

Angry Man - by I. Penelope Skinner.

where it all begins...

Roger talks to the audience.

Do you ever do that thing where you think to yourself
I should really go for a run
so you look out the window
but hmm. That sky looks kind of *ominous*. Doesn't it? So you pick up your phone to
check the weather
see if it's going to rain
but when you look at your phone you've got a message or an email so you
open the message or the email and it contains like
a link to an article or whatever so you click on it and you read it and it's interesting
enough to keep you reading to the end so you read to the end and then at the bottom of the page
you see another link and this one is like
'you're not gonna *believe* what they found when they cut open this giant snake' and
you're like well ok *that* I've gotta read so you read it and then next to *that* article is a photograph
of a celebrity on the beach that you need to take a closer look at so you do and so on and so on
and eventually
you realize time has sort of
and it's forty minutes later and you put your phone down and wonder what you were
doing and remember you were going to go for a run but when you look outside it's raining so
why am I telling you that? Oh right. Because that
is exactly how I first find Alan. Which when I think about it
is where it all begins. It's Monday morning and just to provide you with some context
on this particular Monday morning
things are what I would consider to be
normal. Not the old normal. The old normal is long gone. On a Monday morning
Roger-from-before would be getting in his fancy car and heading into the office. But
what you're looking at here is Roger-Now. And Roger-Now is the third assistant store manager
in the Walnut Creek Safeway and he doesn't work Mondays and if you're wondering what the
third assistant store manager does
you know when you have to bring something back to the store and you're complaining to
the checker? And she's not dealing with your complaint to your satisfaction so you say
'I'd like to see the manager'? The guy who comes along at that point? It's not the actual
store manager just so you know. His name is Tim and he's sitting up in his fancy glass office on
the second floor. We actually went to high school together which is how I got this job. But that's
a whole nother story. Point is you don't need to worry about Tim because you never meet Tim.
See? But me? Sure. I'm the guy who comes to help. I'm not in a suit I'm in a shirt and tie and
I've got a badge and it says my name is Roger and I'm happy to help. And apparently it also
says: I'm a guy you can yell at. Sometimes if you're mad enough you can threaten me with
physical violence. But I'll just offer you a refund and tell you I'm very sorry and I hope you'll
continue to choose Safeway for all your shopping needs. Because that's store policy and I know

better than to go up against store policy. Where am I going with this? Oh right. I'm at the beginning. And it's Monday morning
and I'm awake early and I'm considering exercising when I fall into your average google vortex but this time
instead of forty minutes of pointless surfing
I end up watching a video about history
which is kind of amazing
so I watch it again. Then I click on a link underneath to the man who uploaded it. He calls himself Angry Alan. And he's a pioneer of something they call The Men's Rights Movement. Have you heard of that? Apparently what it is is it's a natural evolution from the women's movement because basically:
in a nutshell: since feminism was so successful
things have gone too far the other way. We're now living in a 'Gynocentric Society' and now
now it's like Beyonce says: Who runs the world? Women. And because of this
ordinary men are really beginning to suffer. And Alan doesn't just say these things: he backs it up with evidence. Statistics. Data. He's got his own website. Angry Alan dot com. He's got his own Youtube Channel. Angry Alan TV. And before I know it I'm reading more and more
I spend five hours reading
and watching videos about men's rights and at certain points I'm vaguely aware of Courtney coming in going 'what are you doing?' and I'm like
'reading' and she's like 'what are you reading?' and I keep reading and she's like 'what are you reading?' and I keep reading and she says 'You know Roger
your ability to ignore the sound of my voice is so offensively patriarchal' and I keep reading and she's like 'ROGER' and I'm like 'what?' and she's like 'Jesus Christ. Never mind. I'm making a sandwich then I'm going to Melissa's' and I'm like
'ok sure I'll take a sandwich. Thanks' and I keep on reading and watching videos and at some point
I'm not sure exactly when but at a certain point I find myself
up on my feet
in the bedroom
and something incredible happens and the best way I can describe it is like this:

A red light flashes and an alarm sounds. Roger is in a state of rapture.

This is what they call: my red pill moment!

The light/alarm stops.

Because for the first time in a really long time I feel like someone is speaking to me in a language which I completely understand and for the first time in a really
really long time I feel like someone is saying something which makes me feel
like
good about myself. Because you know
I haven't felt good for a while. And I mean maybe

years. And I can say that now. Because one of the first things Alan talks about is that in our society

men aren't allowed to talk about their feelings. It's so hard for us men to say things like: hey. I'm Roger. I feel like I could have done so much more with my life. I feel inadequate. I feel like a failure. And until this morning

I didn't even know that's what I was feeling. I thought maybe I had bowel cancer? Because I've also been reading a lot of medical websites? And I had a lot of the symptoms. Of a lot of different diseases. Most of em. Actually. But now I realize this pain in my gut and the fatigue and the rage I sometimes feel is the result of the toxicity of my own history and the bearing of the burden of my own suffering for all these years without ever acknowledging its legitimacy or even worse

blaming myself for it. But in this moment
here in my bedroom on a Monday morning in May
with the sound of the rain on the window I start to learn
thanks to Alan
that maybe it's not actually all my fault. It's like
it's like

