

# SODOMY CAT

A NOVEL

*by*

***NICHOLAS BLACK***

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## PROLOGUE

*Today, 9:32 am . . .*

These chairs are less comfortable than having a bunch of rusty old nails shoved up your ass. And as I try to politely squirm around I'm feeling this kind of pulsating feeling in my pants. My slacks—that I've only worn twice in my life—they're just light and smooth enough to slide by my boxer briefs in just the right way. I don't know if that's by design or if I'm just being hypersensitive. But I'm swelling for sure.

I swear to god, if I get an erection during a funeral . . . that will just be the end of it.

The final chapter on my skewed life.

My gay uncle Gary, he once told me to think of *old women getting torn apart by ravenous wolves* whenever I feel a chubby coming. He said that's the image that short circuits your brain into killing the blood supply to your wood.

He said it's an age-old technique.

But If you think of that scene even one time while you're masturbating . . . that's it. From that moment on a pack of wild dogs chomping down on a bunch of old biddies is the turn-on of all time. So I'm trying not to think about that one, anymore.

When you're sitting at a funeral, all sorts of things go swimming through your mind. Imagine ideas as electric eels just sparking and shocking those dark places in the back of your mind where you store all the really subdued, bridled memories you don't

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care to think about. Ethereal, surreal, thoughts. All the skeletons in your proverbial closet.

Well, in my family model, the memories are a bit more unusual and unconventional—something between grotesque and absurd. Anyway, this is one of those stuffy occasions where you think about the things you desperately want to forget.

And there's a peculiarity to everything. Like we're all stuck in a graphic novel where colors have smells and people are two-dimensional. Everything gloss-covered and the perspective is off just a tinge. You know, we're all wearing drab colors, and people aren't sad enough to cry, but they don't dare smile. They keep it just dark enough in here that even the people who are still alive might as well be corpses.

The living seem more dead than those who are speaking to us from the grave.

There's a lot of furtive gesturing, shifty eyes and whatnot. I think this guy in front of me is somebody from my uncle's side of the family. He's got the same male-pattern baldness going on. Same pasty white skin with three or four coats of *magic-tan* spray—sun in a 6 ounce bottle. I don't know if he's gay or straight, or on one of those fences that bi-curious people find themselves straddling during their mid-30s. The woman that's with him has jet black hair that, up close, looks like strands of nylon. Like high-tensile strength fishing line. Guitar strings painted black.

People here don't know how to be people. Honestly, I can't tell you if any of them actually have any genetic connection to me. Biologically, I would put them somewhere between *Homo erectus* and *Homo sapiens*. They walk upright and basically understand how to use tools, but the concept of having a television screen on your cell phone boggles their minds. If they knew you could get on *Google* and see yourself from space they would probably shit all over themselves.

These are people pretending to be *real* people.

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And I'm not just talking about that nice old lady with bluish-grey hair and mismatched earrings who thinks this is a wedding. I'm not referring to the well-dressed Hispanic midget in the front row that's holding hands with a blond that could easily be a swimsuit model.

When you find yourself in an environment like this, with clocks not even ticking, at all . . . you have time to ponder the fabric of the universe. My mind is analysing everything from a theoretical viewpoint. I could be Einstein, or Roger Penrose, or Stephen Hawkings. I need to focus on complex mathematical formulas.

Anything so that I don't get a hard-on. You have to think of the more philosophical stuff.

That being said, I guess I need to tell you how my gay uncle fucked-up Christmas.



*Not that many years ago . . .*

Christmas at our place, it was always a festive occasion. We pulled out all the stops. We had the trees with glowing hot lights and ornaments from at least three continents. There was an Angel near a Jewish star next to a little muslim guy—who is supposed to be Mohammed, but looks more like a holiday hijacker.

We had the lights out front, woven through the bushes so that you could turn them on and see whole ecosystems of insects in blue and green and orange and red. So hot that leaves are melting in every color of the rainbow, falling to the ground burnt to a crisp.

We had a nativity scene out in the front yard, surrounded by Santa, and even some elves. The idea that none of these symbols should ever be in the same zip code was apparently lost on my family. Christmas was a time for lots of lights and lots of music and anything that added to that was accepted.

