

The off chance

The challenge of writing a realistic HannibalXWill lovestory

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Kapitel 2: 2. Chapter

Will opened his eyes to glaring sunlight. He drew his eyebrows together and looked at his clock questioningly. It said twenty past nine. That was ... unexpected. He lay back down and sighed. Why hadn't Hannibal woken him? He must have already left the house. Maybe the guy had respected his wishes for the first time? It seemed unlikely. Will sighed and stood up. So ... what should he do this fine day? Search for the women's organs? Knowing he would never find them except if Hannibal wanted him to find them? He shook his head. Well, he could start with a shower and breakfast and go from there. Smiling about having made a decision he started with going to the bathroom. In there he opened every cabinet – you never know where the guy might put organs thinking they would be found.

Will even switched on the water while standing beside the shower instead of under it. It was just ... okay, maybe he was getting paranoid but for a second he had seen the shower spouting blood. He hated being played mind-games on and he recognized it was only a result of Hannibal's latest game but he still feared what could happen. Even if it was totally unreasonable that it could happen. If being killed was a likely event why would a bloody shower be unreasonable? It made sense – at least to Will himself.

And wasn't that his eternal problem?

Next he searched his own room in pursuit of missing organs and some clothes for the day. What a great daily routine. Searching for organs in your dresser. Will snorted to himself. Hannibal did this for his amusement ... so if he really placed the organs somewhere, it would be at an obvious place which Will would reach only after believing that the guy had not placed organs anywhere. Hannibal wanted to keep him on his toes. He did not even have to see Will actually finding the organs. Just picturing him and his reaction might be enough for him. Or maybe he hid somewhere in the house, waiting for Will to come across the organs to watch his reaction.

Will swore to himself that he would not scream. If he found some organs, he would keep his cool. With that thought he descended to the living area, looking around for intestines hanging over doorframes and carefully placed hearts in the hands of one of the decorative statues standing around. He saw none of all that. He actually saw nothing out of place at all.

Kitchen coming right up, hm? Alright, he would search the kitchen. He opened all cupboards and cabinets, even the drawers. He only found spices he had never heard of before – well, no wonder when you only used salt and pepper – and a delicate-

looking silver cutlery which was unknown to him. He sighed over the absurdity of looking for eyeballs in teacups but he still did it. It was only after checking every pot that he relaxed slightly. He took a bowl and some cereals to make himself breakfast. He was even humming a low tune when he opened the refrigerator to get some milk. The sound stopped instantly and his eyes opened widely. As he had sworn, he did not scream. Not because of willpower but because something seemed to constrict his throat and strangle every sound.

Right on eye level he was looking at a perfectly human sized brain.

"Pick up the phone, damn it, Jack, pick up the goddamn phone ..." Will kept muttering to himself while he paced the living room.

"This better be good" The other did not sound as if he was in a particularly good mood.

"It's me" Will tried to get his erratic breathing under control.

"Will? Don't tell me you did it. Or maybe do. I want an excuse to shoot someone" Jack nearly growled.

"What?" His own voice sounded hoarse.

"The fucking corpse over here!" Jack shouted into the phone.

"I- there ... there is another?" Tears were streaming down Will's face. Fuck. There was a fucking brain in Hannibal's fridge and people were screaming at him as if he was the guilty one.

"Yes, there is a new corpse, Will. Surprise" The word sounded like a slap in the face.

"And she is one of the worst I ever saw."

"She?" Will blinked. "She as in a woman impaled on bamboo sticks in her back-room beauty parlor?"

"You fucking knew and you didn't call?" This one was even louder than the last. "What the heck are you good for anyway?"

"I ... I'm sorry" He said automatically. "Didn't you find her yesterday?"

"No, you idiot, we found her about twelve minutes ago. Why the fuck should we know about a corpse somewhere in a back-room parlor?" Jack's rage turned to icy cold determination. "So you knew about this. And you did not call. You either did it and are playing innocent or you did it in another psychotic state and just don't remember. Anyway, I am going to arrest you now."

