

Chapter 1 - The Casablancas

Isle of Holly, June 1st 2050

10:52 AM

It was just another day in the Isle of Holly. Just like the day before. Just like the next day. Nothing changed there for 3 years.

This fact isn't more true to any other citizen compared to Matthew Kane.

At exactly this minute, on this day, 5 years ago, the Big One collapsed

But to understand the aftermath, there's always the before.

Matt's apartment, May 18th 2045

10:35 AM

Hollywood. You know it. House of American cinema. Land of opportunity. That can be true for many people. But not for Matthew Kane.

Matt is what people can describe as a failure. His hair is the color of burnt toast, with matching eyes. He's relatively tall and thin, and Matt's attempt at growing a beard is poorer than his career. He was always top of his class on Creative Writing, to the point that he won Essay of the Year every time he competed. He got accepted to the schools he applied to with ease, but, as some say, he "threw his life away" for a chance to go straight into work.

Born and raised in Los Angeles, in a not so poor family, he had his contacts in the industry, just didn't know how to use them.

His apartment was nothing short of poor. There was a leakage on the ceiling, making mold appear on a corner. The light flickered every now and then and there was a crack on the window. The door had many stains, as did the carpeted floor and the bed sheets. The bathroom was shared with the other neighbors, being located in the corridor. The outside wasn't any better. It had a terrible beige color, both inside and out. The windows were smaller than the ones in a prison and the crack was persistent in all of the floors.

Matt was going to meet his best friend, Guy Casablanca, at his dad's house, later today. He was supposed to be there at 11 AM. But Matt, as per usual, overslept.

He had 25 minutes to get ready and get to the Casablanca Mansion. And he was still in bed.

Matt woke up and looked at this phone.

10:35 AM

"Fuck!" he exclaimed, quickly jumping out of bed "I'm gonna be late!"

He then proceeded to disastrously stumble his way through his cramped apartment trying to get everything done by at most 10:45. He was able to basically do his entire morning routine, though some parts were cut.

I'm so late, he thought.

Matt then opened the door, forgetting to lock it. He remembered just in time.

His awkwardly stumbled in his neighbor, Mr. Diesel, a middle aged balding Caucasian man, wearing a stained T-shirt, and a mauve robe over it. The last time he exercised was probably before the building was standing.

"Whachu doin' there?" Diesel said with his raspy voice.

"I'm leaving the building!" Matt answered.

“Better be for long” the neighbor said after a screech.

“Gotcha”

The young man rolled his eyes as he went down the stairs, and on the landing he spotted Ms. White, the landlady. She was your typical cat-lady. An old granny looking single lady, very grumpy, or sweeter than candy, depending on who you are. She always wore a self knitted sweater, this time, a pink one, with the words “Cat Sweet Cat” on it, with little kittens around. Also, she’s a big smoker.

“YOU DIDN’T PAY YOUR RENT!” also, a raspy voice.

Matt pretended not to hear her.

“HEY MISTER, TURN AROUND!”

He ignored her and left.

“YOU’RE GONNA PAY FOR THIS!”

The failed writer was sprinting to the streets of LA, as per usual, trying to make his way to Beverly Hills, where the Casablanca Mansion was located.

After roughly 30 minutes, Matt was standing right in front of the house’s porch.

The Casablanca Mansion, May 18th 2045

11:07 AM

“At least I’m not too late.” he thought.

The doorbell was rang by him.

Guy picks up the door. He was a blonde, rich, blue eyed boy, who you could assume is an ass, but that couldn’t be further from the truth. He’s charismatic and probably the most stereotypical description of an actor. Also, youngest winner of an award at the Oscars. Guy and Matt have been friends since they met in first grade. They bonded over their love for cinema.

“Hey!” Matt was happy to see his friend “Am I late?”

“No! For once you’re not!” Guy stated “Come in!”

The Casablanca Mansion was immaculate. It had a marble floor, paintings all throughout the walls, vintage yet modern looking furniture, a maid was walking through the corridors, it smelled fantastic and was really huge, but also cozy.

“Matt!” Karl Casablanca, the actor’s dad. “Welcome back!”

The investor looked exactly like an older version of his son, but even 20 years older, had the same charm.

Karl approached the failed writer with a warm hug.