Every kind of food you can imagine, we had it. At any given time there were at least 14 different varieties of hors d'oeuvres. We had two different kinds of eggnog to wash it down. One for the parents, and one for the children. There was a special card that said '*Adults Only*' in thick black ink to delineate between the two. *Adults Only* meant: Full of alcohol. More alcohol than eggnog. We started using the card a few years back, after one of my cousins got tanked and threw-up while cutting into the Christmas turkey.

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Those cards, that was my family's version of evolution.

Seriously, this was a huge event for our family. My gay uncle Gary, he had made some money in computers or something. A lot of money. Not enough to buy us all cars for Christmas, but enough to buy us all *Rolexes*. Although, he never did.

Anyway, I'm doing the tight-legged pee-pee dance, dragging myself down a hallway trying desperately to find a bathroom. As I've already had about 13 glasses of eggnog and eaten enough chilled shrimp and cocktail sauce to make me deliberate on each and every breath I take, I *need* to pee.

There's Nat King Cole wafting throughout the house, telling us how a holiday like this should really feel. So, I've got Christmas hitting me from just about every sensory angle possible, and my eyes are watering because I have to relieve my bladder. And I see a bathroom with the door closed. I give it a glance down, make sure there's no light spilling out from under the door.

It's dark, so it must be empty.

And I'm a kid, so I don't do the prudent thing and knock. No, I just barge on in, fumbling for the light switch.

Looking back, if I could take back *any* five seconds of my life, it would be those next five. I'd gladly rewind myself back out into the hallway and find a closet to piss in. I'd even take pissing all over myself and take all the emotional badgering that would follow.

Just those five seconds was enough to leave a scar.

Anyway, as the door opens, the light behind me pouring into the bathroom, I see something standing in the corner, near the toilet. But when you're a kid, and you're on borrowed time, you don't compute things correctly. Your mind doesn't discern shadows and shapes in the corner of a bathroom. The little voice that would normally say '*back away,*' it doesn't sound.

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All the alarms that are supposed to go off are overwhelmed by my desire to take a leak. And I flip on the light. And what I see, it basically changes me forever.

It's one of those things you see, but you can't ever un-see. Like it's burnt onto your retinas. Etched into the back of your corneas. Stuck forever in the bundle of nerves and muscles in your *occipital lobes*.

Funny thing is, two months later I'm living with my gay uncle Gary. He's my parents, now. He's my life coach. And that's when I kind of disappeared as a kid. That's when I started hiding inside my old books and encyclopaedias and late-night television programming.

In my mind, where important things like biology and philosophy should be, there's only just random, non-sequitur bits of literature and film. The words and images that buffed against my forgotten childhood. They were my inoculations against pain. I was never meant to be brought up like this, it's just my family's version of Darwinism.

I never asked Gary about that five seconds in our shared history. And he never brought it up. It was one of those things that we all quietly agreed never really happened. Like Iran/Contra, the holocaust, or the moon landings. If you don't talk about something for long enough, it doesn't exist. The past is replaced by a less hurtful version of the truth.

So that's what we did.

That's how I was taught to cope.

And I don't think it worked so well.

This story, my story, it's not a thrill ride. It won't make you feel like a better human being. There is absolutely no profound wisdom in these pages. No paradigm-shifting catharsis. None of that. People don't win awards for stuff like this.

Most likely, you'll want to take a shower. Clean that junk out from underneath your fingernails. Maybe get a physical. Get

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some shots. Anything you can think of that'll help you forget what you're about to read. Perhaps you'll be able to forget me the way we forget the uglier parts of our past.

But, even though I'm fully aware of how unsettling my story is, I have to tell it. I need to get it out there. Because, if I don't tell somebody, anybody, about *me*, I'll probably end up some lazy-eyed psycho. That guy you hear about on the 5-o'clock news, who's found walking through a furniture store with gum in his hair, a pair of flip-flops, an army vest . . . and a loaded shotgun.

Where are the fucking *sofa-sleepers*?

I'm not saying I *am* that guy, but I might be. Who knows what turns us into monsters? We all have a switch. I don't *think* I've got that kind of horrible potential, but then . . . neither did Dr. Jekyll.

