

Yellow #5

A Thesis by

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and the faculty of the Graduate School  
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in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Fine Arts

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Yellow #5

I have examined the final copy of this Thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Fine Arts with a major in Creative Writing.

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W. Stephen Hathaway, Committee Chair

We have read this Thesis and  
recommend its acceptance:

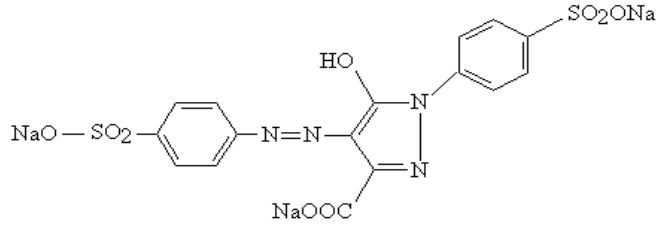
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Philip H. Schneider, Committee Member

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Dr. Mary Waters, Committee Member

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Tartrazine E 102

4,5-Dihydro-5-oxo-1-(4-sulfophenyl)-4-[(4-sulfophenyl)azo]-1H-pyrazole-3-carboxylic acid trisodium salt

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Yellow #5  
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How quickly Daphne seized control! Sharon had been in the female alpha role for the last couple of weeks after Jana got her discharge, but she (Sharon) was so flighty that I knew her reign could last only a little while. She was more interested in earning merit points to buy some TV hours for the weekend (a summertime movie block was running on Saturday, and Courtney Thorne-Smith's second film *Summer School* was playing throughout the entire ruckus), so Sharon had to keep her nose clean, her chin up, her back straight, her ducks in a row and her shoes

tied with her best foot forward. Maybe she'd also get that extra phone time she'd been pining for (she was eligible for up to *five* additional minutes). Clear the way for the new queen, Sharon, and enjoy that extra few minutes jabbering on the phone this Sunday. There was a new girl in the Raspberry River Residential Treatment Facility for Youth, her name was *Daphne*, and she was primed to rule the roost.

Daphne needed only to briefly scan the facility to note the scope of opportunities available to her. Merit points, named PRIVILEGE POINT PASSES, or "PPP's," were posted on the refrigerator left next to the YOUTH HOME RESIDENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS & RULES. She only glanced over those; they're pretty much the same everywhere. She inspected her new home with an air of confidence. She seemed: seasoned. In the ways of group and foster homes, she was: wise, sage, astute. She had: been around the block. Her nose was clean. She had: her shoes tied and her ducks in a row. She didn't bat an eyelash, an eyebrow, or even a foul tip into the left baseline about our firm no smoking policy. She'd find a way to do anything she really really wanted. There were always ways to get around rules, even when I was working, and nothing ever got by me until she came around, until that fateful Friday night.

I was the strictest Staff there, but I let the residents get away with a little of this or a little of that. Nothing too

big. Maybe, if two of them just wanted to make out, I'd look the other way. What did I care if they got a little love while they were in residency? They certainly had none where they came from. The only thing I was always a bear about was locking up the sharps. On account of what had happened my first week working<sup>1</sup>, I had to fill out pages and pages and pages and pages of INCIDENT REPORTS as well as Supplies paperwork after the safety pin incident. Long story. Just take my word for it: the Administration inventories everything, even gauze pimple pads. Long, long story. Oh, the blood! The *blood*. I also was bearish about their homework. Always had to get that done. "If you don't earn your C, you can't have any pudding! How can you have any pudding if you don't have your C?" I'd say. They never got that. Too young to get Floyd, not the right generation.

Daph would surely qualify for outdoor cleaning chores in a couple of weeks, and my co-worker K\_\_ didn't supervise the outdoor cleaning very closely. He was busy concealing his smokes. And that guy was *salaried*. Amazing. K\_\_ just sashayed through his shifts, stepping out every hour on the hour to keep his nicotine level steady, not following through the specs of the

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<sup>1</sup> I took the sub-entry level job of "Tutor" at Raspberry River Residential after an arduous job search after graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in General Psychology. It was either do this or bake pizzas—the job market for scholars with B.A.'s in General Psychology was/is/always will be vacuous, and I had way too little money along with way too many school loans to bail out of town so soon, so I decided to stay.

TREATMENT PLANS, never caring about INTENSIVE EPISODES. K\_\_ always smoothed down the INTENSIVES, not often letting the youths EMOTE FREELY, giving in to things and BARGAINING with the residents because he hated writing up INCIDENT REPORTS. His spontaneous counseling interaction numbers were always skewed, but he would explain at Staff meetings that it was on account of him being direct care. His full-time duties were FAMILY-GROUP ADVISING. Big money there, that FAMILY-GROUP ADVISING. He finally broke 20k after *five* years.

Daphne'd brought a guitar with her. Didn't know how to play it, though. Just another prop to occupy her time. I'd seen it before, the clinging to things, objects, that some do. They bring something that makes them feel real, that makes them feel normal, that helps them to cope with being tossed around from place to place. Something that can ground them and feel safe as if they aren't permanently displaced and disrupted and disturbed in every aspect of their lives. We at the group home issued all new intakes with some essentials:

- soap, shampoo, and other gender-specific sundries
- an alarm clock
- a 30-minute calling card
- a copy of the Youth Home Residents' Bill of Rights
- a blank diary<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> These items were donated by corresponding companies in an effort to receive philanthropic tax breaks. One of the storage rooms in the basement was full of dozens of alarm clocks; the calling cards were provided by a suffocating  
**Footnote continued on next page...**

Diaries and sugarless gum and other assorted things were designed to make the new residents feel more welcomed and more as if they were at a camp instead of a "Residential Treatment Facility for Youth." Once in a while they contained a nugget or two of information, such as the names of their rapists/abusers, drug contacts, or plans for running away, but most residents never used the journals -- or, if they did, made only a few entries and then left their diaries behind with only a small number of things listed, any milestones or achievements unrecorded, undeveloped and eventually abandoned, discarded, blank, uncultured and unwanted.

Daphne was not shy at all, not this one, very vocal. A tart from the start--attitude and attire and attributes, letting it be known to all who could hear that she was, as she put it, the "Bull Goose Juvey," but mostly the badder they bark, the weaker they are. Deep down inside they are: wounded, hurt, damaged. Their hearts are: lost, misplaced, astray. They feel: sad, vacant, alone. Broken, shattered, torn. Here at Raspberry River Residential Treatment Facility for Youth, Daphne got the tiara swiftly, but with stature comes a measure of responsibility. Her time in power would come to an end by way of

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long distance carrier losing business to cell phone companies, and we had enough blank diaries to last through another German-occupied world war.

my mindless mistake and the Youth Home Residents' Bill of Rights, the fridge-posted document that had a rather unique, severe, staid, and stern clause in it, unseen in other youth homes, unheard of in my social workers' circles, unspoken in the walls of the Raspberry River Residential Treatment Center for Youth. You *must* RESPECT OTHERS in RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT! She split in a spiral and spun into space. How quickly Daphne lost control!

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NAME: D A P H N E - M A R I E S A N D I A Z

AGE: 13½      HEIGHT: 9' 2~~1/2~~      WEIGHT: N.O. Y.B.!!

EYE COLOR: A W T O M      HAIR COLOR: S I N A M I N

The list went on; Social Security Number, blood type, et cetera and so forth. Looked like over the years she got tired of filling in her blanks. She was 13. I estimated her weight (which was, in fact, *some* of my business), to be about 150 pounds on her 5'4" frame. She seemed the artistic sort—her hair was the color of a cinnamon stick—a reddish brown shoddily dyed 'do, and her eyes had a grayish tone that I supposed could be considered autumn. Maybe she read J. Crew catalogs. Her skin was spotted with zits and painted with makeup. She didn't look like she'd gotten sufficient exercise; it was summertime, but it had been extremely hot, and I made a mental note to have the in-



door recreation room available. I corrected her height, weight, and all the other info to finish the NEW RESIDENT INTAKE FORM (NRIF) using the blue ink pen she used and quickly put in her pocket.

Her language skills were clearly at a deficit; her GLOBAL ASSESSMENT OF FUNCTIONING, or G.A.F., hovered around mid-range, meaning that she was not DEFICIENT to the point of IMPAIRMENT (which would qualify her for loads more state and federal financial assistance); but Daphne was not too far above the deficiency score, either. Her language skills, her fricatives and other oral phonetics, were clear enough to understand. She learned all the cuss words and used them appropriately. Appropriately, ha! You know what I mean. She got them out of her mouth. Fittingly. Suitably. I noted a tremor evident in her handwriting: fine motor skills mildly impeded probably from SUBSTANCE WITHDRAWAL. She exhibited some of the signs of a hard-case no-hope, but she was still sharp-tongued and hot-tempered, which soundly developed her no-nonsense survival skills. I'd read her case file; I knew. She was wearing a sweatshirt, sleeves down, it was July, and I suspected her to be a cutter or an i.v. user. I hoped there would be not be another safety pin incident...<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The Safety Pin Incident put a damper on All Things Denise, a Philosophy undergrad of the vegetarian, bookish sort (is there any other kind?) who I'd met and managed to ply into bed with a sufficient number of coffee dates and simple, home-cooked dinners to satisfy her feminist inclination, resulting in a tepid relationship that revolved around extra firm tofu, her dog Toto, and folksy femme-fatale musician Ani DiFranco. The difference in our ages  
Footnote continued on next page...

I was scheduled to pick Daphne up at noon (lunchtime at Frieda's Foster Care—she was the on-call director there, a dumping ground for Wards-of-State kids), but showed up early so I could have first go at the lunch line. Lunch at Frieda's was chicken primavera or mac-n-cheese, depending on which frozen foil baking slat sheet got pulled out of the coffin-sized freezer. The USDA food bank had thousands of pounds of frozen foods: pastas, meats, breads, vegetables, fruits. What else, what more, what further, whatever other thing we ate was cooked and canned and carted to these said banks and divvied to who else, who more, whoever wanted to have it. Firsts of months; we must've looked like guppies snap-snatching at bits and pieces, our carts filling with the very best selection of the very worst public assistance foods: sausage lasagna.

Free lunch, but a long drive back to the Raspberry River Residential Treatment Facility for Youth (RRRTFFY) ahead. I nodded at Frieda (known each other almost a year) and introduced

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showed—she was 20 and I was 30 when I started working at Raspberry River—and so did our differences in priorities. She wanted no children, something I was ready to have, and that alone made the affair seem as just a way for us both to bide time until we met someone better. And everything with and about her and around her seemed like it needed a title, needed to be in capital letters, needed to be a Priority. What had happened was this: on the night of the Safety Pin Incident, I was late with the Preparation of the Peanut Butter Stir-Fry, she was angry and antsy for an excuse to dump me because I was "Putting Work Ahead of Life," and we were both sufficiently satisfied to call the whole thing off. She said "tomato," I said "I want my banjo back," et cetera and so forth and so on.

myself to Daphne Marie S\_\_. There's a confidentiality clause in the contract, even for us part-timers.

She stood in the hallway, the bathroom behind her seeping a haze of steam, hands on hips, eyes creased, left brow hoisted up to an uncommon elevation, chewing her bottom lip, eyes studying me. Boot-cut jeans two sizes too small, spilling her buttocks and hips over the edge, a necktie fastened around her waist, long-sleeved white cotton sweatshirt with a Joe Boxer logo (yes, in *this* heat—I had already suspected her to be a cutter or a pinner<sup>4</sup>), a baseball cap cocked to her left, and enough makeup to paint a model airplane. She examined me, her eyes moving up and down, eyebrow unflinching. "Your belt and shoes don't match," she informed me, "never wear black with brown. And that plaid is so not current. You can't dress for shit, which means you're not gay. But you look gay. Faggot." Frieda witnessed this and said, "Come on now, Daphne. Please be nice, won't you?" whereupon Daphne turned, struck her openhanded (it's not an assault that way), and suggested that she eat shit, die, then go to hell. Frieda gasped, reached up to her face, exhaled curtly, and went off to get INCIDENT REPORT paperwork. And adorable Daph exited, stage right, to her room to gather her belongings.

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<sup>4</sup> Intravenous drug user.

Antacids: I carried a roll with me at all times, and most surely had gotten enough calcium during the two years I worked at the HEALTH AND HUMAN AGENCY SERVICES (H.A.H.A.S.) to make my bones sturdy as titanium. There were seven microwave-sized boxes of those chalky pain-liberation tablets stored inside the dry goods pantry in the basement, stored among the scads of free stuff that came to us. I, on behalf of the RRRTFFY, would write letters to companies asking for hand-outs. Toothpaste, aspirin, tampons—sundries of the like.

TUMS. The people at SmithKline Beecham sent a load of their product, a mixture of vital and surreptitious ingredients that kept me working hard to salvage these youth of America without hunching over in acid-induced agony: sucrose, calcium carbonate, corn starch, talc, mineral oil, natural and artificial flavors, adipic acid, sodium polyphosphate, and yellow #5; I had only one roll of them on this trip.

I was driving the agency's old Taurus, a bland tan car that had the get-up-and-go of a sewing machine. The air conditioning didn't work, only coughed occasionally, and it needed new tires badly. It was big enough in the back seat to store the few things Daphne had: a bag of clothes, a CD boom box, a bag of shampoos and make-up and various bottles and tubes and things, the guitar, and a footlocker of shoes the size of a bathtub.

Frieda said that she had tried to relieve Daphne of the burdensome box, but Daph knew well her Ward of the State Rights, and those rights provided that all personal property could stay with her wherever she went. It was heavy, too—almost as heavy as she.

By the time we got to Raspberry River (2 ½ hours!), I'd chewed through the whole roll of TUMS. There was no talking during the trip. I tried to use the casual approach, to learn more about her, but she was NON-RESPONSIVE and GUARDED. She would not request a radio station, would not tell me if she was too warm or cold, would not even adjust the passenger seat from its upright and locked position as close to the dashboard as it could go. I began eating antacids at 12:30, approximately ten minutes after finishing that awful lasagna.

Daphne had asked for some TUMS (she had had lasagna too), but I told her no, that I didn't know what her meds sheet was like, and if there was any type of DRUG INTERACTION causing a reaction, illness, or even (gasp!) *death*, that I'd be responsible, and the Administration would fire me, charge me, jail me, sue me, bend me, shake me, anything-they-wanted-to-do to me. "So no TUMS for your tummy," I told her, "I just don't want anything to happen to you." She rolled her eyes and glowered out the window. "You do understand, don't you? It's for your own safety and well-being."

"You are *such* a pussy," Daphne sighed and rolled her eyes, crossed her arms, and lay her head against the window. This kid was not the worst-off case I'd ever seen, judging from her file, and, even though we Staff were supposed to be rubber and the residents were supposed to be glue, I couldn't help but feel more sorry for this one than any other.

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We got to the group home at quarter till four. The facility was back a ways into the woods outside the H\_\_ city limits, at the end of a long and winding road that, unfortunately, does not always lead the kids back to their homes. Raspberry River is nestled in woods, a forest that is surrounded by farmland and sprawling meadows miles from civilization. It's hard to run away when you don't know where you are...

