

Student Name

English B41A

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The Maddening

Chapter 2: Late Night Hunger

I got out of the car, and started walking towards the gas station I had unknowingly parked at. I felt numb after what happened today, it felt so surreal. I snap myself out of it for a second, enough to at least accomplish the task my dad had given me.

I hadn't realized it before but there was a weird air to where I was. I suddenly felt uneasy, helpless. It made sense after today's incident, and the gas station was almost entirely empty, except for what I assumed was an employee's vehicle. The gas station itself wasn't the best looking store, displaying its name in flickering lights, missing the *s* in *GasToGo*, with other letters also on the verge of going out.

"Ok, I'm just here for the milk, just get the milk and leave.", I mumble to myself, hoping it leads to reassurance. I walk into the store, heading straight for the drink section, scanning to see which fridge the milk might be in. I find it rather quickly and head up to the cash register but am stopped by the candy aisle that I walk through. Sam always complained when I went to the store and didn't bring her anything. Might as well buy her something to appease her. I find the candy she loves, small sour peach rings. I grab two bags and am caught by surprise.

Where the candy had been, there was now a pack of black licorice, which had probably been left next to something hot as it looked slimy. I inspect the bag and am reminded of earlier today, the thing. The thing burned into my mind. The thing that came out of Ms. Jones, or that I had at least

thought I had seen. I recall how slimy it was, yet how long, and so dark it had masked in with her black hair. It had moved in a twitch-like manner and was coiling around something, something I couldn't quite make out. I shuddered at the memory. There was no point to remembering it since it was probably a side effect to my most recent medication. And with that scene, hallucinations were probably not unheard of.

Remembering the scene only made me feel sick and I had to keep thinking of it at the stupidest moments. I could feel a headache starting, I've been thinking too much. I leave the bag where it was and go up to the cashier, pay, and walk briskly outside.

It was only 6pm and it's already dark outside, this is why I hate winter. I quickly enter my car, shivering from the cold air. The car slowly starts to warm up once the car is on, and I wait a couple of minutes before I start driving. The road is awfully empty, more than usual.

I step on the pedal a bit more, starting to go a bit higher than the speed limit. I wanted to get home quickly, and rest as I could feel the headache starting to worsen. I continue just a bit more, until I'm rewarded by a flashing light behind me.

"Shit. Where'd they come from?" They were probably hidden waiting for a speeder and I just gave them what they wanted.

I could see the car coming closer; I reluctantly pull over to the side, annoyed that my long trip just became longer. I roll down my window and see a familiar face. Disgust washes over me. It was Zach from high school.

"Well, would you look at that, if it isn't Xavior. Haven't seen you in a while. I see you're still involved in trouble."

"Could you *please* just get it over with? I would really like to get home. I'm not looking to argue right now."

“It’s not simple as you think. You do know what you were doing could hurt people right? You were speeding. You lose control when you speed, you know. I’m going to have to give you a ticket.”

“Whatever, just give me the ticket and go.” I deserved it anyway.

He gives me a frown, unamused by my reaction. He then smiles his disgusting smile that he has when he’s plotted something.

“Oh, you know, I just noticed your cracked windshield back there. I guess I’d better add that as well. Oh, and were you not wearing a seat belt? That’s another.”

My skin begins to boil with anger. I knew he didn’t like me but this is ridiculous.

“What the hell?? I was wearing my seatbelt when I stopped. You saw me take it off to lower my window. Don't you have anything better to do but to annoy me??”

“You get what you get. Justice is served.” He finished writing the note and hands it to me.

I snatch the ticket out of his hand. “Whatever, have it your way. If only this skewed justice of yours could have changed your father’s sentence.”, I add.

“What did you say about my father? My father did nothing wrong!” He gave me a look of pure hatred that I didn’t expect, at least not to this extent. I knew this would upset him but not enough to shout, or be in this state.

He looks like he’s ready to snap, and just as he’s about to shout what I assume was an insult, he shuts his mouth and the look of hatred is gone, replaced now with a dull, lifeless look. Quickly shined over this, could be what I can only describe as bloodlust. It was an expression I had never seen on anyone before. The look alone sends shivers down my spine.

