

## **Controlled Insanity**

by C. Cameron Twiste

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### **‘So it begins....’**

He exhaled slowly, finally releasing all the years of anguish and turmoil from his mind as well as the air from his lungs. All of the thought, deliberation, and raw energy had finally been realized, and was then gone in a silent cloud of breath. It was strange to him that everything culminated in the most bizarre and wicked events.

Just five days ago the desire started to consume him. Like many things, it started slowly, almost innocently in a philosophical sort of way. Unfortunately it was too late before he realized the desire was starting to control him.

He had always managed to repress his need until then.

The act itself was anticlimactic, of course, much simpler and less rewarding than he anticipated. But to finally come to terms—to put all of the rest to doubt—to end the uncertainty—to finally feel validated—that was enough.

It was the validation he craved most.

He was covered in blood, in awe of the volume that had bled from his victim already. It stained his clothes, stained his skin, stained his soul, yet strangely lifted his

spirit. The arterial spray on the walls painted a horrific landscape of what he had done, by his own hands and from his own volition.

As he surveyed the carnage a deep red pool formed around the body and started to spread beneath his feet. It was much thicker than he had anticipated. Spongy, sticky, dark, and far less fluid as the heart beat began to wane.

Suddenly his hands felt surprisingly cold as the blood cooled quickly. It was almost as if it was aware it had left its host and time was running thin. He was transfixed for a moment by the depth of color in the stains lining his palms. Flexing his fingers, there strangely appeared to be life even in the face of imminent death.

He tried to calm himself as the prickly sense of anxiety started to creep across his skin. Like the blood turned cold, once begun it came quickly. There was no reason to pretend anymore. The deed had been done. It was performed swiftly, methodically, and with reckless abandon.

Still, the rapidness of the evening's encounter did not seem fair to him. Possessed by this day for as long as he could remember he wished his elation had more staying power. The people he sacrificed before were always of little concern, but not today.

Today the victim was more important than he ever imagined and he relished the opportunity to be more proud of his selection. Unfortunately there was no time to revel in the accomplishment. No time to rejoice and certainly no time to reflect.

It was time for action.

He had planned the aftermath of this day for as long as he could remember and

was filled with expectations of what might happen, what could happen, even if he got caught. He was thorough if not relentless in his research, but what did it matter now?

Nothing mattered anymore.

Time seemed to stand still as if it too was paralyzed by the horror of the events that just unfolded. There was so much to do, but the more he tried to cover the atrocity the less he cared about the consequences. This day was paramount in his mind for so long now that the climax had passed it was fitting to end this way—to end with an unknown.

What's done was done.

It was time to move on. He had finally stopped running from his demons and tomorrow seemed insignificant. He felt weak, exhausted from the energy just exerted, but his mind raced with no apparent direction. He was not fool enough to think this was guilt or remorse. His plan was premeditated and he was not about to second-guess all of his decisions now.

He was not a criminal, nor was he insane. But he was not so blind to believe he could convince anyone else of his innocence. He still hoped to avoid any explanations though, as any label was precariously balanced on whether or not the truth was ever told. He still clung to a belief that if people really knew his story, if they could see his life from his perspective, they would think his actions were justified.

As the blood turned black he reassured himself that people have killed before. They have killed millions in the name of God, in vain, and for reasons lesser than his own. He was doing society a favor and they should be thankful for his selflessness.

In his mind this was right, this was just, and this was sane.

## **Day I**

**‘Every Man believes that he has a greater possibility.’**

**‘Ralph Waldo Emerson**

## **‘Monday’**

It was a day like any other. Just as slow, just as boring, just as trying, and just as helpless as the days before. Through the windows it appeared to be overcast outside. The clouds hung low, suspended in a still sky, but even on the brightest mornings the house seemed solemn. What light that managed to cut through the gloom served little purpose. It just extended the shadows beyond their reach, like a ghostly hand pulling me back into despair. There was nothing left that shined, nothing to love, and certainly nothing to help brighten the days.

The house was single, solitary and quiet. Not unlike a tomb

Painfully quiet, aside from the incessant irritation emanating from the alarm clock. My body ached in protest as I threw back the sheets to start another day, amazed that I found yet another reason to get out of bed. The mood of the house was somber and depressed in many ways, but that was to be expected. It was the norm and had been for a long time.

Years ago the mornings were brighter and more alive. In the silence, it was hard to believe the house was ever filled with noise and busy excitement. It was difficult to imagine that I used to wake up every morning to the unmistakable racket of young children starting new adventures, having not a care in the world.