The compound, so to speak, was nothing more than a large two-story ranch-style house, with minor modifications and minute conversions convenient for accommodating a flock of wayward ducks along with overworked and underpaid staff. It had a large yard surrounded by woods; the driveway was a hike<sup>5</sup> in itself, and

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<sup>5</sup> We would send the more advanced, more trustworthy inmates to fetch the mail and the newspaper from the mailbox, which was a treat for them and one fewer thing for us Staff to do. The kids who were allowed to do this were so close to release that the act of running away would be extremely stupid, and this was recognized by even the stupidest.

the obligatory basketball hoop<sup>6</sup> accessory planted in the driveway. It had a full basement in which the live-in staff stayed, with all the amenities of a third-year student's off-campus apartment. It was a dump, with drooping golden wallpaper and dust mites that would bite, but it had basic cable and a *microwave*.

Each bedroom door was fitted with a buzzer, an instant alarm that would send a sheer screeching sound should the kid trigger the device. We had an easy-to-memorize code to dismantle the alarm that the residents surely could not crack, 1-2-3-4, and would rue the day we ever heard the tiny, tinny siren go off because it meant more reports and a mandatory room check, complete with itemized documentation, in case one of the residents stole from another during the melee. At the end of the hallway was the master bedroom, with its full bathroom and sliding doors<sup>7</sup> that led to a deck that overlooked the back forty. It was usually occupied by two females and lay nestled in the back of the residence. Across from it was a small one-closet room that usually held the more hostile and unruly residents because of its solitary window perched some thirty feet above the driveway. Down the hall and directly across from the first floor bathroom was the new intake room. This room also had a birds-

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<sup>6</sup> Frequently twisted around and bent out of shape, just like its vandals.

<sup>7</sup> That never slid open and were locked shut in even the hottest weather, a fire hazard that kept kids from going AWOL.

eye view of the front lawn and the Raspberry River Residential Treatment Center for Youth's driveway, but had absolutely no décor nor furniture other than a four-post wooden bed and a heavy, unmovable and cumbersome dresser, both of which were nicked up, banged up, scarred all around, and presented carved and makeded graffiti of various sorts. The two bedrooms at the start of the hall<sup>8</sup> that were closest to the front door of the house held the better residents, the ones who were poised for discharge, and these had better furniture and nicer, less sullied paint jobs. As the residents progressed, they were moved from room to room, a practice that I objected to because of its inconsistency and lack of a sense of security in the resident's surroundings. "They move constantly," I complained, "and they can't develop a feeling of ownership and familiarity or sanctuary if they just move around every few months." The others just produced faux professional smiles and told me that that was a legitimate concern, thank you. And never brought up again.

The living/ recreation area had hardwood flooring, a fireplace, comfortable couches, a 35" television, and a large picture window boasting a beautiful view of the gently sloping landscape of the lawn that led up and out to the gravel road. The hardwood floor was ruined - gouged and gashed and improperly

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<sup>8</sup> The hallway was illuminated by the sort of 400-watt motion-sensitive light usually used outdoors in a driveway or a patio.



and overly sluiced with bleach by scores of uncaring and unhappy laborers doing their chores just to possibly earn enough PPP's to play a single game of Connect Four. If staff had nothing for the residents to do, there was always cleaning<sup>9</sup> and scrubbing. The two couches had a variety of stains and spots and crud and, at times, living or dead pubic lice, and we Staff never sat on them. The television was the result of a charity event, donated by some local big-wig who smiled for the camera when the story made it on the local news at nine. Only one youth broke the window two times, three days apart. We shipped her off to another facility, one with bars instead of buzzers. Ironically, the front double door was never locked.

4 o'clock was med time, right after QUIET HOUR. That was when the residents had an entire hour to be alone in their rooms, doors closed, alarms set, monitors on, lights dimmed. It's an hour when they can sleep, write letters home, clean, masturbate, do homework, read, listen to the radio, take any substance they managed to sneak by us, cry, sigh, hope for a better life, dream about a better life, devise ways to complain to their case worker (if they had one), compose pleas to their

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<sup>9</sup> K\_\_ had favored residents detail his car; this was an outright violation; the agency's Taurus was acceptable for them to clean; one of the staff had had some of the youth rake leaves, clean house, and do other kinds of work without pay. She soon became an Assistant Director at the non-profit, tax exempt social service agency, the state-subsidized Raspberry River Residential Treatment Facility for Youth, and at about the same time she started wearing Gucci shoes, carrying a Coach purse, and driving a new Pontiac Aztec.

case worker (if they had one), or simply stare at the walls until it was over. Some escapes were attempted during these times, but only by the new residents, the inexperienced ones, the ones to whom it would not occur that this is the worst time to attempt to run away, as all the Staff's undivided attention could be directed toward him or her.

Quiet Hour gave us Staff a break from the arduousness of DIRECT CARE work. As I mentioned before, K\_\_ always went out for smokes while the youth were around, even *right there* and with *him*, he would light a cigarette, despite our firm *NO SMOKING POLICY*. Not the best role model for kids who had been raped, brutalized, beaten, or disciplined with bicycle chains, alternator belts, broomsticks, shoes, bleach, table lamps, beer bottles, dinner plates, or *anything*, all the while having a Camel dangle off the abuser's lips, hands, ashtrays, et cetera. PAIRING THE STIMULI: relating one thing to another. Makes it all flash back, makes the resident ANXIOUS and EPISODIC, makes the resident RECURRENT. Firm No Smoking Policy..

But when Quiet Hour rolled around, K\_\_ was also quick to fire up the PC in the corner (donated by the fine folk @ Dell.com) usually used for research papers about volcanoes or state capitals; skateboarders, or Britney Spears. No, K\_\_ looked at porn. MikesApartment.com, WifeSwap.com, Barely18.com, StreetBlowjobs.com, FancyFeet.com, FuckforCa\$h.com, Steakand-

Cheese.com, MILFHunter.com, MILFseeker.com, MILFLover.com, Big-Mouthfuls.com, BangBus.com, FreePix.com...all of these would pop (!) up as soon as K\_\_ logged on<sup>10</sup> and leered around. Other Staff spent the hour catching up on paperwork: T<sub>x</sub> plans, or TREATMENT PLANS, were ever-changing. There would be phone logs to create and update and situate and separate and manipulate, and communicate; they would inundate us with legal specs and times and long distance charges and fees and technical difficulties and pains in our asses.

While K\_\_ was researching the raunchy, I was usually busy prepping the meds. I had no certification, did not need one—just me and my psych degree. No one else was allowed a cabinet key on the day shift; the master key was secured in a cabinet accessible by security code only—like a mechanical keypad on a garage door. There were a lot of individual doses missing one summer, and since then only a few Staff were allowed to feed residents their drugs. It all started gradually enough. A 1-mg alprazolam dose here, a 5-mg diazepam tablet there: nothing too noticeable. If one of the residents came in with a fairly seri-

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<sup>10</sup> This was a problem; this was something that the kids probably should not see while in residential treatment. K\_\_ and I were up for the same raise/promotion, too, a leviathan 1.2% increase, and looking at pornography probably would not be a detail that could win him it should the topic come up. These raises/promotions seldom came along, and with it, one would be advanced and escape from working directly with the kids. We both wanted out and we wanted out *bad*.

ous injury, he was prescribed a pentazocine/ acetaminophen mix, and the drug was put in his pillbox.

An ankle sprain, no big to-do: ice, rest, elevation. But he sure to-*did*. He made it into a big deal, always whining and grimacing, letting Staff know that he was in agony. We had to address any resident's complaint at any time, as written in the Youth Home Residents' Bill of Rights & Rules, so they would not be mistreated. The emergency room doctor put a PRN (as needed) notation in the directions on the pent/aceet bottle, and we were required by law to follow them. He began to complain more and more frequently. It was clear that he was not drug-seeking for the buzz, but for relief. We started an investigation.

Morning Staff had signed off on the log sheet, indicating that the resident was given his dose. But the youth still had pain; we wondered if a CONVERSION DISORDER had developed, or perhaps he had developed a tolerance for the narcotic. We questioned and interrogated and probed him. Nothing. This went on for two days (seemed like two months to the boy) until his pillbox with the SMTWHFS morn-eve-nite dividers got refilled by another Staff (me). He was finally taking the actual pentazocine script; Staff had subbed aspirin for it and took it herself, leaving the resident in pain. She was fired immediately.

Our new intake, Daphne Marie, stated her status right away, during QUIET HOUR, of all times. Upon arrival, immediately fol-

lowing QUIET HOUR when all seven precious and matted-hair youth in this eight-bed facility were bleary and off-guard, Daphne started stating her status by dropping her bag of shampoos and make-up and toiletries, scanning the youth group home horizon (*The Future is Your's to Seize*, one of the banners alleged<sup>11</sup> boldly), and said: "I am the new Bull Goose Juvey!" She spotted and glared at Sharon, who was seated at the head of the main dinner table, presented her a Grinch-ish smile and continued, "I been to *hunnerds* of these dumps and broke outta *all* of 'em. An' I have a boyfriend who's gotta *knife!* An' I was junior *prom* queen last year, so you all better step *off!*" Daphne glowered at the rest of the youth and me then said, "Now *deal* with that, *giiirlie!*" She reached in her pocket, took out a cigarette, and lit it right up. And she did it, just like that. I called support Staff; they came upstairs; it ended in a full restraint; a whole new batch of paper work ensued. Daphne had stated her status.

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It was out of the norm to see a new intake being so ballsy. Usually, newbers were quite PASSIVE and/or WITHDRAWN. Retreating from or shadowing Staff or trying to make friends with a gift of

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<sup>11</sup> This banner went through several drafts that included and *You'rs* and *Yours'* and *You're's* and *Yours*.

a GameBoy™ or something. And since Daphne did not have a DSM-IV 313.81 diagnosis (OPPOSITIONAL DEFIANT DISORDER), a new report had to be written with a detailed description of what had occurred. It may not seem like a big deal, the lighting of the cigarette and all, but when there is a youth who has been court ordered into residential treatment, has DUAL or CO-MORBID DIAGNOSES, has a criminal history (theft, prostitution, possession), and would be living with others of the same disposition, a report *always* had to be written. It just *did*. What a pain in the ass.

I took the overnight shift that night, just called Amy<sup>12</sup> and asked her for her hours. I had to compose The Daphne Marie Report anyway, K\_\_ refused any extra hours, and Aimers hadn't spent a night at home in a long while. Amy said it would be just fine with her, but wanted my 11-8 shift on the coming Friday. Said it would put her over 40 hours for that pay period, and thus she would have time and a half. So a whopping \$12.75 for each two overtime hours that week. Whopping, for sure. With a paycheck with cash like *that* heaped onto it, she could buy a super-duper-draw-four-do-dah-daily *winning* lottery ticket or something, and move to some warm and sandy clime. Aim high,

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<sup>12</sup> K\_\_, Amy and I were the only active DIRECT CARE STAFF at Raspberry River, and we were assured that HR was actively recruiting some spry and naïve psych majors from the local university, promising them college credit in the form of practicum points and internships. Problem was, none of the profs would sign off on any of these apprenticeship programs because of our horrible reputation circulating throughout the community. Even the public school board mistrusted us.

Amy! Social work pays so very-very well! I would've given her a job that she keep the day job, but a job job seemed too juvenile to justify the joke. So I didn't.

While working overnights, Staff had to remain in the living room/ activity room area, adjacent to the kitchen and very near the hallway that led to the bedrooms. We could watch TV or read or use the internet, but we were not allowed to sleep. If we were to fall asleep and got caught, we would be docked pay for the night and have to go through another training session. Since we had all dozed off once in a while, and since it was extremely bad form to snitch on another employee, this was a forgivable offense if it did happen. One thing about folks in social work - you develop a bond that you dare not break. A code of compliance that included confidentiality and conduct that would support one another. No matter how egregious the breach, save for rape or murder, you could at least count on fellow staff support through the tough times. It was unsaid.

Working overnights in a group home was an eerie experience. A stillness that settled like dust on a museum painting would become ominous and omnipresent. It drifted over and covered, enclosing itself around everything: the sound of an odd click here, the even clock there. I could hear the second hand on the activity room clock creep over its numbers, a steady progression of time and distance—distance between the residents and the

Staff, distance between the ramparts of the Raspberry River Residential Treatment Center for Youth and the outside world that a judge had ruled they were not suited to be a part of. The residents were budding criminals, menaces to society, threats to the social order, and needed treatment. They were unwell. They were hazardous. They were troublemakers, rabble-rousers, scalawags. Pests. Varmints.

Daphne had given hand jobs on the school bus. Read that in her case file court report. She was compensated five dollars each, and would purchase extra cafeteria items at lunchtime with the supplementary capital. This was a lucrative venture for her, and she did quite well. The boys lined up, so to speak, sat in the back, cash in hand, ready to go. They would create distractions, lean over the aisle, blocking out the goings-on under the EMERGENCY EXIT sign above the rear door, the tall-backed red-vinyl upholstered seats.

She was very busy on the mornings of sporting events. She relieved her fellow students of teenaged hormonal distraction, an eighth grade colleague with a duty: taking it for the team, lending them a hand, pulling for the players, jerking one into the seats, playing a doubleheader, measuring cyclical friction; she enabled them to redirect their focus onto their sport. Their girlfriends, the cheerleaders or the Future Teachers of America or the little Mu Alpha Thetas would not perform the

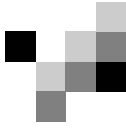


task, would not stoop to doing *that*, not *then*, o my gawd, so the chaps flocked to Daphne.

The lads came with wrinkly Lincolns clutched and creased and crumpled in their growing-spurt little/big-boy hands, the crisp five dollar bills (given to them by their mothers for an extra dollop of dessert) deflowered during the three seconds of exquisite pubescent orgasm that ejected and landed on the beltless bus seats designed to transport them to their educations—were not *these* children the budding criminals, menaces to society, threats to the social order, were not *they* troublemakers, rabble-rousers, scalawags, pests, varmints? However, *they* were not sentenced to nine to twelve months of residential treatment in the Raspberry River Residential Treatment Center for Youth; Daphne was. It happened all of the time, everywhere, all school districts, all over the world. It just so happened that dear Daph got caught.

And now she was a Ward of the State. And now it was my responsibility to ensure that my charge would receive the nine to twelve month treatment that she needed according to the juvenile and family court judge of Region 1 Northwest. How quickly I seized control!

■ ■ ■



HEALTH AND HUMAN AGENCY SERVICES

Raspberry River Residential  
Treatment Center for Youth  
18 Raspberry River Road  
H\_\_, \_\_ 55555-5555

Phone: 555-555-5555  
Fax: 555-555-5555  
E-mail: Admin@STATE.gov

**Youth Incident Report  
Region 1 Northwest**

**To**

Name: Karen S\_\_  
Division Name/Dept: Region 1 RRRTFFY  
supervisor  
CC: Dr. Zachariah H\_\_; Juvenile Officer  
G\_\_  
Phone number: 8450  
Urgent

For Review \*  
Please Comment  
Please Reply

**From**

Axx  
Direct care worker, Region 1 RRRTFFY  
Phone: 8440  
Fax: 932-8499  
E-mail: nxxx@state.gov

Date of Incident: 6/12  
Time of Incident: appx. 4 pm, med time  
Type of Incident: Felony assault w/intent to  
injure/injury  
Youth Name: Daphne Marie  
Other Staff Present: K ; Amy was on-call support Staff

**Description of Incident(s) including all precipitating events :**

STAFF arrived to transport new resident DAPHNE from **Frieda's Foster Care**. STAFF received Case History forms from FRIEDA. See attached report.  
STAFF was introduced to DAPHNE up at appx. Noon. Evidence of recent substance use, Inappropriately dressed, non-compliant. See attached report.  
DAPHNE displayed un-Cooperative behavior. DAPHNE struck FRIEDA (open handed). STAFF witnessed incident. See attached report.  
During transport, DAPHNE displayed as PASSIVE and/or WITHDRAWN. NO REPORT.  
STAFF arrived approximately 4 pm. Unloaded resident's belongings. See attached Youth Inventory Report.  
DAPHNE confronted another YOUTH. DAPHNE raised voice, said, "I am the new Bull Goose Juvey" DAPHNE took out and lit contraband (cigarette). DAPHNE unresponsive to Verbal prompts. STAFF called for SUPPORT STAFF. DAPHNE continued to be non-Compliant. SUPPORT STAFF and STAFF began delivering Steps of Youth Self-Regulation. DAPHNE was Unresponsive. DAPHNE grabbed dinner plate, issued threats. STAFF continued attempt To deliver Youth Coping and Self-Regulation Skills. DAPHNE grabbed fork, swung at STAFF, injuring Staff. STAFF and SUPPORT STAFF considered options for resolving YOUTH/STAFF

■ ■ ■

"Don't you fuckin' get *near* me, faggot."

