

Moron: Chapter 7

1

If dreams are colorless then why would Moron always remember the lifeguard-red buoy bouncing in the darkness as he floated upwards, forlorn? When he awoke, he brushed the long black hair off of his arm and sat up to watch the beads of sweat roll down his chest like marbles.

“Are you okay?” asked Cecilia.

“Yeah. Just a dream,” said Moron.

When she returned from London, she decided to call any and all sexual encounters even. With a banker’s coolness, she dropped the subject. Moron knew it would rear its head over and over again but had no counter to her proposal, aside from breaking things off for good, which he wasn’t prepared to do.

2

In order to fulfill the requirements for his minor in education, he had to spend one day a week at a neighboring town’s elementary school. The school itself existed out of time, almost on a prairie, impossibly surrounded by nought. Moron had never seen a town like it in his state and yet there he was looking down at twelve of its confused kindergartener’s faces. The teacher of the class and her assistant stared at him with the same doubt. Despite being a senior in college, he still looked too much like a child himself. That’s what they all treated him like anyway. It seemed the only thing any of them wanted out of him was to keep the children entertained at recess. Sometimes he chased them around like he was a werewolf. Sometimes they chased him like they were angry villagers. He didn’t learn anything about being a teacher, but he had fun- at least until he acknowledged his surroundings. The impoverished school needed more help than the faculty could bring it. Moron fantasized about hitting the lottery and giving all of the money away to them.

3

This next part of the story doesn’t have much to do with John Moron. Oh, he was there, but only as a powerless observer. There was nothing he could do to stop what was coming, what had already been set in motion years before he ever met Hank Howard.

Moron, Cecilia, Hank, Corrina, and Frankandsteve decided they should go to one of the university’s football games. None of them had been yet and it seemed like the appropriate thing to do, if for no other reason than to check off a box on their collegiate experience list. Hank, by far the most sporty of the group, seemed the most apprehensive. Moron figured it had something to do with whatever stopped his high school football career, but he could have never imagined what lay ahead.

They arrived at the tailgate and drank and partied just like every other student and alumnus there. When they needed to pee, they went into the woods without privacy, surrounded by dozens of people doing the same thing. Their early afternoon was full of events atypical for polite society but acceptable for a pre-game party.

Moron didn’t clock the older blonde woman that approached their group and neither did Hank until she was standing next to him.

Hank Howard always had a difficult relationship with his mother. His parents divorced when he was ten and when it came time to choose a house, he decided to move in with his father. Jack Howard was the epitome of "local", a former athletic standout who made a career in real estate after he graduated, and stayed around to coach the high school football team hoping his son would follow the same path. Everything went to plan and Jack was especially proud when Hank's Pop Warner team won the National Championship in Florida. When Hank entered his freshman year, Jack achieved his dream of coaching his son on the same field that he once played. Around that same time, Jack's fiancée Sadine moved into the house.

The first time Sadine had sex with Hank was when he was fourteen years old. The encounter burdened Hank with tremendous guilt. It would take six months before it would happen again, the dalliance then became an affair, and each time Hank would feel less than the time before it. Jack didn't seem to notice. The only thing he paid attention to were the names of the schools on the front of the recruitment letters. Destiny was calling Hank. He'd be the next big college star.

One Saturday morning during the winter of Hank's sophomore year, only a month removed from him delivering the best defensive season in his high school's history, the walls around him crumbled. His father Jack's f150 broke down without warning two blocks from their house. Jack was on his way to Home Depot which meant Sadine thought she and Hank had at least forty-five minutes before he'd return. She had asked Hank if he'd like to try doing it in the kitchen and when Jack walked in the house he found the two of them on the marble island that sat in the middle of the room. Jack punched his son in the face over and over and threw his fiancée to the ground when she tried to intervene.

Hank moved in with his mother and quit football to avoid seeing his father. They tried to hush everything up but Jack got drunk and told someone what happened over shots of whiskey at a bar. When Hank went to school that Monday he was inundated with equal parts scorn and cheers. Both made him feel bad. He didn't want to be some folk hero to his peers or to be considered a pariah by their parents. He just wanted to disappear. Hank begged his mother to let him switch schools but she told him the damage was already done. She told him that they'd all forget about it in a week. No such luck. Hank kept his head down at school and spent his free time self-exiled in his bedroom. Video games were his only friend for the next two years. When it came time to apply for colleges he waited until the last minute and when it came time to actually confirm his attendance, he waited even longer. He was wise enough to know the only reason the university accepted him in the first place was in a naive hope that they could convince him to come out of his football retirement. They tried and failed.

