

**N.C.R.**

**Navigating the**

**I.**

**Maryland Dept.  
of**

**Hell...**

*Based on a true Story*

**“Not Criminally Responsible”**

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\*All scripture and scripture references are from the New International Version (NIV)



## Are You There?

Time doesn't matter. It's not like anything's gonna change tomorrow. I'm gonna feel like this forever. My skin is on fire. Sweat pouring out of every gland. I can't stop moving my legs. I can't get comfortable. My celly's snoring adds to my discomfort. I can't stand his pedophilic ass! My blood boils just hearing him breathe. I think my last good deed will be to take his life, like he took their innocence. It's the least I can do. Especially considering I'm gonna be leaving mine behind. At least there will be one less monster in the world to hurt them. They will never know how much daddy cares.

The tears start pouring down my cheeks thinking of the times I've missed. The times I'm gonna miss. How could Stacy be so cruel? Just because we had our problems, doesn't mean she should interfere with the "bond" between a father and his daughter. And she calls me a "lunatic," a "psycho." Always throwing my mother's schizophrenia in my face! The fact I don't make enough money! That I spend too much time with my son and his mother! I hate that bitch! I should have chopped her up when I had the chance. Especially for what she did. Yeah! Especially for that.

The jingling of the guard's keys brings me back to reality, but they also remind me of where I am, and how I got here. That long perilous road, that now has me on the brink of total destruction. I just can't bear it! I just can't go on like this anymore! My mind and body are simply worn too thin. The rigor of prison life is eating away the last of my strength, at the last of my hope.

Their fists and boots upon me. His hands forcing me down and taking my innocence. Her blood curdling yells. The pain. The suffering. The absence of love. No heat. No hot water. No food. And all of their lies. A never-ending river of lies. Maybe the Bible's right. Maybe the heart truly is wicked above all else (Jer 17:9). I mean, to use, abuse and neglect like they have, it would have to be. But mine's not! I'm not like them. I hate evil and embrace all that is good. But in a world of darkness, is there a place for light? If there is, I haven't found it yet. Perhaps because it doesn't exist.

Jesus was the example of pure love and light and they destroyed him! They mutilated his visage more than any other man that ever walked. And he was allegedly the son of God. Scripture says that the light came into the world and the world knew it not (Jn 1:5). If they did that to Him, how much more will they do to me?

God I'm hot! The walls are closing in around me. I wanna be free! Running along the shore with a cool breeze at my back. The kids frolicking in the water. All those beautiful sounds: the surf crashing, happy laughter, the gulls singing as they sway in the wind.

Why did it come to this? Why wasn't it enough? Loves enough. It's all I ever wanted. The sweet embrace a family brings. Acceptance. Compassion. Understanding. I know I wasn't perfect. High strung about providing for us. Working until my fingers bled. I just wanted us to be OK. I think most men feel the way I do. An overwhelming pressure to provide. To be "The Man of the House."

Am I alone Lord? Are you there? Am I going to Hell for taking my life? I just can't do it anymore. It's just all been too much. I spring off my bunk not caring if I'm too loud. Not caring if I wake him. If he so much as mumbles a word, I'm gonna smash his face until it's unrecognizable. It'll be easy considering what he did.

I grab my extension cord and swing it over the bars, tying one end off. Then I start winding the other end around my neck with all my strength. Pulling tighter and tighter with each twist, until there's only a short piece left that I use to lock off my work.

It's done! I'm past the point of no return. The pressure about my head is unbelievable, constricting every muscle and every vein in my neck. My temples are pounding. My breathing stops. All I can hear is my heart beating within. My knees get weaker with each second. The noose gets tighter with each inch I slump down. I wanna scream. I wanna let out my final cry to the world to let them know how cruelly they've treated me. To let them know that I'd rather be dead than live with them...

.... All goes dark



## Candy Land

“Mikey, come here. Sean and I have a surprise for you. We wanna show you something.”

I extend my hand and Christopher takes it. They lead me down the street to a small path carved in the mouth of the woods.

“Here, put this on. It’s a surprise, so you can’t see until we get there.”

Everything goes dark as Sean covers my eyes. I’m scared, but I trust them. They’ve lived next door my entire life.

“You’re gonna love it Mikey. But this is a secret place, so you can’t tell anyone, OK?” I nod my head as I stumble over a rock. Then all of a sudden I hear a dog start barking viciously in the distance. I’m scared. The fear paralyzes me. I’m stuck.

“Pick him up, he’s not moving.”