“Thanks Karl!” Matt said after the billionaire’s act of kindness.

“Hey Matt! What about the scripts, huh? You know how much I’d love to produce a movie with you as the writer! Greg could direct it, though I don’t know how he’d feel about not having control of the script!”

They laughed. Other than being a big entrepreneur, Karl was also a movie producer, a great thing to be when your son wants to become an actor. Even though Guy is a spectacular actor, without his dad, he probably wouldn’t go as far as he went.

“Well, the scripts aren’t going well...” Matt replied, embarrassed.

“Oh” Karl said, seeming disappointed “But, if you do, you got my full support!”

“Thanks!” Matt said.

“You know, we’ve all seen your creativity. I’m pretty sure 40% of the population has watched ‘Squipadalea’.” That was the name of an Act 1 Matt wrote in high school, about a magical city called ‘Squipadalea’ where a group of scientists discover while exploring black holes. There, everything seemed amazing, like a utopia with highly intelligent beings, but it hid dark secrets. What were the dark secrets? Matt didn’t know, he didn’t get to that part of the script. He sold that script to a writer, who didn’t give him any credit, and the movie became one of the highest grossing ever. Of course, Matt and his close friends knew, but since he sold it, and only wanted the money at the time, nothing could be done.

Karl was always a father figure to Matt, ever since his dad went missing when he was just 6. His mom has to raise him alone, but now she moved to a retirement home. She had Matt in her 40s. She still believes her husband will be rescued some day. Matt lost hope, thinking he already passed away.

“So, shall we go back to my place?” Guy asked.

“Sure!”

They both went into the same door as Matt had entered.

Guy’s house, May 18th 2045

11:38 AM

Guy was very distant from the classic Greek style white mansion his dad owned. The building was two stories high, it had a modern look with a glass window that covered both floors. The colors of the paint outside were vibrant, but it blended in with the neighborhood. The kitchen had a giant glass pane, making it visible through the street. It was accompanied by a neatly trimmed garden, with assorted flowers, ranging from yellow to blue, some classic rectangular bushes and a mailbox, with the number of the house, 1138.

“What have you been up to?” the actor asked as they entered the house.

“Same old routine as always.” Matt responded, disappointed.

The inside of the house felt different from the rest of the lousy and stressful Hollywood. It had a warm homey feel to it, as if, even though they were in the midst of May, a fireplace was lit.

“If you want to, I can take you to one of my trips. I think Greg is wanting to make a mafia movie set in Italy” Guy tried to help.

Greg was a famous director.

“Maybe, I dunno, let’s wait” Matt said, knowing the actor’s act was similar to charity.

“I mean, if you think so” he indirectly tried to convince Matt “wanna go to the game room?”

“Why not?”

The game room was even cozier. There was a TV with all sorts of gaming consoles, a foosball table, ping pong, a cabinet containing assorted board games, a pool table and even a door to a cinema.

They sat on puff chairs to talk for a bit, before playing some games.

“So how was Egypt?” Matt asked, because he knew Guy was working there, shooting a new mummy movie being released the following year “Did you meet some new people?”

“Not really, just some of the cast and crew, but I already knew most of them”

Not surprising, ever since Guy was one of the most sociable people to have ever lived, probably just being behind his dad.

“And you Matt? Have you written anything new?”

“Other than the stupid scripts for my 9 to 5?” Matt worked in a fast food chain called The Cosmic Burger, where children’s parties happened every other night.

“Of course, dumbass”

“Well, there is this one script I started”

“Tell me about it”

“Ok. So basically there’s this group of people that need to go on a flight from New York to London, but their plane falls on a small island on the Atlantic. So you see them become savage and wild. At the end, they’d get rescued, and become civilized again in moments. That’s to show the slow process of losing your mind and the fast transition from surviving to living in your comfort zone. But I don’t know, that’s kinda cheesy”

“Matt, shut up, you don’t know what you’re talking about. This is great! I’d totally watch it!”

“Well that’s only cause your my friend”

“No it isn’t! Even if I despised you I’d think that’s clever”

“You think so?”

“I mean, ya!” Guy said genuinely “That’s better than most scripts out there”

“If you say so...” Matt was still uncertain about the script “I just think there are adjustments to make”

“Of course there are! That’s what a rewrite is for!”