I've been living in a cage, right? I'm like a man who's been living in a cage but he didn't know it. He was unhappy. And the reason he was unhappy was because of the cage. But he didn't know about the cage. So he didn't know why he was unhappy. And when I take the red pill it doesn't solve the problem. I'm still in the cage. But at least I *know* about the cage. And *realizing* that I'm in a cage. Is like

so liberating
that I make a decision: I say to myself these exact words: out loud I say:
'Things are going to change around here'.
And once I've said it
there's no going back.

ARE MEN GREAT OR GOOD VIDEO

I text the video link to Joe. My son?

Me

www.angryalan.com/aremengreatorgood.av

He lives with my ex-wife. And I haven't seen him for about eight months or something because he's supposedly having this 'rough time' but no one will tell me what it's about? So I text him the link. I want to make sure

whatever he's going through

I just want him to know: you're intrinsically good, son. *We're* good and we're brave and we're clever and people just like us have done some pretty awesome things and don't you ever let anyone make you feel like you're not worth something just because you're a *man*. Of course I don't say that in my text I just send him the link. But I think he'll get the message.

II.

fish tacos

So the next significant event
is probably this evening a few weeks later when Courtney makes fish tacos. Not because
of the tacos themselves which are
like much of Courtney's cooking
fairly unremarkable

but because this is when I first find out about the conference. I've signed up to a couple
of men's rights mailing lists and as a result I've been getting a lot of emails. In fact I haven't had
so many emails since I was at A T&T. And it's keeping me quite busy. Which is why I'm on my
phone during dinner

and I'm just about to open my last unread email when Courtney takes a big bite of taco
and turns to me and says 'Are you fucking someone else?'

Courtney can be quite crude by the way so I apologize but this is what she does she takes
a big bite of taco and then turns to me and says: Are you fucking someone else? And I say what?
And she says

and it's quite hard to understand because her mouth is full plus I'm distracted by the large
smear of guacamole on her cheek but I'm pretty sure she says:

'When Georgette Peterson's husband Arnie started sleeping with that skinny girl from the
thrift store she said one of the first signs was how much time he suddenly spent on his cellphone.
So I'm asking you Roger: are you fucking someone else?' and I laugh

because

well first of all because I quite like the idea that I could be fucking someone else
and I don't immediately want to rule it out as an imaginary possibility

but also because I'm relieved that I'm not fucking someone else but instead not only have
an innocent explanation for the amount of time I've been spending on my phone

but also a reason of such immense political importance and value. And I say no Courtney
I'm not fucking someone else

I'm changing the world. And she says you are?

And so I explain to her about Alan. They don't teach Men's Rights at the Community
College by the way which is why Courtney's not aware of the movement. She actually only
discovered feminism last year when she signed up for her Women's Studies Course. And it's
been very inspiring for her. But I also think it's a big part of why Alan has been such a breath of
fresh air for me. I kind of knew

this whole time

that there was something not quite right about the things she's been coming out with?
Like all these factoids about how bad things 'still are' for women? Alan debunks a lot of them on
his website. So I run through the basics for Courtney. I teach her about gynocentric sexism.
About how men are raised to value women's feelings over our own. How we're taught early on
that our only worth as human beings lies in being financial providers. And I'm just explaining
how women have been exploiting this for years when Courtney starts smiling. And I say 'is
something funny?' And she goes 'What's this about, Roger? Is this about me going to the
Community College?' and I say 'No. What? What are you talking about? And she says 'ok then'
and she gets up and starts clearing the plates and I'm like 'Are you not even the slightest bit

interested?' And she says 'Nope. Not really. Sounds kinda dumb' and off she goes into the kitchen. Starts washing up already. So

I'm left here feeling pretty offended and thinking how nice it must be to feel so blasé about the oppression of approximately half the human race and I decide
before I go help with the dishes
just to check that last unread email:

From: MRKentucky@aol.com

To: RogerMcCleod64@sbcglobal.net

Subject: Cincinnati Conference on Men's Rights

Tickets now on sale for this event on August 16th and 17th

and turns out Alan is organizing a men's rights weekend conference in Cincinnati. And I think: how cool would that be? To be surrounded by people who understand why and how much this stuff matters?! And look! Alan himself is giving the keynote speech! Can you imagine? To hear Alan talk in person? I think that would be something quite inspirational! But then I look at the price of the tickets and I think: whoah
ok well. Maybe not. Maybe next time.

III.

a son!