I feel my feet come off the ground. I feel helpless. I just wanna be in my father’s arms. I wanna scream but nothing comes out. And even if I did, no one would hear me. The woods are thick and the houses are far away perched upon a hill.

“Don’t worry Mikey, we’re almost there. You’re gonna love it!”

I feel my feet hit the ground. I'm hot. The bandanna covering my eyes drenched with sweat. My heart's pounding like a drum. I'm frozen. Frozen with fear. I hear the boys whispering. I want to run, but I can't even see. Then without warning, I feel one of them working the knot loose securing the fold upon my face. As it comes off the sun blinds me. A few sharp rays piercing the dense foliage. I adjust my position to gain my bearings. Am I dreaming? Have I died and gone to heaven? Because right before my very eyes, hanging on hundreds of threads, candy floats all around me. Gumballs, licorice sticks, chocolate patties, and lollipops swayed in the breeze.

"This is the real Candy Land Mikey! Go ahead and pick some, but don't pick too much or it won't grow back."

My little hands work quickly to grab all they can. Tugging and tucking their harvest into the fold of my shirt. I don't think I've ever been so happy before. So amazed. So surprised. But that was the enchanted beauty of Potomac, Maryland. A sliver of God's creation that is still esteemed opulent today. Home to the privileged. Home to the rich and famous. Like Linda Carter (the original Wonder Woman), Mike Tyson, Sugar Ray Leonard, the Stallones, Schwarzeneggers, and *The Housewives of...* But to me, it's just where it all started. Fleeting memories of a mind that has almost reached its end.



## Why Not Me Lord?

..... Light!

A deep sense of terror consumes me. My hands instinctively grasp at my neck, pulling at the fragment of cord that still squeezes it. The moment is surreal. Caught between reality and a dream. My face is numb. My esophagus on fire from the brute force of the tether upon it. I feel the cord give way and I gasp for air, struggling to gain consciousness. The warm salty taste of blood on my lips. I know where I am, but how? How did I survive? I had committed beyond the point of no return. To think of all the others who were able to extinguish their flame. Why not me Lord? Why can't I just come home?

The silence is broken by my celly's pathetic voice. I want so bad to just spring off the floor and rip him from his bunk. To think of what he had done. Molesting all those innocent children. He truly doesn't deserve to live!

"Ugh!" *I grunt to let him know I'm alive.*

"What are you doing!? I woke up and you were thrashing around unconscious. You kept banging your face into the bars. I was just about to get up and the cord snapped. I was so scared I didn't know what to do. Are you OK? Why are you trying to kill yourself!?"

I pull myself together and use what little strength I have left to lift myself to my feet. I flip on the light and walk over to the mirror. I think to myself, who is that? That's not the man I once knew. There's no light coming from his eyes. What was once a young, strong, vigorous man. Now. Now all that looks back is a broken, shattered frame. Dark circles encamp my eyes from not sleeping in weeks. My flesh is as blanched as the moon at night. I've lost a great deal of weight from banging dope and not eating. Except for this jail shit. My reflection scares me! Several new cuts adorn my visage from me banging against the bars. I am a sickly, frail, bloody mess. But the external damage cannot compare with the absolute destruction deep within. All

the years of self-abolition. “Thug’in and Drug’in” as they say. The mental anguish. The absence of love. I truly am a broken man. A void so deep, only death can fill it.

It is approximately 4:30 AM. Chow Time. I hear the doors at the top of the tier start popping.

“Listen Chris, I’m begging you, please don’t say a word about this OK?”

“Yeah, of course Mike. I just hope you’re gonna be OK.”

“I’ll be fine. Just don’t say a word... OK!?”

“I promise Mike!”

The door pops and Chris gets up to get ready for chow. I’m pretty worried that he’ll tell the tier officer about my suicide attempt in order to get rid of me. It’s obvious how much I hate him. And besides, in prison, that’s what bitches do... Tell!

He throws on his state clothes and hurries out of the cell without brushing his teeth. I’m glad to be alone, yet an overwhelming emotion of sadness engulfs me. I see all of their faces in my mind. Flashes of the times we shared. The happiness. The freedom. The only love I’ve ever known. My God, what I wouldn’t give to be with them right now, MJ, Avery, Erika, Steve, Nubia, and Mom. But instead, I’m trapped here in this cage like an animal. Like a monster. If they only knew my heart. If they only knew the sadness of that hurt little boy deep, deep within. They would open this door. They would set me free. They would express their compassion. Their understanding. And they would wish me well on finding peace and love in this cruel, dark world. Is there love in this world? Does it really exist or am I just wasting my time? My eyes make a cursory scan of the cell to see if there’s another ligature. Another chance to end it all. Lord knows I can’t go on. I can’t go on!





