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Email may be sent to me at paulgrant@gmail.com. Please put “Nothing eBook” as the subject as I get a LOT of email everyday. I will do my best to respond to you in a timely manner.

Here's a little bit about me, if you're curious. I am a disabled, single parent of three lovely children, trying to support them and myself. I love to write, and hope you enjoy reading this book as much as I have enjoyed writing it. I live in the Pacific Northwest of the United States of America and divide my free time between my kids (the lions share), reading, writing, music and movies. I also enjoy target shooting and shoot in my clubs monthly steel plate match. I am also a big supporter of the second amendment.

Thanks once again for downloading this chapter and I hope you enjoy it!

-Paul Grant

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Nothing

A novel

by Paul Grant

Chapter One

In the beginning...

The reporter puts his tape recorder on the table between us and takes his seat. "I hope you don't mind me recording the interview." he asks and I shake my head. He is a short man, middle aged, overweight and balding. Judging from the thick glasses on his face, he must be extremely near sighted as well. I take a drag from my half burned cigarette and blow a perfect smoke ring at his face. He coughs and eyes me like a dangerous animal.

"You don't mind if I smoke do you?" I ask. He shakes his head and I smile. Yes, I'm a bastard, in more ways than one. The air conditioning system is broken and the hot summer breeze comes through the barred window to my right. I can see the sun setting through the haze over the western hills. The smell of the photochemical smog helps mask the odors of sweat, fear and vomit which linger in the dingy room.

"Hot day today!" he exclaims and I agree. Unlike him however, I love the heat. "I'd like to ask you some basic questions first if that's alright." he says and I nod. "Okay, if you could tell me your name and age to start with."

I shrug, what the hell. "I'm John Smith and I'm 23 years old." He acts like he doesn't believe me.

"Can you tell me a little bit about your childhood?"

I acquiesce. "I was born without a soul. My mother left me with my maternal grandmother shortly after I was born and soon afterward landed herself in an insane asylum. I've never known my father and don't have a clue who he was. Not that it matters. I'm not looking for your sympathy, nor do I expect

any.” I take a second to crush out the cigarette in my right hand. The remains smolder in the ash tray on the scarred table in front of me. Across the table the reporter straightens his glasses and clears his throat nervously. Sweat beads on his bald pate and he coughs. The smoke must really be bothering him, not that I give a shit.

“You say you were born without a soul. Don't you mean you have no conscience?” The light from the bare bulb hanging between us makes his sweaty skin shine. Outside the locked cell door a guard peers in through the reinforced glass and moves on.

“No,” I say “I meant what I said. I know the difference. For instance...” I peer deep into his eyes and he shudders violently as though someone had just walked over his grave. “Your soul is so stained and black it's a wonder you have a conscience at all.”

“What do you mean?” he stammers. I detect a quaver in his voice.

“Karen.” The one word becomes electric after it leaves my lips and he jumps out of his chair as if his seat had suddenly turned into a cobra. He backs up against the peeling, pale green wall. I laugh. “Don't worry, I won't tell. After all, you got away with it, didn't you? No one ever did figure out why she killed herself.” He looks like he might have pissed himself. Yes, there it is. My nose detects the unmistakable scent of urine. I motion him back to the chair, but he looks like he wants to run away instead.

“H- H- How did you know about that?” His face is pale and he's visibly shaking. Another cigarette appears in my hand. I place it between my lips and the tip glows cherry red as I inhale.

“It's what I do,” I say, “I've always been able to do it. It makes making friends a bitch though.” He

edges back to his seat, his eyes never leaving me. He sits there and stares at me, still eyeing me as one would a rabid animal. “The eyes really are the windows of the soul. Would you like me to continue?” I ask and he starts to shake his head. “I mean about myself.” I add.

“Oh... Yeah.” he says flatly. I grin.

“Growing up was a real bitch. I remember as a young child getting a puppy for my fourth birthday. Everything was fine until I went to pet it. The damn thing just dropped dead when I touched it. Do you have any idea what that does to a kid?” The reporter shook his head nervously. “I'll tell you, it was hell. I cried for days afterward. My grandma tried to tell me it wasn't my fault, but I knew it was. You see, when it died I felt it's life force flow into me. My grandma learned real quick not to get me any living gifts.” I take a drag on my cigarette and set it down in the ash tray. I extend my right hand over the table. “Wanna shake my hand?” I ask. He shakes his head so hard I almost expect it to pop off. I can't help but laugh. “Don't worry, I can control it now.” I say. He doesn't look like he believes me. “Um...” I mumble, “I'd rather not talk about my first sexual experience. Let's just say, people care a whole lot more when a pretty young blond dies than when a puppy does.” Suddenly I don't feel like talking about myself. I sit and stare at the ash tray in silence. The smoke from the still burning cigarette drifts up to the ceiling until intercepted by the breeze. In a surprise to even me I continue, “I left home soon after that. I think secretly my grandmother was relieved, but I don't blame her. She did her best for me. I spent the next few years growing up on the streets, and after that I went wherever the spirit led. I did some things I'm not proud of, but I'd rather not talk about them.”

