I found the following writing scribbled in a notebook atop the hill described in the ensuing pages. As my dog sniffed some bushes, I noticed a blue notebook laying beneath them. I'm not usually the type to pick up dirty notebooks, but I felt oddly drawn to it.

I have formatted and punctuated what was written for the sake of clarity, but aside from that, I have changed nothing.

I have never met and do not know the young man this notebook belonged to and I am unsure I would ever like to. Nevertheless, I found what I read to be rather interesting - so here it is.

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Where I'm sat is a place I've no doubt taken for granted. Even this shabby old bench seems special to me right now. A patch of perfectly green grass lays in front of me, and in front of the patch, the slope of a large hill leads to the forest I sit above. Yet despite the scenery, each time I glance away from my notebook I catch myself eyeing a certain tree.

This tree stands as though it is sad. Not quite curved, not quite straight, just… uncomfortable with itself - tired of being a tree. It is extremely close to the edge of the hill leading down to the forest. It is alone. I wonder, does it ever get sad looking down at all the trees so close together as it stands on its own? I doubt it, it's just a tree after all. And I'm not one to put my feelings into things like trees - that's the kind of thing that should be left to poets. And this is not a poem, it is a suicide note.

The thing I especially like about this tree though is the branch protruding from it. The branch comes outwards of the tree and hangs over the edge of the hill.

Desperate to be part of the forest, no doubt. It looks as though it will be able to hold my body weight. If not, it will snap and I'll fall about fifty-feet through bramble, bushes and whatever else hills that lead into forests consist of.

A doctor once told me that if you measure a drop-hanging incorrectly, you can end up decapitating yourself. He also told me that the slipknot is an incredibly difficult knot to get right. The man spoke as though trivialities such as decapitation and difficult knots are enough reason to battle on. If I could comfort myself with trivialities, I would not be here. There is too much I cannot forget.

I remember the boy with no arms. I must have been about ten. I'd spent the morning sitting in dew-covered grass on the sidelines of a football game I wasn't picked for. Playing for the opposing team was the boy with no arms. He played as though he did not have short stubs of flesh poking out of his t-shirt. Sitting on the sidelines, I heard a lot of the adults say things like "Bless him," and "Terrible, isn't it?" But despite their words, I noticed many of them could not help but stare at the armless boy playing football.

When the final whistle came, the opposing teams went to pat each other on the backs. I stood on my own and watched from the sidelines when the boy with no arms approached me. With a flushed face, he smiled at me with a smile you may get only once or twice in a lifetime. The smile of a young boy who has already gone through a lot of suffering. He extended the stub of his arm towards me, still the smile on his rosy face. I looked at him, then at his stub. I went to shake but I pulled my hand away and shook my head. "I'm sorry," I said, "I can't." His smile turned to a look of indescribable sadness and I haven't seen a smile like it since.

I hope he does not think of that day as regularly as me. I hope he didn't think about it for too long. I would like to know how he is doing. I would like to apologise. I hope wherever he is, he is doing okay.

I recently saw a picture of myself from several years ago. It was my eighteenth birthday and I was very happy at the fact. My eyes looked bright, my smile looked genuine, and if I were not me, I would question whether he and I were the same person. If only I could tell him what terrible uneasiness lies in being loved.

I remember Christmas day with her. Her family went away for the holidays without her. She spent Christmas at my house with me, my mother and my sister.

As a child, Christmas eve meant a night of uncontrollable excitement. I would lay in bed, unable to even close my eyes, awake for an unbearable amount of time. Eventually, I came up with a coping strategy for this predicament. I would tell myself over and over that my eagerness was foolish. I would convince myself that the day ahead was going to be terrible until I was numb of fervor. Looking back, this was most definitely an unhealthy solution and one that likely bled into my normal life. It's funny how things like that work.

As an adult, Christmas means nothing. I really do envy adults who manage to maintain a love of the holiday. It's as though on the day an innocuous childhood wonder glows around them saying, "Yes, I have preserved at least some of my innocence."

Waking up to her sleeping at my side, I could tell right away she were one of these people. It shouldn't have surprised me - she always radiated something that comforted me from the day I met her. I stared at her for a while and remember being very happy in that moment.

Later, we sat on the settee at the far end of my living room. She wore my dressing gown and sat with her legs beneath her with her hands between her thighs. She always used to say she liked wearing my dressing gown because it smelt of me. I was unaware I even had my own smell before I met her.

I remember that Christmas day being particularly warm. Despite this, my mother insisted on putting the living room fire on. I've never understood these pointless kinds of human traditions but never dared question them. People seem to be able to find comfort - or even happiness - in things like unnecessary fires on Christmas day.

So we were sat next to each other on the settee. My little sister opened her presents with that glow surrounding her as my mother enjoyed her joy.

Esme watched me as I opened my cards with an inexplicable beauty on her face. She looked so gorgeous all the time. Her eyes were large and a shade of melted brown that could have been amber if they wanted, her eyelashes long and defined, lips plump, and cheekbones high. Her smile makes me feel warm when I think about it. It really does. And the way her eyes squinted when she laughed - that's a sight I miss like crazy.