He starts in my direction, and I instinctively roll the windows up, scared at the Zach I don’t know. He bashes on my window, and I’m left in shock that he actually had the guts to attack me.

Even his partner, who had been waiting for him in the car rushes out with a look of shock and worry. He attempts to stop Zach from bashing and is met with a fist to the face. Zach knocks him down and jumps on top of him, ready to punch some more.

“Holy shit.” I didn't expect him to hit his partner as well. I have never seen Zach start a fistfight, and although I wanted to leave, the fight also intrigued me.

My curiosity at watching Zach fight quickly dissipated, however, as I realized he had stopped attacking. And had begun *eating*.

Zach was now gnawing down on his partner's face, pressing his teeth into his soft cheek the hardest I've ever seen teeth snap. This was followed by a blood curdling scream that rung into my eardrums. Blood dripped down his chin as he chewed on another piece of flesh, this time what appeared to be an ear. His partner tried to shove him off, but his attempts were met with defeat as Zach bent down, in pursuit of his eyeball, gushing blood everywhere as he popped it like a balloon.

I couldn't bear the sight any longer and turned towards the passenger seat, throwing up on the just bought goods. I felt nauseous and sick all over. I proceeded to dial 911, terrified that I might be next.

The phone rang a couple of times before someone answered, “Hi, 911 em-”

I cut her off, “Please send help! I just saw a man attack another man and and... “, I stumbled on my words, still shocked from what I'd seen.

“Sir, can you please give me your location? I'll send someone right now, but I need to know where you're at.”

“I'm... on Eastline road, just before Harvey Lane. Please send someone, please, I-”

“Ok, sir I’ll send someone right now, but please try to remain calm in the meantime. Can you please describe your situation?”

“yes, I was driving when- “, I hear footsteps and a rustle, scaring me more than I already was. I put the phone to the side of my seat so that it’s barely audible.

I reluctantly looked over the window, slowly peeking to try to see who or what was causing the noise. There was nothing. Nothing I could see.

All that was left was the pile of what once was the cop, his face and body gnashed at in several spots. Zach had gotten to his stomach, and had bitten so deep that part of his intestines were now exposed. I felt sick again, and hurled to the side.

Characters in Chapter:

Xavior Green:

- Major character/Protagonist
- 24 years old, born on 10/24/87 in New York, New York.
- Male, 5'5, 197 lbs., black eyes, dark brown hair
- American
- Single
- Lives in Apelp, Vermont
- Not particularly religious, family is Christian
- Speaks English
- Considers himself a moderate
- Lower middle class
- He cares for his family more than anything else, his family comes first
- Highest level of education is high school
- Attended Apelp High
- Favorite class was history, least was math
- Has a negative reputation as an outsider despite being years since he's moved to Apelp
- Father is Charles Green. He is living and works as a freelance botanist.
- Xavior helps his father with his work by running errands, deliveries, etc.
- Mother is Rebecca Green. She is considered dead, worked as a nurse.
- Parents never divorced but his mother went missing and is assumed to be dead.
- Has a younger sister, age 10, named Samantha.

Zach Stevenson:

- Minor character
- 26 years old, born on 3/21/5 in Apelp Vermont
- Male, 5'10, 193 lbs., hazel eyes, brown hair
- American
- In a relationship, engaged
- Lives in Apelp, Vermont
- Considers himself Catholic but doesn't always follow the teachings
- Speaks English
- Republican
- Upper class
- He cares for few people in his life, mainly his father above others. Has his own idea of what is morally right and wrong
- Highest level of education is college
- Attended Apelp High
- Favorite subject was Physical education, disliked English

- Works as a police officer, but wanted to study to become a lawyer. As he studied law, he realized it wasn't for him, and after constant struggles changed majors.
- Is popular in the town, has a mixed reputation.
- Father is Richard Stevenson, who was a politician. He is alive but is in jail for fraud. Zach believes the sentence was a mistake.
- Mother is Layla Stevenson, who is a housewife. Living, still married to Richard. Rumors of her current income have circulated around town. Zach is distant from her but doesn't dislike her.
- Has 3 older brothers, of 29, 32, 35. He is the youngest in the family.