A photograph of Joe

This is Joe. People say he looks like me. What do you think? He's such a great kid. He's into arts and acting but he's not one of those nerds who gets picked last for the sports team. He's outdoorsy too. You know? Like I was. And it's funny because when I get his text

I'm just about to head into work and I get his text
and it stops me in my tracks. I'm out here on the driveway
about to get in my car and I read his message and suddenly I get this vivid memory of me and Suzanne

when Suzanne was pregnant
going to that scan where they tell you what kind of baby you're having? And I remember when the nurse lady first said it's a boy

and I looked at Suzanne and I said it's a boy! and she said it's a boy! and it was like in that split second this whole future just unrolled in my imagination

how we'd hang out together. Just me and him. Go hiking and hunting and camp out in the wilderness. How I'd teach him all the stuff my dad taught me. How to whittle a stick to catch a fish. And use a gun. And build a fire. A son I thought. A son! And then he's born and it's like crazy and we don't sleep and Suzanne gets post-natal depression which I don't know if anyone here has ever experienced that but it was extremely challenging for me? And next thing I know we're getting divorced and then I lose my job and I move away and I'm paying all this alimony but I don't see Joe except on weekends or holidays. And the older he gets the more of a

stranger he seems to become and then he stops visiting altogether and no one will tell me why so of course I blame myself? Right? But then I take the red pill. And I learn about how the entire legal system and the structure of the family courts are rigged to favor women. And mothers. And meanwhile men like me fathers who love their kids are getting exploited. Suzanne got custody. I've paid her all this alimony. Over many years. And in return I've been alienated from Joe through absolutely no fault of my own. And I find myself standing in the driveway about to get in my car reading a text from my son

Me

www.angryalan.com/aremengreatorgood.av

Joe

LOL.

Can we meet up? Need to talk to you.

saying he loves me
sorry I just
saying that he loves me a lot
and that he wants to see me because there's something he needs to talk to me about. And I just feel so elated. Because at last
he's going to confide in me about this 'rough time' he's been having. And I'm going to get a chance to help him finally. And all it took was for me to stop blaming myself and to reach out to him with a profoundly important message about his self-worth and at last we've got a chance to build a real relationship. So.

Beat.

Now we've just got to find a time to actually meet. We're going back and forth with dates at the moment. Modern age eh? Kid's fourteen. He's got to 'find time in his calendar'.

HARVESTING THE MALE GAZE VIDEO

IV.

#metoo

So it's a Thursday night and it's nice weather and me and Courtney are out for a pizza with some friends of hers from work
Nadine and Melissa
nice girls
and since the tacos things have been a bit tense between me and Courtney? Not terrible. But she keeps making little comments like 'Can you pass the salt Roger or does that violate your

human rights?' or 'oh hey Roger. Here in the Matrix the trash cans need to go out'. So you know. Suffice to say my attempts to convert her have so far been unsuccessful

and we're sitting in the booth in the corner and we order some drinks and we're deciding what to eat and they're all secretaries at the same law firm

and they're going on about work so I'm half looking at the menu but also checking my emails when I hear Courtney say 'well we've got to do something. We can't just let him get away with it' so I listen in

and turns out they're discussing some guy at work who they're planning to hashtag metoo? His name is Paul

and he's apparently been 'harassing' Nadine for months

and I'm looking at Nadine and I'm remembering the video I watched this morning and lets just say Nadine has a lot of gaze-harvesting techniques going on

so I say 'now hold your horses girls

how do you know he's harassing you?'

and they tell me Paul keeps asking Nadine out. Wanting to see her outside the office. And I say 'Well. Ok. Maybe he likes you. You're a single lady. Isn't it possible he thinks he's being romantic?' And Courtney says: he's her boss, Roger. And Melissa says: is it romantic to email her pornography? And Nadine says: is it romantic to tell everyone at work that he had sex with me when it's not true? And I say 'Ok. But. Could he have had a good reason?' which is when Courtney leans over the table and hisses

'Roger? Be quiet please. You are *embarrassing* me!' which once upon a time might have worked on me but I'm sorry

I said things are gonna change around here. And that means when the situation calls for someone to speak out against the oppressive Gynocratic Regime? I can no longer remain silent. So I say look, The truth is

according to my friend Alan

these witch hunts

that have happened as a result of this hashtag metoo

are extremely detrimental to our justice system. Does a man not even get the right to a fair trial? What happened to innocent until proven guilty? And Nadine's like 'Paul's not being put on trial, Roger. I was just going to tweet about it'. And I say 'ok well then but it's trial by media. And Melissa says are you telling us you don't agree with hashtag metoo? And I say 'what I'm telling you Melissa is that you women need to think about what it is you actually want. Because Alan says Modern American Woman wants it all her own way: she wants her own career. *And* she wants a rich guy to treat her like a princess. She wants you to respect her intellectually. *Then* she invites her girlfriends over to watch *Love Island*. She wants to be president. *And* she wants to be spanked on the bottom in the bedroom. And you can't have both now. Can you? Because meanwhile'

I say

and I'm on a roll now I say

'Alan says Modern American Men are getting more and more confused. And we're taking more and more of the blame when you women don't get what you want.'