It makes me laugh, if anything as depressing and ironic can be called laughter. At the time, “chaos” was the word I chose most often. I never thought the chaos would be what I missed most. Now it would be nice just to hear a voice in these hallowed halls, any voice other than my own.

The house was empty and had been for over a year. There were no signs of its prior life and it was lonely all the time. I mentioned it was like a tomb. I was the soul sentenced to purgatory.

The solitude enveloped me with a deafness that bordered madness. When you have nothing but the memory of something, it does little to warm you when the nights grow cold and long. I don't know why I clung to the hope that it could ever change.

At times I found myself sitting motionless on the floor, blindly watching the empty spots where they first crawled, first walked, or first spoke my name. The memories were fond, but the joy was long gone. Sometimes I sat for hours, my legs tucked underneath me until they grew numb and I found it difficult to regain my footing.

Others times all I could handle was a few fleeting moments before I started pacing. For some reason I always ran over the same pattern on the same empty floor until I felt the same knot form in the back of my throat. I never knew why or what memories would cause the pain to swell up, but it always did. Then moments later I would find myself curled into a ball, hoping and praying for salvation.

Until I learned to shut down my mind, repress the pain, and hide from my past.

The kitchen always triggered the most memories. It doesn't make sense, but I think the coffee is the biggest remainder of my loss. I used to smell it all the way up stairs as soon as I shut off the shower. It was always hot and always waiting for me. One cream, two sugars, and a smile, hug, and kiss from my wife. Amazingly the most often overlooked luxuries are what made life bearable.

You can call it trite, but it's true. You never know what you have got until it's gone. But it was gone and I would give anything to get it back. That was an unfortunate

reality that I faced every day, and one that I have yet to accept. Now I seek refuge in a hot shower and a 15 minute wait at Starbucks to replace what I never appreciated years ago.

Ironically I even remember fondly the times that used to cause me stress and aggravation. Someone please tell me how that is not wrong. I vividly recall many a morning when the kids were finishing their breakfast and turned the kitchen, as well as each other, into a war zone. Meals always erupted into a battle of young vs. old, even though they were just a few years apart. Food was often seen hurled through the air before it landed on tables, floors, walls, and sometimes even faces.

I'd ask my wife in dismay, 'when do they grow up, when does the chaos stop?'

She always responded the same way, 'it doesn't' and did so with a smile on her face. I never understood how that could make her so happy. How the mess she had to clean every morning made her glow. I know now though, and would give almost anything to get that time back.

As I reflect I realize all the times I should have joined the fun and maybe even thrown a pancake myself. I usually opted to throw my voice instead. I should've stopped eyeing my watch and started watching with my eyes. Life was unfolding in front of me every day. But I was too blind to see and always too busy to look. If only I could turn back time—would I make the same mistakes again?

Back then the house was alive with light, sounds, and love. The sun would streak through the large bay windows, splashing and reflecting off the walls as the kids ran under foot. They were always busy with the mundane activities of the day, making even the most regular of things seem new, somehow different and more exciting than the day before.

The children required constant attention and entertainment, but what felt like another full time job was really a gift. They were a privilege, not an obligation riddled with additional responsibilities. Unfortunately I never saw that then.

Instead I'd complain to my wife that we never had any time for ourselves, that we were never alone. She'd always dismiss me with a wave of her hand, but must have agreed with me on one level. During those years, in the few precious moments we spent in each other's arms—let's just say we were madly in love.

Alex and I were high school sweethearts, dates to the prom, long distance lovers in college, and everything in between. We were the ideal modern romance. I'm not saying we were Romeo and Juliet, but at least we were real.

## **‘Doctor’**

The house was particularly cold as I readied myself this miserable morning, much like yesterday and exactly like tomorrow. Regardless of the temperature outside the house always created a chill that ran down my spine, coursed through my veins, and remained with me throughout the day.

I woke this morning to the screaming of my brain, reminding of the previous day’s emotional adventure. I called my daughter, my sunshine. It was her birthday, but she was not home. I left as heart felt a voice mail as I could muster; explaining in vane how much I missed her, loved her and wished I could be there to celebrate the birth of her second decade. I doubt her mother bothered to explain why she forgot to invite me to begin with. Did she even know herself?

Needless to say, my evening ended poorly.

I was out shopping for something obscenely grand for the special occasion. I had my cell on all day waiting anxiously for the call, but it never came. When I got home I was greeted not by a loving child with longing eyes wanting desperately to know what required the hands of three men to carry inside, but by the blinking lights of my answering machine. The message was from a tearful child who apparently did not know I called before. Why Alex didn’t tell her to call my cell was both obvious and cruel.