“Ok, you’re right”

“What were you gonna call it?”

“Oh, uh, ‘The Lost People’”

“I guess that works”

“Hey did you hear what happened to Tom?” Matt changed the subject.

“Sylver?”

Thomas Sylver, or Tom as he is known, was one of the highest praised actors ever.

“Yes!”

“No dude, what?” The actor seemed very interested in the topic.

“He disappeared! Last week I believe”

“Kidnapped?” Guy asked, worried.

“Probably. His wife went to stay the night on her parents’ house because her mom got sick, and when she came back, he wasn’t there”

“Creepy”

“But it gets worse”

“What?”

“Yeah. His newborn daughter was just there sleeping. He was gone, but not the baby”

“Shit man, gotta be careful these days”

Guy’s house, May 18th 2045

1:21 PM

During the time Matt was there, they played some games, watched a preview of Guy's mummy movie, commented about it, had lunch and now Matt was leaving.

"Ok! So that's about it" said the black haired man.

"I think so." Guy responded. "Hey, can you meet me on the Boardwalk tomorrow? 9 AM?"

"Fine, why?"

"If it all works out, I'll have something really important to tell you"

"Alright"

Matt's Apartment, May 18th 2045

3:34 PM

Matt stared at the blank page in his computer, that came right after a single line that read:

END OF ACT ONE

He stayed like that for a solid 15 minutes, considering the possibility of continuing it, just to come the same conclusion as always: "I'll finish it a little later"

Matt then remembered what Karl told him earlier today. He decided to work on the script for real

Matt's Apartment, May 18th 2045

9:52 PM

He was able to write 3 more lines.

Chapter 2 - The Cosmic Burger

Matt's shed, June 1st 2050

10:52 PM

Matthew Kane had just got out of bed, he did his usual morning routine and got his phone, still no battery left, but he always takes it with him, just in case he can charge it. The sun was shining outside, 110 degrees of heat. If it's this bad in June, try picturing noon in mid July. The quiet Isle of Holly was one of the only habitable places in the Separated Islands of America, or SIA

Matt had a walk to do, to go somewhere that no one should know.

James Chaplin, the once handsome young talent, was screaming outside, as always. After losing his beauty, his sanity couldn't last long.

Matt's apartment, May 19th 2045

9:35 AM

When Matthew was 18, he decided he needed to live on his own. His parents bought him a small apartment for him to live in, and to make some money, Matt started a "temporary" job at a themed restaurant for kids, called The Cosmic Burger. The place was the definition of tacky. Neon everything, only techno music playing and two creepy aliens as mascots, Zeepy and Zoopy. He planned 6 months working there part time, so he could write his

debut script. The semester became a year, that became a year and a half, that became two years, and now it's 2045, he's 25 working a full time job where he dresses as an alien and sings Happy Birthday to nerds.

He checks the time.

9:47 AM

"Crap!" thought Matt "I'm gonna be late! Again!"

Put on jeans, quickly brushed his teeth, combed his hair, grabbed a cup of coffee, got whatever T-shirt he had laying around. All that in the span of 2 minutes.

"Ok, I can get there in time"

He runs around the streets like a maniac. Stop signs and confused faces pass by like a flash. 9:53 AM. Just some steps away. He finished his coffee, and instinctively, because of his habit of always buying coffee from the shop across the street, threw his metal cup in the bin as if it were a basketball.

BAAAAAANG

"Oops" said Matt

Everyone around was watching his pathetic attempts at trying to get his cup back, failing multiple times.

9:56AM

He continued to sprint trying to get there.

The meeting spot was just a few blocks away.

He started to see the boardwalk.

9:58AM

And Guy is already there waiting.

"Hey!" Said Matt, panting. "Did I... leave... you waiting... for long?"

"Not at all!" Guy responded, fully omitting the fact that they had planned to meet at 9:00. "Just got here as well"

"Great!" Matt was still recovering from the marathon he had to run. "Let's sit?"

“Sure. I found this new diner that just opened. Wanna go there?”

“Fine by me”

The Spring Diner, May 19th 2045

10:06 PM

It was very charming, with little hanging lights and plants.

“Table for two.” asked Guy.