We went to open the cards we gave each other. "Mine's the one in the blue envelope," she said, glowing. Sitting close, we opened our cards. Before I realised it was actually off the girl I was seeing behind her back, I started smiling and giggling to myself at the message inside. "Aw," she said with that cute smile on her face and leaned over to kiss my cheek. As she kissed, I saw her eyes wander to the card. She stared at it a while before looking at me. And what a terrible sight it is to see a heart break in front of you. Watery eyes, pouted lips, and a frown with hostility replaced by

helplessness and disbelief. With that look, her glow disappeared and I haven't seen it since.

How pathetic and cruel I was to beg her to stay.

I just glanced at *the tree*. And how lucky it is! Last spring, as its leaves were starting to bloom, it stood in the same place it is now - unmoved by the terrible world surrounding it. Oh, to be this tree. To not fret about whether it is today or yesterday, to know that if your leaves die they will be back again. The tree exists exactly how it is meant to, it cannot make mistakes because it simply just is.

It is odd that this set of circumstances means that this tree has been waiting here for me all of its life. Actually, I'm starting to sound like a stupid poet. Why is it fair only humans can make meaning out of such silly things? Well, actually, perhaps the joke is on us for thinking our meanings mean something.

But regardless, last spring, as I stood watching cars pass by from Esme's bedroom window, here it was: waiting.

I remember that horrible day vividly.

It was one of those mornings where the sun shone but really it was cold. As I looked upon the main road in front of her house, I could not stop shaking. My back was turned to her. On her bed, she lay facing me on her side, resting her head on her hand. I had to turn away from her because I could not bear the look of her face. She knew she was acting like the most vulgar of women, the kind that's out to cause pain and knows it.

"I don't believe you," I said.

"Ha! Don't believe me then. I don't give a fuck. It's all your fault anyway. You're the one that fucked me up so bad."

I couldn't disagree with her, but my sunken heart began turning to anger and my sad shaking turned to aggressive shaking.

"Oh, and something else you should know," she said, "he liked to choke me."

I spun around, punched her in the nose, slapped her in the side of the head and dragged her off her bed. Whilst she lay on the floor, I kicked her repeatedly in the stomach. I punched her in the face again and blood began gushing from her nose and lips, covering her white blouse. She whimpered and cried as she lay helpless on the floor. I told her I was going to murder her. I told her I would not leave until all that was left of her was a bloody corpse.

I went to her kitchen to get a knife. When I came back, she had managed to lock her door. I banged and banged and kicked and kicked. From the other side, her voice trembled as she said "I've called the police."

I have not described what I was thinking in those moments because I really do not know. In fact, most of what I have written cannot be true. The past is impossible to write down. I can try to justify my disgusting behaviour by calling it "experience" but as I look back to my past all there really is are words and nebulous images. As I look back, I find my memories disappearing, each recollection becoming less real than the last. Am I supposed to be able to live with my actions by calling that "experience"?

Several days after what I did, after being released from police custody, I sat in the kitchen with my mother. She looked languid and pale, as though all she had done the past couple of days was cry. To me, it looked as though she were hiding behind the cup of tea in front of her.

We sat in silence for a while. Hers was the voice that broke the silence. "Is it true?" she asked meekly.

I shook my head and held her hand in mine. “No, it’s not true, mum. She’s a liar, I promise you.”

She started weeping, got up and gave me a hug. “I knew it wouldn’t be true. I know my boy couldn’t do something like that,” she said.

As I held her in my arms, I felt the unpleasant sensation you get when you want to cry. But I held it in and let another piece of me go.

Now, I’ve justified this to myself in all sorts of ways. I told myself that human life is filled with many serene examples of insincerity and deceit. Some, I told myself, are actually quite splendid. I told myself that the world is full of people deceiving each other without wounds being inflicted, people who seem unaware they are even deceiving each other. I told myself guilt is just an evolutionary formed trait to stop us from committing behaviour that would leave us ostracized from our tribe. That guilt is nothing but an evolved superficiality to survive. But lying to my mum like that is something I cannot and will never forgive myself for.

I’m sorry it is from this note you are finding out how bad a liar your son is, Mum. I could just not stand the thought of even you looking at me differently.

I’ve spent the past six months almost entirely alone. After assaulting and threatening to brutally murder a woman, people look at you differently. This is completely understandable. Though, the thing that bothers me is that looking is all they care to do. I’d take screams in the face over a thousand scattered whispers anyday. All that whispering is enough to drive you insane.

Though, even if they did care to talk to me, I feel as though every question anyone ever asks can only be given a superficial answer. Words cannot cover life. Words cannot cover how despicable I really am. And that is what summarises human destiny: a lack of oneness. And as a result, deceit becomes our nature. It is

impossible to interact without it. No one can know who I really am and vice-versa. How lonely life is.

I just glanced at the tree. There was a gust of wind and its branches and leaves seemed to take on the image of an enticing finger. I think it's time for me to go now, my hand hurts from writing so much.

I've started to cry. This page is filled with my tears. They have smudged the ink. I really can't live with myself anymore.

For what it's worth, I'm sorry. Everywhere I go, all I do is break people. There is nothing more anyone else could have done. This is on me.

I just walked over to the tree. I'm sitting by it now. I tried to tie the slipknot but I couldn't do it through my tears. Then, a terrible thought came over me. I thought of my mother having to identify my decapitated body. I burst into tears and only now have I stopped. I stopped because I heard the tree. It did not speak to me or make a noise but I heard it. I cannot burden it with my death, that would be unfair. I know what I am going to do now. I've realised I quite like this writing thing and that I want to be a tree. Yes, that's what I'm going to do. I will write and try to be more like a tree.