"You're doing a good job of keeping your voice down, Daphne. You now need to listen to Staff and put Sharon's dinner plate back on the table."

"I'm going to crack you in your fucking *skull*, faggot."

"I see you're upset, Daphne, and that's understandable. But you need to listen to Staff and go through the steps of ACCEPTING STAFF DECISIONS."

"Get away from me, cunt."

"You're doing a good job of listening, Daphne, as Staff can clearly see that you heard Staff by your immediate response. But that was an inappropriate response, Daphne. Now Daphne must go through the steps of COMPLYING WITH STAFF."

"Eat me, asshole."

"The first step of COMPLYING WITH STAFF is—"

"She has a fork. It's metal. Watch it."

"—to make eye contact and say 'okay' in order to—"

"Take *that!*"

"—a-a-hcknowledge that you heard Staff. Can Daphne make eye contact and say 'okay' to Staff?"

"Did she *cut* you? Are you *okay?*"

"Staff can see that you are continuing to be upset, Daphne, and that is understandable. But right now we need to put down the fork and go through the steps of FOLLOWING STAFF INSTRUCTIONS so that we may return to the first task, ACCEPTING STAFF DECISIONS."

"You *dick*. Do you think you *Staff* can fuck with *Daphne's* head? Nuh-uh. No way. I been through millions of people like you, you stupid dick! Her too. An' I'm not gonna let none of that shit get me. I'm gonna get out of here. Watch me. I will."

"You're *bleeding*."

"Staff can see that you are continuing to be upset, Daph—"

"Oh god! Should we—Basket hold?"

"Basket hold."

■ ■ ■

Amy and I must've basket-held that girl for twenty minutes, blood and all. I wrapped my hands around her forearms and elbows until she ebbed into submission, her strength waning until her staggered struggles dwindled into wispy hitches and weak sobs, sniffing intermittently until she was finally fully malleable. She never cried. Exhausting. RESTRAINTS after NON-COMPLIANCE should only be used when necessary, and it was necessary to show Daphne that the Raspberry River Residential Treatment Center for Youth (RRRTFFY) was not a facility where she could

just browbeat Staff and residents around. We needed to show her who was boss, who was *really* the Bull Goose, and I don't know if that was the right decision. It's never a good choice to use physical force on these kids. You should read their case files. There are ETIOLOGIES, root causes, for these kids' behaviors. A basket hold or any other physical contact would (and did) fuck these kids up way more than they already were. How could they build any trust with us if they got the same classification of treatment while they were in a residential behavioral management facility? We were supposed to be in the business of teaching the children in our charge simple conduct modification (or at least self-regulation), showing them through reward and reinforcement systems designed by top head shrinkers and LEARNING THEORISTS some better ways to cope with their dire days behind, present and ahead.

Yet we also had an obligation to institute control. And had this control not been implemented, had she not received that cue of how things were run around the River, she would be assaulting Staff (like poor ol' Frieda) and residents from the get-go. It was an administrative decision made by in-the-field Staff, whether or not we were qualified or trained or justified or determined to do so. And we did it, just like that.

Amy had taken over on her own. I was dog-tired, bleeding from a *fork* wound, and had to drive the ten miles into town and

get the slash on my arm checked out. I wrapped it up quickly; K\_\_ had corralled the other kids into their rooms as standard procedure mandated when episodes like this occur. I tossed K\_\_ the med key (it was, after all, a state of emergency) and he split to get the other youth their meds. Besides, female Staff checked female residents in; there were no exceptions to this rule. Book belongings, search body cavity, get urine sample, etc. Amy was not working at that moment; she had to log these extra hours as volunteer. She gathered the downtrodden Daphne and dumped her into the proverbial den of the New Intake Room down the corridor.

■ ■ ■

If you're late with providing the benzos like Valium or Xanax or Klonopin, some residents get real snippy - - imagine no coffee whatsoever, or withdrawal from whatever your drug of choice is, and multiply that by teenage angst and attitude, compound it by a psychiatric disorder or two, add in behavioral problems augmented by a horrendous upbringing, divide it all by pressure on Staff to make sure the med disbursement log is always accurate and the 10,000 youth who come in and out of there get their dope on time, and you get a formula like this:

$$p+hU^{10,000} \frac{DW \times TA+A=Z}{/pr.} \rightarrow st = a \text{ difficult situation} : \Psi d \times B^{\Omega} /$$

■ ■ ■

It was too late on the Daphne D-Day for anything academic to get done. I had developed a syllabus for the summer months and included all I could to ensure that they got at least some of what they clearly were missing. As if it weren't bad enough that they had so many obstacles/barriers ahead (and behind), but add a new, completely arbitrary and uninformed NCLB Act enforced in the public school system by political motivation, and you got lots of stupid people trying to fix lots of stupid kids.

Their torturously tough grammar studies required third to fifth grade levels of understanding; the more advanced tykes hammered out sentences complete with appositive phrase identifications and auxiliary verb examples. But the books at the facility were archaic. One was © 1956. There were no substantial texts for the residents, and none were anticipated to roll in on some big grammar book truck. There was not enough money to purchase any.

The facility had only limited resources for spending: as a non-profit agency, H.A.H.A.S. enjoyed the charity of local Benevolent & Protective Order of D\_\_ Lodges and the like (who, in fact, do good work); their mission statement [*sic*]:

To inculcate the principles of Charity, Justice, Brotherly Love and Fidelity; to recognize a belief in God; to promote the welfare and enhance the happiness of its Members; to quicken the

spirit of American patriotism; to cultivate good fellowship; to perpetuate itself as a fraternal organization, and to provide for its government, the Benevolent and Protective Order of D\_\_ of the United States of America will serve the people and communities through benevolent programs, demonstrating that D\_\_ Care and D\_\_ Share.

Which is fine, fair, fantastic and fabulous statement of D\_\_ Mission, all well and winning wonderful and good great and grand until you have to memorize the *whole goddamn thing* for the *sole goddamn purpose* of kissing ass at the goddamn D\_\_ /H.A.H.A.S. annual Christmas jubilee, soiree, rendezvous, fes-tiv-i-ty or whatever goddamn elegant and irritating word they use to label it. It's a humiliating effort to recite the thing in front of tables full of drunk old folks, knowing that you're just a sideshow, that you're the new guy, and you have to do this to demonstrate gratitude to these drunk old men, the core donors who essentially provide your salary, and that the co-workers you were in allegiance with and in opposition to are sitting out there alongside them, quietly snickering, waiting for the next task to be asked of you the circus monkey, and all the while yearning for the tiny tube of TUMS and its mixtures of sucrose, calcium carbonate, corn starch, talc, mineral oil, natural and artificial flavors, adipic acid, sodium polyphosphate, and yellow #5 that nest in your cheap navy sport coat jacket with the asinine plastic gold buttons, the coat that you bought when you rushed @Φ your freshman year of college; the



drunk old D\_\_ Lodge men not too dissimilar to the drunk young @Φ men hazing you that freshman fall you fell in love with Casey Kalveki, the girl who offered you some of her French fries at the Wendy's in downtown Whereeversville, and how you never, ever needed antacid tablets while you were with her, and that you never ever thought there would be a day when you were reciting the Benevolent & Protective Order of the Lodges' Mission Statement. Never goddamn ever.

K\_\_'d gotten out of the recitation humiliation. He just sat there at a table, smoked and watched the show. We were both up for a pay raise, and he had seniority. He had been with the agency for too long, he had burned out, he just didn't care about the kids or their recovery/ rehabilitation/ restructure/ reprogramming/ repentance/ reverse back into healthy, happy, hopeful, hardworking taxpayers. Because that is all these H.A.H.A.S. programs are about: keeping kids off the Medicare/Medicaid/Food Stamp/Public Assistance payrolls. The importance and urgency of their incarceration states that they need independence. The sooner the independence, the quicker they learn to care for themselves; once they work, they no longer will be a menace to society. If the troubled teens stay on the assistance rolls, they become: dependent on free money. They believe: life is unfair. They think: it is okay to rely on public assistance. They feel: public assistance is the only

way. They will: ride the system until they exhaust their allotted resources. And it will: continue on and on. On and on, perhaps, until they die of some preventable disease of gluttony or end up destroyed in some dirty dime-bag dope deal. They will not become self-sufficient, they will not toe their own line, keep their noses clean, their chins up, their backs straight, their ducks in a row, and shoes tied with their best foot forward; therefore, before this develops, they must undergo some kind of intervention, some treatment, some kind of preventative interruption. Or they will live off Tommy T. Taxpayer. And any doubt about *that* is: naïve.

The D\_\_ Lodge top dog handed over a pre-written check for \$350 with a smirk and a sniff.

■ ■ ■

K\_\_ and I were up for the same raise/promotion. One of the many problems with moving from DIRECT CARE to ADMINISTRATION is that any problems with questions, concerns, complaints, or just plain *gripes* came thoroughly and wholly arbitrary, and a job at ADMIN would get you out of answering any of them. ADMIN is an easy street. This dependence on promotion usually starts by means of their first run-ins with the law [in no matter what fashion] and probably never ends. It's hard to get out of DIRECT CARE, especially when an employee works his or her way up being told that

he or she will have a better job in doing so. It was much worse if the employee had a degree and/or was intelligent enough to comprehend how awful DIRECT CARE work was, realized through experience or study or word-of-mouth, and this created an environment/mindset before social service agencies would get them. I'd stick around for an ADMIN job, a cushy post that would beat burning burgers or babysitting brats sixty hours a week. K\_\_ had much more time in than I, and his conduct showed it.

He resented that we were both being considered for this advancement. He unintentionally made this clear. In a beautifully oblivious display of textbook PASSIVE/AGGRESSIVE behavior, I surmised that he would get it, no matter what he had to do. It was on a Thursday morning, just before Youth Wake-Up time. K\_\_ was standing in the Staff kitchen-break room, leaning against the counter, stirring a cup of coffee and seemed to be jonesing for a smoke.

"Morning," he said. I hadn't even begun to heal from the furious fork fray, and he seemed almost amused by the whole thing. I returned with a hello. He said, "How is the wing feeling? Did you get a tetanus shot?"

"I was up to date on everything. Part of the new Staff orientation. Shot series, background check, and the works. Well, I still have my second Hep B series yet."

K\_\_ shook his head. "Looks like she got you really bad."

I reply. All metal utensils were now locked away and replaced with the plastics that we usually reserve for the more aggressive, violent children, the ones with PATHOLOGIES that require absolutely nothing be available to them that could be potentially dangerous. Usually such extreme cases get shipped down to Central, all doped up, incapacitated by a chemical straightjacket prescribed by frenetic, annoyed ER docs who just want the runts out of their hair; but once in a while we'll warehouse one at el Rio de Raspberry for a bit.

I *had* been gotten really bad. Daphne's slash was fairly deep: four fork tine-lines from below my elbow and along the ulna to my mid-forearm, requiring five stitches total from the eminent Dr. Shankar, who sewed it and classified it as an incidental work-related injury, so no assault charges could be filed. This was yet another scar to add to the several I had earned in my tenure as a Direct Care Worker for troubled teens. K\_\_ had a few, too, but none as fresh. No. Not any for a long, long time. And I think he wanted to keep it that way. He wanted the raise/promotion and a way out of direct care, in-the-field work. And I suspected that he would do anything to win. Anything.

"I read Daphne's case history. Horrible. What triggered her?" he nodded and gestured at my arm with his coffee mug.

"SPONTANEOUS INTENSIVE COUNSELING. She was up to a LEVEL THREE INTENSIVE EPISODE when Amy saw it coming. Someone left the metals out. Daphne had just assaulted Frieda at the foster home. She's in a pretty bad dissociative state."

K\_\_ fixed his eyes on me, stern and unmoving. Wide nostrils, jaw muscles pulsing, rouge flush blooming in his cheeks and lower neck. "I put my time in with direct work. I'm ready to go on up. I don't have a college degree or hoop-jumped certificate. But I have been here a *long* time. And I will do whatever I need to do for the promotion." He returned to his coffee, eyes still fixed, a marked increase in respiration. He seemed INTENSIVE himself. I only stood quietly, keeping eye contact, not giving in to this Bull Goose. K\_\_ finally dropped his eyes, and I was relieved enough to blink. I looked down, trying to release tension and re-focus my attention. The side of the coffee cup facing me said in a scribbled, sappy font:

*Children : Our Hope, Our Future*

■ ■ ■

Daphne settled in quickly as resident of the New Intake Room. We allowed her sole habitation on the basis that she was a cutter, and that if she were to have a roommate, the roommate would be unfairly disallowed things like scissors and thumbtacks and disposable shavers and the like. The NIR Suite was void of

décor: bare walls adorned only by nicks and scratches from countless new residents waiting to be let out, waiting for the paperwork to go through, yearning to have a real life, one that did not involve forms and courts and social workers and institutional food and plain, characterless State vans, POWER OF ATTORNEYS, FDA approved medications and WAKE-UP TIMES and LIGHTS-OUT TIME; QUIET TIMES and REPORTING TO STAFF TIMES and ACADEMIC HOURS...they just wanted to be *kids*, and the smart ones caught sight of the quickest, easiest way to do so, to get at least *some* liberty. But how so?

COMPLIANCE and MARKED IMPROVEMENT on their TARGET SKILLS, coupled with APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR, was their ticket to freedom. Their rates of successful learning usually wavered and wobbled at first, but as soon as they picked up on the tricks of BEHAVIORAL THERAPY, they were usually good to go. Move on up.

Ms. San Diaz's tenure in NIR was brief. She had swiftly earned newbie Privilege Point Passes, enough to earn her a half hour of TV time per week. She made friends fast—the two other girls admired her for not only lighting up the cigarette, but for actually *cutting* a Staff member. She was a hero in their eyes, but they played disapproving enough in the weekly one-on-one counseling sessions that we Staff could not justifiably mark their progress sheets with their newfound idol worship. They played off their admiration well enough—and Daphne had effortlessly seized control.

In an innocuous remark made by a co-worker, I should have seen that Daphne had gained some control of me. On passing over shifts, Amy and I were exchanging notes and going over TREATMENT PLANS, or T<sub>x</sub> SHEETS. I was absentmindedly picking at the stitches in my arm—they itched and had a red, burning glow around the rim of the cuts and were almost ready to be taken out—when Aim was about to leave the break room she said, "Nice belt. It matches your shoes."

