

was just so, so ordinary. Here in front me, this was the man who had murdered my wife, and in doing so, separated me from the land of the living. How many seconds did I have, if I wasn't fast enough I would fail. Not yet. Instead, I look directly into David Smith's eyes, brown pools and I ask him, "Why did you kill my wife?" I don't believe David Smith blinked before he said, "I don't know. I thought I wanted to feel alive." I sat very still, I did not move my eyes from his, "I loved my wife and you ended her life for no reason." He dropped his gaze then, "I'm sorry. There's something wrong inside of me. Something I don't know how to fix." And then David Smith began to cry. We can not fix something when we do not understand why it is broken. Or how it came to be. So I told this man, "I will try to forgive you, only because I will never forget my wife. My Sophie." Oh god, I've been worried about us too, Babyluv. Sophie visited almost every night in the days before I went to meet that man. And as sure as I stand here, she knew. *You have to heal, my sweet, sweet boy. I don't know how, need to end this. I need you. You have me, always. Forever. And you know mercy in your heart. I don't want to worry about us anymore. I don't want to worry about you, Babyluv. Don't make me worry.* And so, I could not.

I was worried that the blooms would be so fragile, but look at how strong they are. And now blue. As blue as the ocean, or lapis lazuli stones...or Sophie's blue. Sophie's blue. It's taken me much, much longer than I would have planned to give her a dozen baby blue roses, but here they are, and I can only hope they are everything she would have wanted them to be. She still comes, you know, but not nearly as often, and her face now is a perfect and as clean as ever, and I know, for certain, is that there is a paradise, a beautiful place and that I will arrive there, when the time is determined, and I will be with my Sophie for eternity, and there will be no need for science of any sort and nothing will need fixing. We will be surrounded my fields of blue roses, every shade of blue the mind's eye has never even imagined. I see us dancing in groves of blue roses, bright, bright blue in the full bloom of sunlight. I am not worried about us anymore. Babyluv. *I'm going to be there, Sophie, and I know you'll be waiting. Oh, my babyluv, you're in my blood like holy wine, you taste so bitter and so sweet, I could drink a case of you darling, and I would still be on my feet. I would still be on my feet. Mmm...hmmmm...*

Here in this House

Carl Sason writing as Christopher Scarpo

I was like, I don't think so. But my parents were like, we know so. And so I was like, umm, this is totally like, really unfair and everything. I mean, it's not like I had huge plans for the summer or anything, but that did not mean I was all about spending a month in the wilderness at Happy Faces Summer Camp. And I mean, aren't camps for like 12 year olds, not high school kids? But, whatever. So, it was like, goodbye Fashion Square Mall and all night makeover parties with my girlfriends and hello to spending a month in the forest, like, getting to know God better. And hello to bugs. Like, lots of bugs. Really big ones that, like always seemed to find a way in to my cabin. They were like totally gross. But as God always says, love all things equally, and I guess that includes centipedes, right? So, basically, I've like known God forever, right? But the whole point at Happy Faces was to help you get even closer to the Big Man Upstairs.

So, like in between roasting holy marshmallows to go on sacred s'mores and swimming in the river filled with like, creepy underwater bugs we spent lots of time like, reading the bible and like, doing arts and crafts hour. We had to like, draw a picture of Jesus, but I can't really, like draw, so my picture of Jesus looked sort of like a person with a stick body and a potato for a head. But I like explained to the camp counselor that what I thought was that, like, what really mattered was that you had to like, have Jesus in your heart, and that, if ya had Jesus in your heart than he would totally forgive all of your sins, even drawing him to look like a potato. And, like, saying that, got me kinda worked up about like my like, passion for Jesus and so I was like, "Oh my god, I like totally love Jesus." And then the counselor totally shouldn't be saying, "Oh my god", and that like didn't make any sense, and so I was like, "Oh my god, I'm like saying Oh my god, about like totally loving God" and that's so not bad. I think that totally made the counselor think about some really like spiritual stuff because she just looked at me with this like really intense look and said something about me having some quiet time and drawing another picture of Jesus as a vegetable. I, like, think I totally helped her on her personal path of getting right with God. I think, like the two most amazing things I learned at Happy Faces Summer Camp were that 1) God totally believes in me.

and knows I can do anything, even if it seems like totally tough and 2) He's gonna like, love me, like no matter what. And like, I really like knowing that. So, I guess going to camp last summer was totally worth it, even though the back to school sale at Fashion Square is like really righteous.