Novel Outline:

Before Current Chapter: Before this incident, there is a different event, and unexpected murder.

Ms. Jones, who worked as a high school teacher and was Xavior's teacher at one point killed the stylist she had an appointment with. She has used the scissors the stylist had to puncture her body repeatedly. Xavior was at the scene and witnessed the murder and saw a black thing leave her body. He thought he was hallucination. Unknown to the reader: Her heightened state of love towards the stylist was what triggered her to act as she did. She was able to stop herself from feeding on the stylist before killing herself. Parasite leaves her body, was premature and was able to make it into the water of a nearby fountain, where it eventually died.

After Current Chapter:

- Police arrive at the scene, and are suspicious of Xavior. They are confused as to how the wounds on the police officer were made. They take him to the police station to interrogate him and end up taking a look at the dash cam, but it only shows the point where Zach bashes at the window, the rest is out of the camera's field of view. The police can't seem to fully believe Xavior's story since the culprit is a fellow member, and instead of releasing the story of cannibal, describe the victim being mauled by an animal. Xavior is forced to keep quiet.
- There are several more incidents similar to the ones before. They involve two suicides of a local market vendor and a small child. There is also a missing report filed for a 30-year-old woman. These are considered the tragedies of the month and begin to garner attention from media outside of the town. Xavior isn't a witness to any of the suicides but has begun to suffer from his traumatic experience.

- Xavier can't seem to do tasks like he used to without feeling anxious or helpless. He is also at the limit of speaking out about what happened. He doesn't want to discuss what happened with his family and instead comes into contact with an old friend from high school he hasn't spoken to in a while. He agrees to meet up with him but upon reaching the friend's house, he finds a body mauled in a similar fashion to the scene he had witnessed, who turns out to be his old friend's wife. He flees from the scene, unsure what to do next, and ends up back at home. His family by this point have noticed changes and are concerned for Xavier.
- The body is found and reported, with the husband being reported missing. Speculation passes through town that the friend was the culprit and false rumors spread around of a possible cult being the culprit of the murders and suicides. The mood around town had changed with some people mourning for their loved ones, while others have become fearful or stressed.
- The rumors of a cult only heighten as there appears to be impersonators leaving messages around town to terrorize the townspeople. The body of Xavier's friend is found at the shore and more are reported dead which only adds to the tension. Some have decided to move at this point. Xavier is experiencing night terrors and recalls the parasite he had seen in the beginning. He searches the scene, and although he seems delirious, he finds it in shock. He feels relieved at the thought he didn't hallucinate at the time.
- He takes what he found and takes it to his father, who what he knows from bio can tell that it's some type of parasite resembling a horsehair worm. It appears to have several mutations that led it to be how it is now. Unknown to Xavier, the smell of it's

- like is caught by a nearby affected person. They are attempting to enter the house but Xavier's father mistakes it for someone knocking.
- He answers the door and is almost attacked but Xavier defends him and is attacked instead. He urges for his father to close the door and attempts to get away, but due to his current state doesn't have enough energy to do so. He is murdered but dies with the thought that he at least was able to protect his family. His father comes out with a weapon but is too late to save his son.
 - The father reports the parasite and after investigation, it is found that a local gardener and vendor had been growing near a restricted area that was nearby to the water now contaminated with them. The area had been avoided due to a rumor of a curse and the vendor had taken advantage of the unused land. The vendor is sent to jail, and the father is awarded with the discovery of the parasite.

Author's Note: My story had changed a lot from what I had initially planned, so I apologize if anything isn't completely soundproof or if there are any plot holes. The outline also isn't as detailed as I'd want it to be but it was getting long. If this were a completely novel there would also probably more focus on Xavier's changes as well, not only with that of the town. The chapter title also changed a lot and I'd still consider it to be tentative. I hope you found my story entertaining nonetheless.