■ ■ ■

"My mom says I can get it. She called. So I can get it. I want it. It's my right." Daphne was twisting strips of red and white streamers together, holding them up against the blue background that framed the misspelled WELCOME NEIHGORS sign she was going to hang above the entryway in the front foyer. K\_\_ was within earshot, in the adjacent kitchen, patting burgers together, seasoning them, and putting them into a Tupperware container. It seemed he was very interested in our conversation; his *scoop-cup-shape-pat-drop* routine forming the hamburgers into patties was secondary, subconscious, routine, mechanical. He was listening in. Daph continued.

"You got the call. Amy said Raspberry River don't—"

"Doesn't."

"—doesn't have custody of me yet. So my mom's still got parental rights. An' she says I can get it. So I wanna make a appointment."

"An appointment." I had been trying to work on her grammar at every opportunity I could; it became second nature, a banter she and I developed swiftly and seamlessly over the previous few weeks since she was admitted. It was a tough battle, but not one entirely futile. She also did not know left from right; she was nearly fourteen years old. She would always just point and say, "that way" in demonstrative fashion, either question or answer. *Fourteen*. And she wanted birth control. She was much too young, and no daughter of mine would ever be allowed birth control at such young age. The process was rocky in the beginning. If she'd ask for anything, or had a question about where to put dishes back from the dishwasher, I'd direct her using left-right VERBAL CUES. Frustrating for her, taxing to my time, but something she had to know. Direction. Seems simple enough, but on one particular occasion when she was not accepting the DIFFERENTIAL DIRECTIONAL DISTINCTION very well, she flipped.

Flipped out. It all began with "on your left," and that sparked an hour of arduous argument. She had a tough time understanding whose left or whose right was meant, and replied back in teenagese, "Myyy right is *thiiiiis* way. Yooour right is *thaaat* way." She couldn't continue her cleaning tasks until



she knew her left from her right. And no cleaning tasks done meant no television time.

"We have to see if the State will cover the shot. Medicaid didn't pay for another youth's ortho tri-cyclen. Her grandmother did. We'll just have to wait and see."

Daphne pursed her lips and reached down for some tape. She was finishing the banner, preparing to hang it, a bed sheet-sized page of construction paper, created and poised to welcome the 20-some guests we invited as part of the HEALTH AND HUMAN AGENCY SERVICES'S Raspberry River Residential Treatment Center for Youth public relation\$ campaign to develop awarene\$\$, knowledge, understanding, compa\$\$ion, and (as if this were not evident) *donation\$* to the facility. The idea behind this was to get the immediate neighbors and members of the nearby community to see how tough these kids' lives were, to show them that no one loved them, and that we were taking care of them, so please contribute so that we may continue to care for these poor children and give us \$ome dollar\$...

The administration planned a barbeque. Burgers, dogs, and brats for the brats, complete with the typical picnic-food fare found in church basements: baked beans, potato salads, chips, dips, and the like. K\_\_ had gotten the smorgasbord provisions and simply charged it to the State Food Bank account. The rationale? You have to spend money to make money. And the ticket

came out to \$150. May not seem like much, but each youth had a daily budget of \$10. Which may also not seem like much. However, during a month's time, a resident eats only \$300 of food on-site; this food fest feast was half a month's worth of groceries. So we were going to party like it was \$149.99.

Daphne wanted a Deprovera shot. Her mother, N\_\_, made one of her few allowed phone calls from prison<sup>13</sup> and told me she didn't want anything like what happened to her to ever happen to her darling and dear Daph. N\_\_ begged me to let her have the shot, the rationale being that the pill was too much for the child to remember to take daily, and with all the moving around from foster home to group homes to court dates to overnights in juvey detention halls, that something would happen/could happen, and a shot would be effective for some six months, worry-free. The last thing Daphne needed was an unwanted pregnancy.

I nodded and shrugged. "I'll see what can be done. Check the ward laws." She wobbled. "Hey, watch that chair; it's unstable. I just don't know if you need birth control right now, Daph. You're fourteen--"

"It's my right."

"--living in a group home--"

"My mom says I can."

---

<sup>13</sup> N\_\_ was indicted for felony assault after she pummeled Daphne's alleged rapist (and paternal uncle) with his own cue stick in a neighborhood bar--she'd already had two DUI's, three domestics, and a B&E.

"—under court order, and more or less under the Agency's custody. I just don't see the need for it, for birth control. Residents are disallowed from dating—"

"She'll sign them papers."

"The papers. She'll sign *the* papers. Maybe she will. But for now, you should focus on your COUNSELING and TARGET SKILLS here at Raspberry River. You've made some very good, rapid progress and need to keep centered on that." I sighed. "In the meantime, I'll see what I can do and make a call to the health center. Okay?"

She surreptitiously smirked; her eyes shimmered; her back stretched and arched from reaching up above her head, her tiptoes lingered on the teetering chair. The red and white streamers were neatly woven together over the blue WELCOME NEIGHBORS banner clutched in her tiny, tremulous, teenaged hands. Through her secret, sassy smile she asked, "Is this centered? How does it look? Should I move it to the *left* or should I move it to the *right*?"

■ ■ ■

"What's y-e-l-l-o-w number five?" Daphne squinted as she asked, trying to decipher the small print.

"It's a chemical called tartrazine. A dye used in foods and candy. Some medicines. It adds color to things, like the

red dye you used on your hair." It was an early autumn afternoon, in the low 60's, partly sunny. The summer struggle with the Agency car's air conditioning was waning; fall was near, and school had a week until it began. Daphne was examining the roll of antacids she'd plucked from the ashtray in the Taurus. We were going to Dr. Shankar at the Free Clinic for her Deprovera shot, with Temporary Custodial Guardianship papers and her Medicaid card in the folder labeled D.M. San Diaz, and she was fidgeting, talkative, HYPER-VIGILANT. Perhaps she was petrified by the tales told by her fellow delinquents about the physical examination that accompanies a Depro shot, and the misinformed misfits' cliché version of the gigantic birth control needle along with a bonus and supplemental legend of the Wicked and Painful Pap Smear Stick, a humongous Q-Tip that doctors inserted inside and twisted till the little tart's tiny twat twinged. "After they stick all that shit in your pussy, the last thing you want is a man up in there. That's how the birth control works," I'd overheard. Her MOTOR TREMOR that she suffered was more pronounced than usual, that day, and I attributed it to normal nervousness. She dropped the antacids twice before squinting at the tiny text on the side, her lips pursed with vaudevillian determination. Her voice wavered and she let out interspersed "hu-hu's" in her VERBAL DISCOURSE. Daphne had been maintaining SELF-MONITORING DATA worksheets fairly well, a program I really pushed for after only my second

month at the Ras, and to the surprise of some of the more closed-minded Admins, some good results were coming in.

I'd come across a quote from Plimpton about Hemingway in the Martin/Pear *Behavior Modification: What It Is and How to Do It* text I had used as an undergrad. Basically, it was about self-recording and how it can really inspire one to strive to do better, to see the results of one's activity or inactivity in a clear, more corporeal way. If the data shows that you have lapsed in your work and you can't have that extra phone-talk time or TV hours or an additional dollar to your allowance, the reason(s) will be clear, and the motivation will (in theory) be there. I required the youth residents to maintain an earned hours chart and post it publicly on the refrigerator. No breach of T<sub>x</sub> confidentiality was broken - this was strictly a chart about their TV time, not any of the other RESPONDENT CONDITIONING SKILLS. Hemingway would see a spike in his word-per-day output on a chart he kept under a gazelle head mounted on the wall and think of that spike in output if he began to feel guilty about all the time he spent fishing.

Daphne's progress was coming along nicely, for some skills a little too nicely, and I had sent a memo to Staff to watch for false response in her self-reports. She was, after all, well-versed in the ways of group homes, foster care, the juvenile court system, Ward-of-State stipulations, Temporary Custodial

Guardianship papers, and almost all other programs, and some of the more experienced clients could lie their way out of treatment to get out of the home faster.

"Chemicals can kill you. You shouldn't eat chemicals, Alan," Daph admonished, and placed the TUMS back in the ashtray. She turned and faced the windshield, fingers interlaced. I almost corrected her with the whole routine regarding how youth were to address Staff only by "Staff," but I didn't. I let it go by; it was nice, like something my niece Eliza would call me, my brother's daughter. My brother was thirty-six and had two children, ages thirteen and eleven. I mentioned that fact in the interview—that the eleven-year-old boy had ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER with HYPERACTIVITY, or ADHD. I would baby-sit his kids frequently, and thought that gave me enough experience with children to at least mention it in the interview, if not help land the job. The task of taking care of one of those kids should be enough to earn at least an Associate's degree.

"I ate soap when I was a kid. My grandpa made me. I thought my tongue was gonna crawl down my *throat*. At least he didn't hit me." We were coming up closer to town, and she pointed to the stop where the middle school RRRTFFY residents smoked cigarettes while waiting for a connecting bus back to the facility.

Wringing her hands, "Here you just lose *phone time*. I

don't really need to talk to anyone anyway. 'Cept my brother. He<sup>14</sup> better watch what he eats." She swallowed hard and took a breath. "They feed him USDA food there. Sausage lasagna. *Ew.*" Sweat was collecting over her eyebrows; she began to play with and turn the air vents toward her. The clinic's caduceus came into view; I turned the Taurus and headed for it.

"Okay. I'll try to cut down on the TUMS. And improve my diet. And no one here at Raspberry River will ever hit you. Or make you eat soap. TUMS are better than soap. And soap is better than sausage lasagna. Okay?"

She smiled but soon began to gnaw her knuckle and then her thumb. "Yeah, 'member that sausage lasagna? When you picked me up? From Frieda's?"

Daph looked up at me, lower lip pressed down by the upper lip, eyes filled, a corner-mouth flat smile. This was the Raspberry River resident who attacked me with a *fork*. This was the kid who jerked off juvenile jocks for cash. This was the child who got raped by her father's brother. This was the daughter that someone could love. *Should* love.

"Alan?"

I looked at her, examined her face, her hair, her hands over the air vents, her eyes wide and expectant. I wanted to

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<sup>14</sup> Her brother was in foster care; I never knew his name, as he was only alluded to as "male sibling" in her file and his file was missing.

turn the car around and go back to Raspberry River, just go back and say: we got a flat tire, the engine broke down, the clinic was closed, we almost hit a deer, I got sick, she got sick, the Guardianship forms weren't all validated, there was a scheduling conflict, the road construction made us late and we missed the appointment, *she was too young.*

"Member?"

But I knew it would just be rescheduled, that the law was the law, and that this was something that would be done one way or another. That the forms had been signed, the consent had been given, the decisions had been made. And if for some reason this didn't get done, that lawsuits would be litigated, that reprimands would be written, that raises would be revoked, that rights were rights and rules were rules. I was just doing my job, just doing my job, *just doing my job.*

"Sausage lasagna." I reached for the TUMS.

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Aimers had left a cute little card in my break room mailbox. It was one of those make-it-yourself things for people who are too stingy to go to a store and actually *buy* one, so they "create" one and print it out with cheap ink on cheap paper to try to make you think they were being all thoughtful and caring and crap. On the front, it had a picture of a shoe sole and an arrow pointing upward. The printed text inside read, "Glad



you're all heeled up." Hilarious. Witty. Brilliant. Where do they *find* these people...? She signed her name and had scrawled,

*I'm putting in a good word for you for you to get the rase! ☺*

■ ■ ■

Daphne was making good progress. She had excelled in several skills, was deficient in others, needed no work in a few, and developed some of the core curriculum as was indicated on her target sheet. They were posted as RESIDENTIAL YOUTH LIFE AND EXISTENCE SKILLS (RYLES), the core of the BEHAVIORAL TREATMENT MODEL, and listed on STAFF REFERENCE sheets in Roman Numerals from i-1. I had made note of them, monitoring each as needed, some more closely than others. The first LIFE SKILL, as numbered in a *supposedly* arbitrary way (but not really), was:

- i. FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS AND RULES. She does this fairly well (aside from the whole fork-stabbing incident) from the start, and so little improvement is evident in this field. Some residents have had a difficult time doing even simple tasks by instructions or understanding and following rules. Daphne makes eye contact, repeats the instruction(s) or rule(s) while maintaining eye contact, does the task, and checks back verbally. Despite the mild FAS symptoms, she is able to work from simple to more complex tasks with relatively few errors from a *behavioral* standpoint.

- ii. ACCEPTING CRITICISM OR A CONSEQUENCE. Daphne is not adept at accepting criticism. Being at the top, being in the alpha role, she thinks she can do no wrong. When she does, and during the very few times when another youth calls her out on it, she becomes livid: her pulse rises, (evident by a throb in her temples, pupils widening, etc.), respiration quickens and becomes more audible, she replies in short, bursted, monosyllabic affirmative or negative phrases, but once in a while her temper gets the best of her and she will have FAILED TO MAINTAIN EMOTIONAL CONTROL. Nothing needing a restraint, but certainly one that needs some attention, and was so marked on her overall report. From time to time, when she does not control herself, she screams, "Goddammit, Alan, you always do this, you always work me up till I crack! You do it just to test me!" Another matter of some concern is of when she was ~~typing~~ copying/plagiarizing a report during a Saturday study hour. I didn't lecture her about copyrights and academic honesty, no. What I found more troubling was that she would bark at the word processor every time she misspelled a word, and not able to accept its criticism, Daphne clicked on "Add to Dictionary" for each word. That will surely show Bill Gates. Application for OPPOSITIONAL/DEFIANT DISORDER forms filed on 7/5/04.

- iii. ACCEPTING NO. Not a skill that was too tough for the more advanced residents once they got a good feel for the limits imposed by the facility, the Staff on duty, and the other residents. It was a matter of only asking for something that was obtainable - if one does not aspire to too high a goal, the possibility of failure diminishes correspondingly. This is an important life skill that many adults have never acquired.
- iv. PROBLEM SOLVING. Her levels vary widely with this particular skill. If the problem presented to her was, for example, how to get a six-pack of beer or find a couch to crash on, she would have excelled. Her intuitiveness and survival skills transcend the norm that most people acquire. But when she is not able find the can opener and searches for it for thirty minutes while the dishwasher is running and the youth who was assigned Kitchen Chores sits back and guffaws at her, I know that there are deeper issues at work. Daphne had lived independently too long and was not adept at interpersonal skills. She *is* beginning to understand different approaches to more age-appropriate activities.
- v. REPORTING WHEREABOUTS. This is one RYLE that Daphne always fails at. Because she is *Daphne*, and since she commands the attention of everyone everywhere just by her *being*, she

feels she really needs not to report her whereabouts as per protocol. Everyone always knows where she is and knows when she enters a room. She really doesn't even have to announce herself: she *is*. And because she *is*, Staff always knows whether or not she has come into a room. Like an actor offstage, waiting in the wings, preparing for the performance, she puts on a show every time upon entering. Since we don't always know when she is waiting in the wings, Daphne loses some PPPs for FAILURE TO REPORT, but not very often. We Staff just shrug off the routine of verbal reporting with her<sup>15</sup>.