So, I need to tell you this history of me. For me.

My name is Trevor . . . and this is my story.

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*First day with my gay uncle Gary . . .*

Almost any subject you can think of, there's a spot in my brain hooked to it. I mean, don't get me wrong, I don't know everything. Not by a long shot. But I have some bit of old, useless knowledge tacked-up there. That's how I coped with the shit I couldn't cope with.

I'll give you a *for instance*.

We use this one every day: A.M. Probably, you can't find ten people out of a thousand who actually know what it means. But if you ran into me at the library, or in a movie theater, I'd tell you it is the abbreviation for *ante meridiem*. It's latin. It means 'after noon'. It also could be *anno mundi*, in the 'year of the world'. And if I really want to be an elitist prick, I'll remind you that it's also used for the Master of Arts degree—like M.A. is used. See, in Latin the A would be used first. In English, we place the M first.

Seriously, my mind is just full of that kind of pointless information. It's my escape from the awkward realm I call reality.

How I got through school was by memorizing, not *learning*. How I made it past my years living with gay uncle Gary was by becoming numb, not *feeling*. I'm not claiming this as the way somebody else should live their early years. But when you see your short, fat uncle coming in two or three times a day with those black plastic bags that they give you at the sex shops, you look the other way.

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When your guncle—*gay* plus *uncle*—buys enough D-cell batteries to power a nuclear reactor, you bury your face in another encyclopaedia. When the power being drained from Gary's bedroom is enough to dim the lights, not just in our house, but along this whole side of the block for as far as I can see . . . well, maybe you turn the television up a little louder.

When I first started living with my guncle, he sat me down at a large glass table in the living room. Think of grey and white marbled floors, cold and polished enough to see the insides of your pant legs. Imagine furniture that comes with birth certificates, just so the owner's can prove their lineage. Picture artwork worth so much money that people ask, ' . . . *That's a lithograph . . . right?*'

Think of giant flat-screen HD televisions that come up from underneath the floor. A swimming pool with it's own waterfall, and a bar inside the cascading wall of water. A thermometer that alters the climate by listening to who's in the room. That's my gay uncle Gary's house.

Gary's sitting across this glass table—so thick it's blue—and he tells me, very calmly, his hands folded on top of each other, "Trevor, your dad and I didn't see eye to eye on everything."

Understatement of all time. Like saying, the sun is *warm*.

" . . . he had his *way*, and I have mine. And it's not about anyone being right or wrong."

My dad, he hated Gary like most people hated that Nazi torturer, Joseph Mengele—the *Angel of Death*. He hated my guncle the way people hate Paris Hilton, but where you know there's a hint of envy stashed away in there somewhere.

" . . . But I still loved your dad, just like I love everyone else in this family," he says, his fingers manicured to perfection. He could be a hand model if his fingers weren't so chubby. Like little manicured pink bananas.

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Everyone in our estranged family likes Gary because he's loaded. If he didn't have the money, they'd have pushed him over the edge of a cliff long ago. If he wasn't the financial foundation which kept the constant cries for help muffled, they'd have put strychnine in his *Red Bull* first chance they got. Or thrown a pillow over his face during a nap.

People quietly plot grandiose mutinies in our family.

They had to *love* Gary because he was our *Wizard of Oz*.

The guy you could turn to.

Like when my cousin Tina, on my mom's side. When she got pregnant and needed a very complicated *procedure* after she tried to do-it-herself with a twisted coat hanger. All she ended-up doing was making a mess, but the fetus was still alive. Gary's lawyers were called-in to keep Tina out of prison. And I guess, somewhere, I've got a scarred-up nephew.

Or when our other uncle, Steve, got liquored-up and crashed his car into the side of a school bus full of Jehova's Witnesses. Talk about a shitload of bad karma on that one. We've had a running pool that he's going to slip on some banana peel or get hit by a stray bullet at any time. It's was up to \$835 the last time I checked. I took *death by electrocution*, so I figure that money's as good as mine.