"Wait a second! That was Hannibal, not me!" Anger and desperation mixed in his voice.

"Even if you only covered for him, I will get your ass back in prison."

"Jack, listen for a minute! There is a human brain in Hannibal's fridge and I am only a second away from puking my guts out. If you want to arrest someone, get a forensic team over here and arrest Hannibal afterwards."

There was stony silence on the other end. Enough for Will to start hyperventilating again. He knew that was bad and he knew he should stop but he just couldn't. Even as his muscles began to cramp up.

"There is a brain in your fridge?" Jack sounded calm for the first time since picking up the phone.

"Yes, there is a human brain in the fridge" Will had to swallow and was finally able to stop breathing so fast. He took every breath deliberately now. "And Hannibal told me yesterday about the dead woman. But he said that you had called him about it."

"Bullshit. The woman was only found this morning" Jack took a deep breath as well.

"Okay. I'll head over and bring a forensic team. Do not move, understood?"

"Yeah ... yeah, I- I'll ... just sit down" Will nodded absently. "I'll wait."

"Good" That was followed by a long beep.

"And?" Jack was standing next to Will who was sitting in one of the living room chairs. "I don't think it's from a human" Beverly crossed her arms. "It's the right size but not the right form. More like a cow or maybe a horse. Best we take it to the laboratory."

"Then Hannibal would know you were here" Will forced out. His voice was quivering like a leaf in the wind.

"How is that a problem?" Jack only seemed annoyed by his interruption.

"It's ... I don't know. Who knows what he thinks?" Will looked at the other beseechingly. "He is mad. No, he ... he isn't mad but still he does not live in the same reality as we do. Who knows what he will do. Who knows what game he is playing here."

"You should" Jack crossed his arms. "You are the empath here. And last time I looked you certainly weren't living in the same reality as I did."

"Jack!" He jumped from the chair but even with a look up close there wasn't even a trace of guilt in Jack's face. His gaze wandered slowly to Beverly, hoping and fearing at the same time what he might see there.

She did not look away but neither did she look completely comfortable with the situation. After a moment she offered: "I could probably identify it with the pictures and a tissue sample. One would never know I had taken that sample."

Will mouthed a thank you her way. She only nodded and went back to the kitchen.

"So ..." Jack stared at the place where Beverly had vanished but he was clearly speaking to Will. "What did he say? What did he know about the murder?"

"He ..." Will recollected the scene. "He said there was another murder. That you had called him to ask where he and I had been" Jack made an impatient noise. "He said a woman selling cosmetics had been found in her backroom beauty parlor. The murder had happened three days ago when we were out for dinner. And that she had been stabbed with sticks of her bamboo plant."

"We calculated the time of death to be about Tuesday morning. That would be some hours before your dinner."

"Haven't you kept tabs on him?" In spite of everything he did Hannibal was still human. He couldn't make himself invisible or walk through walls. If someone observed him 24/7 he should not be able to murder anyone.

"Yeah ... he had patients the whole day, then drove here to get you and went to dinner with you. It's just ... I would like to believe you and arrest him but we have given him an alibi with our surveillance. He really couldn't have done it."

"And I?" Will's voice was only a whisper. "Did I ... leave the house?"

"Do you think you would still stand here if you did?" Jack looked at him. "This was a Chesapeake-Ripper murder. It wasn't done by you or him. But somehow you both seem to know about it" He took a pause in which he regarded Will. "It makes you ... suspicious. More even – it makes you suspects. Both of you. I don't know what to think but I sure as hell won't trust either of you."

"Jack ..." Will sounded pleading. "I did not commit those murders. If there was more I could tell you I would. I-"

"I'm not inclined to believe you" Jack nodded, more to himself than to Will.

"Why?" He clenched and unclenched his hands in helplessness. "Why won't you believe me?"

Jack leaned near as if to whisper in his ear but his voice was harsh: "You're alive. It's suspicious."

Will didn't know if he should be angry or disappointed. Even if he could chose one feeling, he didn't know if he should rage or cry. He felt like he didn't know anything. He didn't know if what he saw, what he heard and thought was real. He didn't know if his conclusions had any merit or if he was only spouting nonsense which no one except him believed. He didn't know if he would survive the night.