- vi. SHOWING RESPECT. She does this in a way that is hot and cold. She jealously defends other youths' rights to keep a private journal, and when she caught one of the residents reading another's, she immediately initiated a little scrap, citing the Youth Home Residents' Bill of Rights and its accompanying PERSONAL INFORMATION CODE AND RESIDENTS' PRIVACY RIGHTS. Kids will be kids, but she has a street-savvy hierarchy of things and modes, and the way to earn respect, in her eyes, is to do something "cool." This is obviously skewed and needs some direction, but the good news was that

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<sup>15</sup> En route to the termination of my tenure at RRRTFFY, this oversight led to a dreadful and heartrending outcome.

she *has* a hierarchy, and that she is young enough to replace her false gods and goddesses.

vii. SHOWING SENSITIVITY. Some problems arise with this one. She is able to empathize and accept empathy. She is able to recognize the ills and mals of the world. But when she is on, and on *full force*, her conceit overrides the world, and she comes up with some god-awful things. She has been clinically classified with NARCISSISM, an AXIS III PERSONALITY DISORDER.

viii. ASKING PERMISSION. Daphne is unabashed in her Deprovera request, her brazen contemptuousness puts her in the annals of Social Worker anecdotal gossip, and her unashamed audacity makes her who she is. We Staff have to rationalize this down with her, help her realize that there are more appropriate ways to get things done, and that she will have a difficult time in life if she were to never understand the whole "honey-vinegar" approach.

ix. CONVERSATION SKILLS. Her improvement wavers on this LIFE SKILL, not only because she is so used to the alpha role (and therefore dominates every conversation without showing any interest in what anyone else had to say), but also because she has had little social development in peer-group settings, and the topics are far beyond the realm of appropriateness for her age. Terrible tales, calloused remarks,

and repeats of bar-jokes she probably heard while in taverns with her mother on school nights. One joke in particular made me wince: "How do you make a four-year-old girl cry? Wipe the blood off your dick onto her teddy bear."

x. COOPERATION. She needs to work on this. One of the many problems with Daphne is that, if she doesn't like someone or something, she immediately and categorically dismisses he, she, or it. She has begun to realize that this approach will not work for her when Staff assigns Dish Duty to her and Sharon, the previous Rasp Riv top dog. They have to work and *get the task finished* harmoniously and thoroughly, whether they are sincere about it or not. False platitudes were abundant after a rather shaky and unpleasant start (Sharon had pulled a soup spoon on Daphne; Daphne deftly dodged the assault, which resulted in Sharon's PPP phone time dwindling to 3-minute check-ins with her mother), and the archetypes we Staff set at the workplace are lackluster, unworthy of role models, especially the unspoken, tense, terse, dissonant discords between K\_\_ and me.

xi. ACCEPTING COMPLIMENTS. You'd think a Narcissist would be good at this with all the praise one supposedly gets in their little worlds, but there are good ways and bad ways to ac-

cept compliments. Humility. One of the reasons ACCEPTING CRITICISM is so high up on the list (and this one just barely out of the top ten), is that sometimes youth in T<sub>x</sub> facilities get way too much praise, too much sympathy, too many favors and sad-eyed looks from their workers, and that sends some youth residents into a sense of false reality, that not *all* of the reasons for their having ended up where they have are their fault. Some of them are their fault, and they need to know that and carry the realization with them.

xii. VOLUNTEERING. Daphne often volunteers for a few reasons. (1)

It gets attention from the other youth and from the Staff.

(2) It is a way to earn bonus PPPs, a little loophole in the system with which she was very familiar. And (3) it gets her out of things like the Auxiliary Homework-Hour for Academics (AH-HA) during the school year, or mowing the lawn in the summer. Her familiarity with living in group and foster homes has taught her that. If she has finished all that she was required to finish, there is no way to deny her the opportunity to volunteer, and in the end we just let her. No harm no foul.

xiii. LISTENING TO OTHERS. Only when the topic applies to her.

There are times when she lends an ear to a fellow resident, but soon she breaks the dialogue and goes on and on and on

and on and on and on and on and on and on about herself.

Her egotism precludes her from making significant advances in this area.

xiv. SHOWING APPRECIATION. Remarkably, Daphne Marie is able to do this. If it is a simple gesture of volunteerism by another youth (thus aping her to gain favor) or a selection of her favorite cake for Resident's Birthday Dinner Day<sup>16</sup>, Daph always says thank you in a way that is either too deceptively declared to discern disingenuousness, or absolutely authentic and sincere.

xv. HONESTY. The work needed to develop this skill goes beyond the PPP motivators implemented by this particular facility/group home; honesty is difficult to teach with a reward system based on Brady Bunch, Nik-at-Nite TV time. I suggest reading *Huck Finn*.

xvi. ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITY. Did she or didn't she? Did you or didn't you? A fairly easy question to answer when the one questioned has a firm grasp of accountability, liability, and a good regard of self-awareness. It's difficult to develop when dealing with delinquents. They, like most other children their age, usually point fingers: "He made me do it," or "My [mom or dad] said this was the way to... fill-in-

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<sup>16</sup> The youths' birthdays are celebrated by meal selection and a USDA frozen cake that came in chocolate, vanilla, and pineapple; she loved the pineapple cake.



the-blank." A seemingly winless argument, all we Staff would have to do is wait out the HYPER REACTION and go through the logic in a calm, clear manner. After some time, careful thought, and more rational thinking, this cleared up for them.

xvii. GIVING CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK. Something lost to certain Staff, this skill has been mastered in such a way that she could replace some Raspberry employees in diction, nomenclature, and elocution alone. *When* to do so is another skill that we still needed to mill.

xviii. IGNORING INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR. Daphne likes to *look* at other people's business but mostly maintains her monologues when any notice is directed away from her. She has no interest in Shannon's new approach to gaining attention, her budding (and poorly pretended) eating disorder she called, "anaconda nervously-a". After eating, Shan would ask to be excused from dinner and take her leave to the main bathroom. She would play-act determined disgust while gaping at herself in the hallway mirror (looks at her front, side, back; front, side, back; repeat), heave a heavy sigh, go into the lavatory, and make fake vomiting noises that resonated throughout the halls and walls and air ducts for everyone to hear. Of course this had to be reported as an eating disorder (E.Disord.253) that was soon determined unclassi-

fiable for two key reasons: first, she wasn't losing any weight (she was *gaining* weight), and second, she told K\_\_ of her plan over a four-pack of Dolly Madison Lemon Cakes he had used to lure the info out of her.

xix. AGE-APPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES. Borderline. I think she could have drunk me under the table her first week. Sexually-themed music, though not uncommon for girls of Daphne's age, is disallowed in the facility, and she was caught downloading some from the internet. She also told another youth that she was going to ask Santa Claus for a tattoo of a dolphin above her "bickanny line." Report filed.

xx. LEADERSHIP. She certainly has the characteristics that leadership requires: personality, motivation, drive, desire, and the like, but she is 13 going on 11 and has the academic intelligence of a grade-school child.

xxi. PEER REPORTING. Daphne will tattletale if she thinks it will get her anything, if she thinks it amusing, or if she wants to exert and exhibit control.

xxii. TIME MANAGEMENT. She has an uncanny way of getting things done despite the amount of time she takes "entertaining" the other youth (and Staff). She probably has mesmerized some of the younger girls in her hallway to do some things for her; since she is not classified to IMPAIRMENT on her AXIS V - GLOBAL ASSESSMENT OF FUNCTIONING, she still needs remedial

courses in English and math. Her reading and spelling skills are nearly nonexistent. I tutor her and have become quite frustrated by her ability to charm her way out of doing things. She needs to work on working academically.

xxiii. TABLE MANNERS. This is a mystery. Despite growing up in a one-bedroom slum in a rather rough part of her town, Daphne has gained an amazing way of keeping couth at the dinner table. At the drop of a napkin, she can have the poise and charm of a debutante. Reminds me of some 1960's TV show, the one with Brian Keith and the debonair butler and the pretty but very young Cissy. She may have gotten these skills from television. TV is not always as bad as some make it out to be. It can provide a socialization orientation, a framework from which to build on, or at the very least reference.

xxiv. GREETING/DEPARTURE SKILLS. Always the hambone, Daphne can handle these tasks appropriately and with a weird kind of elegance that is simply too sweet for a more discerning audience. She puts mimesis on the map when it comes to Bradyesque platitudes and faux flatteries.

xxv. PUBLIC CONDUCT. She is petrified in public. She nearly cowers and cringes and mumbles and hides from anyone she does not know. When we take a trip to buy sundries, clothes, school supplies, etc., Daphne clams up and stays quiet the

entire time outside of the group home. Since, during these times, she is not gregariously grabbing for the spotlight, this particular skill is not near the priorities, although it will be something to consider down the road.

xxvi. POSITIVE SELF-STATEMENTS. She certainly has made several positive self-statements, but really to no positive end. One of the many things that concerns me about this case was that her hyperbolic rhetoric would get checked by an authority figure without any prior knowledge of her sensitive state, and crush what little VALID EGO this NARCISSIST had had. Tread lightly is the game plan: a slow, methodical analysis of her audacity in a safe environment in order to show her, not tell her, that she really is not "all that," even if she has "a bag of chips."

xxvii. HYGIENE/APPEARANCE. She always keeps herself neat. She is always showered, she always wears clothes that are age-appropriate. She takes care of her hair (despite the dreadful dye job) and shows no signs of an AFFECTIVE or MOOD DISORDER that does not match previous information/ reports. Daphne has arrived at the River with trampy teenage at-

tire.<sup>17</sup> We will demonstrate different styles and modes of dress more appropriate to public school.

xxviii. TELEPHONE SKILLS. Quite the conversationalist, Daph can talk until a listener becomes exhausted, if she were allowed. She can go on and on and on and on and on...about everything. She has a tendency to talk in an exceedingly loud voice when she is on the phone, and I thought it was because she wanted to enrapture the audience with dramatic and ominous statements like, "That will show *him* to bring a gun to the hearing (looks to see if anyone is listening) at the *Federal* courthouse. And tell Grandma that if my *lawyer* (makes eye contact with another youth and nods incredulously) doesn't file that Constumeter *Gravence* [sic] against that Staff, I'm gonna *fire* him (looks again), and that's *final!*"

xxix. STAYING ON TASK. She can get most of the tasks done if she puts the time and effort into them. She lacks the motivation, the drive, the focus. She will begin a chore, wash-

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<sup>17</sup> We had no formal dress code at the group home. But we did have a policy of storing personal belongings, keeping them in safe care, and when Amy or Admin or K\_\_ or I thought something was unsuitable for a youth in our care, we simply classified the article as personal property that would be returned at their discharge. Since having a dress code wavered dangerously on the lines of a civil rights violation, we would point to this provision and clothe the kids with what we had on file: jeans, sweatshirts, t-shirts without logos (including school jerseys), dress pants and outfits manufactured by children younger than they were, purchased from or donated by huge discount stores that got insane tax write-offs on merchandise that was otherwise ugly, undesirable and therefore un-sellable, and we offered these limited choices to the flock. They could only wear what we provided, and therefore could not dress inappropriately within our judgment.

ing the transport car, for example, but then will start to talk and chat and prattle and divert her attention from the job. The Taurus would be shiny with soap streaks along the center panels, and part of the hood; trunk and top door panels would be dull and clouded with dirt. Since this is usually considered a RYLE vii, VOLUNTEERING, she rarely loses PPPs for not getting the car washed.

xxx. EMPLOYMENT SKILLS.<sup>18</sup>

xxxi. MONEY MANAGEMENT.

xxxii. PURCHASING SKILLS.

xxxiii. SEX EDUCATION. She has had a horrible education about sex, one that no one should ever have. Upon reading her case file, it is quite clear that the criterion are present to fit the suspicion, never mind the police reports. The list of the behavioral symptoms<sup>19</sup> includes: nightmares, trouble sleeping, fear of the dark, or other sleeping problems; extreme fear of "monsters;" spacing out at odd times; loss of appetite, or trouble eating or swallowing; sudden mood swings: rage, fear, anger, or withdrawal; fear of certain

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<sup>18</sup> These three skills, numbered 30-32, are usually reserved for the more advanced residents ready to leave the facility, and we incorporated them mainly to prepare them for discharge on their own without any family or foster supervision. Once they reach 18, if their court order was not based on something too terrible, we had no choice but to set them free and off they went, oftentimes in no better shape than when they got to the facility in the first place.

<sup>19</sup> Straight from a printout of a web page that was lying around in the Staff Lounge.

people or places [e.g., a child may not want to be left alone with a baby-sitter, a friend, a relative, or some other child or adult; or a child who is usually talkative and cheery may become quiet and distant when around a certain person]; stomach illness all of the time with no identifiable reason; an older child behaving like a younger child, such as bed-wetting or thumb sucking; sexual activities with toys or other children, such as simulating sex with dolls or asking other children/siblings to behave sexually; new words for private body parts; refusing to talk about a "secret" he/she has with an adult or older child; talking about a new older friend; suddenly having money; cutting or burning herself or himself as an adolescent. Daphne has had an extensive sex education.

xxxiv. GRADE IMPROVEMENT. Her grades have improved from what they had been before, but that is mostly due to the fact that she actually *attends* school. She has some skills and some impairment; unfortunately, in these cases the youths' academic performance and grades, while in residence, are not the highest priority on the list. Residents become overtired of the constant, unyielding analysis and scrutiny --- they were being assessed and analyzed and judged and evaluated every minute of every day---as a result, most become very weary and very resentful. Staff→ teachers→ staff→

parents/ family → Administration → peers → school peers → self → Staff → parent's report → counselor → doctor → peers → Staff. The cycle went on and on. It is difficult to try to explain the method, much less the means behind this, and one can only hope that in their futures, they would understand and appreciate the "why" behind this.

xxxv. APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE/HUMOR. See ix.

xxxvi. PARTICIPATION. Of course she wants to be in all of the reindeer games...she was "Blintzens [sic]," but with a shiny, glowing nose, too. She wants to lead, but she doesn't want to be perceived as weak or Rudolphian, either. She is stuck in a hard place, and only wants to join in if she can lead. Others shy away, secretly and quietly, and form their own groups without her company.

xxxvii. SPORTSMANSHIP. Being the star of the show hardly lends itself to adequate sportsmanship, and she soon learned that either she has to try to work with others or she cannot play. Her deficient dexterity demands that she collaborate.

xxxviii. USING COMMUNITY RESOURCES. One day, we were all at the park on a Youth Day Out. Daphne was peeling a banana when she decided that she didn't want to have it anymore. She completely disregarded the adjacent trash can and threw the banana peel on the ground, then walked away without even pausing to ponder why that was wrong.



xxxix. APARTMENT LIVING. Not in a long, long time.

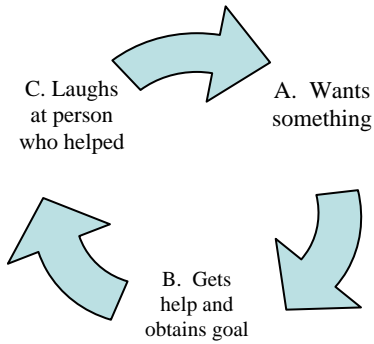
x1. SELF MEDICATION. One of the many problems with a residential population that has so many problems with behavior, brain chemical and other neurological imbalances, congenital disorders, and all other sorts of pathologies, is that they usually come to the River thoroughly and wholly medicated. This dependence on drugs usually starts by means of their first run-ins with the law [in no matter what fashion] and probably never ends. It's hard to get off meds, especially when a child grows up being told that he or she needs them. Much worse if the parent used/ abused substances and created that environment/mindset before we get them. Every case of the sniffles becomes a request for medication. Every time they have any trouble getting to sleep at night, he or she asks for a sleep aid. All of a person's particular problems may be resolved with a particular pill. They become dependent on turning to drugs at even the *slightest* discomfort. Any time someone suffers from menstrual cramps - go see Staff. If the resident feigns a headache we must attend to it or the matter may be reported to a JaCAL (see xlviii) as Neglect and/ or a Violation of Youth Home Residents' Bill of Rights & Rules. These seemingly simple remedies are unrealistic and potentially dangerous.