Anyway, Gary saved the day on that one, too. And now he's trying to become the last thing he'd ever imagine being . . . a parent. My legal guardian. I can tell he's uncomfortable with this. Not as uncomfortable as I was when he bought hamsters and duct-tape and a 5-gallon bucket of Mayonnaise for an *experiment*.

But I can see this isn't easy for him.

“ . . . I'm going to take care of you. I'm going to give you everything you need to become a successful adult. To be able to . . . to,” he shrugs, “. . . to become the man you can be. I want you to feel at home. I will respect your privacy. You must respect mine.”

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At this point, I don't know about the gas-powered purple dildo, or the body condoms, or the swing set in his shower. So, this whole privacy thing, I'm thinking it's just about him being undeniably gay. And I'm a kid, so I don't understand what all that entails. I mean, I've only seen like, 3 minutes of *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, so I get it, I just don't get it.

“ . . . and this house is your house. Anything you want, if you can prove to me that it will benefit your intellectual development in some way, I'll get it for you. Whatever food you need, you can give your order to Bruce—our chef—and he'll prepare it.”

I'm not, even now, sure which way Bruce swings. He is, um, sexually ambiguous, and hard to figure out. But he is the most incredible chef this side of the Mississippi.

“ . . . I want you to complete all of your studies, and if you have any problems, Bruce and I can help you. If there's something we can't figure out, we'll find somebody who can. I guess . . . ” he says looking down at the ocean of crystal blue table between us, “I just want you to succeed. Be the one man in this family that becomes something great.”

I tell him, Uncle Gary . . . I think you're a success.

And that brings a smile to his round face. When he smiles, his cheeks turn all rosy and his eyes get partially obscured by all the skin.

“Thank you, Trevor.” And then his smile fades, “But I think you'll hear the family calling me anything but successful. I'm their embarrassment. Their dirty smudge and indignity. They only like me because I'm, well . . . you know.”

I don't know what to say to him. I've only ever seen the side of him that he shows us at parties. At Christmas and Thanksgiving and Easter and Birthdays. I've only seen other people around him when he's giving them things, or they're angling for him to.

Mom likes you, I say to him.

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He nods slowly to himself, a kind of sad smile briefly lighting up his eyes before they fade again. "I liked Candice a lot. She was a wonderful woman." He unfolded his hands and steepled them, "Let's you and I become friends. I won't try and be your father. I'll just be your friend. You know, when you want some advice, or when you're feeling down. No pressure. No motives."

My guncle, he's a strange fellow, but he's got a good heart. Sure, he has special nipple clamps that run electricity into his body. Yeah, he's the guy who plays dress-up with himself. With wigs and make-up and assless chaps. He's that guy.

But he's the only guy that cares about me. The only one who would take me in. None of my plethora of aunts and uncles and cousins and grandparents wanted to take on the responsibility that was *me*.

I never thought of myself as a burden when those same people were hugging me at Christmas, giving me multicolored sweaters that would get me beat-up in school. No, it was all smiles and kisses and hugs. Lots of proud appraisals. You know, plenty of *he's going to be a fine young man*, and *that Trevor of yours is so smart*.

*He's so polite.*

*What a gentlemen.*

*He has such perfect manners.*

None of the people that said those things, not a one of them wanted me. They all claimed that the economy was in a tight spot. Too unsteady to take on a teenager. The dollar is just too weak.

One of my grandparents actually said that they couldn't keep me because of the problems in the middle east. How they were growing, spiraling out of control. And with a political climate as volatile as this one, it wouldn't be prudent to have a young child in their house. Like I might need my diaper changed, but the

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situation was just too tense on the Iranian border. Never mind that I'm almost 15 when this discussion takes place.

My aunt Gweneth—who I think is a blood relative of my guncle—she said that she didn't understand children enough to take on another one. And that's an odd stance for her to take seeing as she has three daughters around my age. Claire, Daisy, and Karin.

Thing is, none of my cousins even have the same eye color as their parents. Aunt Gweneth and Uncle Bobby both have blond hair and pale blue eyes, with milky white skin. I think Gweneth's problem is that she doesn't understand the genetic probability of having three brown-eyed, black-haired daughters . . . it's nearly impossible.