He wanted to be angry at Beverly for not telling Jack off. He wanted to be angry at Jack for daring to suspect him of murder. He wanted to hate Hannibal most of all but he somehow couldn't bring himself to. And that left only one person to be angry with: Himself.

Why was he even here? Why had he thought he could help with this? How had he imagined this to work? Hannibal murdered even though he had one former FBI agent in his house, others following him all around the clock and the whole homicide department at his heels. It was beyond absurd and it still happened. He played with them and he played with even higher stacks than last time.

There was a way to end this. There always was. He could kill Hannibal himself. It would mean his death but by now that did not matter much to him. He didn't know if he could trust reality. But he would kill a dangerous person whatever happened – either Hannibal if he was the murderer or himself via Hannibal which would make him too dangerous for society anyway. So maybe he should. Maybe that was what Jack was counting on. Maybe that was why they had released him. To do what they could not. They always used him to do the things they could not do themselves.

Jack had made him hunt down those criminals. He had nearly gone mad because of it. Now he made him try to stop Hannibal. He would certainly go mad if this continued. So why not kill Hannibal to escape madness and be killed for it? At least he would die with a clean consciousness. As clean as a consciousness can be when you had killed someone. It all came back to Hopps, didn't it?

Killing a man for the first time. Living with the fear, the guilt and the secret irresistible feeling of power. He could do it again. He had done it so many times now. Killing another psychopath would not weight hard on his mind. Yes, he could ... he could even save a life. If there would never be a third corpse in this series, they would know he had been right.

He could live with that. And he certainly could die with that.

He looked at the kitchen knives. One of these would have to do. Wouldn't it be fitting to kill Hannibal with one of his own kitchen knives? Oh yes. Will grinned when he chose one. It was Hannibal's favorite. Quite a fitting end.

He settled back into the living room chair he mostly used, knife securely in his hand. Now he only had to wait. All good things came to those who could wait. Hannibal would come, just as he came back every evening, exactly at the same time. Hannibal was predictable when it came to his schedule. When he wasn't killing people or throwing out threads while smiling charmingly.

Will's grip on the knife tightened when he heard the front door open. Hannibal would come to the living room first. It was the place Will most often frequented. He would say hello, continue on into the kitchen and tell him what he had planned for dinner. Just like any other evening.

"Evening, Will" Hannibal only spared him a short glance and went straight into the

kitchen. "How was your day?"

"Splendid" Will forced the word out.

"Have you finished your book?"

"Not yet" Should he go after him? Or should he wait for Hannibal to come back? He tugged the knife back to his side when he heard footsteps drawing near.

"Is pâté de cervelle alright for dinner?" Hannibal stepped into the room but stopped near the door.

"Sure" If he would only take a few steps ... just some inches more and he could reach him.

"Great" Hannibal nodded obliviously. "I'll begin with the preparations. Just ... take a shower, all right? You smell a bit."

"Do not!" Will would have stood up if he hadn't remembered the knife in his hand in the last second. No use letting Hannibal see that he was armed.

"Do too" The other only nodded and headed back into the kitchen. "Take your time."

Will stayed seated, looking at the now empty spot in bewilderment. How should he ... what should he ... he smelled himself. Well, okay, maybe Hannibal had a point. In his nervousness he must have sweated quite a bit during the day. But should he really shower? He looked at the knife. Well ... he shouldn't attack Hannibal in the kitchen. He would most likely work with a knife himself. He should wait until dinner. Best to take a shower now.

With a sigh he headed upstairs, knife in hand.

This was even more surreal. He was about to kill a man and all he did was peacefully standing under the shower spray and filling the bathroom with steam. Maybe he should knock his head against the wall to be done with it. Then Jack could arrest Hannibal for killing him, even though he hadn't actually done it. But who would know? Who would care?

He shook his head and let out a sigh.