So, anyway, like school starts again and everything and I decide that in between trying to get like a four point oh G.P.A. And scoring a like fifteen hundred on the SAT, that I had like another really big goal. So, like, I sit down with my Mom and my Dad, and like, I totally get ready to like structure this conversation and I'm like, "Mom, Dad, like I think I'm like totally ready to start, like, dating." And, um, my Mom and my Dad are like totally silent. Like as silent as like...potatoes. But then, like, my Mom basically tells me that Jesus wants me to focus on my grades and My Dad tells me that I can like date when I get married. And like, I don't think they're like really getting the picture, right, and I try to explain that I don't think my husband, or Jesus for that matter would really be down with me dating after I got married and everything, but like, then my Dad he basically tells me that boys are like really bad, and like, I'm like really getting the picture that my Mom and my Dad don't like boys at all, which is probably like totally un-awesome for my like little brother, but then my Mom and my Dad basically tell me no-way, no-how, no-go, no dating ever. And I'm like, "Wow. Okay, gag me with a spoon." which, I know, is like very disrespectful and everything, but I figure Jesus will get over this one like, slip and like, I walk down to Grace's on the corner and order a pineapple coke, which is like a coke with like pineapple ice cream topping like stirred into it which they say no one every orders because it's like totally like revolting but like, I think it's like totally delicious and it's what I like to order when I get like upset, so like whatever. I actually drank, like two, so, like whatever. And so, like, later that night, I totally had some like quiet time with you know who and like, tried to explain the situation. And like, I tried to like explain to him that like my Mom and my Dad had not explained anything to me about boys and that now that I was a Junior in high school, like I kinda thought I should probably go on a date or something. And like, I think he totally understood, which like, was a huge relief. And like, I know it's kinda a sin to lie to your Mom and your Dad but, uh, I totally thought about it and realized if I just didn't say anything than that wasn't lying at all and Jesus would probably be okay with it.

So, like, the next day at school I talk to my two best friends, Marissa and Clarissa, and I like explain to them that I'm ready to start dating. And so, Clarissa asks, What about Jesus? And Marissa, she asks, What about your parents? And so, of course, I like explain that Jesus is totally fine with it and my parents just don't need to know. So, Marissa suggests that we like have, like an audition or something. And I say that like drama club is like so for losers. And then Clarissa says we should start taking applications and I was like, Um, I'm not like, Burger King, this isn't have it your way, this is like, getting a boyfriend. Sometimes like Marissa and Clarissa are like totally clueless. So, like, I decide there has to be, like an easier way, right? So, after fourth period, I go up to Lucky at his locker and like, ask him if he wants to like go out on like a date. I did it sorta like this. "Hey uh, Lucky, uh, like, hi, like, uh, I was like wondering if like, uh, well, like, uh, would like to like go out on a like, date?" I was like totally nervous but I don't think he could tell. And then he was like, sure. Like, everybody made such a mondo deal out of this whole, like process and it was like really easy.

Okay, so like, Friday night comes and I like change my outfit like seven times and like do my hair like fourteen, and like, after looking in the mirror to make sure I didn't look like a potato, I like went out on my first date. I like told my parents I had a like school project to work on. So, like we went to Grace's and I had a pineapple coke which is like coke with pineapple...well, like I was really nervous. And like, Lucky wasn't weirded out at all. So, we like sat there and he told me about like how it is to be on the like football team and how his older brother is like a football star at college and I looked at him, "very intently and nodded my head once every few words"- that was like, some advice I got on this dating site I looked up. And then we like, held hands for like a few minutes and then, like the date was over. And I'm thinking, that was so not sinful at all. Like, maybe my parents are just really elderly or whatever, and they don't even like remember how dating is or something. So, I was totally grateful that Jesus had been able to guide me in the right direction. So, like, I was really worried about the whole part about me asking Lucky on the second date and all that stuff, but like two days later, he like totally asked me out again, and I'm like, wow, that's a relief. And then, like after that, he asks again. And then, like again. And then, again. And then, okay, well you like totally get the idea, right? So according to like girl date.com, like, after date number five, like you're totally boyfriend and girlfriend, so, like I wrote on my like AP Physics notebook, BF and GF forever, just to like remind me that I totally had a boyfriend now. I guess that was kind of lame, but whatever. Okay, so it's like Saturday night, which is like, usually date night for me and Lucky, right? And so, he like takes me to like Red Lobster (which I'm thinking is like really fancy for high school, right?) And

