

This was how the can of worms were opened:

Famed writer, Quentin Norman attempted suicide on a humid late May night. It was by hanging and if it weren't for his wife and her perfect timing, he would've been dead. And oh, how cherished his lifeless form would've been to his fans and anyone who admires the deaths of the young and tortured. But it wasn't like that. Rather, he was ushered into a hospital and plugged into a machine. Coma. He was alive but in a coma. Coma. Coma. Coma. His wife- Julia- was left to his silence and the pitying glances of others. Doctors had that gaze in their eyes, neighbors would touch her shoulder in solidarity. The media would air out personal things about him and then talk of how mental health was important. A shit storm. An unnecessary chaos. She was numb and still and uncertain and cold. The bed was cold. The house was cold. Everything.

Her days were spent alternating between work and seeing Quentin in his helpless state. Repeat. Over and over again. Nights were spent collapsing out of exhaustion or tossing and turning without sleep. And oh, how the insomnia was torture. The tick of the clock, the shifting of the moon's light on her ceiling. No sleep, no control over her body. She knew Quentin had suffered with insomnia but it lessened after they got together. She never understood it, the sheer fear he described in having it. But now she understood. More than anything. The sun was a comfort, the day ahead was a comfort. Nothing more and nothing less of constant distractions to avoid certain thoughts. Now, however, when the night went on there was nothing to do but think of the worst and pray for the best. At night, she couldn't help it.

*Why did Quentin do what he did?*

And some nights, she'd become selfish about it- helpless fixations of how she did wrong with him, of what she could've done. Because maybe it was her fault. Maybe Quentin was unhappy in their marriage or he was secretly miserable for marrying so young. Only twenty one... she wondered if that was it. Other nights, she would look deep and hard at the memories of every conversation they had for any hints. Well, he had depression and PTSD. But they never talked about it because it didn't affect him like it did with other people... that was probably it. So then, maybe it was Julia's fault. She never pressed. She just trusted his requests and asked how therapy was when he got back from his sessions every Wednesday afternoon. Maybe he needed someone to press further into it. Maybe if she had done that, all of this wouldn't have happened.

*Poor boy. Her poor boy. So lonely and funny and intelligent and witty.* Of course, the best always seemed to be the most tortured or the most sad. Every 3 AM for weeks she'd curse herself for not being better, for not being there for her Quentin. Because really, she didn't even know how he got the PTSD, That was kind've shit of her, right? Depression she knew didn't have to have a reason but something must've happened to Quentin right? Well, she had asked earlier on in their relationship but he said he didn't want to talk about it. She respected that and they never really touched upon it again because she wanted Quentin to tell her on his own time. Was that the wrong thing to do? Maybe Quentin needed a push to get someone to talk about this stuff. He wasn't always an open book, really.

And oh lord. Speaking of books... she thought of his own. What he had written and whether or not there would be clues to why he'd want to kill himself. Write what you know. A writer's book is a deeper look into their soul. All of that, etc. Some nights she would flip through and reread them, trying to ignore that blasted ache in her heart. She'd keep going until she felt like she was going to drown with her husband's words spinning round and round in her brain. They were all mystery novels. Usually set in midwest American small towns- kind of like the one he grew up in before he moved out to LA. The kind of place where conservatives would lay around, gulping everyone's freedom and expecting each person to act a certain way. There were villains and monsters in these books- wretched things that were unfamiliar and unforgiving and full of hate. Tall, beastly women. Humanoid sea creatures. Cryptids with many peculiar limbs. All things that could terrorize sleepy corners of the midwest with their unearthly threats. But always the true evil never laid in these 'things'- they laid in the townspeople themselves. Cocky people who had a set traditional vision of how people should behave and would turn to violence if people didn't behave in that way. Facist ideologies and racial slurs. Places and people who wanted nothing but to normalize hatred. Quentin was obsessed with that. Messing with the reader, wanting them to question who is the real villain or whether there are such things as good people in his novels.