“Alright Mr. Casablanca” replied the waiter with the naturality that someone would talk to a neighbor. Which isn’t wrong to do in Hollywood. If you live there, you either are friends with a celebrity or friend of a friend. “Follow me”

“So? How are you doing” asked Guy to Matt on their way to the table.

“Fine, I guess”

“What’s bugging you?” Guy already knew there was something wrong.

“Nothing”

“C’mon, there’s gotta be something”

Once they were already on their table, Matt replied:

“I mean, what did I do wrong? It’s kinda strange that with all I have I work in a restaurant for kids and receive two cents over minimum wage”

“You’ll figure things out. Didn’t you say you had a billion dollar idea? ‘The Lost Ones’ or something?”

“It’s ‘The Lost People’. And what for? I have three billion dollar ideas a week and I’m still in 20 grand in debt”

“I know you got that script in you. Besides, you’re 25 for God’s sake! You’ll get your shot!”

“I know” Matt replied with disappointment in his voice “I just thought it would come sooner. I mean look at you!”

“Come on! We all know I only got that because of my dad”

“No. You’re talented”

“Thanks, I guess”

“Oh shut up. You’re an Oscar winner at 25 and complaining about your life”

“You know I meant”

“All I’m getting from it is that you’re comparing my miserable life to your luxurious and lavish lifestyle”

“Oh, I’m sorry. I didn’t know I had to be poor to be sad” he regretted those words right as they came out of his mouth “No! That’s not what I meant!”

“Fine, I get it, I’m poor and you’re rich”

“That’s not why I came here. Let’s get on topic” Guy said trying to get out of that situation “My dad needs a script for a movie”

“And?”

“Can you do it?”

“Well, what’s it about?”

“Here’s the thing! It’s whatever you want!” said Guy with excitement “Though he really liked the idea of ‘The Lost Ones’”

“Alright. Due date?”

“The end of this month”

“Fine. I’ll try”

“That’s the Matt I know!”

Why not accept? He had a whole week to do it. The world wasn’t gonna end by then. Right?

The Cosmic Burger, May 19th 2045

12:30 PM

His boss is called Robert Lucas, a middle aged man with glass lenses so thick that you could assume he just cut off the bottom of a soda bottle. But unlike soda, he wasn’t sweet at all. He’s mean with his employees, a total money addicted goblin, smells bad,

and, weirdest of all, is rude to the customers, which, economically, makes no sense.

“Alright fellas! I want there to be no crying! Floors shining and tables set!” exclaimed Robert.

“But...” said Joe, one of Matt’s coworkers.

“NO IF, BUT OR MAYBE, GO TO WORK!”

There is no way to describe The Cosmic Burger other than trashy. The walls are full of grease, the lights flicker, the alien costume’s eye is popped off and the food is nothing but vomit inducing. It’s surprising how it’s still open.

The worst part is, since this is a party place for kids, everyone needs to pretend they are having the time of their lives.

“The name of the kid is Peter!” shouted Robert “I want you guys to come up with an alien name for him”

“Zeter?” someone said.

“C’mon guys! Do better than that”

“Zeebleter?”

“Zooter?”

“Zointer?”

“No, no and no!”

“Zoinko?”

“That can be anyone! I am more creative than all of you dumbshits combined! Uh, let me think... ZETER! How didn’t you guys come up with that?!”

As usual, the party was the worst part of everyone’s day (kids included). But especially Matthew’s, because of the fact that he was the only one that had to wear the smelly 7 feet tall costume of Zoopy.

There were nearly no events and the kids received a ball pit with no more than 30 balls.

All they had for “fun” was a cracked tablet from 2015, a broken rubix cube, a rocking horse, a coloring station with reused papers from the other parties and broken crayons, and a jigsaw puzzle that said it contained 200 pieces, but looking at it, it seemed more like 50 left.

But the worst part for Matt was the little shows he and one of his coworkers had to put on every party night. That’s where the stupid scripts Matt told Guy about were used.

Strangely, Robert asked for new scripts every night, instead of using the same one. Matt believed it was a kind torture focused on him.

Now they had to do the ache schedule for the week.

“Joe, you’re cleaning next week!” said Robert angrily.

“Boss, you know I have a severe allergy to the chemicals in those weird knockoff supplies you bought for us, right?” replied Joe.