Could someone please tell him what he should do? Give him some kind of sign? God-like intervention or something? He had hallucinations anyway, so why did he never see any signs of God talking to him? Sure, he wasn't schizophrenic and didn't have a brain tumor like that guy from the angel case but his autoimmune disease had given him all kinds of false knowledge and strange deductions before. Surely an angel with a message or even some figures in the steam weren't too much to ask for?

He was so absorbed in his thoughts that he nearly jumped out of his skin when he heard a sound behind him. A sound like a vacuum being filled. The sound of an opening shower stall door. He turned around.

And screamed.

Logically he knew what he would see. I didn't help. It never helped.

He stumbled backwards, sliding, falling.

His hand hurt, his rump hurt but he could only think of crawling further away, backing up against the stall walls with no further escape. He was dead. He was so fucking dead.

"Calm down" Hannibal held up his hands innocently. No knife. No weapon at all. "I only wanted to talk to you without the surveillance's notice."

"What surveillance?" Will's voice trembled.

"Ah" A smile lit up Hannibal's face. A soft, pleased smile. "I had wondered."

"What?" Not only his voice, his whole body trembled. Shook with shivers of fear.

"Calm ... you have nothing to fear" Hannibal slowly bend and held out a hand.

Will stared at that hand. That face. That hand.

What?

"I only wanted to surprise you. I did not think you were this jumpy. I apologize."

Huh? Will blinked. The trembling subsided but left him shaky. He slowly held out his own hand to let himself be helped up. And he was helped up. No sudden moves, no reaching for the shower head to strangle him with the tube and still no weapon.

"It's alright" Hannibal's voice was soothing. "I did not want to scare you. Calm down" A shudder went through Will and nearly forced him to his knees. "No, no, we won't have that ... are you crying? Did I do this?" One hand still held Will's arm, the other caressed his cheek. "You poor thing. So scared ..."

Hannibal was nearly crooning. It made Will cringe inside. Good, he hated this. He hated his weakness. He hated his tears. He hated his loss of control. It only made him sob for which he bit down hard on his lower lip.

Hannibal's arms settled around him and slowly guided him into an embrace. All the while the guy continued talking as if he was a child or a hurt dog or something like it: "You don't have to be scared. There is nothing to be scared of. All those fears, all this anxiety, it is all in your mind. It is not real. You are safe here. You came here for safety, so I will keep you safe. Don't worry. No one will harm you while you are with me."

Shit. Will suppressed another sob but had been so close to bursting out of him. He hated this. He hated Hannibal. He hated what Hannibal had done to him. He hated how the guy played with his mind. He hated everything about it.

He lifted his arms and gripped Hannibal's shoulders. He only had to shove. He only had to push the guy away to be free of the embrace. He only had to use a minimum of force to have him take a step backwards.

Why couldn't he?

Why the fuck did he feel as if he were paralyzed?

"I will keep you safe. You are mine to protect. Mine to keep. I will not let harm come to you. So calm. Relax. I can hold you up if your legs give out. Now calm ... good. You're doing well. So well" One of his hands had begun to stroke his spine. "Exactly like that. It feels good to relax, hm? You can relax here. Such a good boy."

Will still trembled. He was leaning against Hannibal and he relaxed and he still trembled. He hadn't known that was even possible. But he felt good and scared at the same time. Somewhere along the lines of positively nervous.

"Very good" Hannibal grabbed his shoulders and righted him until he was standing on his own again. He nodded, smiled and turned to leave the shower.

Will nearly went after him until he remembered where he was and who he was with. The sharp reminder struck him like lightning. Hannibal. A murderer. A serial killer. How could he forget even for a second?

"Ah, here you are" Hannibal – still a bit wet and completely naked – reached for something in the pile of Will's clothes lying on the washing machine. Will flinched when he saw what Hannibal had taken. "This is what I was looking for. I need it for cooking" Hannibal smiled over his shoulder without turning. "See you at dinner."

He left without another word.

So Hannibal knew.

Will had thought that all along but this was prove that Hannibal knew what he was here for. One cannot ignore his supposed guest carrying around long kitchen knives.