Which is when Courtney kicks me under the table

she actually kicks me in the shins and she says 'you know what I want Roger? I want you to shut your face!'

Beat.

In her defense
Courtney's very sensitive about anything to do with 'harassment' because of what
happened to her Mom. But you know the other way round? Like if I kicked Courtney
in a restaurant
in front of our friends?
you'd call that abusive. So

V.

impulse buy

I wait for her to be asleep and I go online
and Christ knows what she's going to say about me spending this kind of money but I say
the following words out loud: Fuck Courtney, I say. Not quite that loud because she's only in the
next room, I say it more like: *Fuck Courtney*. And I go onto Angry Alan dot com and I click
and I click
and I pay
and I'm going to the conference in Cincinnati and I'm feeling pretty excited about it
when the page comes up you know the page saying the payment's gone through
and thank you for your payment
except now it's offering me the chance to donate. The suggested amount is a hundred
dollars.

DONATE

you can make a donation to support Alan's charitable work with men and boys

And suddenly I imagine myself
I imagine Roger
walking into that conference
holding his head up high because he's made a real contribution. He's helped fund a home
for men who are victims of domestic violence. Or or or survivors of male genital mutilation. And
before I know it I'm logging into my online banking and checking my account and ok oh dear
that's worse than I thought because my alimony payment has already come out but no ok it's
doable. How about
instead of staying at the conference hotel
I get my tent out of the garage. Book a spot at a KOA campground outside of Cincinnati.
That could save a bunch of money. And uh ok I can do some overtime next month and maybe
put my stamp collection on ebay which I've been meaning to do for ages anyway and I go back
to the window I click on the button and I'm doing it
I'm donating
what can only be described as a significant financial contribution to the Men's Rights
Movement. And I feel this kind of

like an exhilaration. Like I'm changing. You know? I'm becoming someone new.

VI.

two dozen eggs

Alan points out how unfair it is that in an emergency
like on a sinking ship

the rule is you have to save women and children first. He says this is because men's lives are considered to be innately less valuable. Are we men disposable, he asks? Are we less worthy of saving for some reason? If a ship was sinking who would you rather save? A stranger or your own son? Your own father? See when you take the red pill you start to question all the things you've just taken for granted your whole life

like how you as a man are meant to be some kind of a hero
or else there's something wrong with you. And how one of your jobs
as a man

is to go around saving women from whatever situation they've gotten themselves into while you yourself are left drowning. This is what I'm thinking about as I'm supervising a spillage in Aisle 7. And then Charlene comes over and asks me to go to Register 3 and when I get here I see the bagger Martin looking all sheepish and his hands are covered in egg yolk and there's a woman here

a woman who is lets just say quite an unattractive woman
probably menopausal
and she's standing here
holding a carton of eggs to her chest like it's a wounded animal or something
and weeping

and I remember what Alan says in his video on male suicide: about how seventy percent of the people who kill themselves in America are men
because we're raised not to show our feelings. See? All we hear about all the time is how much women suffer

and meanwhile guys like me for example
my wife walks out on me and takes my kid
then I live through 2008
lose everything I've worked twenty years for
and you know what?

I haven't cried in front of another human being since I was eight years old. So I'm looking at this woman in a new light, right? I now recognize her tears for what they are: a weapon of manipulation. And I can hear Alan's voice in my head and he's saying 'Roger. Don't be a White Knight. She doesn't care about those eggs. She just wants money off. Same as they all do.' But what can I do? New Roger wants to speak up. He wants to call her out on her mercenary BS. But Store Policy dictates the customer's always right so I say 'Ma'am let me get you a refund on those eggs' and I go get her two more cartons and I pack them myself. And she goes away happy. Course she does. But next thing you know Martin the bagger is being called up to Tim's office and turns out this is his third strike

and he's gone. Just like that. An honest man loses his job

because a woman wanted free eggs! I'm sorry I'm just
it's just so unfair and I just

Beat.

I end up back here on my own
hiding behind a big palette of cereal boxes and feeling kinda

I don't know. Because it takes me right back to A T&T and that day in Bill Jefferson's
office when he told me they were letting me go. The look on his face. This look like
sorry man. It's just one of those things.

I should just go get my gun I thought. Because there's not much use for me now. A
middle aged guy starting all over again in this market? People want twenty three year olds fresh
out of college or even eighteen year olds who were smart enough not to go! But guys like me?
Twenty years experience at a company like A T&T means diddly squat apparently

I mean thank goodness for me I met Courtney when I did. Otherwise
yeah

Roger mimes shooting himself in the head.

So of course I want to do something to get justice for Martin. I'll go into Tim's office I
think. Threaten to quit. 'If he goes I go'. Right? Right! Let's go see Tim! But then I remember
the money I spent on the conference and the donation and the kind of financial position I'd be in
if I didn't have this job and I think ok well listen

I'm going to the conference. And I'm supporting men's charities. So when you think
about it maybe I'm already doing enough for men like Martin. And maybe this is a case of pick
your battles. So. Ok. So for now. I'll stay quiet.

