on a big black carpenter ant who appeared to be looking directly at him... slowly opening it's little black mouth... waiting five seconds...before emitting a tiny scream. Chuckling at the stupidity of all of this, Sean flicked the insect off the table where like a jet it sailed through the air, landing on the buffet and smack-dab in the chocolate pudding.

A fat guy didn't see the squirming bug as he shoveled spoonful after spoonful of the pudding onto his already loaded dessert plate.

Then out loud...Sean laughed...and laughed...and laughed. He laughed until his tummy hurt.

His mother looked up, wiping tears from her eyes. It was good to see her little boy laugh.

He rarely does that.

The End