- xli. SELF-CARE. She argues this RYLES quite a lot, contending that she has had to take care of herself "for years" without understanding the reasoning behind the term. We have had long, detailed discussions of the concept and how it involves lots of different facets like socialization, diet, exercise, hygiene, academics, understanding others in order to understand oneself, and everything else that can possibly fit into this category. She thinks it means only staying clean - staying sober - and using condoms.
- xlii. BEING ASSERTIVE. Numbers 42 and 43 go hand-in-hand, if analyzed closely, and Daphne has no problems doing either, if given a RATIONAL MOTIVATOR and set of ATTAINABLE GOALS. For example, a prompt can be along the lines of answering a question presented by a teacher who asks that the answer be complete and correct. One of the biggest challenges for Daphne is to keep her focus, not clamor to be called on, and to jump in a class discussion or any other SOCIAL EXCHANGE without jumping around. One school note reports that she would gesticulate her arms and bray, "Mr. Kotter, Mr. Kotter!" on substitute teacher days. She has oftentimes been sent to the principal's office on those days and has become quite friendly with the secretarial staff and the school custodian.
- xliii. TAKING INITIATIVE. See xlii above.

- xliv. IMPULSE CONTROL. This is a challenge for her. She started her stay at Raspberry River by doing whatever she wanted whenever she wanted, but once she got the idea that she cannot move along in the program without controlling her immediate fancies, she has toned down a bit.
- xlv. ANGER CONTROL. Daphne doesn't want to blow her top too often because she knows she would lose the PPPs and the favor of her custodian. Obviously, she has lost control once in a while, but all in all, she keeps it to a small TANTRUM, a hurricane in a saucepan, and is advised to take the breaths and do the counts and the pauses before the self-restraint can be lost. The problem with trying to cultivate anger control skills in un-advanced youth was that they can MISALIGN their IRRITATIVE-COPING skills and develop a COMPENSATORY STRATEGY that highlights SUPPRESSION and COMPRESSION of the NOXIOUS feelings, thus possibly MANIFESTING them in a deeper set of IRRATIONALANTS and COGNITIVE/ BEHAVIORAL ASPHYXIATION.
- xlvi. EXPRESSING FEELINGS APPROPRIATELY. Flailing about, yelling and screaming, passively passing time in the corners of the room and baiting Staff or another youth to approach with concern and come over to help, only to be pushed away again. Outbursts happen, but some limits and self-control need to be employed in order to function in society. Daphne has a way of manipulating people and gaining their

trust only to snap back and laugh at her deceitful work.

See diagram.



(diagram)

xlvi. SEEKING ATTENTION Daphne needs to learn how to differentiate between negative and positive attention, appropriate attention, attention that is earned, desired attention, attention that requires patience and understanding, attention that is needed, and attention that one must seek in order to continue getting attention. SEEKING ATTENTION is one of her most crucial problems, and it is extremely difficult to tend to these issues when she is the center of everything all of the time.

xlvi. ACCEPTING DECISIONS. This particular skill is lost on some of the youth by the very Staff that tried to "encourage" it. Because it is a consumer-driven organization (meaning that the resident youth are, in essence, our bosses), any decision Staff made that really irritated the youth would go in a file of Consumer Grievances and have to be heard out by their case worker(s), the Administration, the Juvenal and

Court Advocates & Litigators (JaCALs), and the parents who, for the most part, got them into the Group homes. The only thing close to some kind of assurance from making unsavory decisions was that the grievance process was so long and drawn out for the residents to file that they usually abandoned the process at the first sign of any extra effort, work, or exertion. Daphne has yet to file a grievance.

xlix. RESISTING PEER PRESSURE. Since she is the one usually providing the pressure, she has an advantage on most of the others. But another problem that arises is that of bravado, and how once in a while someone will challenge her (the *nerve!*) to do or say something, and she feels the need to fulfill whatever absurd request she gets. One memorable afternoon someone challenged her to eat 50 eggs. Two fried, three scrambled, two microwaved, one raw, in that order, over and over. I was not on shift that day, but I have read the reports that K\_\_ had to file. Not only did he have to explain the huge gap in the food reserves, but he discovered a terrible kitchen mess (eggs cracked and boiled over and onto the stove and down the sides of the burners, the microwave had had a metal utensil in it for a while, and so on, creating another set of reports to file) and had to care for a very sick girl who just lay on her bed and

moaned after gulping only eight down. K\_\_ called her "Cool Hand Puke" for a week afterward<sup>20</sup>.

1. APPROPRIATE BOUNDARIES. Daphne has a skewed view of these, not only from the rape and the neglect, but probably from her environment while she was in a COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL learning mode. Unable to tell when and what, she oftentimes evades awkward attempts for friendship made by the shyer peers, and finds any signs of assertiveness or initiative by other youth, Staff or public person a threat and reacts to it. This also is going to take a tremendous amount of work because definitions and examples and observations of appropriate conduct and SOCIAL EXCHANGES need to be shown and reinforced. That often takes a very long time, time which Daphne doesn't feel she wants to spend at Raspberry River.

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Back-to-school time was in full swing, and things at the Raspberry River Residential Treatment Facility for Youth were calming down agreeably. I had been avoiding the lemon-flavored TUMS because I figured they had more yellow #5 in them than the others. Actually, the need for them had begun to wane, and I would only reach for the commercial-sized tub once every so of-

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<sup>20</sup> K\_\_ had to replace the missing eggs; he filed a complaint because he had to work overtime while caring for her; HAHA's never paid overtime.

ten while saving the roll in my pocket for a reserve.

The youths' days began bright and early at 6:15 when Staff knocked door-to-door to roust the ragamuffins from their teen-aged golden slumbers. It was red-tape onerous for the Staff who had the morning shift—we had to start at five—and the forms forms we had to fill out were insane. Food logs, med logs, head counts, bed counts, Staff reports, incident reports, reports to be filed if there were no incidents, school notes, teacher notes, med notes for the youth to bring to school to have permission to take their meds. The list goes on and on, and so do I...

The wake-up was the easiest part to pull during the school year. It all depended on the sign-up sheet order for the one shower at this particular facility. Staff would rattle the kid's cage, disengage the alarm for that room, and wait two minutes. If there was no response, the youth would get a verbal warning and another clatter on the door. If the youth was not up and out of his or her door, the youth got a written reprimand and PPPs were deducted from his or her card. The longer the wait, the more points were deducted, until the resident was out of the room and into the shower.

Breakfast was always hectic. All residents were required

to get the U.S. Recommended Daily Allowance<sup>21</sup> of each food group: fruits and vegetables, breads and cereals, dairy, meat/proteins: 4, 4, 3, 2. If the youth were not offered this menu, or if for some reason these foods were not available, a report would have to be written out, explaining why. The youth had access to report forms themselves if they had a beef with the menu, and some of the complaints were funny. "Why don't we have Cinnamon Toast Crunch," or "More tater tots," and "I'm a lacto-vegan-a-tarian." Someone must've been watching Dr. Phil to learn that one.

The eight (or more or less, depending on occupancy) teenagers needed to eat before they were off to school, and it was Staff's responsibility to see that they were all fed. The kitchen duties were delegated according to length of stay, experience, PPPs, Core Curriculum Skills, and by need. If Sally was in the shower sudsing her gorgeous locks an extra four minutes (as earned by a Privilege Point Pass), then Johnny had to bake the bacon<sup>22</sup> and get it to the table in time for the bambinos to board the bus.

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<sup>21</sup> The newly revised USDA food pyramid approval had been pending implementation for over two years.

<sup>22</sup> The residents were prohibited from frying bacon, sausage, and the like after a grease fire started and scalded a Staff member who in turn sued Raspberry River and the HEALTH AND HUMAN AGENCY SERVICES for "...negligent food preparation guidelines and standards..." The Youth Home Residents' Bill of Rights & Rules had to be revised; the Staff Operation Manual and Etiquette (SOME) had to be reworked; a new, unpaid Saturday morning Staff training session was mandated, and we had to install two (2) smoke alarms and two (2) fire extinguishers in all kitchens in all HAHAS facilities. The plaintiff was awarded \$125,000 and went back to college to finish her degree in Industrial/Organizational Psychology.



The shower shift was slated to take 25 minutes. Each youth (three of them not included—the Suite had its own bathroom, and the two who lived there switched on their own volition; one youth would be assigned to shower at night), was allowed a 5-minute shower, and that included prep time. The Admin had done all this crazy math and concocted unrealistic formulas involving gallons per minute, a residential home's water heater efficiency, water pressure calculations for different shower nozzles, number of toilet flushes during that time period, cost of grey water and raw sewage disposal, the effects of the tides and the moon's gravitational pull, the flow of hard water from the county reservoir, children's average amount of exposed flesh per square inch, and how quickly and efficiently different brands of soap rinse off skin and if the width of the pipes should be widened for a more effective flow. This study was funded by a \$4500 grant awarded by the HEALTH AND HUMAN AGENCY SERVICES' RRRTFFY district administrative center to the Payroll Director's nephew, a graduate student in Wastewater Disposal Management, and conducted over the course of one (1) week during his summer break from a college downstate. He came in on a Monday morning, collected samples from the faucets, clinked and clanged around the basement for a while, strolled out in the exercise yard for a while, ate lunch with us, wrote notes on some forms, then left, saying "I'll be back tomorrow." We never saw him again, were

never given a formal report, an informal report, nor were we ever informed of any results/ data/ conclusions/ deductions/ assumptions/ inductions/ inferences/ suppositions/ statistics/ facts/ figures/ numbers/ records or anything found by his extensive study. Except that the residents were required, as a result of Administration's conclusion from the Study, to take 5-minute showers.

The youth were eyeing each other, edgy and HYPERSENSITIVE/ - REACTIVE, and I thought they had smuggled in some kind of contraband from school the previous day, or perhaps two or more of them had again engaged in some sort of sexual activity that morning. The shower schedule was out of sequence, as usual, but the unusually lengthy lull should have forewarned me that *something* was going on. Long, lingering leers over their bowls of the bulk boxed, cheap-o, major brand knock-off Coco Roos™, with its brown dye bleeding into a greasy-sheen layer and turning it into a swampy film that they would slurp up anyway. Cold cereal, toast and orange juice, a banana and an eerie aura started the day.

I had overlooked all the obvious signs. Unsuspecting of what was on their little minds. I thought about Daphne's Curriculum Skills sheet - - her problems with the fifth skill, REPORTING WHEREABOUTS, had seemed normal and workable and improvable. She had, after all, been the Bull Goose Juvey, and everyone al-

ways knew where she was. She exuded her presence, even while napping on the couch. If the vibe in the air did not demonstrate Daphne, there was no mistaking it. She was there during the morning that Friday, but more muted and quiet, a rare occurrence that I had welcomed and relished, savoring it while it lasted.

I had failed to notice all the indications. She had seemed distracted after school and paid little attention to her homework the night before. Daph lost PPPs for that. Amy had noted in the End-of-Day Report that Daphne was in her room during Study Hour and would only come out for a few minutes after Staff administered VERBAL ENCOURAGEMENT TO FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS. The report stated that San Diaz complained of menstrual cramps. Staff is aware of all resident's cycles, and therefore Amy concluded that Daphne was lying—or, in Raspberry River lingo, not STATING COMPLETE AND ACCURATE FACTS. Daphne had lost PPPs thusly.

I had missed all the details. I do remember thinking to myself, "She's put on a few pounds." Her legs seemed thicker; the disallowed logo Linville High School Class of 2002<sup>23</sup> sweatshirt she had donned for Football Friday was even more unflattering than usual, the furtive glances given to her compatriots and from her compatriots, the ones who had been privy to her

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<sup>23</sup> Linville High was the opposing team (and historically bitter rival) that night.

plans, a sinister and sneaky strategy as it was, the kids in cahoots with the Ruler of the Roost, Ms. Daphne Marie San Diaz, Bull Goose Juvey, Fair and Eminent Princess of the Raspberry River Residential Treatment Facility for Youth was on her way out.

I didn't put it all together. When she walked out the door on the short trek to the morning bus with the others, I saw a significant sign, a cuff of a different color, hanging out the left leg of her baggy jeans: a second pair of pants under her oversized L.E.I. hand-me-downs, and I just didn't put it all together until it was much too late and the afternoon bus had returned that Friday at 4:10 p.m. with no more than seven of the eight Raspberry River resident youths exiting, and I knew that I had overlooked all the signs, had failed to notice all the indications, had missed all the details. Seven of eight was not eight of eight and the huge, gaping gap was so utterly obvious that I immediately knew what had happened, what had gone wrong:

Daphne had run away.

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#### PERSONAL INFORMATION CODE AND RESIDENTS' PRIVACY RIGHTS

As an organization that prides itself on positive results, the HEALTH AND HUMAN AGENCY SERVICE (H.A.H.A.S.) understands the desire to protect personal information. We intend to inform you how your personal information will be gathered, tracked or used, and to give you choices. If choices are not offered on patient intake pages where your personal information is obtained, please select one of the COMMUNICATION CHANNELS listed at the bottom of your RESIDENT INTAKE STATEMENT to indicate

your communication preferences. This may be completed by your Social Worker, Welfare Worker, Legal Guardian, Parent, or Other, pending approval.

We have taken security measures, consistent with local, state and federal information practices to protect your personal information. These measures include technical, legal and procedural steps to protect your personal information from misuse, unauthorized access or disclosure, loss, alteration, indictment, or destruction.

Since RASPBERRY RIVER RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT CENTER FOR YOUTH is a partially state-funded facility, we do, at times, provide information to our regional and national offices. The personal information that you have provided to us may be transferred to other HEALTH AND HUMAN AGENCY SERVICE offices around the state in order to better serve your needs. For example, when Out-of-State referrals register, their personal information may be transferred to servers in the Resident's current State then transferred to servers in one or more of the HEALTH AND HUMAN AGENCY SERVICE's national offices. Also, in certain states our outside contractors might undertake the collection, transferring, storage and processing of your information.

We make a sincere effort to respond to your requests to update, protect, or correct your personal information. If you believe that the HEALTH AND HUMAN AGENCY SERVICE does not have your current personal information, you can update it through your Social Worker, Welfare Worker, Legal Guardian, Parent, or Other, pending approval, or use one of the other communication channels at the bottom of this statement. RASPBERRY RIVER RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT CENTER FOR YOUTH regards all resident's correspondences, personal documents including journals or diaries, health records, school records, treatment plan records, treatment progress records, or any other documentation as private and confidential, and cannot view, copy, reproduce, transmit, or have access in any way any of the above stated materials without written consent of the resident in treatment or his or her legal representation upon severe penalty of law, including termination of employment.

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I needed Daphne's diary. I had to find out who she was with, what she was doing, when she got there, where she was, and how she managed to get away.

Misuse, unauthorized access or disclosure, loss, alteration, destruction, viewing, copying, reproducing, transmitting,

or having access in any way of her diary was an infraction of the YOUTH HOME RESIDENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS & RULES; I knew that. But I also remembered the story K\_\_ had told me about the last runaway and how he went directly for the resident's diary. "Got the name, address and phone number of the guy she was screwing during the school lunch hour. It's against policy, but Staff won't rat on each other, and Admin looks away. It's the kid's Case Worker and civil lawyers you have to look out for. Damn JaCALs<sup>24</sup>."