Maybe it was that. Maybe the pain in his head came from the hatred of the people he grew up around. Maybe the small minded culture had caught up to him and he couldn't handle it anymore. But even then, it was all speculation. Julia couldn't be for sure and she couldn't just pin it on that like it was nothing. And his books were all fiction. Every book he wrote was a piece of fiction and it didn't necessarily reflect everything about him. So it was kind of hopeless in that department.

But there were... there were other things Julia could look at.

When May ended and June began, there was a pulsing hum that seemed to radiate the whole house and her whole being. In Quentin's study, there was a mahogany shelf full of journals from when he was a child to the point he attempted suicide. Four shelves of these things and he was a devout journaler. He didn't want anyone to read these things, let alone his wife and she understood that. Journals were private and even when he was in his coma state, she didn't want to look through them even if she knew the answer was lodged somewhere within those books. For a while, she stopped by the door of his study and pondered just going in and doing it. Reading what he had to say and maybe it would shed light on the situation. She didn't do it until the night of June second in a very violent sleepless bout.

She tore through her house, ripped open his door and picked up a journal on his shelf. It was one he had written in when he was eighteen. She flipped pages, looking for clues but most of the journals she opened described mundane things or plot points for his stories.

Quentin didn't have his journals in chronological order and it felt like he had done it on purpose. No, he wasn't an organized man but when it came to his writing and work, he rather was. But his journals being out of place was almost like he was trying to combat people from reading them. If

Julia wasn't sleep deprived and angry by her lack of answers, she knew she'd feel some sort of guilt about it.

But fuck guilt. She could feel guilt later. She needed to know why Quentin did what he did and she felt like she deserved to know why because she was haunted by the image of him hanging from the ceiling of *their* bedroom.

The whole night and day, she flipped through them and she'd get interesting tidbits every once in a while. The people he grew up with. Little antidotes and memories of his home town. The ruthless insights he bestowed on the people he called 'family'. All of that, peering into the unknown labyrinths of the mind of the man she loved most. All of it. All of it. The words in these journals were raw, messy, more Quentin than any of the books he published were. Messy handwriting, repeated patterns, slowly Julia began to piece things together.

Then at noon, she found the journal. One that began normally and was kept by a thirteen year old Quentin. Halfway through the book, an entry that started in the middle of June stood out briskly-

*Something terrible has happened. Something deep and terrible has happened. They touched me and they hurt me. They touched me and they hurt me. I can't mention it to my parents, they'll tell them and they'll kill me if they knew I was writing this. I can't speak of them but they hurt me.*

And suddenly, the sheer invasiveness of Julia's activities had caught up with her. She felt her breath be snatched from her and she slammed the book shut.

She was sitting at Quentin's desk where he spent many days cranking out masterpieces and she had so many of his personal journals stacked upon it.

Disgusting. What she had done was disgusting. It wasn't like Quentin was dead- he was still alive and he'd wake up someday. And he'd awake knowing his wife had snooped through his most private of possessions. What a terrible person she was- and now she knew too much because she was thinking of the worst. Of who had touched him. Who had hurt him. What had happened?

Julia had a good idea of what he was talking about and it boiled something deep within her core. Quentin as a thirteen year old being touched wrongly. A mountain of disgust hallowed in her chest and she stumbled out of the study to get a drink of water or something to eat. Again, the words he had written replayed over again and again and she felt so empty. He was just a child. Nothing more than a child... and if that was the reason for his suicide... the weight that must've been on his shoulders all those years must've been insufferable.

She wished she hadn't snooped. Because when he wakes up, what was she going to do? She couldn't hide this information from him. She couldn't lie to Quentin forever. Blossoms of guilt grew all over her. Maybe he'd understood. Maybe he'd get it. Why she would do something like this.

If anything, she hoped this wouldn't make it worse for him. Knowing what she knew now, all she wanted to do was hold him and hold him dearly like her life depended on it.