**Messages ping from Joe. Hey Dad, can you send me your dates?/ Can do any
weekend in July./ You got any dates in August? /Dad call me about dates. /I can't do
21st anymore can do 16th. Can you let me know? /Dad?**

VII.

erisis

hero

crazy woman

I mean if I was a person inclined toward this kind of thinking then at this point I'd
wonder if there is a conspiracy to stop me going to the conference. First of all
despite having a 'rough time'

Joe appears to have the social life of the Great Gatsby and the weekend of the conference
is now the only weekend in the entire summer break when he's free to visit
and secondly this evening
about two weeks before the conference

when I finally get around to telling her I'm going
me and Courtney reach crisis point. And it's very interesting because just before me and
Courtney have the argument we're about to have

I listened to Alan's podcast on the warning signs of 'borderline personality disorder'
because as it turns out crazy women are a real problem in our society

and the woman you're in a relationship with can be the most dangerous. No offence to
any of the ladies present. But guys? We need to be on our guard. See? So anyway. Here we are
we're about to eat. And Courtney's made a potato salad and we're at the dining room table

and I tell her I'm planning to go to the conference

and that she might be interested to know the schedule actually contains talks by several
women

and she says oh god Roger you're not serious and I say 'no you gotta listen because one
of these women ok she used to be a feminist just like you and then she learned about Men's
Rights and she totally changed her mind and now

she actually speaks out against feminism and she's a highly educated professional
journalist writing for (among other things) a real British newspaper called

uh oh wait what was it called

the Daily Mail? And I say: See it's nothing like you said. It's not just a bunch of angry
middle aged white guys flapping around like dying fish out of water because 'progress' has made
them feel disempowered. Ok? Gasping for air. Ok? No. See? Because there's white *women* too.
And she says 'They found a couple of idiot women prepared to take their side and now you think
I'm going to change my whole opinion?' And I say not a couple of idiot women. There's a whole
organization of em. They call themselves the Honey Badgers. They've got an official website
and everything. You want me to send you the link? Which is when Courtney says:

Roger?

I think I'm falling out of love with you.

Beat.

And I say

what are you talking about? And she says: If I'm honest Roger? I think you're having
some kind of a breakdown. You know? I think you're still very angry about A T&T. And this
Alan guy is feeding that anger. And it's not healthy.' And I say 'Courtney? You are way off the
mark.' And she says 'so you're not still angry about A T&T? And I say I didn't say that. Course
I'm still angry. I'm saying that's got nothing to do with Alan. And she says but it was such a
long time ago Roger. Are you going to be angry about it the rest of your life? And I say well.
Unless they apologize. Unless one day Bill Jefferson comes to my front door and says he's sorry
for ruining my life. Why Courtney? Are you saying I shouldn't be angry? What are you saying?
And she says I don't know Roger. I guess I just don't look at you that way. And I say what way?
And she says like a man whose life has been ruined. Because so what if you lost your big shot
job? So what if you don't drive a fancy car? So what if you can't go around telling other people
what to do? Look at Tim. And I say what about Tim? And she says: you hate Tim. And even
though I really do hate Tim I say what are you talking about? Tim's my buddy! And she says: I
just sometimes think the most powerful men aren't necessarily the nicest men or the happiest
men or the men with the best lives. And I say 'I have literally no idea what Tim has to do with
this.' And she says I'm trying to make you feel better, Roger. And I say oh really? By reminding

me how powerful and rich Tim is compared to me? Do you want to fuck Tim? Is that what you're telling me? And she says 'I'm telling you I don't want you to go to this conference!' and I say well you know what? I don't want to hear it. And I walk away. I walk away. Because Alan says that's the best thing to do when a woman is being out of control crazy.

Beat.

Courtney's insistence on equality doesn't extend to night-time comforts so
I'm sleeping on the couch. And I don't know. I guess until I decide whether I love her
enough to sacrifice going to the conference? Is that

I mean is that the choice I'm being offered right now? Courtney or the conference? Joe or
the conference? Is that it? Or is this in fact

you know is this the moment in the story when the hero is faced with great adversity?
And he has to overcome these obstacles in order to succeed?

VIII.

the orange lamp

At first there's a certain novelty. The bathroom's always free. I eat nothing but takeout
chicken burritos. I drink beer for breakfast. I watch TV naked with my butt on Courtney's special
armchair. And every spare minute I'm not at the store

I spend online

reading and watching videos and truthfully? Ok

maybe I get quite into researching the Honey Badgers and where they live and if there are
any in my local area. Which there aren't. But there are quite a few going to the conference so I
use thinking about that to keep my spirits up. Fantasizing about sitting down to dinner with a
woman who doesn't just

argue

about

everything but the fact is

Beat.

truth is the house feels very empty without Courtney. And it's not like I didn't try
because I did

