

# Shoot

by Christian Bell

Dear Brandon Lee:

I know that you're dead and can't respond to letters, but I've always felt a connection to you since I learned you died during the production of the film, *The Crow*. I was 22 when that happened, in the middle of the best years of my life, when the untimely deaths of people I didn't know stood in for the real thing, which now I know all too well.

The next summer when the film was released, I saw it and like many people my age then, was blown away by it. Your performance was spectacular, and the film itself is dark and edgy and the hand of vengeance your raised-from-the-dead character delivers to that savage city's criminals was most awesome. It was like being an invincible hero in my own nightmare. My friends and I would drive around with the windows open blasting the soundtrack to that album. We were college age and carefree and could do whatever we wanted during the day while regular grownups were working and we stayed up late at night partying when they were sleeping. We drove around in a ragged, rusted powder blue Ford Taurus station wagon that sputtered and stalled. It was the best car ever. It was the last free summer.

That last free summer was going to be many things. I was going to write a novel. My friends and I were going to drive across the country and back. We were going to start our own microbrewery. We were going to live at the beach. We were going to throw the biggest, longest party ever. We were going to do all the things that were in our dreams. Then you need money. Then you start interviewing for jobs. Then you don't stay out as late. Then you start paying bills. Then you start having real skin in the game and life isn't about grades and people aren't kind about giving you

second chances and I suppose this is why some people start walking around with scowls on their faces and they take jokes seriously and vote Republican.

Brandon, I can't imagine what it was like to be a young movie star who had his life ended by a stupid accident. I can't imagine what you were thinking when that gun was fired and there was supposed to be a blank and you were supposed to go into actor mode like you'd gotten hit by a bullet but you really did get hit by a bullet and you quickly died and, shit, that was that. One minute you're fine, the next you're not. I remember people claiming conspiracy and the eerie coincidence of your father dying early at age 32 but it was really just a stupid accident caused by carelessness. It's written in pen. There is no do-over.

Now, the old friends and I are thinking about getting together again for another ride or two. Sure, that Taurus has long been scrapped and we'd likely be driving around in a minivan, but I'm going to bring *The Crow* soundtrack and it's not going to matter. Of course, nowadays, we always talk but never do. Such is the way of things now that we've become our fathers. But if we do, we want you to come with us. There'll be room for one more. We're trying to recreate that feeling of being young and invincible and where anything is possible, so don't worry about being dead. One of my best friends is dead also and I plan to invite him too so you won't be alone.

Best,

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