Hank's mother threatened Sadine with a restraining order and statutory rape charges if she were to ever contact Hank again. That kept her at bay for a few years. One year before the tailgate, in the fall of Hank's junior year of college however, Sabine direct-messaged him on Facebook. Her life had predictably fallen apart due to the gossip in their town and neighboring areas. She "just wanted to see" how he was doing, then she "just wanted to see if he missed her" and finally she "just wanted to" send him a picture of herself. Hank told her to leave him alone but the interaction caused him to spiral for a few hours. That's what led to the hole punching and the chair throwing. Hank managed to move past the Facebook incident with Corrina's help, but Sadine wasn't done with him yet.

Sadine was forty-two years old but dressed like she was half of that. The black Victoria's Secret leggings held snug to her body, the bottoms disappearing tightly into her Ugg boots. The North Face vest stayed open to reveal a tight white T-shirt with the university's name displayed over the chest. Recently done neon hair fell deliberately on her shoulders. Aesthetically, she was the fantasy she was wishing to display.

"How's it going?" said Sadine.

"Fine, thanks," said Hank in the same tone that you'd respond to a stranger at a bus stop. Because of his confusion, the rest of the group assumed this was just another alumnus trying to relive their glory days. Slowly, life came back into Hank's face and you could see his eyes start to process the situation.

"Can I talk to you privately for a moment?" said Sadine.

"No. You can't," said Hank. Corrina, who was the only other person present with some awareness of the situation, put two and two together.

"Is there a problem here?" said Corrina in a volume foreign even to herself.

"No, dear. I just wanted to talk to Hank for a minute if that's okay.."

"Would you mind if I asked you your name?" said Corrina.

"It's okay, Corrina. Let's just go," said Hank.

"Is this her Hank? It's her isn't it," said Corrina, continuing without waiting for an answer. "Well, why don't you fuck off then!"

"Listen, missy, I..."

"Don't call her fucking missy," said Cecilia joining the fray. "I don't know who the fuck you are but if you've made her mad that means you must be an asshole."

Sadine walked away mumbling to herself as Corrina and Cecilia continued to hail obscenities at her. Moron and Frankandsteve stood beat red and motionless. Hank then asked Corrina if they could leave. After a few minutes, the whole group followed suit, knowing the excitement of the game couldn't match whatever had just happened.

They never really talked about it again, at least as a whole. Everyone learned the backstory one way or another and then respected Hank's privacy. Moron alluded to it once which caused Frankandsteve to give him a look that said "you see this is why we don't fuck anyone."

It was difficult for Moron to process the situation. On the one hand the animal within yearned foolishly for the woman Hank had taken to bed over and over. Fourteen wasn't so long ago. Moron remembered dreaming of every girl and woman around him, even old gray English teachers close to retirement. On the other hand, he recognized he definitely wouldn't have been emotionally or physically equipped to handle it. The consequences were another thing entirely. Hank alienated a friend and a parent in his father, was beaten by him even though he was the victim, lost out on a potential professional career in sports, and became the town outcast.

Hank was quieter than normal for a few months after the game.

5

The first time Moron ever saw cocaine was in December of that year. Cecilia was doing it with some people at a party and Moron was too drunk to talk her out of it. He sat on a mangled couch next to some guy that looked like an old pile of laundry. Whoever he was, he had consumed too much of everything.

“I have some of the original Four Lokos stored in my garage if you want to buy any,” he said.

“No thanks,” said Moron.

“Do you like Belle and Sebastian?”

“They’re pretty good, yeah,” said Moron.

“You into the Occupy movement at all?”

“Don’t know much about it,” said Moron.

“Hey, do you have any more of that yak?”

“No, I’ve never done it. Someone else had it,” said Moron.

“I’ll trade you some of the original Four Lokos for it,” he said.

“I... nevermind,” said Moron.

“Don’t you think it’s all over?”

“Don’t I think what’s all over?”

“Everything,” he said.

“Yeah,” said Moron, closing his eyes. “Actually I do.”