I tried explaining how important this is for me

I explained why feminism is damaging

I explained how men are suffering

but it didn't do any good. The sad truth is that Courtney is so jaded because of what
happened in her own family? In the end she packed a bag

and stood at the end of the bed

and she said: you know the first time my stepdad got arrested Roger

I thought we were going to be safe

because he'd go to jail for the rest of his life

and I just feel like if the legal system was as rigged towards women as you keep saying
he would have gone to jail the first time
or the second time
maybe even the third time
but he wouldn't have been free to do what he did and maybe my mom would still be able
to see properly. Roger. Can you explain that? Can you please explain how the system is so in
favor of women
that my Mom is now partially blind? And I said Courtney
all domestic violence is wrong. Ok? Whether it be women against men or – and she said
how many men die each week because they are murdered by their spouse Roger? And I said 'I
don't know Courtney because I don't accept all those Gynocentric media statistics anymore' and
she said 'I'm leaving you'
and I said ok
and she said ok
and I said I hope you're taking your orange lamp because I don't want it cluttering up my
hallway! Which is mean. Obviously. And I regret it. But
you know
obviously I was upset.

Beat.

The good news is I can go to the conference now without anyone giving me grief. And
Joe's coming camping. So
oh right. I didn't say. That was my brilliant idea. So I get to do both. I bring Joe out to
Cincinnati on Saturday night. He can stay in the tent with me. I still get to go to the whole first
day of the conference then on Sunday morning we can go for a hike
maybe do a little shooting or fishing
he can tell me whatever this big thing is he needs to talk to me about
and we can get back to the hotel in time for Alan's keynote speech. Pretty inspiring for
Joe don't you think? To hear Alan speak in person. I wish I'd had that kind of opportunity when
I was fourteen that's for damn sure.

IX.

cincinnati

So I get here on the Friday night
pitch my tent at the KOA
and it's ok, the campsite's kinda gross and it's near the shore of this big man-made lake
so it's pretty humid but it's fine. And I sleep ok although I'm extremely nervous and I wake up at
dawn and I get to the hotel bright and early. I'm still anxious because I don't know anyone but I
come into the conference room and it's very nice
nice big windows and all the chairs laid out and a little stage with a podium and a screen

very professional very organized looking
and there's a table with sticky name labels and I get a very pleasant surprise to discover
that my sticky name label has a gold rim
and the gold rim apparently means that I'm a donor. Isn't that something? So I stick it on
feeling pretty good about myself

Roger is now wearing a name badge with a gold rim.

and I grab a bottle of water and I hang around on my own for a while trying not to look
awkward

and as the room gets more crowded people start mingling and I get talking to a couple of
guys and they're real friendly. And the whole scene is very upbeat and quite exciting and I start
to feel somewhat like my old self again, you know? It's kinda like when I used to go to
conferences back in the day with A T&T. Little coffee cups all laid out on a table and the sound
of men laughing and talking and we're all here for a common purpose. And because of that
purpose we matter. You know? I meet Jamie from California who's a building contractor. And I
meet Dave from Aspen who's also got a gold name badge. And they're both divorced like me
and we talk about how we ended up here and then something very exciting happens which is I
see Alan for the first time. Across the room. He just walks in like any other guy. Maybe he's a
little smaller than I thought? But there he is. And I'd love to go over

should I go over?

but no he's immediately surrounded by a bunch of people who all want to talk to him and
then the sessions begin and for a while I forget all about Alan because I have to tell you

being here

it's not just that it's inspiring

it's not just I'm making all these new friends it's like

remember that cage I was telling you about? Being here it's like the bars of that cage are
finally lifting. With every speaker that gets up on that podium I start to feel more and more
optimistic that we could one day live in a world where all of this injustice that I feel

all of this injustice that I know has been affecting me

I start to feel like maybe one day we could live in a world without it

because it starts to feel like old times you know? The jokes people are making

some of these jokes I wouldn't repeat but the people here are just laughing and I mean the
women too they're just laughing and cheering and clapping and one of the speakers

he's talking about false rape allegations

and he makes one joke

it gets a laugh so big they have to turn his mic up because we're just so pumped with the
frikkin freedom of it all because you don't realize

until you get here you don't realize just how oppressive the Gynocentric Society is. You
get used to living your life

feeling bad about who you are

feeling guilty

feeling anxious in case you do or say something which once upon a time would've been
totally fine but in this day and age is suddenly completely unacceptable for reasons you are
unable to comprehend and living your life in terror that if you put one foot out of line

you will be viciously and violently attacked on the internet and feminist lynch mobs will trash your reputation. And that's no way to live. That's no life at all. Is it?

Beat.

I can't wait to meet Alan. I've got it all planned. I'm going to wait till after his talk tomorrow then I'll go up to him and shake his hand and say Alan? Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Because if it wasn't for men like you men like me and Dave and Jamie we'd be on our own in this world. You know? Misunderstood. And completely frikkin powerless.