I stormed into her room, rummaged for something—anything—to give me an idea of how to get her back and went drawer-by-drawer to find it. Underwear, t-shirts, socks, jeans, sweatshirts, towels, make-up, shampoo, toothpaste, deodorant, face wash, lotions; all became a flurry of sundries as I ripped through the mess to find what I needed to find. As I continued my hunt, some of the remaining five residents crept up to the room, peeking around me to try to see if I would snap and break protocol. To see if I would violate any of the thousands of rules that governed their lives and mine. To see if I would breach the trust I had earned between Daph and me by infringing on the only tangible right they felt they had here at Raspberry River: their right of privacy. I shooed them away, threatening PPP

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<sup>24</sup> Juvenal and Court Advocates & Litigators (JaCALs), civil rights attorneys who would sue everyone and everything.

fines, and sent them scurrying, each of us contemplating the concept of their sacred diary and all it represented: humanity, honor, individuality, and independence—it was the only thing that they had full control over. Since the residents always spilled their guts to the Staff, Social Worker, Custodian, parents, case worker, and on-site psychologist, we offered them the right to keep a journal. We figured that we would find out everything anyway, and that this device, this method, this *prop* to occupy their time, would give them that sense of space to themselves, a sense of tranquility through being free from worry that whatever they put in there was theirs and theirs alone. I slid the diary between my back and my belt.

I returned to the Youth Recreation Area to interrogate the residents, Daphne's journal hidden. "Where did Daphne go?" I demanded. "Where is her diary?" I lied. They were quiet and sullen, their eyes twitching and betrayed, mouths mad and scared and disillusioned, hands kneading and anxious and trembling and excited. Two of the youth stood facing me; one sat on the couch with legs drawn underneath crossed arms, chin resting on knees; one was looking out the large reinforced-glass picture window that overlooked the front yard; the fifth was not in sight. "Where did Daphne go?" I barked.

"Who?" asked the OPPOSITIONAL/DEFIANT.

"Yeah, who's this Daphne of whom you speak? We'd love to

help," added the PASSIVE/AGGRESSIVE.

"Maybe she's getting *laid*," sighed the PROMISCUOUS/LOW SELF-ESTEEM, and guffawed. The ANOREXIC/INTROVERT giggled softly in accord. I felt my face flushing in fixed fury. I sought assistance from the wrong source. Looking for the TRUANT/ACADEMIC UNDER-ACHIEVER, who is usually obliging in order to get out of doing required tasks, I went into the kitchen, but instead called support staff and the school on my cell phone.

School staff said that they'd not seen her, but would ask attending faculty to monitor the football game that night. In the meantime, the custodial crew would check the campus while completing their duties. Other than that, it was a waiting game. Historically, runaways come back, especially when they get hungry, cold, tired, and/or bored. But I was impatient. I was angry. I was deceived. I had gotten her the Depro shot. I had given her ample leeway, tried to make her happy. Bent some rules, fostered some improvement.

I was determined to go out and search for her and bring her back home.

■ ■ ■

I left Daphne's diary on the countertop. I took the Taurus and drove toward town, noticing that her bedroom curtains were closed as I backed out. That would be a loss of PPP's for FOLLOW-



ING INSTRUCTIONS AND RULES. It wasn't a really big deal, but it could certainly be justified when looking for as many ways to keep any residents at low points and punish them by proxy. It was going on dinner time, and Amy with the help of K\_\_ minded the remaining group<sup>25</sup> while I went away to find Daphne. September was temperate and mild—not too cold if she were outdoors without a jacket, but my worry was about nighttime and how the temperature dipped to the low 40's. As I had seen that morning, she'd worn two pairs of jeans and the Linville sweatshirt, appropriate for daytime temperatures.

She was probably at someone's home, I hoped, tucked away in the furnished basement or attic-nest-bedroom of a classmate (hopefully female), watching movies or on internet chat rooms with pop music playing in the background and pizza by delivery. Popcorn and Pepsi, gossip and giggles, teenagers and talk of tongue rings.

Driving into town from the west, I skimmed along the outskirts of the nicer homes, the more affluent part of town, foolishly thinking that she might be among the upper echelon, which

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<sup>25</sup> On weekends, residents of a higher BEHAVIORAL MANAGEMENT CONTROL STATUS who score high on their PPPs would get weekend trips to their parents' home, foster home, or any similar approved location from Friday until Sunday. K\_\_ usually asked for the TRANSPORTS on his weekend shifts, as this duty allowed him the freedom to drive, smoke, run errands, goof around, or anything else he wanted to do. Upon departure, the Staff were given the Taurus keys, a Marathon credit card, a Raspberry River Residential Treatment Facility for Youth cell phone, and an \$8 meal stipend payable upon presentation of receipt(s).

she had somehow charmed her way into some rich kid's heart and subsequently, her home. Maybe they were playing basketball, shooting hoops in the waning sun, smiling and getting good, fresh air and exercise, the mother cooking a pot roast and potatoes with Daphne's favorite creamed corn and dinner rolls and mashed potatoes all served on Pfaltzgraff plates. They would talk about their days and their summer vacation plans to some theme park somewhere, sit down to eat supper, and, when finished, Daph would volunteer to clear the table and she and her new friend would talk about boys and rock bands and how they hated English class and what colors were "in" this season.

As I drove, I re-envisioned her diary. The single entry, a scribbled note really, about a "Donny" gave not much other detail than the name. The diary was of no use. The sun was setting, the light diffusing, and I needed to find her. No one had called the cell phone.

The middle-class division of town was north and east. These houses were nestled in neighborhoods aside from the main throughways, apart from the business district. Most residences had driveway and porch lights on, and seemed still and waiting for occupants to return. Closer to the high school, the roar of the football game surged and ebbed, tide-like; the game was a long traditional battle between the two towns, like Capulet and Montague, and the boisterous cheers seasoned the air with a fer-

vor that was almost tangible. Houses along these streets displayed hometown team streamers from their eaves and porches, a light breeze lifting them to lilt and swell with the cheers: to and fro, to and fro. I imagined Daphne hanging these in the early afternoon, along with the...I squinted and leaned forward to read the nameplate on the nearest house's mailbox...Habermehl family, handing tacks and tape and nails to each other, positioning the banners and flags, just like the day she hung the misspelled WELCOME NEIGHBORS sign in the group home, teetering on a ladder and smiling and laughing and hopping off at the call of dinner, tuna casserole with peas on Fiesta dinnerware, and washing hands and chattering about the football game and how good or bad the cheerleaders look in their hair and makeup.

There was no sign of her. All light had dissipated. Crossing the north-south Amtrak line, I scanned the rougher, dingier vicinity with its shoddily-sided houses and unkempt lawns. Street lights wavered in intensity, dogs barked continuously, and the air had an uneasy feel to it, intangible and indescribable; a thick, oily gas stench hung over the houses, the autumn air unable to disperse it. Unmuffled cars passed by, drivers suspiciously watching me, speeding up and spewing smoky exhaust and louder noise. Porch lights were mostly dark or dim or cast an ominous hue, unwelcoming and uninviting. Daphne's dinner would be cut-up hot dogs in macaroni and cheese, plopped

on Melmac saucers and served with a sneer, saccharine soda, all without dessert. Cigarette smoke would hang a haze over her and her friend, they would sneak butts from a pack perched on the PlayStation, the adult too drunk or preoccupied to notice, and the children would slink into a clandestine location, looking over their shoulders, not caring who was playing football, what the cheerleaders were wearing, when biology class was going to have a test, where the girl's mousey, bookish little sister was, or why the hostess's mother was wearing a big, clunky thingy on her ankle that made quiet beeps and flashed a small red light.

The houses and street lights became more intermittent as the road continued southward into an area populated by spruce and pine trees. Narrow roads trickled off into dark and dense wooded areas, perfect parking places for teens trying to find and feel love. Maybe Daphne was parking with Donny, flushed and breathing deeply, yearning to feel him, to relish the touch, to experience intimacy and closeness and understanding, to unhook her bra herself because he fumbled too much, too eagerly and without coordination or compassion, she wanted to sense something physical because emotionally and psychologically and spiritually she was vacant, it was vacuous of a life worthy of her much-too-young 13½ years, and she certainly couldn't get anything from a court-ordered residential treatment facility, from staff supposedly trained in universities and seminars and

workshops and continuing education programs; community outreach could never grasp the magnitude of the problems kids like Daphne had had dumped on them, so they put them on public assistance payrolls and piously pray for their souls.

It doesn't work like that. Kids run away. Literally or figuratively; psychologically or emotionally, they flee and never return to what they were or what they could be. Anything they wanted to be or could have been is lost, gone, a faint memory and an ideal never realized. Group homes *change* kids. They're never the same. They feel betrayed by their parents, handed over by their families and the social system, let down by their peers and teachers, sense they're inferior to others, and feel as if they don't belong even among the other residents. Once a child goes through that isolation, that stigmatization, that abandonment, it is hard to change them back. Once they are cast away as rejects, it is impossible to convince them otherwise. Once a cucumber is pickled, it can never change back. The vinegar soaks in and saturates to the center; it corrupts to the core.

■ ■ ■

With the Taurus parked near a convenience store, I reached for the antacids I kept in the ashtray. Sufficient time had lapsed since my last dose, but I never paid much attention to

the product label warnings; they were just product disclaimers and only absolved liability. I chewed six, two-by-two, and called the school number to see if they had had any contact or sightings. I got a recording that provided an "emergency-only" number to call, a cell number linked to the vice principal. I thought about buying a pack of cigarettes, filtered Camels, but decided I could wait. After several rings, the forwarding phone number got me to a very young girl who answered amidst a rather loud crowd, a clamor presumably at the football game. "May I speak to Vice Principal Simon?" "Daddy, it's for you," she chimed. She—her voice, rather—seemed so happy, so healthy, so well cared for. I pictured her having been raised in a nuclear family setting, complete with husband, wife, two cars, 20-year mortgage at a low and fixed rate, with Brady Bunch bedrooms and Malcolm in the Middle melodramas. She seemed so at ease, so wholesome, so nurtured. So loved.

"Yello?" It was Simon, the vice principal. M.Ed. (1999), State U. With five years teaching, three years admin, first year Vice Prez. Salaried at \$55k and waiting for the next higher-up to retire. He answered with a well-practiced, well-oiled, administrative, polished and professional \$55,000 smile - I could hear it.

"It's Alan calling from Raspberry River. Hope you're having a good evening."

His voice firmed, the smile had fallen and flattened. He was never very helpful to us, and had I called him on a Friday night. During The Big Game. I had irritated him. He was bothered. Annoyed. Interrupted. "Yes. What can I do for you, Alan?"

"I have a missing resident. Daphne Marie San Diaz. She didn't report back to the group home. It's late."

"Doesn't your program have a weekend release or something? Perhaps she's gone to a foster home." Smug. Bastard.

"No. She didn't earn enough PPPs. She's not advanced enough to go anywhere. She's still got to direct her emotional and behavioral control."

Simon let out a deep, perturbed sigh. "I don't know how you people can keep those kids in..." He stopped himself, and I knew what he was thinking. I knew he hated having discordant delinquents in his precious school. He didn't have to say what I knew was scurrying through his little rodent brain. *They're budding criminals. Menaces to society. Threats to the social order, and troublemakers. Rabble-rousers, scalawags, pests, varmints, scum. They are rotten. And if you let one get away, it's your problem. We're not responsible for them after 3:15 p.m.* "We have no control over students after they leave school grounds," he reminded me. "Our jurisdiction dissolves at the bell, and dissolves as soon as they are off the school grounds."

A pause and then a surge of raucous cheers distorted the

cell phone signal. People were applauding and cheering and whistling. I thought I heard his wife shouting for joy. His daughter said "We're *winning*, Daddy!" and squealed. The sound from the stadium traversed across town and caught up with where I was parked, miles away. The game was unquestionably exciting, captivating the contentious audiences and keeping them together. A contest, a diversion that everyone there could share and feel unified. Their Friday night excite kept them collectively and molded them en masse. They were all a family.

"If there is anything else I can do for you, Mr. Evans..." said disingenuously, coldly, impolitely polite, a frigid farewell followed by the sound of a riotous crowd concurring.

I at once felt like an outcast. A scourge. A disruption to the social order. I was imposing on his precious time for reasons he did not care about, could not understand, and would not accept. I was a keeper of crud, a custodian of chaotic kids, and I was sullyng his Friday revelry. I shut the cell phone and started the car.

■ ■ ■

K\_\_ was in the kitchen, the too-bright overhead light illuminating the spotlessly clean and chipped countertop, scratched and notched and stained from years of hapless and hopeless youth scrubbing extra hard to try to earn a few extra points; it was



over-bleached and reeking from the extra chores assigned to the remaining residents in order to occupy their minds and divert them from bolting themselves. This runaway incident was an opportune moment to do so, as the staff was worn as thin as the countertops themselves from overwork, underpay, and the unforeseen circumstances of their dearly departed queen Daphne.

K\_\_'d locked the runts down early—it was a little after eight, and Friday nights were Board Game Nights for any youth who hadn't gone away for their visitation weekend. But runaways inspire runaways; it can be highly contagious, and this group was certainly not immune to the virus despite their general petulant passivity. He had three forms in front of him on the countertop, neatly aligned next to each other, and a half-full pot of pungent coffee quietly clicking and ticking. I looked at the partially completed documents: a TRANSPORT LOG, an INCIDENT REPORT, and a portentous document entitled, EMPLOYEE REPORTING A RIFT OF RULES (ERROR). In his hand he held a copy of the PERSONAL INFORMATION CODE AND RESIDENTS' PRIVACY RIGHTS, and next to his half-empty coffee cup was Daphne's diary, surely meant to be evidence exhibit A. K\_\_ was beaming.

■ ■ ■

"Alan. Glad you're here. I need your signature."

"Is she here?"

"No. My shift is over at nine, and then I have to file these forms at the Administrative office—"

"Fuck off."

"—and file some paperwork. Now, now, Alan. Tisk, tisk."

"Where the fuck is she?"

"My, my, Alan, *that* was inappropriate. That was a *violation* of rule number thirty-five of the RESIDENTIAL YOUTH LIFE AND EXISTENCE SKILLS, APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE. Another detail to add into this rather lengthy ERROR report I've filled out." He took a pen from his pocket, looked down at the form, and in a stage-voice said, "Staff used foul language and was HYPER-IRRITATED. There. And, oh, I have to write out that your selection of INAPPROPRIATE LANGUAGE—"

"Is she here?"

"—shows we need to do some CORRECTIVE TEACHING."

"What the fuck is there an ERROR form doing there?"

"I see that you're upset, Alan, but your foul language continues to be inappropriate—"

"And her diary? Give it to me!"

"The appropriate thing to do is to *ask for permission* to see a resident youth's diary—"

"You sonofabitch. This is about the promotion, isn't it?"

"And complete the required forms. However, you did *not*."

"She wasn't *here*, goddamnit!"

"—but instead you *violated* her *privacy*. That is against the *rules*. She trusted you. Raspberry River trusted you. But you *violated* that trust. Do you think the review committee will recommend you for the raise with this in your file? No. No, no. Hey, come back here. She's not in her room, so you can quit looking. You *broke* the *rules*. And now you must have *consequences*—"

▪     ▪     ▪

*All I wanted was a job. All I wanted was to help people. All I wanted was someone to care for. All I wanted was a promotion. All I wanted was to be complete.*

▪     ▪     ▪

At nine that night, K\_\_ left and took the forms with him. I had acquiesced. I had signed them.