“Oh, ok, let’s just get rid of our responsibilities then!” shouted Robert.

“That’s not what I...” Joe was abruptly interrupted by this boss.

“Enough speaking! You’re up on cleaning!” he shouted “Now, Jessica and Matthew, you’re Zeepy and Zoopy this week”

“Ugh” exclaimed Matt “Again? Really?”

“What did you just say to me? Huh? Any problems Mr. Kane?”

“It’s just that I’ve been Zoopy for the last five weeks”

“I don’t get your disappointment. You should be proud!” said Robert with disdain in his voice.

“Well the high pitched voice you make me do makes me sick”

“*What?*” Robert mocked Matt with said voice “*Little Matty doesn’t like the voice?*”

“Not one bit”

“*Well how about I go on like this? Will this make you mad? Will this make you lose your mind?*”

“Can you just stop?”

“Well I’m the boss here, you have no right to be annoyed”

“Go to hell” said Matt without thinking.

“OH ALRIGHT! CUT THAT BEHAVIOR NOW MR. KANE!”

The veins were visible in Robert Lucas’ forehead.

“Only if you cut yours!”

That was the breaking point.

“THAT IS IT!” shouted Robert louder than ever “YOU ARE BANNED FROM EVER COMING BACK TO THIS ESTABLISHMENT!”

“AMAZING! GOODBYE MR. LUCAS!” screamed Matt throwing away all the anger he collected over the grueling 7 years of torture in Robert Lucas’s hands.

“GO TO HELL MATTHEW KANE”

And that’s how Matthew Kane lost his first job.

Only on his walk back home, after letting the dust settle, that Matthew had realized what he had done. His only source of income was gone. And because of what? A dirty alien costume? That was no reason to put his life to gamble. He needed a way to get money, quick money.

When he got to his messy apartment, he instantly turned on his computer and started looking for job interviews:

Hiring: Jungle Bumble

Jungle Bumble is the single greatest restaurant themed around the African Jungles made for chil...

”No, not this again.” he thought “Let’s keep looking”

Hiring: The Daridas Store

The world famous shoe store opened in Hollywood! And we are in need of some salespeo...

“I’m thinking more of a ‘No Human Interaction’ type of job”

Hiring: The Cosmic Burger

“That bastard! It’s been like 15 minutes since I left!”

He slammed shut his laptop. He furiously and anxiously walked around his tiny room. Looking for something that helped. Quick scan around the room. Laptop. Bed. Chair. Desk. Door. Pencil. Dirty clothes. Paper. Printer. Stapler. Some documents were thrown around the desk. Look for something good. Rent yet to pay. Bills. A jar filled with tips from The Cosmic Burger. Script titled “The Lost People”. Bingo!

After going full time, he could never take a look back at the scripts. He took a fast read through of the script again. Not the most original, but could be sold.

Matthew now got his opportunity to do what he was born to: become a writer.

It was 11:43 PM on the 19th.

He needed to lock his first draft until the 31st.

At that moment, he had the first act and three more lines.

What would follow, would be an excruciating three nights and two days, of writing, rewriting, scrapping, pulling out of the trash, back to the trash, re-rewriting, editing, formatting and finally, ending.

Matt's apartment, May 22th 2045

7:15 AM

Matthew Kane has finally done it. After 8 whole years of nothing, he had officially finished the first draft of a script. It wasn't great, pretty bare bones, but that's what a draft is for.

It was 42 pages long, it had deep characters, magnificent dialogue and a plot twist that would make M. Night Shyamalan proud.

Now all he had to do was show this to Karl and he'd probably get a movie out of his own script!

"I'll call Guy!"

The phone is ringing. No answer.

"Weird. He always picks up"

Second try. Nothing.

"Alright then. You leave me no choice. Let's go to the Casablanca Mansion"

The Casablanca Mansion, May 22th 2045

8:35 AM

Police cars were parked on the sidewalk, together with a crowd of people and the press.

"What's going on?" asked Matt to a police officer.

"It's confidential"

"That's alright" sadly stated Guy "he's my friend"

They walk around the garden for a little bit.

"What happened?" Matt, worried "Is everyone alright?"