so, like I know already this is going to be a totally special night. And then, like while we're eating our friend shrimp, he like presents me this like box, and I unwrap it and there's like these silver hoop earrings and Lucky tells me that he'd been saving up forever for them, and I'm thinking that look a lot like the ones that you can get at the drugstore for two dollars, but like whatever, it's totally like the thought that counts. And then, like, okay, like get this, Lucky tells me that he like totally loves me, and uh, he asks me if I like, love him to. And like, the thing is, I think about it...and like, I realize, I totally don't like, know. So, like I explain that like, I'm like way into like Jesus and everything, but that since Jesus is totally about love that like, yeah, I do love him. And then he like stares at me really intently and nods his head. And I'm thinking, whoa, does Lucky like surf girl date.com too? That's totally intense.

Okay, but anyway, then we just like drive around for awhile, and Lucky like parks the car, and like tells me he wants to talk for a little while. And I'm like pretty nervous, so like, I say like a little prayer, asking God to help me with like the right things to say, 'cause I'm thinking like, after tonight, like maybe Lucky is totally gonna be like my husband someday. And then like, Lucky he tells me, that tonight, like, we're gonna do more than like hold hands. And I'm thinking, oh my go...goodness, I'm totally gonna have my first kiss tonight and I get like pretty hyped, right? And just like I thought, like, Lucky he starts kissing me. But uh, it's not like little peck kisses, it's like the open mouth kind and at first it was okay or whatever, but then I'm thinking, this is totally why they say it's like eating your face, right? 'Cuz it sort of feels like Lucky is going to like eat my head or something and so it's like totally enough and I'm like trying to back away, but Lucky like holds me by the back of my head and he tells me, "I'm so glad your ready." And like, I was thinking, if he wasn't ready for this, I am not ready, and like, maybe will never be ready, and I'm like saying to Lucky that this is totally enough for tonight but he's like telling me he totally loves me like over and over, and I'm like, okay, I get it, like, not an airhead, like, roger that, but like, then, like, and I don't even know how, like his hands are like under my shirt and whatever and like pressing and squeezing and I'm like thinking back to girl date.com, and so, of course, I say, "That's enough, Lucky. Please stop." But like, I guess he was loving me like so much right then that like he didn't even hear me because then he was like, on top of me and we were like pressed sideways against the front seat of his car and his hands aren't like under my shirt anymore, they're like, uh, like totally lower and so, over and over, I'm like, "Stop, Lucky. Please stop." But like, maybe when they get like that, boys I mean, they can't or something, because he was like pulling my jeans off, and I guess I'm like crying at this point, because I'm like totally embarrassed, and I just can't like get out from under him, ya know? And uh, then, he like, um, he well, he was right there...right where he wasn't supposed to be at all. And there's like a lot of pushing, and my whole body feels like as flat as paper or like a really heavy rock, and like, I know I shouldn't say this sort of stuff, but it like hurt the worst of any hurt that like, my body could feel. Like way worse than when I got my tonsil taken out when I was ten. And all of a sudden, I feel my Mom and my Dad and Jesus too were like in the backseat of Lucky's car, like, saying, "Ta da da da da." "This is why." And I just felt like, so retarded. Like I totally should have known. And then Lucky, he like lifts himself off and his face is so like sweaty and gross. And like, I totally don't think he even noticed I was crying, cuz like he says, "That's how it's supposed to be. When you're in love." And so, like, he does his jeans up and um, he drives me home.