My shady uncle Nick, he's a writer. He told my guncle that he'd love to take me, but that he thought it would be a bad environment for him to finish his latest novel. I've read some of uncle Nick's writing, and I can tell you, he's *never* going to publish. No way. Gary and I started a pool for that, too. Nick's already on his 13<sup>th</sup> novel, and he's got more pages in rejection letters from his first 12 books than there are pages in *War and Peace*.

Uncle Nick ain't no Tolstoi.

I could go on and on, but I'm sure you get it.

I tell Gary, "I know that nobody else wanted me. So you don't have to pretend to like me."

He leans in, his face growing red and menacing, "Who told you that, Trevor?"

I shrug. "I'm not stupid," I tell him. "I heard grandma on the phone when you were talking to her last weekend. I could hear uncle Bobby apologizing for aunt Gweneth."

He held up his angry little finger, "Trevor . . . I took you because I wanted you here, with me. I didn't do it because everyone else made excuses. Your mother and I talked about this years

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ago. It was always going to be me. So don't you listen to any of them."

But I heard—

"I know what you heard. You heard a bunch of selfish people make horrible excuses for not being decent people. Have you ever heard the phrase, 'everyone's your friend until the rent is due?' Well, that's our family.

"But me . . ." he says placing his soft plump little hand on his chest, "I'm not them. And neither are you. You are different. You are special."

I hope he doesn't mean serial killer *different*. Or *special* like those kids at school who lick the windows on the short yellow bus, wearing safety helmets while they slobber.

"You are much too intelligent to be a product of this family," my gay uncle Gary says as his face relaxes.

And that was our *talk*.

My first day at my guncle's estate.

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## 3

### *First days at school . . .*

When I moved in with my guncle I changed zip codes. And even though it was only by a few digits, it was enough to get me thrown into a different school. This new school was much bigger and better financed than my last school.

My last school smelled like burnt pasta and propane. It's mascot was a lion with a broken arm. Seriously, who has a mascot with a broken appendage? My old school lost every sport we participated in, but due to the large amount of black and Mexican gang members that went there, we always won the after-game fights.

Away games were more like treasure hunts. While our guys were getting their asses kicked out on the gridiron, almost every car in the parking lot was getting broken into. Our mascot should have been a pirate with a big bag full of stolen wallets and purses.

But my new school, Peterson High, well . . . that was something completely different. The hallways had carpet. The aroma was that of vanilla and jasmine. It smelled so good that you could almost see colorful swirls of scent and fragrance rising from the floor like the melted air lifting off a hot roof in the summer.

We had vending machines that had all sorts of fruit punch and health drinks, even carrot juice. At Peterson High, you didn't have to find a safe place to hide when you saw two Mexicans walk-

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ing towards two black guys. Here kids talked about music and politics and art. They made plans for their futures and traded wall street gossip.

Kids at my old school carried knives. At my new school, the students carried diaries and day planners and stock portfolios. At my old school the smart kids get beat-up on a pretty regular basis. Here, you have to have a high IQ just to understand how they're making fun of each other.

At Peterson I haven't seen one girl who's showing signs of pregnancy. Not one kid who's ever been shot. No teachers that have ever been raped by the students. None of that.

But I'm still the new kid. And I have lower-middle class stitched into my DNA at some level, because they can all tell. Rich kids can always play poor, but you can't go the other way. The really rich can sniff out a kid who ate *Cap'n Crunch* a mile away. They can take one look at you, even when you're wearing designer jeans that Gary bought you, and tell that you've swam at a public pool before.

Or that you've tasted bologna.

Eaten dinner at *McDonald's*.

Watched *Jerry Springer*.

Upper echelon kids like these, they instinctively know these things. It's how they stay on top. Their ability to pick a kid like me out of all the others, it's some sense they have that I'll never develop.

And my first day, while I'm taking a spot at the back of the class, in a grey desk-chair combo, that's when Thomas introduces himself.

"New kids sit at the front," he says as he looms over my right shoulder.

I look around, trying to figure out if he's full of it, or if there really is some program for getting the newer students involved.

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I ask him, "How do you know who the new kids are? There's lots of kids in here."

"You're new," he says tapping on my book bag. "Nobody around here would carry that kind of bag. It's queer."