No one sane at least and even though Hannibal killed off people like others would weed their garden – he was sane. In the strictest sense that he had no hallucinations or delusional ideas. As long as you did not count regarding humans as mere disgusting assembling of meat without any virtue or merit an delusional idea.

Without any doubt Hannibal knew that Will was here to spy on him and knew that he had killed those people. So why hadn't he killed him yet? Why was he kept alive? What were Hannibal's plans for him?

He should replay this conversation word for word. So Hannibal had come into the shower – why? He had said something about surveillance. Had he thought that Jack had bugged the house? Maybe even installed cameras? The bathroom with the running shower would have swallowed both sight and sound. So Hannibal had sent him to shower – most likely after he noticed Will had taken the knife – to ... to do what? If he expected surveillance it would have been the perfect opportunity to kill him. But he hadn't done so.

He had made Will intuitively tell him that there was no surveillance. Maybe that had been all he wanted to know. Maybe he had just wanted to find out if there was any surveillance. And Will had blurted out the truth right away. Great move, Will.

And then Hannibal had ... well ... what exactly had that been? Calming him? Why should he? Maybe it was another attempt to fuck with his mind but what did Hannibal plan to accomplish? What was his goal? Will let out a deep sigh.

He did not have the slightest clue.

“Have you ever thought about becoming a vegetarian?”

“Is the dish not to your liking?” Hannibal's face showed actual concern. Maybe he was petty about his cooking skills. Well, he had a right to. Will had found the damn brain in the fridge this morning and thought it belonged to the latest victim and still he was able to eat. Notwithstanding the latest freakish scene in the shower. One would expect all that to curb Will's appetite.

It did not. Dinner was obscenely delicious.

“No, no, it's great. I just wondered. You like meat, especially organs. So I thought ...”

“If I might be on a crusade against vegetarians? Not at all” Hannibal smiled one of his trademark not-reaching-his-eyes-smile. “I like salad. I am just no friend of fish. So it is either meat or salad with me.”

“What about non-salad vegetarian food? Indian for example?”

Anything which did not include organs sounded good right now. Had Hannibal ever ... no, he did not want to think about it. It was disgusting. Hannibal wasn't a cannibal. He wasn't insane and he hadn't immigrated from an remote, otherwise unknown island.

“I like to eat it occasionally. But mostly when I am eating out” Hannibal reached for the wine bottle to refill their glasses. “I do not have the necessary spices here to do it myself. I don't like prefabricated mixed herbs. And a good curry has about fifty different spices in it.”

“Really?” No, you idiot. He wanted to get Hannibal to cook vegetarian, not discuss exotic spices. “Don't you like to try? Mixing all those can't be easy. I guess it would be a nice challenge for you.”

“Hm ... an interesting proposition. I concur. But I would like to make Thai instead of Indian food. And seeing as we are not vegetarians, I want to try some of their recipes with chicken.”

“Alright” Chicken sounded fine. It was something easily identifiable at least. “Anything

I can do to help?"

"I'll write you a shopping list. Do you think you can manage groceries?"

Will was nearly asking why he shouldn't be able to until he remembered that Hannibal liked to keep up their facade. Well ... if he had to play a fearful ex-killer afraid of stepping out of line to survive then he would.

It had been a week.

Jack had not called. Every time Will tried calling him, he seemed to be out of the office. And no matter how often he left a message asking to be called back it never happened. So Jack really was through with him.

Will sighed and curled up on the sofa. What should he do now? It all seemed ... senseless. He wasn't able to stop Hannibal. He wasn't able to get any evidence on him. Even if he somehow miraculously did get something Jack wouldn't listen. He could try to kill Hannibal but after that night a week ago the impulse had deserted him. As well as his courage. And he wasn't coldblooded enough to kill someone he had been living with for weeks anyway.

So what was left to do? Give up? Go home, get his dogs from Alana and search for another job? Could he? Would he be able to forget what a mess he had left here? He closed his eyes. He knew he wouldn't. He would not be able to leave.

He would just stay and wait.

