

Suicide Rough Drafts

by Matt Brandstein

I was taught the meaning of the word suicide when I was eight from my summer day camp friend Jason. His mother had sadly taught him the meaning of the word with a personal example of it earlier that year.

Jason brought a mimeographed copy of his mother's suicide note that he had borrowed without permission from his father's study for one of my peer group's impromptu unsupervised show and tells. Up until that moment, stolen pornographic magazines and class C fireworks had been considered the decisive chapter of adolescent discovery. The explosive joy found in those former lucky charms would not compare to the detonation of learning an unadulterated firsthand account of a middle aged woman's existential catastrophe.

The smeared purple words of this crudely produced facsimile were taken in by my fellow campers with the concentration of repentant murder row attendees hearing their last rites. I read the letter aloud to the group since I had some experience with bigger words, having been an avid reader of my older brother's very sophisticated KISS fan magazines. With the exception of a few obligatory mentions of guilt for abandoning her children, this tragically departed woman taught us life's most affective vengeful manipulation - suicidal blame.

Her despair roster included, in descending order of importance, a husband who would never really love her the way she wanted to be loved, an overall lack of sexual interest despite unorthodox attempts to reveal her orgasm, shame resulting from those unorthodox attempts to reveal her orgasm, godlessness, an alcoholic father with sharp words and hateful hands, an ineffectual mother and endless struggles with the monotony of being bourgeois.

After the letter was read, we didn't discuss what we had learned,

Available online at «<http://fictionaut.com/stories/matt-brandstein/suicide-rough-drafts>»

Copyright © 2008 Matt Brandstein. All rights reserved.

nor did we lend our support for our grieving campmate. Instead, we rushed over to the recreation center's gymnasium for a dodge ball competition that was packed with total blood lust.

I was the first to be slapped out to the sidelines by the game's unforgiving red spongy ball. The burn of defeat on my cheek shot straight to my heart. With Jason's mother's note still fresh in my mind to distract me from the sting, I began to contemplate its remarkable ability to amass interest. I had absolutely no intention of finishing out the eighth year of life with a lethal bang, but the idea of encouraging others to believe such a thing felt deliriously worthwhile. Later that night in the privacy of my bedroom, I wrote my very first suicide note.

The morbidity of red ink is almost entirely lost on the playfulness of Snoopy stationary. But I boldly pressed on with my darkest thoughts to strengthen the effort of my offbeat creative exercise. As a prodigal potty mouth, I chalked my message full of nuclear F bombs for dramatic effect. It read something like this.

Dear Everyone,

Fucking fuck fuck fuck! I fucking hate my fucking life! No more fucking fuck. I will die like David's mommy. You will all be fucking sorry! Fuck you fucks! Shit. Fuck you, fucking fuckheads!

Fuck you!

Matt

My mother knocked on my bedroom door to politely inform me of her impending entrance. She watched me hurriedly collect my writing materials into my knapsack in preparation for bedtime. A loving smile broadened across her face. She was unspeakably proud of me for writing all by myself like a big boy. But three days later her

mood had shifted south when the big boy letter was finally brought to her attention by my camp counselor, who I had let intentionally discover it in the mess hall after lunch.

"If you ever write anything even remotely like that again, I'll be forced to tell your father. And he'll give you a perfectly good reason to really kill yourself," warned my mother in the bumpy elevator ride up to our apartment. That succinct maternal pep talk contained all the meaningful challenge I needed for inspiration to get right back on track to my juvenile calling as a prodigal suicide note author. I was sentenced to my room for contemplation until dinner under the guise that the time alone would somehow guarantee my safe return back to the regimented pathway of a well adjusted childhood.

The hours lingered as I struggled to compose just the right thesis statement to express the suicidal intentions of my second note. The deep examination of my world-weariness lead to that scholarly twilight where truth and fiction effortlessly coalesce. For my exaggerated literary endeavor to be deemed credible enough by my sophisticated readers, I knew I required the acquisition of a genuinely self-destructive habit - something grave enough to evoke the sympathy I sought, yet insignificant enough to keep me from permanent institutionalization. Unembarrassed by the cliché, I snuck away to the liquor cabinet.

After several hearty swigs of the family's Passover Manischewitz Concord grape wine, the words of my limited second grade vocabulary flowed much more easily to flesh out my larger-than-life misery.

Dear Everyone,

My death is a coming! I drink wine a lot. Fuck! Do you fucking know that? I'm going to die from being drunk. Fuck. You don't even know. I am a bum. Fuck you. Fucky, fucky, fucky you see how fucky drunk I am you fucky fucks!!! I'll suicide myself with this. Nobody cares except Snoopy and he's not real. Fuck you fucky.

I mean it. Fuck you.

Yours truly,

Matt

"Dinner's ready," screamed my mother from the kitchen to tear me away from my writing. I always waited to arrive at the table until after her second more indignant broadcast because I took a wicked pleasure in denying that I ever heard the first one. I drunkenly stumbled into my seat, giggling at the strange shift in gravity.

"What's the matter with your hearing? Are you deaf," my mother shouted as she placed a green bean casserole on the table. I slipped out of my chair onto the floor.

"I'm not in the mood for your *mishigass* tonight. Act your age!" yelled my father.

"I can't sit down right. I'm drunk."

"Oh yeah, right." complained my brother.

"Serious. I'm for real."

"Prove it." He said.

"Okay."

Over the masticating reverberation of my mother's starchy dinner, I uttered the most indescribable saying that I heard my father once blurt out during an acute attack of road rage.

"Mother-fucking cocksucker!"

Stainless steel cutlery thudded against bone china plates. My

mother sat there thunderstruck with one eye on me and the other eye on my father, silently communicating her inability to proceed with the meal. My brother beamed with hyperventilated excitement over procuring a complimentary ticket to my impending demise from the comfortable safety of his ringside seat. My father took one murderous glance in my direction to finely impart the message that the luxury of suicide was not going to be an option this time. I didn't mind though because the rest of that last supper provided enough fodder for my third suicide note to settle the score.