## Smack!

My mind wanders, searching for direction. What's next? (I think to myself). Then it dawns on me that I still have a shot! So, I quickly go through the process of prepping my hype: the warm water from my stinger, a bottle cap to mix it in, and a piece of cotton for the tip of the needle. My arms look terrible! Riddled with track marks. To think how many times I've dodged lock-up. The times I've duped 'em on those piss tests. The gangs. Green Dots. Western Union. Cash App. Getting addicted to drugs in jail is a hell all in itself. Clear (liquor). Molly (speed). Grass (weed). The pills: 1(tobacco), 2(K2-spice), 3(Suboxone). Dope (heroin). It's almost as bad in here as it is on the streets. But in here, word travels fast, like a wildfire blazing out of control. Hundreds of people coming at you all day, every day. Trying to get a piece. Looking for something. Anything. And if you say "no," you open yourself up to the attacks and ill will of all those who harbor hate and jealousy in their hearts.

There's technically only one way to "use" successfully in prison and that's not to tell a single soul your business. But that too is almost impossible, because you need to buy it from someone. Unless you have the "pull" to get it in yourself. But that too has its risks. Passing it in the visiting hall and potentially getting caught by the guards on the floor or Big Brother. Perhaps it's as simple as a "note" from a cat you crossed in the past. That being said, the only sure way to go is to stay away from the shit! But with the majority of the prison population involved with drugs in one way or another, that's like telling an alcoholic who's trapped in a bar for years, "not to have a drink." IMPOSSIBLE!

It's ready! I spin the syringe on the cotton and draw the boy up. It's a big one. And for jailhouse smack it's pretty damn lethal. I flick the hype a few times to get the air out and then squeeze until the dopes on top. All my veins are so screwed up (hiding deep beneath the surface). So, I bust out about 30 push-ups to get the blood pumping. I'm so weak I can barely do 10. But I fall to my knees and finish the last 20. I'm starting to sweat. My gut tightens from anticipation.

I can't miss! (I think to myself). I can't miss this vein. This is my last. God knows when I'll get more. Or, if I'll even be alive to use it. I pray for God's forgiveness under my tongue. See a blue ribbon and push the spike in trying to stab it on the first try! I think I'm in and pull back the plunger looking for blood... NOTHING! I jostle the tip back and forth, stabbing

over and over digging for a vein. The pain is deep and throbbing, but I don't stop because I know what lies on the other side..

I'm finally in and pull back hoping to see red. Time stops for a junkie when the incoming flow of blood mushrooms up in their tool. It's a signal. Go! You're all clear! It's the moment you've been waiting for. Time for the pain to stop. Holding the shaft of the hype as steady as I can, I press the plunger watching the blood-filled contents disappear into my arm.

I feel like I'm standing outside right before a vicious storm. The sky's black and ominous. The wind ripping by threatening to take me with it. The static builds up, and then without warning the lightning flashes. All goes blank as the thunder crashes down and my body trembles amidst its power. The rush of the dope surges through my veins like the warm summers' rain that follows. The moment, is blissful. I'm free! The walls that confine me melt away. I feel no pain. No sorrow. Time stands still for just a moment as I release a deep pent-up breath from all the chaos looming about me. I'm frozen. I'm paralyzed. I think I used too much..

..... All goes dark.

I hear Mom's footsteps frantically about the wooden floors above. I can see her pacing. That crazed look in her eye. She had just got done boarding my brother, two sisters and I up under the crawl space of the steps. A perfect place to hide us from his men. I'm terrified. I see them coming, ripping us from our secret spot and throwing us in a big dark chamber. I wonder what it's gonna feel like? That poisonous gas stealing my life. I don't want to die. I love my family and miss my dad. I start crying uncontrollably.

"Mikey, it's going to be OK! mom's just sick. No one's coming."

My older sister Erika tries to soothe Bianca and I. She's only about 14, but she acts like our mother. Always looking after us. Dressing us, feeding us, and most importantly, protecting us from my older brother Tad. He just sits there with this dazed look in his eyes. He's so brutal. Erika said it was because he was mad at dad for leaving. Mad at mom for getting sick. Whatever the reason, it doesn't matter. I'm scared of him, and rightfully so. He's already done things to me. Bad things. Things I'll never forget.