PAUL ELAM TRUMP VIDEO

X.

honey badger

So it gets to evening
amazing day. Best day ever. I head back here and I've got a couple of hours to kill before Joe's bus gets in and by now of course I'm getting nervous about whatever this 'thing' is he needs to talk to me about. Is he being bullied? Or is it drugs? Or girls? Or or or or even you know
is he wondering if he 'likes'
'boys'

not that I'm saying that's what it is but of course it's crossed my mind as a possibility. I know he's into 'theatre'. So. And I'm not saying I'd find it easy but I'd be ok with it. You know?

I'm open minded. I just want to make sure he knows I'm here for him. So anyway I've cleaned the gun and laid out the fishing tackle and I'm just rolling out the spare sleeping bag when I realize it smells musty so I come outside to air it which is when I see the young blonde woman standing by the shore of the lake

and it's a warm night and the bugs are out
and I recognize her from the conference and I notice she's looking kinda glum
and I think Roger? that Honey Badger could be in trouble! So I go over and I say hey you're at the conference right? And she says oh yeah. Hi. And I say Roger.

He points at his gold name badge.

And she says Sam. And I say what a day eh? And she says yeah. And I say because I'm trying to cheer her up I say
You know I was so excited when I found out about the Honey Badgers
and she says I bet

and I say I just think it's so cool that there are young women out there like you who actually get where we're coming from! And she says uh huh. And I say I'm super excited about tomorrow! Aren't you? I can't wait to hear Angry Alan talk in person. I'm a big fan of his work he's the one who kind of got me into all this so

and she says yeah I'm hoping to interview him. He's very controversial isn't he? And I say 'interview? Which is when she reveals

get this

she's not a Honey Badger

she's a 'vlogger' from some online thing

and she flew here from New York to cover the conference

'from a feminist perspective.'

Can you believe that? Just my luck! They're frikkin everywhere! And I'm like gosh darnit is nothing sacred? Can't we have one weekend to ourselves? I mean I don't say that of course because for a feminist she's surprisingly attractive and I figure there's no harm in just talking for a while so I say oh how interesting and how are you finding the conference and she says 'yeah it's fine I just wasn't expecting it to be so hard

to sit in that room and listen to all those comments because' she says

'I agree that men have issues and of course you have rights but I just don't understand why you're all so angry with women'. And I say: well women are angry with men, aren't you? Feminists are the angriest women of all. Aren't you a feminist? And she says: Yes. She says: I am. And I'm angry too. But you're looking in the wrong direction. Because if you hate the way society makes you feel then look to the people who actually run society. Look at corporate greed! Look at the one percent! Because you can blame Donald Trump's mother for Donald Trump

if you want

but it's not going to change anything. Oh and speaking of which? I see you're one of the poor idiots with a gold name badge? So just so you know. Because I looked into it. Alan doesn't give any of your money to charities for men. He keeps it all. For himself. To fund him sitting on his ass making angry videos. And he calls it 'raising awareness'. So there you go. And just like that she walks away.

Beat.

Roger looks down at his name badge.

I mean

you know

it's not like I believe her. I don't. But even if it's true? Awareness is ninety percent of the problem and raising awareness is a huge contribution. So my donation is valid. It's a completely valid contribution.

I may not have saved any actual lives. Yet. And I'm sad about my stamp collection. But I've still made a difference. So. No. There's nothing to feel bad about on my account. You know? The most important thing is I'm here and I'm having a great time. And I've got my son coming up to see me. And we're going to get to know each other again and things are good you know? Things are really when you think about it things are just about perfect.

XI.

precipice

A long pause.

I have a son.

That's what I say: I say: I have a son. His name is Joe.

Beat.

I'm sorry I'm all over the place. I've missed a bit. I need to start before. Before like uh how about when it's morning and we're in the woods early and it's a beautiful day. I've got the gear in a duffel bag and the gun on a strap on my shoulder and Joe's got his little backpack and he's carrying the lunch and the water and the birds are singing and we hike for a good couple of hours and eventually we get to a clearing and we sit down to drink some water and I can tell he's about to come out with it but when he does

Beat.

I say: what does your mom say about all this? and he says: she's getting used to it. Slowly. Why didn't she tell me? I say. And he says: because I asked her not to. Because I wanted to tell you myself. In person. Even though it was really hard Dad. I've been feeling sick for days. Are you mad at me?

I say: No. I'm mad at your mother. Clearly this is because of that school she sent you to. And he says it's got nothing to do with school, Dad. I've been feeling this way for ages. And I say ages? My god. You haven't even been alive for *ages* Joseph. What about football? Hockey? What about that girl from your drama club. Sandra - Sally - whatshername? And he says Sara Caruso? And I say right. I thought you had a crush on her? And he says so? And I say well and he says Dad: I'm not gay. I'm just saying .

I don't identify as a male. And I say I literally don't even know what that means. You got a dick don't you? And he says so? And I say So? So! So

you are a male. And he says it depends on your definition. And I say no it doesn't. It's a biological reality. And he says I knew you'd say that. So I bought you a book. Can I read you some? And he opens up his little pack

and takes out this book he's been carrying and reads me part of it

Both women's and trans liberation have presented me with two important tasks.