And um we're like both totally silent. And so, like, of course I just go to bed, thinking that like, when I wake up for school, like it's all gonna make sense or something, or just like go away like a bad dream. But I wake up, and like, it's even worse, and like, I'm thinking, okay, so like, now I've had like the dating experience or whatever and we'll just like move on from this, and like, whatever, right? But like, within two days at school, like everybody totally knows about it, and Marissa and Clarissa won't even like sit next to me at lunch and, like, after fourth period, somebody has left this sign on my locker that says, SLUT, with these like grody pictures and like, everywhere I walk it's like a thousand voices whispering. When Clarissa finally talks to me, she tells me she heard that Lucky totally broke up with me and that he's like dating Alexis now. Well, that's just great.

Lucky stops me on the way past his locker on the fourth day and he like asks me, "You know why they call me Lucky?" And like, I'm just staring down, shaking my head, I can't even look at him, ya know? But, uh, he open his locker, and on the like back wall of his locker, there's this like list, a list written in like, um, black sharpie pen, and I'm looking, and I'm thinking I don't even know what this is, right? But it's a list of girl's name, like name after name after, and like at the bottom of the list, the last name, like, oh, the last name is mine. And Lucky, he just smiles at me, and says, "I like, totally love you." And then he starts laughing. And then I know why they call him Lucky. So, like, I get home from school, and my Mom and my Dad are home from work already which is like totally not like them cuz they both usually work til like really late at night. And it like, looks like my Mom had been crying and like my Dad is like way not

happy. And so then, like I find that like Mrs Henderson called my Mom she goes to our church and everything, and I find out that she like knew all about everything, and like told my Mom. And like, I realize, this is not very Awesome at all. And then my Mom, she like asks me, "How could you do this to us?" And my Dad he asks me, "How could you do this to Jesus?" And I'm thinking, how could like Lucky do this to me, but I try to like explain that I was praying and...but my Dad like backhands me across the face and I'm thinking, like, he hasn't done that for a really like long time, and then my Dad says, that I have ruined my body and that no husband would ever want me and that, like, basically I'm going to hell, and that, here in this house, they can't have that and then they're talking about what this is going to do to my little brother and I'm like thinking, my little brother isn't dating Lucky, and then that like maybe I'm a sexual addict or something and that like, maybe they're going to have to send me away. And I'm thinking they don't mean *Happy Faces Summer Camp*. *And they say, this is terrible. And I think, I know, right? But* they tell me to shower and just go to bed. But like, I didn't think I'd be sleeping very much, so like I was going to go down to Grace's for a pineapple coke, but they're totally closed, and so instead I came here, because I know that God's house like, totally never closes. And like, I haven't been here for a really long time, and like, it's weird ya know, cuz like my parents totally talk about being down with God like all the time, but like we never come to visit his house like ever. But like, the even weirder thing is, this is like the first time like my brain has been quiet since this whole thing started, ya know? And I'm totally glad I came here. Because like I was totally like talking in my head or whatever, and like somebody was talking back, and since I don't think I'm bonkers, I gotta think he was talking to me.

And like, I think he totally understands that I've really been trying. Like, I do want to go to a good college. And like, I realize that 3.9 isn't a 4.0 and that like, I really need to get a 1500 next time instead of a 1480, but, like, the point is, I really try to just like do what my parents tell me to. I just wanted to like see a movie with a boy, ya know? I mean, like maybe if my Mom or my dad had told me about boys or...well, I guess that doesn't really *matter now, does it? But like, here in this house, like I mean, I really think that* God thinks I'm beautiful and that I can do whatever I put like my mind to, and like, it makes me that, um, God and I are still good. And so, like I ask him, if like maybe he can like talk to my parents or something, ya know, like maybe explain that I'm sorry I let that stuff happen with Lucky, that like, I didn't mean to, ya know? Like, I totally didn't mean to. I wish it hadn't happened. I totally forget how awesome the stained glass is here. It's like everything in those pictures is perfect. I guess life just isn't sometimes, like when your picture of Jesus looks like a potato. Like, I think I'm gonna just sit here in the quiet for a little longer.

DARKENED HIGHWAYS

Plays by Carl Sassoon

Thief of Snow * Heal * Here in this House

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