The reporter suddenly finds his voice. “Can you tell me about the evening of August 23rd?”

“The Circle K?” I ask and he nods. “Well, I went into the store out of boredom and there was a robbery

in progress. There were four punks in there, the bald one with tattoos was holding a sawed off shotgun on the clerk while the rest kept the shoppers on the floor. As I walked into the store one of them shot me in the guts with a .357 Magnum.” I pause and look him in the eye. He glances away quickly. “Have you ever been shot?” I ask.

“No.”

“Well, you should. Nothing cures a Pedophilic Rapist like a hot lead slug to the genitals.” He pales and I laugh till I'm crying. I manage to regain my self control and continue. “Well, being shot in the stomach fucking hurt. It's like my insides are trying to fold in on themselves. My guts twisted into knots and I fell to my knees in agony.” The reporter interrupts me.

“There wasn't a scratch on you when you were arrested.” he says. I nod.

“I heal quick,” I say and he looks like he believes me. “I looked at the clerk behind the counter. He was a good man, pure, one of the few I've ever met. The world needs more people like him. I stood up and took two steps forward. The tattooed baldy pointed the shotgun at me and told me if I took one more step he'd blow my fucking head off. I told him to do something physically impossible. He put the shotgun to my head and screamed at me, '*Do you know who I am? Do you fucking know who I am?*' I looked him in the eye and said, '*I'll find out in tomorrows newspaper.*'” I place the cigarette to my lips and pull the last bit of life from it and crush the remains in the ash tray. “I took his shotgun from him, jammed it into his chest and pulled the trigger. I believe you already know the rest.”

The reporter did indeed, for he'd seen a bootleg of the security camera footage slipped to him by a Police buddy. *The bad guy collapsed to the floor leaking a great deal of the red stuff and overhead the*

fluorescent lights in the store dimmed. Blackness flowed into the video image of the man in front of him, seemingly from out of nowhere. The remaining criminals tried to shoot him, but he moved unbelievably fast and dodged every shot. One by one he caught up to them and placed his hands on each side of their heads. Smoke wisped up from them and their skin blackened and charred. Their screams were chilling from the video and the reporter shivered thinking about it. Their eyes turned to glowing cinders and their bodies collapsed into piles of ash on the floor. The cops arrived soon afterward and he allowed himself to be arrested with no resistance. He shook his head to clear it of the horrid images.

“You killed them all,” he states. I nod.

“It's not like they didn't deserve it,” I say and a smile plays with the edges of my mouth. He squirms in his seat uncomfortably. “Don't worry,” I say, “I don't have any plans to kill you, yet. But who knows, the night is still young.” He glances out the window to his left as if to verify it is indeed night time. The lights of Phoenix shimmer in the blackness outside. In the distance the sounds of traffic can be heard.

“What are you going to do now?” he asks.

“Trial and prison don't sound very exciting,” I say. “No, I'm going to walk out the front door of this jail and go away. With any luck you'll never see me again.” He looks relieved to hear this. I stand and push the chair back. The chains on my ankles smoke and fall to orange colored dust. The cell door dissolves into a large pile of smoking iron oxide with a touch, and with a wave of my hand the orange jumpsuit transitions to my street clothes. My eyes cloud with pain from contact with the burning metal, but freedom is worth the temporary discomfort. In moments the pain is gone as my body's natural defenses repair the damage. The reporter backs as far away from me as he can possibly get, the fear visible in his

eyes.

“What are you?” he hisses between clenched teeth. I look him in the eyes once more, he flinches but doesn't look away.

“I am Nothing,” I say and turn and walk out of the cell. The first cop I meet on the other side of the door screams at me to freeze and draws his gun. I look him in the eyes and he pales and begins to shake. The crimes I see on his soul shock even me. He drops his gun and flees from before me. I leave the police station a gibbering, crying mass of humanity, mostly. Not everyone is bad. There exists among the general populace a certain percentage who are pure of heart.

I cross the street and head East. Two blocks away a black limousine pulls up to my left and keeps pace. The right rear window glides down and a mans voice calls for me. I stop and go over to the open window. The vehicle stops and I get a good look at the man seated in the back. Perfectly styled hair and white teeth, tanned skin and piercing blue eyes like mine. “We need to talk,” he says.

“No thanks, I'm not interested.” I exert my will towards this strange man. It rebounds off him and I stumble backwards, almost losing my balance.

“Get in,” he says and I comply. The limousine pulls away from the curb and we head down the empty street. I look over at him with wonder. Now that I look for it I can see the power oozing from his every pore.

“Who are you?” I ask. He turns to me and his eyes burn like coals.

“I’m your Father,” he says.