‘Daddy...how come you didn’t call? You promised me. I wish you were here...Mommy says you should have come, why didn’t you? Please call me back...’

I immediately picked up the phone with a million thoughts running through my mind and a sob in my eye. It rang three, four, five, six times and then finally she picked up.

‘Sunshine...it’s me. Wait until you see what daddy...’ but she was not there.

‘She too upset to talk to you’. Her voice was cold and calculating.

‘Alex...’ was the last person I wanted to speak with. ‘Did you tell her I called? Did she get the message?’

‘What message? How could you...on today of all days’, and then she was gone.

I hit redial for as long as I could tolerate the echo in my ears, but no one picked up. All I could think was, ‘Alex...why would you do this? To me? To her? To us?’

That was last night, and a few hours of restless sleep had done nothing to brighten my mood. I rubbed the pain away from my eyes as I stared at my clothes crumpled on the floor. They were exactly where I left them before I stumbled to bed. I don’t know why that surprised me. It was not as if there was anyone else to pick them up, or to take care of me anymore. Today looked to be a day much like any other, but that was all about to change.

### **8:35AM**

As I drove to work this miserable morning I let my mind wander, as I usually do. Sometimes I think of better days behind me and sometimes I think about the future hoping that whatever the next sunrise brings is infinitely better than the sunset. But most often I just wonder. I mean really wonder why I chose such a retched profession.

I elected to place a call before I fell fully into a bout of depression. I let my daughter down and that was not something I wanted raining over my head to start the week. I needed to talk to someone about last night but my options were limited. I couldn’t

in good conscious call Alex without relying heavily of a myriad of choice four letter words and I was not ready to face my little girl. Instead I listened to a familiar ring, half hoping she would not pick up.

Dr. Lethe was an old friend, but I feared what I would get this morning was a bit more then friendship, and a bit less then what I needed.

‘This can’t be a good sign...’ she said. Her intuition never failed to amaze me.

‘Now why would you say something like that? Maybe I just wanted to say hello’ but I knew she wouldn’t believe me.

‘I’d like to believe that. But based on the hour, the tone of your voice, and the significance of yesterday I’d argue otherwise.’ Dr. Lethe was never one to mix words with rhetoric.

‘Yesterday...’ then it dawned on me. ‘How do you remember these things?’ I asked, silently thanking her for saving me the disgrace of explaining the event in detail. ‘Alex never told her I called...I got a voice mail last night.’

‘And?...’ The question was brief, but the implication heavy.

‘And nothing...I called, but she wouldn’t come to the phone’ was all that I offered.

‘She wouldn’t come to the phone or a certain someone wouldn’t give her the phone?’ Enough said.

‘It’s the same difference...we didn’t get to speak.’ I replied shamefully.

‘The only thing the same, is your inability to stand your ground and that is not going to...’ but I cut her off.

‘Please...not another lecture’ was all I could muster in my defense.

‘You didn’t sleep again did you?’ she asked, knowing that I was not ready to dive into my part of last night’s debacle.

‘No...not really’ but do I ever sleep these days?

‘What about the dreams?’ Her voice was cool, calm, and collective. She sounded like the mother everyone wished they had.

‘The dreams were the same...they are always the same.’

‘Listen...I think we need to talk. I mean sit down and talk. You know I can’t help you with these once a month confessions’ and she was certainly right about that. It was not the first, second, or even twentieth time she suggested we sit down formally.

‘I know...’ not sure of what else I could say.

‘Knowing and doing are not the same thing...and you KNOW that. Why is this so hard for you? You were there for me. Allow me the same courtesy.’

‘Yes I know...I am just not ready’ and that much was certain.

‘What about the dreams...I think we should at least talk about them.’

‘The dreams, my marriage, the kids...all of it. We need to talk about all of it, right?’ I barked regrettably, before I realized the words escaped my subconscious. She was just trying to help, and did not deserve even the slightest hint of contempt.

We were silent for a moment, and I swear I could hear the faint whisper of her breath in my ear.

‘I’m sorry....forget what I said, please forgive me’ and she would. Just as she had done numerous times before, and probably will many times again.

The remainder of the conversation trailed off into oblivion. I lost site of the reason I called, maybe I didn’t know to begin with. The last thing she said hit hard though.

‘As a doctor...’ used to be badge of honor. Now it was nothing more then an albatross slowly dragging me down. It was not that I thought I deserved better then my lot in life, I just couldn’t believe the extent of what I had become.