The space is tight and stuffy. The candles we light make it unbearably hot. I have a difficult time breathing. I'm only about 9, but I pray to God. Mom is a zealous German Catholic who hung pictures of Jesus everywhere around the house. I always thought He was so beautiful. Something about the gentle love that gleams from His soft, amiable eyes. The maturity of His stature. The way His open arms welcome me. Deep down inside I wish He was my dad (better yet, was finding out He is my Father).

"Mom, please let us out!" *Erika pleads.* "Please mom, no one is coming!"

Mom's footsteps grow louder as she races to our aid. Pounding down the steps as she comes.

"Children be quiet! Don't make a noise or they'll hear you! They'll come and put you in the gas chamber. They will rape Erika and beat Tad before they gas you all. Stop making noise!" *She begged in her deep German accent.*

Sometimes she would keep us in there for days. Sometimes longer. We would have to urinate and defecate in a 5-gallon bucket. Tad would always watch when we went. There was a small opening at the bottom of the wall where mom would pass food and water. Looking back, it's clear those conditions were insane. Not even suitable for a dog. Not even a dog!

My mom's sister Erna, who came to this country with her after the war (WWII), would periodically come by to check on us. Thank God! Because had she not, Lord knows how long Mom would have kept us in there. Sometimes Erna would have to call the police to free us from our crude captivity. The cops pounding on the front door of our house would send Mom into a floridly psychotic state. Her piercing, blood curdling screams have haunted me ever since. I still hear them from time to time. I see her. I want to help her. I want to hold her in my arms and tell her that, "everything's gonna be OK, and I will always love you... ALWAYS!"

..... Light!



## The Last Place You Ever Want to Go

“Quick! Call a code. I think he tried to OD this time.”

The voices of men chattering bring me back to my senses. I’m on the floor again. I must have fallen out. But how’d they know?... Chris! That snitching little bitch! I should have trusted my gut.

“Mr. Kapneck are you OK? What happened to you?”

I want to answer. I want to tell them that I’m dying of a broken heart, but I can’t move. I can’t say a word. So I just lay there on that cold concrete floor listening to my heartbeat as I breathe. God I wish I was dead. Perhaps home in His arms at last. Heaven sounds so beautiful: lakes of crystal glass, roads paved with gold, no pain, no sorrow, no suffering, weeping or gnashing of teeth. Where lamb and lion lay together. Where God’s glory is so radiant there’s no need for the sun. To be absent in the body is to be present with Christ (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor 5:8). Oh God! Please take me home.

By now my cell’s filled with guards. The tier has been locked down and all the men are screaming, relaying to one another what they’ve seen and heard.

“Can you get up Mr. Kapneck? Or do you need a stretcher?”

Then it dawns on me, that if they think I tried to kill myself, I’ll be taken to the butt-naked room. Suicide watch. The last place you ever want to go. So I dig deep within and muster up the strength to stand.

"I'm OK, I don't need a stretcher." *I reply.*

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"You don't look OK... what are all these cuts on your face?"

"I fell off my bunk last night. I had a terrible nightmare."

"Well, why is your neck so red?"

"I don't know, maybe I hit it into something when I landed on my footlocker."

"What about your arms? What are all those marks from? There's even fresh blood dried in the crease of your left one."

I know what's on the line. A ticket. A trip to the hole. Or worse, the butt-naked room. But I can't think of what else to say. What else to do. So I just sit there. Slumped. Speechless. Gaunt and frail. Empty. Looking like a man who has given up all hope. Truth be told, I have.

"Sarge, look at this."

One of the officers produces the broken piece of cord that once fettered my neck and in his other hand a used hypodermic needle. One look at my arms and it's obvious it's mine.

"Mr. Kapneck, please stand up and put your hands behind your back."

Without hesitation I comply. I know there's no use fighting against all those ample, healthy hands. I tried before and paid the ultimate price. A few broken ribs. A black eye and

bleeding on the brain. I think they call that "hematoma." Fighting against the police is a no-win situation. You'll never prevail. Never!

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I am checked over by a nurse and deemed well enough to meet with the psychiatrist. They feel that despite my cuts and bruises I am in much greater need of psychiatric attention. And as much as I hate to admit it, they're right.

As I'm being removed off the tier, the other men scream, yell and bang on the doors. Their insults are cruel and heartless. They're like bloodthirsty dogs in a frenzy.

"I would have killed you for free!" *One yells.*

"You should have let me do it!" *Another heckles.*

"Next time, cut your wrists! Down the road, not across!"