Oh-boy. My uncle must be so gay that people can tell just by the kind of book bags he buys. I look at the bag, then up to this stocky kid. He's got a shaved head, very risqué for a high school kid. His face is kind of stern and etched, like a statue that hasn't been smoothed out. His eyes are dark and menacing.

He's the kid who will probably put me in a trash can at some point. I make a mental note to learn karate or something.

"It's a black bag," I say. "How can that be queer? There's no rainbows on it. No pink triangles."

He sits down beside me, no books, no bag, just a ballpoint pen that he carefully places on the desk so that it's exactly parallel to the top edge of the light tan colored desktop. "When a guy buys a black bag, he's probably compensating for something."

*Is this guy for real? Compensating? Seriously?*

" . . . he's trying to hide something," Thomas says. "Like that fact that he's gay, or a democrat. Something horrible. Look around, do you see anyone with a solid black book bag?"

My eyes do a quick scan of the room. There's probably 35 kids in here. Well-dressed girls and boys with their notepads and three-ring binders and backpacks. And he's right. There's not a single all black bag in the room. All but mine. *Shit.*

I turn to him, "My dad gave me this bag." I'm fumbling for something, anything, to say. "From Vietnam. He . . . he used to carry body parts in it. You know, when he would cut the ears off of NVA officers and shit . . ."

And then I shrug like it's par for the course in my family. That's how tough *we* are. We're the kind of family that picks our teeth with railroad spikes.

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I'll seem like a badass vicariously if he doesn't see that I'm a freakin' liar and completely full of it. And then I wait and watch his reaction. The truth is, my dad actually hid-out in college with a bunch of tree-huggers during the war. He even went to Canada for a stretch, but this kid doesn't know that.

"He was a green-beret," I add, as an afterthought. No big deal, really.

Thomas takes another look at the bag. Lucky for me the zipper is scratched-up from where I dropped it getting out of Gary's *Bentley* this morning.

And Thomas, he just nods and then looks at me. He extends his hand, "I'm Thomas Velasco."

". . . As in Velasco Motors?" I say. They have these really cheesy exotic car commercials where a tall, dark complected man is flanked by women—strippers, I bet—and he's talking about what a car *should* be, how life is short, and how he'll handle the financing.

He smiles as we shake. "That's my dad's dealership."

Then he turns, kind of shifting in his desk, his eyes staring vacantly forward, "The teacher for this class, Miss Reegan, she's hot."

About five minutes later the most attractive math teacher to walk the earth sauntered in. She was tall and thin, with brilliant green eyes behind thin rimmed glasses. Her hair was pulled back into a ponytail, and it looked more like brown silk than hair. Her skin was tanned and perfect, and she had amazing breasts that we all hoped to see whenever she leaned down towards her desk.

It was like a lust lottery.

Her legs were toned and every time she turned around to write something on the board, every boy in the room gawked. This lady was the first teacher I had ever seen that I would later fantasize about. Later on, she would be the girl in the shower.

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And really, I don't think there was a kid in this class, the girls included, who didn't have imaginary sex with Miss Reegan.

Supposedly she was seeing one of the History teacher-slash-wrestling coaches. But that only made her that much more attractive. The idea of her rolling around on the floor, her hair loose and wild . . . well, you see where that could get good.

Thomas and I became friends. He was a soccer player—which at my old school was reason enough to get beat-up, but at Peterson was a status symbol—and was considered one of the Jocs. I tried playing soccer a few times, but it was just too much for me. All that running for no reward. I like basketball, where every fifteen seconds somebody is scoring. I like video games where you can shoot something and be instantly gratified by more points.

Thomas introduced me to the other kids that were important. The kids who would grow up to be doctors and lawyers and senators and governors. “Chances are,” he said, “you'll see a president or two come out of *this* school during your lifetime.”

And I don't know if that idea haunts me, or gives me pride. But that sums up Peterson High. It's what Beverly Hills High—you know, from 90210—would be like if the kids weren't actually 32 years old. Girls here had sweet 16 parties; the boys got *Porsche's*.

Me, I've got one friend name Thomas, and an uncle I can never, ever admit to.