Guy wipes off some of his tears, takes a deep breath, and says:

"Well... my" he cried softly "my dad he... died"

Chapter 3 - The Boardwalk

Isle of Holly, June 1st 2050

11:38 AM

Matthew took a walk around the city center. The recovery from the Big One was not that terrible, now with a pretty big marketplace centered in the trading of resources and services.

“No! Two fish for five gallons of water? What do you think this is, huh?” Matt overheard the old Halbert Stallone say, a man he absolutely despised, for something he did 5 years ago.

Halbert was once a multi-billionaire investor with companies around the world. Luxury in his later life, but he was born in a very humble family. That was probably what made him come back from the ashes of the world after the Big One and became the most wealthy and successful empire of supply stores in the country.

Matt’s hobby is analyzing the people around. Seeing their story and thinking how that impacts them now.

His only challenge to analyze is the most dangerous person alive:

“The Dictator” as he calls himself.

The Casablanca Mansion, May 22nd 2045

8:43 AM

“He was found dead at 8:03” Guy informed Matt

“Who found him?” asked Matt

“Don” he was the gardener of the mansion.

“Any weapons?”

“No, but a bullet on his head and a bullet hole on the window”

This was odd to say the least. Karl Casablanca was one of the most loved people in Hollywood, up there with his own son. So the killing of a “no haters” celebrity is out of the blue.

“Why were you even coming over here to begin with?”

“I had good news” Matt picks up the now titled “The Lost Ones” script off his bag, to Guy’s surprise.

“Oh wow. I’m impressed” Guy exclaimed in a melancholic way while looking through the 42 page script “What a pity dad will never read it. I’m sure he would be proud of you. And I like the name change”

“Thanks”

A cop comes towards the duo, with papers in hand

“So, you guys need to leave, I’m sorry”

Guy puts his hand on the cop’s shoulder

“That’s alright Jim” replied Guy “I’m sure you miss dad just as much as I do”

Jim’s eyes teared up, but he was quick to wipe those tears.

“I do”

Matt didn’t know it, but that was no ordinary cop. His name was James Cruise. Karl and him met in high school, and it became to see one without the other. His eyes were a deep dark color, just like Matt’s, and also like his skin color.

He got a scholarship to study in the private school Karl studied at. He was bullied and offended, until the popular kid came and befriended him. He achieved his dream of becoming the captain of the LAPD.

But today, he lost his closest friend. The one that made him persist and get all he wanted. This was more than just a simple case, this was a personal offense. A non justified act of cruelty towards a good man.

“Hey Captain, can I get your number, for you to contact me in case of a conclusion to the case?”

“Sure bud” Jim then passed Matt his number.

As they kept lingering around the house, Guy’s sadness became more and more visible, until he was going around in circles, crying.

“Ok, man, let’s go for a walk.” said Matt in an attempt to get his friend to relax and get out of the house.

“No, I need to stay here to hear what Jim has to say”

A minute passed, then another, and another, followed by more minutes that didn’t seem like they were passing.

“C’mon, processes like these take hours, especially with famous people!” said Matt “You can either stay here suffering or go out of this house and come back once the captain calls”

“I think you’re right” said Guy disappointed

“Alright, where do you wanna go?”

“Anywhere”

“Ok, follow me”

They were just about to leave the gates of the mansion, when they were stopped by a familiar face. Vincent Shaw.

Vincent is Guy’s agent, so they spend a lot of time together and are very close. Vincent is a tall pale man, Scandinavian looking and blind in his right eye. He always wears a black fedora and a black trench coat. But even though he’s scary looking, take a good look at his eyes and you’ll feel the warmth of his heart. He was accompanied by Quint, his bodyguard. A 7 foot tall black man,

that could probably take down a grizzly bear. He never spoke a word.

“Hey Guy. What’s going on?” said Vincent with worry

“Oh Vin, my dad” pause to wipe tear “he died”

The shock in Vin’s face was visible. Already tearing up he said:

“... what?” crying out loud.

“Oh Vin...” Guy tried to comfort him “It’s alright. They are looking for the murderer right now”

“And they will find him!” his voice was revengeful “And the monster capable of doing such a thing deserves to rot in jail!”