Maybe someday Hannibal would finally kill him. Maybe that would help to convict him. Will could only hope. It was his only hope left to be of any use.

"Oh, look" Hannibal had just sat down and taken up the newspaper. "There has been another murder."

Great topic for breakfast. Especially when they both knew who had done it.

"Gruesome. They found a butcher impaled on his own sharpened bones" Hannibal continued playing or actually being oblivious to Will's discomfort. "His legs were skinned and hung with the animal's legs. They only recognized them after searching for the missing limbs for hours. It seems to be a Chesapeake-Ripper murder. The victim was missing his heart."

"Still missing it I suppose" Will said more to himself than to Hannibal.

"Well, yes. Obviously" When Hannibal lowered the papers there was a smirk on his face. "It means the killing spree is done for now. There have been three victims."

"Thank God" Will let out a deep sigh. Unexpectedly he wasn't one of the victims. He was alive. He shouldn't feel glad about the murder but somehow he was. "When was he killed?"

"Yesterday, probably around noon."

"Didn't you have clients at that time?" Will furrowed his brow. How the heck did he kill all those people? He was still under observation, right?

"Of course I had. What else should I have done?" The smile could be called condescending at best. "You are a better radar for crimes. You seem to understand why and how people do those horrible things."

Will was tempted to tell him to shut it but he wanted to survive another day. So he would reign himself in and pretend again that nothing was wrong and that Hannibal was a normal psychiatrist. Whatever he needed to stay satisfied.

"So, tell me more" Hannibal held the newspaper out to him. "What happened?"

"I have to see a crime scene to do that" He concentrated on eating his boiled egg.

"I have seen you doing it far away from crime scenes. I know you can do it" Hannibal smiled but there was a hard edge to that smile. "Indulge me."

Shit. Will studied the other carefully. He didn't want to do these debriefing sessions. He didn't want to encourage Hannibal. But at the same time he did not know why Hannibal kept him alive and this might be it. He spoke carefully while watching the other: "I don't want to. Whenever I think myself into a murderer ... it means that I see what he sees. I do what he does. I feel what he feels. I am being him in that moment, completely emerged in his thoughts and fantasies. In those moments I like killing people. I like mutilating them. Every time I do it it leaves a stain on my soul. Every time I feel a little more disgusted with the world and myself."

"Yes."

Will waited. Hannibal didn't seem inclined to saying more. He still held out the newspaper.

"Why would you want me to do that?" Desperation clung to his voice.

"I want to see what happens when the disgust overwhelms you. Will you conquer it? Or will you drown? Will you be able to cope or will you break away from yourself and become someone else? Someone who really thinks and feels like this?"

Will knew what question Hannibal did not ask. He knew because it was what he most feared: Would he become someone like Hannibal? Was it possible to drown in such much blood and gore that he would turn into the one he despised most? That he would give himself up to escape the pain?

He reached for the newspaper.

Maybe that was Hannibal's plan. Maybe his goal was to turn Will into someone like himself. But why would he want to do that? Why would he want to turn Will into a copy of him? I didn't make any sense. Well, maybe it did. Maybe ... maybe he knew enough now to find out.

Will eased into one of the chairs and relaxed. His mind always worked best when he was in the middle of a crime scene. This house was their crime scene. This house was where Hannibal kept and groomed him into another being. He let himself sink into his mind.

He was a bit older than forty. He was living alone in a big house in a quiet, family-friendly neighborhood. He had never been married and did not seem to have had a girlfriend or another significant other in quite a while. He had studied medicine, became a surgeon and then changed to psychiatry. He was a psychopath and had killed for at least fifteen years now.

Spotlight.

He always had problems connecting with others. They never noticed because he was charming when he wanted to but he felt severed from other human beings. They did not feel as if they belonged to the same species he did. Rather they seemed to belong to one species and he was alien. It never bothered him much. He was superior to them. He did not need to spend time on their feeble social interactions and miserable attempts to gain affection from one another. He was free to learn whatever he wanted, read all he liked and enjoy the finer things in life.