"Next time, jump off the tier!"

Their words are like fiery arrows from the enemy. Daggers stabbing away at the last speck of hope buried deep, deep within.



I am escorted across the compound to the psych department. The stares of the men as they pass by forces me to keep my eyes fixed upon the ground. In jail, a suicide attempt or heavy drug use is looked upon as weakness. Only the strong survive. “Survival of the Fittest,” as they say. I am brought into a well-lit room and handcuffed to the table. I feel whipped. Broken. Hopeless. I look down at my arm reminiscing about the tattoo that adorns it. A tribal band constructed of lightning bolts. My son’s initials abstractly embedded within. Green, teal, and yellow electrically setting it off. On the underside, the Chinese symbol for father. I’ve heard it said that any man can be a dad, but only a certain man can be a father. Now knowing what I know about life, I completely agree with that statement. Fathers are definitely a dying breed.

Mine was born into millions. A privileged boy raised by an attentive and loving family. Grandpa Michael, who I’m named after, was a freakishly successful businessman. He started a company after World War II called Reliable Home Appliances. A sort of “Best Buy” of today. Selling TVs, washers, dryers, refrigerators, and other household appliances to the budding families springing up across the country. Story has it that he then invested in real estate and upon his death, left dad close to twenty million dollars’ worth of property and assets... in the 60’s! Along with a company that is very much alive today. But considering Phillip disowned us, I know nothing of Grandpa Michael’s business. Hell, I don’t even know my own dad. All I do know, is that he chose the material things of this world over his own children’s flesh and blood. That’s why I’ve always called him “sad” instead of “dad.” But you’ve gotta ask yourself...

**“For what is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul for eternity.”**

**(Mk 8:36)**



My mother by contrast, was raised in the small village of Frat, just outside the city of Wiesenfelden, Germany. Her story is truly amazing and plays a major part in who I am today. Unfortunately, those “parts” are the ones I struggle with most. But they are still part of me, and of her. Rosina, or as I call her, “The Wild Rose” was the second of three girls. Her father was a Woodsman. I know that occupation may sound funny to some here in the United States, especially in our age of information and technology. But in that part of Europe (at that time), a “Woodsman” was a real occupation, bringing home just enough to keep one’s offspring alive.

They lived on a small farm doing things you’d probably imagine. Like, milking cows, growing produce and raising livestock. They churned their own butter, made their own bread, and even cut the heads off their (often-beloved) chickens prior to defeathering for the eating. As a child, I was always so fascinated by mom’s stories, especially about the war and the hard times she endured. Like, when she described the American soldiers throwing chocolates to the German children from their tanks, as they rumbled through her village. Or how she said she’d seen American planes diving time and time again, dropping bombs, and how the earth would tremble afterward, as if it were terrified of the very act itself.

Poverty was commonplace. To be without the bare essentials was the norm. Children without shoes would wrap their feet in burlap sacks stuffed with goose feathers. And school was a privilege, not a right. Not even a requirement. She also shared that she and her sisters would walk over 6 kilometers (or almost 7 miles) to and from. And if there was a heavy snowstorm during school hours, they’d have to walk back through it regardless of its depth. On many occasions, in order to prevent getting frostbite on their toes, they would urinate on one another’s feet. I always remembered that as a true example of poverty and struggle. Not the soft stories I’ve become accustomed to here in the West.

But despite Moms harsh upbringing and destructive illness, “The Rose” has unrivaled grit. Traveling to a new country without speaking the language, possessing marketable “skills” or knowing a single person. And ALWAYS telling us children, “that my pain and suffering was, MY PAIN AND SUFFERING... NOT YOURS! So live your life! don’t let the struggles I went through stop you from living yours.” To this day I’ve never met a stronger woman. Mom I love you!





## Psychoanalyzed by Some Quack

“Hello sir, my name is Dr. Allul. I am a psychiatrist for the jail. Can you tell me what’s going on?”

What you’ve just read was penned in 2010. I was a prisoner serving the balance of a 10-year sentence for “Grand Theft Auto.” Although I’d already been opined “Not Criminally Responsible” on one case and adjudicated “Not Criminally Responsible” on another; my transformation (if you will) was still many years in the making. With that, please allow for a certain measure of grace when considering a life unmoored. Rest assured, I expect NO sympathy or even empathy. For I now know...

**“A person’s own folly leads to their ruin, yet their heart rages against the Lord.”**

**(Pro 19:3)**

\*-God willing, a complete novel will one day see its way.