“That’s the goal” said Matt

“Matt...” said Vin “You must be devastated”

“Of course I am”

“Let’s all enter a state of grief” said Vin “At least I don’t need to change my wardrobe”

They chuckled. It’s good to see that positivity in such dark times.

“Well..., I’m going inside. Bye”

Streets of Beverly Hills, May 22nd 2045

9:09 AM

“So... still not telling where we’re going?” asked Guy

“It’s a surprise! Wait and find out” responded Matt

In reality, not even he knew where they were going. Just aimlessly going around Hollywood until he found something to do. Meanwhile he needed to distract his best friend.

He had put himself in quite a pickle. If he came back home, he’d have done nothing to take off the stress off of Guy. If they just walk around, the topic of conversation will eventually become Karl, and that’s not good. He needed to come up with something quickly, or his plan would be a great failure.

“Let’s try to distract him for now” he thought “Perhaps with a game...”

“Ar w gng t a rstaurnt?” Guy said, but Matt couldn’t comprehend, being lost in thought.

“What?” he said, finally blinking his eyes after a solid minute.

“Are we going to a restaurant?” Guy repeated.

“No, it’s 9 in the morning”

“Brunch?”

“What, do you think, that we’re going on a date?”

“Skatepark?”

“Why the hell would we go to the skate park?” He was genuinely surprised at the idea.

“I don’t know, just shooting in the dark”

“Ok, can you shut up for a moment? I’m trying to think!”

“You have no clue where we’re going, right?”

“Of course not! How could I possibly distract you from that happening? It’s impossible!”

Guy starts crying.

“No, I didn’t mean to...” Matt stops because he has an idea

“Hey, remember when we were kids going to the arcade in Santa Monica? Staying there for hours upon end? Not a worry in the world?”

“How could I forget?”

Matt turns Guy to look the other way.

“So wipe your tears and let’s have an unforgettable afternoon”

The Great Arcade, May 22nd 2045

9:31 AM

Matt really wanted to pay, but Guy, knowing his financial state, got to the cashier ahead of him.

The Great Arcade is the oldest arcade in the West Coast, making it sort of a tourist attraction. If they had come in July, the place would be packed, but it was only May, so the place was almost abandoned. Another aspect that might have helped this fact is that it was a Tuesday morning.

It smelled like buttered popcorn, it had the signature neon esthetic after the 80s, and had the stickiest floor known to man.

“After you, nice sir” said Matt

“Thank you, fine gentleman” Guy replied

What followed was a sequence of only top tier arcade games.

First they played basketball. Matt won.

Matt: 1

Guy: 0

Then Skee Ball. Guy won.

Matt: 1

Guy: 1

Dance Machine. Matt won.

Matt: 2

Guy: 1

Revenge on basketball. Matt won again.

Matt: 3

Guy: 1

That kept going and going on a back and forth win and lose scheme for almost 5 hours. The scoreboard was:

Matt: 70

Guy: 64

First to 75 wins

They picked the last games:

Basketball (47th time)

Skee Ball (59th time)

Pinball (38th time)

Table Hockey (52nd time)

Dance Machine (28th time)

They would keep going on this sequence until they crowned a champion, who would get the top prize in the arcade, because of all the tickets they got.

It was Matt and Guy in sequence until the score was:

Matt: 74

Guy: 68

Then, out of nowhere, Matt had a terrible “unlucky string of games” that resulted in the greatest comeback in arcade history.

Matt: 74

Guy: 75

Guy couldn't be happier. He took a victory lap around the boardwalk with his newly acquired crappy gaming console that he paid 600% of the price, but with already priceless memories attached to it.

They were happier than ever, and Matt's plan of distracting Guy from his dad literally dying somehow worked. His guess was that

there was something mystical about the Boardwalk. It wasn't magic. It was nostalgia.

The Boardwalk, May 22nd 2045

2:47 PM

After the best afternoon of their life, Matt and Guy went back to the Boardwalk to have something to eat.

"Where do you wanna go?" asked Matt

"I dunno. Maybe The Iciest Cream?"

"Sure. Why not?"

So they went to this small ice cream bar. Family owned and cozy, with wacky old decoration, making the top of the building look frozen, even in the heat of May.

Walking towards it, they were approached by a good friend.

"Well if it isn't the friendliest people I know!" said Greg Spielberg "Hey Guy!"

