

A black silhouette of a bat with its wings spread, flying towards the viewer. The background is a dark cave with a bright, glowing light source behind the bat, creating a dramatic silhouette effect. The light rays emanate from the source, illuminating the cave walls and the bat's wings. The overall color palette is dominated by dark browns, blacks, and bright yellows/whites from the light source.

**A Bat
ON THE SUNNIEST DAY**

Student

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By Jolavian Shenouda

Today *is* different. Today I don't force my lead-heavy eyelids open. Today I don't smack the alarm and curse it for waking me up. Today I don't question the purpose of my life. Today I *have* a purpose.

Today I wake up alert and ignited, although I haven't even slept, have I? At the familiar *beep-beep-beeeeeep* of my alarm clock, I jerked, glanced at the clock, 4:30 am. Just in time for final preparations. I left my crumpled, sweat-scented bed and walked determinedly to the dim ambience of the bathroom. As usual, I glanced at the mirror and proceeded my way to the shower, but this time, I retreated and stared right at it.

A monstrous human being, or so is said, was the one staring back. Uncut and untidy was his black hair. Sharp-edged was his face. Strong and bold was his jaw. Thick and black were his eyebrows, framing his sharp, deep, black eyes. I stared back. Meeting this reflection for the first time in years, I was such an opportunist.

I looked at his eyes which so much resembled mine; I remember my eyes were black, but they were never that sinister. I remember those lips... Were they ever used to smile? *Smile...* I vaguely remember the memory of my face so dumbly stretched like a rotten banana; it was years ago. I remember I was happy when.... I abruptly repressed the memory away. Science call it repression. I call it adaptation.

I remembered my purpose. I came here to prepare for the most crucial step of my life. I looked at my reflection. "Your opportunity has finally come and it's yours to seize," I said. "You absolutely can't let it slip from your fingers" replied the reflection.

Tighten your grip.

Control your thoughts.

Abolish your feelings.

You're already empty.

Revenge, and ONLY revenge, could fill you up.

KILL HIM!!

I was ignited with the determination in my eyes, and headed for my routine shower. The sudden coldness of the water brought me back to reality after being so much immersed in thought of ways to torment the murderer of my family before offering him the eternal rest of death, only that I'm not planning to offer it.

I quickly put on the meticulously chosen outfit for this mission. Lying on the bed were a

black T-shirt, dark blue jeans, black leather jacket, and my favorite bat-buckle black belt. Bats are symbols for death and rebirth I once heard. Anyway, I glanced at my sharp boots and knew it's time.

I wore my clothes, haphazardly combed my hair, loaded my nine-millimeter gun, and checked for my silver chain. Even on a day so packed I can't leave my chain.

Knowing I was fully prepared, I headed to the door. Maybe I'm being dramatic, but the door didn't feel as light as before. "There's no coming back now," I said aloud, knowing full-heartedly that it's true.

The sky is a black curtain above me; a perfect weather for my mission. An early February morning is a time when I sure will have little audience. I proceeded my way to the 23rd Avenue, knowing exactly which cafe that filthy person goes to for his morning "espresso" at this hour. *A killer with an appetite.*

There he is.

He's sitting right there, enjoying his morning coffee, not even caring about the lives he so viciously took. Old mistakes are the least he should consider; right now he should think of death ONLY.

I took position, checked my gun, and drew the deepest breath I've ever taken. "Focus and take control," I whispered to myself.

Looking at the man who snatched away my life, I faced my greatest fear: *flashbacks*. Memories hit me like a ruthless, determined truck. My biggest enemy is my *own* nervous system! I remember the last smile on the face of my baby boy; his white pure skin; and his ocean-blue eyes, which he inherited from his marvelous mother, *Hannah...*

"I hope you know I'm doing this for you and Alex. I've been counting down for the day on which I'll grant you your peace in the grave," I prayed, hoping Hannah could hear me with her soul like she used to say. I touched my silver chain which she gave me ten years ago and caringly said that it would be my guide in the world.

I readjusted my thoughts to think of my son flying from his baby-cart at the middle of the street, followed by his mother's last scream, and finalized with my own torturous one. I remember the face of the coward who hit them with his vehicle and ran. For sleepless nights and agonizing days, I've been thinking and dreaming of him. *The man who destroyed me.*

I glared at the face in front of me and took aim. I heard a crash. At first I thought it was his coffee cup shattering on the floor, but then I realized it was I who fell. It was I who got hit by a motorcycle.

Isn't that ironic? I came to take my life back, and here I am, losing it. When on Earth did it start raining?! I was just losing consciousness when I saw him approaching. Panic spread throughout my whole body, but it was as if the cable connecting my brain to my muscles was

unplugged. Just like that, I blacked out.

I woke up after what felt like an eternity of deep sleep to a face agonizingly familiar. Rage reached every cell of my body when I saw him sitting beside my bed. Is he really sitting beside my bed? Wait, are these flowers?! What on Earth happened to me?

Just then I noticed a nurse. "Thank God you're awake," she said, and it took every inch of my self-control to break the eye-contact with that devil *sitting beside my bed... with flowers!* "Let me call the doctor. And by the way, you should be grateful to Mr. Adam. He saved your life out there," she proceeded. She then went out, and I could've never been more grateful.

Is it possible for someone to be hit by a train, electrocuted, drowned, shot, and stabbed, in the same second? That pretty much sums my feeling right now. Among all the feelings, panic won. Now I'm unarmed, weak, and helpless. *HE CAN KILL ME.*

"What are you doing here?" I said with a hateful tone. "I'm really glad you're fine," was his reply. "I'm really disappointed that you are," I fired back. *Was that hurt on his face?... Well, he can burn in hell.* "Listen, I'm truly sorry for your family. I..." "Excuse me, you are SORRY? Oh, you're going to be sooo much more than sorry when I stab you with this needle." Rage and fury circulated through my whole body, and I grabbed the needle and aimed for his neck. Strong hands gripped mine. Now his face is inches from mine. He's crying!!

"I AM SORRY!!" he said with tears streaming down his face. "You have every right to kill me. I even tried to do it a couple of times," he laughed a miserable laugh. "I'm suffering from guilt every second of my miserable life. I remember the blue eyes of your son and wife; they haunt me. I don't sleep. I can't live. Five years of guilt and misery drained every atom of energy I had," he continued, and I was too stunned to reply. "I am a coward. I killed a baby and his mother and escaped; although it was an accident. I was too much of a coward to end my life, and I was praying for the day on which you're going to end it," he paused a long pause, and took out his phone.

"What are you doing?" I asked but had no reply. Was he calling the police? I don't care if they turn me in as long as that animal here gets what he deserve! "I would like to report a criminal," he said, and after ninety seconds of staring at my face, "Adam Jacobs, myself," he finished.

It took me by surprise; the man whom I wanted to kill is now turning himself in! Justice took place without me getting blood on my hands. He lived years of guilt and misery and now is going to prison.

Did I forgive him?... *I have no idea.* However, now I know how the bat is the symbol for both *death* and *rebirth*.