Amy's overnight shift started and she just left me alone in the kitchen, alone at the counter, coffeemaker quietly clicking and ticking, while the stillness settled like dust on a settles on a museum painting, ominous and omnipresent. The silence drifted over and covered everything, enclosing itself around all: occasionally came the sound of an odd noise here, the sound of an even noise there. I could hear the second hand on the activity room clock creep over its numbers, a steady pro-

gression of time and distance—distance between the residents and me, distance between the ramparts of the Raspberry River Residential Treatment Center for Youth and the outside world, the space between me any hope of a promotion, and the vast void between Daphne and the safety of the group home.

I was furious. I sat and silently seethed, eating TUMS two-at-a-time from the commercial-sized tub donated by the manufacturer, the barrel-sized container that we kept in the lounge to allow easy access for all. Its ingredients churned inside my belly, swirling into an amalgamation of soothing sucrose, calcium carbonate, corn starch, talc, mineral oil, natural and artificial flavors, adipic acid, sodium polyphosphate, and yellow #5 working together in gastric harmony to ease my irritated guts. I was sinking deeper into sadness and anger: sadness from seeing that the little girl's life would/could only get way worse, no matter where she was or where she would be, how she would end up or the way she would grow up, despite my best efforts, and fury from the traitorous tactics accomplished by the under-handed, backstabbing villain; I would undoubtedly be unable to dig out of the hole I had created, and useless anger was running and spinning around.

Meanwhile, Amy just let me sit there, in the kitchen, alone, for two hours; the remaining residents were nestled all snug in their beds, while visions of freedom, success, and a

normal life danced in their heads. She moved about the facility quietly, prepping morning meds and preparing activities for the Saturday residents who weren't on leave, finding activity sheets for the following morning to occupy their time until we got Daphne back. I just sat and ate more TUMS.

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From: <http://nrscrisisline.org>

#### **WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN MY CHILD RETURNS HOME?**

**Be happy he or she returned home.** While you may be understandably very upset with him, let your first words be calm and welcoming. Many teens stay away from home because they are afraid of the initial confrontation with their parents when they return. Take a very long, deep breath and tell him that you are relieved to have him/her home.

**Allow time to settle in.** Most runaways have not had the luxury of consistent access to food or shelter while they were on the run. Perhaps she needs a shower, a meal, a clean set of clothes or good night's sleep on his or her own bed.

**Get medical attention, if necessary.** A visit to your family doctor might be in order.

Talk with your teen. Concentrate on how you can work together to prevent any repeat running away behavior. Acknowledge that some problems take a lot of time and effort to improve. Make a commitment to finding a safe and reasonable resolution to the current problems and situations.

**Make follow-up phone calls** to anyone you contacted while he was on the run. Let friends and family know that he has returned home. Call the police to let them know that he or she is no longer missing.

**Look for assistance.** There are people and places in your community that can help your family.

**Counseling is helpful to everyone.** Asking for help is a sign of strength and shows that you are taking the issues seriously.

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The police came and left on Saturday afternoon. I was in the basement break room, dozing in and out, murkily reviewing the "WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN MY CHILD RETURNS HOME?" steps to take for when Daphne would return home. They were on a brochure printed off the internet. I faintly heard questions about clothing and hair color and ethnicity and weight and if she had any distinguishable markings. Amy had handed over Daphne's file to the older-voiced officer, a quiet and reserved man who had been to Raspberry River a few times before<sup>26</sup> for low-staffed violent outbursts that the residents would sometimes have.

Amy came down to file Police Visitation forms and update me on the status. Nothing was new. We agreed that she would take the evening shift if I would put in the overnight shift while she stayed downstairs. Whether we could get overtime pay was uncertain, because once an ERROR report was filed, HR had to be contacted immediately in case there was a suspension of pay. And since K\_\_ filed the report on Friday night, no one in Admin was around to read it or process it or even know about it.

The remaining youth asked questions and voiced concerns; whether they were morbidly fascinated by their hero's daring es-

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<sup>26</sup> He once handcuffed a kid and that single act immediately set the little rat straight - he propelled through the program and followed his case worker's advice to the letter, which got him a favorable discharge in the matter of six months, as opposed to the typical nine to twelve. He had benefited more from that simple snap of the cuffs than any behavioral/ psychological group home setting could or ever would have done.

cape or possibly (gasp!) *actually concerned*, it was difficult to tell. One. Both. Neither. Whatever. Shudder to think. As was typical in their tumultuous little existences, their lives were disrupted by someone else's fuckup, and the evening's recreational activities got cut short. Amy had put them in their rooms by 8:15. She brought a clipboard with the Staff Change of Shift Sheet, already filled out and ready for my signature. The PPP's on their daily log were inflated with reward points for not making too much of a fuss about Daphne's Dash, and she doled out many other rewards for being considerably compliant. After finishing the paperwork (as Carr said in *Cool Hand Luke*, "...one in the bush...") Aimers then bid goodnight and told me to wake her if I needed anything. Obviously exhausted, she sighed on her way downstairs and closed the door behind her.

A noiseless autumn drizzle began, cooling and crisping and cleaning the air, clinging to any and all fall pollens and wind-swept dusts still hovering in the air, pulling them down into the muddy muck and into the mulch left from the lifeless leaves fallen from the trees, to be raked and swept and cleared away, unwanted and useless, rejected products of their parent trees, simply cast away, left to die and rot all alone.

I sat on a couch in the living/ recreation room and watched the glass glaze with the sprinkling mist. The shift lasted for nine hours; I studied the steps of the online pamphlet WHAT

SHOULD I DO WHEN MY CHILD RETURNS HOME? that was clasped to my clipboard. I soon dozed off again and fell into a slumber full of infinitesimal fits and tiny twitches, moving and jerking while filmy images of Denise, an apron around her waist, tended to a pot roast and creamed corn with mashed potatoes and dinner rolls, a dinner ready to be served on Pfaltzgraff plates at the Raspberry River Residential Treatment Center for Youth's main dinner table. Soft and lyricless Ani DiFranco music played, muddled but melodic, and drifted down the chimney. Denise sat at the side of the table, smartly dressed, smiling broadly. At the head of the table was an empty plate, and in front of it was a pineapple birthday cake adorned with an array of TUMS, lemon-yellow frosting, and fourteen pap-smear swab sticks, brightly lit, burning quickly, and ready to be blown out.

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"My stomach hurts," Daphne said. She was hovering over me, dripping and stinking of cigarettes and alcohol. "I'm sick."

After some blinking, I slid my elbow under myself to look. "Daphne?"

"Sleeping on the job?" she asked. With a guffaw. "Can't you get fired for that or something?"

"Where have you been?"



She plopped down on the floor, sitting down as her shoes squished and squeaked against the hardwood. She shimmied up toward me, her Linville High sweatshirt hung from her five-foot four-inch frame, drooping down, the sleeves too long and extending down past her hands. Her hair was: sodden and drippy. Her face showed: anxiety and fear; remorse, relief and tension. She was: back and alive; intact and in trouble.

*(Be happy he or she returned home)*

I sat up from the couch, still blinking, thinking of the pamphlet and the first thing to do. *While you may be understandably very upset with him, let your first words be calm and welcoming.*

"Daphne?"

"Oh, just got out of Raspberry Riv for a bit. But now I'm back. No big deal."

"Where the fuck have you been?"

"Huh?" Daphne's bearing began to exhibit more pronounced symptoms of ANTICIPATORY ANXIETY. She exhibited an ACCELERATED HEART RATE by way of FACIAL FLUSHING; her pupils surely began to DILATE, but it was too dark to see her eyes. "I-I j-just took some time off. Geeez. I've split for a while from every other place. And at least some of those dumps let me out. Not like this pl—"

"Did you have any goddamn idea what you were doing?" I stood up; she cringed. My voice was much louder than I ex-

pected. "What have you been *doing*?" Daphne, aghast, started backing away, scooting her hips and treading on her hands. I threw the clipboard across the room, accenting my question. It clattered over the wood floor and slid to an abrupt stop.

"I - I--"

She looked terrified, and that was sickeningly secretly satisfying and overwhelmingly appalling. Her eyes began to swell and she started swallowing repeatedly. I slithered toward her, I towered over her. I saw Daphne's RESPIRATION had increased TO BORDERLINE HYPERVENTILATION. She stopped her crab-scramper, her hands moved up toward her face, in a DEFENSIVE POSITION, at chest-level, palms outward, fingers extended, shaking from the fear coming from her center.

"I came back! Chill out! I came back! See?" I didn't hear her. I saw bright electric bolts and a quivering mass, a thoughtless and thankless troublemaker, a rabble-rouser running around and spreading disease and disorder, a scalawag who knew no better than to suck its parasitic livelihood from all who didn't care and all who tried to help it. "Please, Alan! Don't!" The Bull Goose Juvey had no more insolence now. She stated this status right away, and how quickly I lost control.

I loomed over this little nuisance, raising my hand back, tasting vile vinegar in my mouth; I was priming to swat the insect, to wallop the pest, ready to really rule the roost, rais-

ing my hand back to smack the despicable wretch into gratitude and compliance and comprehension and normalcy. The ingrate begged and backed up against the front door, the door that was supposed to house and help even the lowest of the helpless; without saying a word I swooped down and slapped her sharply, briskly, squarely on her left cheek, the top part of my palm and fingertips instantly stinging with sweet and sickening satisfaction; the girl's tightly contained little squeak ejected upon impact, a yelp likely heard from a mortally wounded animal, a squeal that was immediately followed by a piercing chorus of buzzers, a kind of choir of caution, launched from the instant alarms affixed to the resident youth's bedroom doors; they sounded out with a great resonance, followed by the flash of the motion-sensor hall light, illuminating me and my victim in a bright and inescapable spotlight, and I was blazing under the intensely glaring eyes of Daphne's saviors. This broke me free from my fury. From their rooms, the remaining residents of the Raspberry River Residential Treatment Center for Youth stood at their doors, rebellious and bold, forgetting their OPPOSITIONAL/DEFIANT, PASSIVE/AGGRESSIVE, PROMISCUOUS/ LOW SELF-ESTEEM, and TRUANT/ ACADEMIC UNDERACHIEVER-labeled conditions, ranks and positions, and they had quickly come to the defense of their kindred.

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Amy had been watching the whole thing from her bunker, the stairwell that led to the basement. She shoed the youth back to their rooms and promised them PRIVILEGE PASS POINTS for many, many things if they would only comply with her request to get back to bed. Points promised were for FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS AND RULES by keeping themselves in their rooms' proximity and returning into them while she attended to the situation; SHOWING RESPECT by ignoring what they had seen and not getting involved; SHOWING SENSITIVITY to the situation when they kept their mouths closed about what they *thought* had happened; COOPERATION with Staff by not jumping to conclusion and succumbing to conjecture; the LEADERSHIP ROLE of not reporting any of this to Administration; preserving SELF-CARE by keeping a weary distance form the dangers of thinking that they knew what had happened and telling their Counselors about it; TAKING INITIATIVE and acting/ reacting if another youth talked about telling anything to others; implementing IMPULSE CONTROL and resisting the urge to speak up and become involved; having ANGER CONTROL and not going berserk and keeping their understandably negative feelings at bay; and MAINTAINING APPROPRIATE BOUNDARIES by way of keeping away from it all.

The kids corralled themselves into their rooms and I disarmed the alarms, which were still sounding and by then seemingly hoarse. Amy and I exchanged flat-smiled, "Oh no" looks while she took Daphne downstairs

*(Allow time to settle in)*

to the staff bathroom to clean her up. After the herd returned to their respective corrals, I started to reset the bedroom alarms, but somehow it seemed that the siren kept ringing.

I finished resetting the alarms and scanned the living room. Daphne's footprints marked the floor, and my first thought was that they needed to be mopped up. To make like it all never happened. I was sure the youth would be awake for a long while, and I had plenty of paperwork to do. I called the police

*(Make follow-up phone calls)*

and informed them that Daphne was back and in the custodial care of the Raspberry River Residential Treatment Center for Youth. I started coming down from the surge of adrenaline, but a amplified wobble plagued my steps and coordination. My stomach felt lava-filled and felt like it would be unreceptive to anything, much less over-the-counter antacids. But I grabbed the commercial-sized tub of antacids, opened the lid and peered inside. It was nearly empty, save for a few of the lemon-flavored ones. Sucrose, calcium carbonate, corn starch, talc, mineral oil, natural and artificial flavors, adipic acid, sodium polyphosphate, yellow #5. I shook four into my palm and pushed them two-by-two into my parched mouth and rinsed them down with cold coffee.

I hid in the kitchen while Amy brought Daphne upstairs and to her room. I only heard feet padding; her shoes were surely ruined. I took the medicine closet key from my ring and placed it on the counter, next to a reminder note I wrote to make an appointment with Dr. Shankar

*(Get medical attention, if necessary)*

and stood still for several minutes. Amy came back and I told her I was leaving. She asked if I meant for the day or forever. I told her forever. She asked me what I wanted her to do. She said that it would be difficult to believe the youths' words over ours. Kids sometimes gang up on staff and tell lies to try to get them fired. Admin was aware of this. She said that I was too good a staff member to lose. She said that it had been a stressful situation, and that she didn't think I had overstepped any rules or boundaries as far as she saw. She said she could fix it, blame the handprint on the guy she ran off with. I stood silent. Again, she implored "What do you want me to do? I can make it all okay."

I watched her, saddened, and sighed.

*(Look for assistance)*

She was of no use. I wanted to tell her it wouldn't work like that. Kids will always run away. Literally or figuratively; psychologically or emotionally, they flee and never return to what they were or what they could be. After living the lives

that they've had, after having to live in a group home, anything they wanted to be or could have been is lost, gone, a faint memory and an ideal impossible to realize. They've been abandoned and told either directly or indirectly that they're unwanted, useless, garbage. Group homes *change* kids. They'll never be the same. They feel betrayed by their parents, handed over by their families and the social system, let down by their peers and teachers...they sense they're inferior to others, and feel as if they don't belong even among the other residents. And group homes change the people who work in them.

*(Counseling is helpful to everyone)*

And people on staff get tired and burned out and frustrated and angry and lose control. No matter if counseling is available or not. They get pickled. Then there comes a point when it's no longer in the child's best interest to have a pickled person trying to show her a better life, a healthy way of living. It isolates them from anything positive from that person. And once a child or someone trying to help them goes through that isolation, that stigmatization, that abandonment, it is so hard to change her back. Once they are cast away as rejects, it is impossible to convince them otherwise. Once a cucumber is pickled, it can never change back. The vinegar soaks in and saturates the center, it corrupts to the core.

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I patted Amy's hand, feigned a smile, and said goodbye as I walked out the front doors of the Raspberry River Residential Treatment Center for Youth. I was leaving it all to itself, for better or worse. I didn't want to end up like K\_\_ or Amy or Daphne or some asshole Administrator. I left because it would never be any good if I stayed. I was pickled, and my work there was done.

I walked out the door and down the driveway, keys readied in my still-stinging hand. The drizzle had stopped and the half-full moon illuminated the long walk. I was exhausted. While unlocking my car, I noticed the curtain shift slightly from the right to the left, and then quickly close, in Daphne's bedroom window.