Gregory Spielberg isn't the typical director. In all his movies he starts with the closing scene and makes his way backwards. This weird directing choice is to prove that all his movies are meticulously designed to be watchable from start to finish and from finish to start. And the other quirk about him is that, with no exception, all his movies have to feature Guy Casablanca. He's a man slightly older than the duo, being 32. But even though he's only thirty, his hair is already turning gray. He had bright green eyes and a smile that lit up the room.

"What's up Greg!" Guy exclaimed with excitement.

"What are you doing at the Boardwalk? You're always at home by now" questioned Matt.

"Well, I needed a little break from my latest script. I have no idea how the climax will transition into Act Two. How about you Matt, are you cooking up any scripts?" replied and asked Greg

“Surprisingly, yes. Just finished a script titled ‘The Lost Ones’”

“Do you happen to have a copy of it with you? I might give it a read when I get home”

“Actually, I do! I was going to give it to Karl, but...” Matt stopped himself from finishing the sentence.

“But what?” Josh asked.

“Oh no, you weren’t informed. I think Guy won’t be able to give the news to someone else, so, I’ll say it” as Matt said that, Guy was already crying “Karl, well, how do I put it. He passed away”

Greg was in shock. He couldn’t speak.

“This is hard for all of us” Matt tried to comfort him.

“He... he was so... so young.. What happened?” Greg, holding back his tears.

“He was killed. Shot on the head” Guy said revengefully.

“Holy shit. That... doesn’t make sense... he was loved by, let’s face it, everybody”

“He was” Guy agreed “And my role model”

“Everyone’s role model” Matt said

“Well, let’s have some ice cream, shall we” Greg proposed

“Sure” the duo said in unison

They ended up doing more than just eating ice cream. They went back to The Great Arcade and played a bit more. After that, another round of ice cream and a ride on the Ferris Wheel. They became kids again to bear adulthood.

Greg even had time to read “The Lost Ones”. He was very impressed, especially because it was Matt’s first draft and first full script.

Just as the sun was setting, Matt finally got a call from officer Jim.

At least we had fun and Guy wasn’t killing himself in that living room he thought.

“Who is it?” Guy asked.

“Captain Jim. Let’s see what he had to say“

Matt picks up the phone.

“Hey Matt, Jim here” he said as if phone calls were like Walkie-Talkies.

“What happened?”

“I need you guys to come to the mansion, and fast” Matt’s heart nearly dropped after hearing this. *What’s the new lead they have?* He thought.

“Ok then, bye”

“Bye”

He then grabbed Guy from the arm and said:

“He said to go to your house, and quick”

“That can’t be good” he replied “Can we take Greg along with us?”

“Ok, fine, but you stay outside if Captain Jim demands it” Matt said pointing at Greg, as if he was his mother.

“Of course”

The Casablanca Mansion, May 22nd 2045

7:35 PM

The police cars had left, but the media and the crowd had already left. It was the golden hour.

“Who’s him?” questioned Jim, pointing at Greg.

“He’s Greg, close friend of the family”

“Alright then, come in”

The place was completely different from when they left. There were huge bright lights that made the house look like a movie set. They had put up some UV light for any signs that might have been left there. A man and a woman were both sitting side by side analyzing the security cameras in the middle of the living room.

In other words, but very obvious ones, it was looking like a crime scene.

“So, what have you guys concluded?” Guy asked nervously.

“The case is inconclusive” responded Jim, to everyone’s disappointment.

“Inconclusive? You’re telling me an entire police station got together to solve a man getting shot in a place with many security cameras and it’s inconclusive?” Guy questioned, clearly irritated.

“I’m sorry Guy, it’s just that the criminal knew what he was doing and...” he was interrupted by the lady who was on the security cameras.

Her skin was smooth and the color of almonds. Her hair was curly like Mac & Cheese and she was wearing a big LAPD jacket.

“For your information, young man” she said, when clearly they were about the same age “your dad was killed precisely at 2:37 AM, by someone who had their face hidden by a mask and was lurking in the blind spots of these cameras”

Guy’s eyes were wide open after she said that.

“Wow, how blue are your eyes?” she said in a mocking tone.

Guy blushed.

“Uhh, Matt” he said awkwardly “Let’s go”.