He tried dating in college to see what the fuzz was about. He never understood. Sex was nice but the price tag of a hormonal, nagging female was too high. Prostitutes seemed a cleaner and cheaper solution. Not that he needed their services. He wasn't a

slave to his urges the way most men his age seemed to be.

He chose surgery because it suited him. Blood and intestines held a peculiar fascination for him. Holding them in his hands gave him more thrill than sex could ever do. It felt like power. It occupied him for quite some time before he became bored again.

Boredom had always been his eternal enemy.

Something was missing. The precise surgical way in which he had to do his operations seemed too confined. There was no art in it, no artistic value. And it was only half the fun if he could not see people's facial expressions. He wanted ... more. Something new. Something exciting. He tried different fields of surgery but even the most radical and bloody didn't satisfy him.

He found his answer one night. He didn't want to save people's lives. He wanted to snuff out that light burning in their eyes. He wanted to replace it with fear, desperation and pain. He wanted the thrill of knowing that he truly had the power of a God. He would bring another Deluge and cleanse this earth of all that foul, abominable creatures.

He would be merciful and give their lives meaning. Lives that lacked all kinds of worth would be turned into works of art. He would be a creator in his own way. He would become what only he could be. He was chosen. It was why he had been made different. He had been made in the image of God.

Or so he thought. It was pure bliss in the beginning. Luring his prey, killing and arranging them. Always fearing that someone would find out, that someone would find him. But they never did. He became more daring. He went on killing sprees, left patterns and even clues to his identity. But they never found him.

He had overestimated the force of law. He had guessed that at least one might have something similar to his intelligence. If one did, he wasn't in the field. It was almost too easy. No, wrong, it was too easy. It wasn't fun anymore.

He had long since changed his occupation to psychiatry. Understanding people's minds seemed like an interesting challenge. It was like trying to understand another species who didn't even speak his own language. Fascinating – but repetitive over the time. They all had the same patterns. Schizophrenia linked to mania. Fear linked to depression. Severe depression linked to schizoaffective disorders. Some personality disorders were less severe forms of those psychotic diseases. Other personality disorders based on disturbed emotional input, processing or output. Narcissistic, antisocial and Borderline personalities – they were all just different manifestations of similar neurological deficiencies. Some modulators turned too high, some too low, some defect but all part of the complex emotional regulation network.

He had long perceived that he wasn't a God. Those had been delusional ideas to give his life meaning and self-worth. Not that he had ever missed them. His personality made him unable to miss his feelings. It even made him unable to feel his self-disgust. His personality disorder – if one could call it that – seemed like a gift to him. And he wasn't alone. There were others like him, even though most of them weren't as daring and nearly all of them a lot more stupid.

Thankfully his personality also made him unable to feel any sympathy for them. They seemed like flawed experiments of a grand ideal of a human. He might be such an ideal. They certainly were not. Killing them felt more like euthanasia than killing regular humans.

Searching for them and getting to know them became his new excitement. Maybe somewhere he would find one that would be interesting. Finding someone who was

similar to him sounded tantalizing. In a good way. Putting his brains against another criminal genius ... well, that sounded like fun. Winning would mean he could go against a better one. Losing would be a glorious death.

It would be like Sherlock and Moriarty. Only better.

He just never found one. Finally when he was near to giving up, someone interesting crossed his path. Not a criminal genius. Not even a genius. But someone with the astonishing skill to think himself into every criminal in the world. No matter how sick, no matter how twisted. What a rare gift.

A gift he didn't know how to handle. What should he do with him? Certainly not kill him. It was like having a rare specimen in your lab when you had seen nothing but mice all your life. He would observe. Give him obstacles. Give him riddles. Turn everyone against him and see how he would cope. Isolate him. And then keep him to play some more. Training him, grooming him and see how far he could go. He could discard it if it broke or if he got bored with it. But right now it was his new toy.

His brand new source of fun.

Will opened his eyes. He trembled. His whole body shook. As soon as he got a minimum of control over himself he dashed to the bathroom and vomited. He retched until there was nothing left inside of him. Only then did he have enough energy to cry.