One: to join the fight to strip away the discriminatory and oppressive values attached to masculinity and femininity. Two: to defend gender freedom -- the right

of each individual to express their gender in any way they choose, including the right to change their sex, whether female, male, or any point on the spectrum between.

Do you have any idea what any of that means? Because I sure as hell don't. And I look at him and I go: Joe. And he says: Katie. And I say: you have got to be shitting me. I'm sorry but no. I say: I have a son. His name is Joe. And he doesn't say anything. And I say: is this because me and your mother got divorced? He says no. Is it because I wasn't around enough? He says no. Dad. And I say: then what is it? Is it a phase? And he says it's not a phase. It's how I feel. And it's what I want. And I say ok so what does it mean because because because because if you don't believe in gender

if you're telling me you don't believe in gender then

and he says I believe in gender freedom

and I say ok but what does that actually mean? In like

practical reality are we talking about are we talking about

and what I want to say is are we talking about you wanting to chop your dick off because

I swear to god if that's what he wants I'm going to march him back down to that campsite and lock him in the car till he comes to his senses but he seems to know what I'm asking and he goes

ok Dad lots of people do and I'm not against it but I'm not interested in surgical

intervention. And I say you're not? And he says no. But I do want to wear dresses and make up and high heels and I want to challenge the notions of gender that exist in mainstream society.

And I say well surely you can just identify as a girl without wearing a dress son. I mean

Courtney is a girl and she only ever wears jeans and sneakers unless she's going to a wedding or a funeral and he says exactly: I just want to be able to choose! Why do we have to be boxed in by these narrow definitions of what is or is not a man? And I say you don't son

but please don't start wearing dresses. And he says why not? And I say I don't know.

Because I don't want you to. And I'm asking you not to. And he says: but you don't even know why Dad. You don't even know why. And I say ok because the thought of it

even the thought of it

and he says: you're ashamed of me. And I say 'I just think I should have been told! Your god damn mother should have told me. Ok? I'm not a nobody in this situation, Joe. I'm your father!' and he says 'you always say that word *Father* like it's got some magical power or something. It's just a gendered word for parent, Dad. You know that, right? And I say 'This is not a game ok, son? This could affect your whole future. People find out about this? What about when you want to try and get a job? And he says 'Please Dad! I need you to accept me! I'm not asking for permission' and I say no? Well maybe that's the problem here. You know? Because who's gonna pay for these dresses you're going to be wearing? Huh? Who pays for every god damn thing you own? Huh? I do! I pay for the clothes on your back and the food on your table and that means I get to be involved! I have a right to be involved! And suddenly as I'm saying this everything starts crashing in on me in waves: all the injustice. All the things I've read and seen. How unfair it all is and how helpless I feel and how angry I am because of all the things I've had taken away from me - my job

Suzanne

years of alimony

Courtney

my basic human rights

and now my own son? And I can hear Alan's voice loud in my head saying my God
Roger how much more can you take? how much more of this are you going to take? And that's
when I just let go: I say I am so sick of this shit. Do you know that? I'm sick of you
disrespecting me
and your mother
scrounging off me
and I'm sick of everyone always
turning everything around and blaming me
and I'm sick of people thinking I'm a piece of shit they can just walk all over do you hear
me? Do you know what it cost me to raise you? Do you have any idea what I've sacrificed for
your sake? Do you? And for some reason he's got his hands up in the air and his eyes are wide
and fearful and I realize as I've been saying all this I realize I've grabbed the gun somehow
from off my shoulder and somehow I've got the gun in my hands and I didn't mean to but
I'm pointing it at him
I'm standing here
pointing the gun at Joe
and he's staring at me and his eyes are wide with something like
terror
and I say I'm not gonna
Joe
but he doesn't say anything he's just standing there shaking and I say I think I need to
take a walk ok?
ok?
I need to take a walk and I put the gun down
carefully I place the gun down on the ground
and I back away
and I leave him there
and I go on up the trail through the woods
I walk and I keep walking until I come out of the woods and I'm high up into the hills
now and I can't walk any more so I stop
on the edge of the rocks
over a wide valley
I can see the lake far below
and there's a buzzard circling in the air
and I stand
looking out over the country
this country
the country where I was born and raised and where I've lived my whole life
and I wonder what's going to become of us. Because this can't be the future can it?
Everyone just
changing the rules. Deciding who we are just doesn't
I mean
I can't just decide one day not to be a man, can I?
I'm a man.
I'm a man. And deep down I know that's what my son is too. Course he is. He's a man.
He's a man. I'm a man -

The sound of a single gunshot echoes around the valley from far below.

What was that?
Did you hear that?
Sounded like -

Realization of what has happened dawns on Roger. He stays very still, horrified. He takes a sharp breath. There is the sound of lapping water not far away. Roger struggles for breath. The faint sound of fish tails slapping on the ground. It goes on for a long time.

The End