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The Downfall of Daniel Fitzpatrick: A Creative Short Story

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The Downfall of Daniel Fitzpatrick

(A Not So True- True Crime)

Renee Daniela Horsley

Acknowledgments: I would like to thank Dr. Herb Thompson for allowing me to produce something outside the box. I would also like to thank my family for their support in writing this story.

Trigger Warning: this story contains strong themes and a discussion of death and suicide.

Part I

The Perspectives of Daniel and Victoria

Daniel

I grew up with humble beginnings. A small farm in a small town in the middle of nowhere Nebraska. Now here I am sitting in a jail cell awaiting my trial. Where did my life go wrong?

Starlight, Nebraska was one of the best and safest places to raise a family. A small-sized town is full of parks, biking trails, and a river that ran through the outskirts of the town. My parents were proud to call Starlight home. Our farm included fruit, produce, and eggs. We had a small apple orchard that we picked in late summer to early fall. We also specialized in several types of berries such as raspberries, blackberries, strawberries, and gooseberries. I used to love Blackberry season as my mom would make the most delicious pies and jams. I can still smell her cooking even now. A true Nebraska family, hardworking and strong.

My father was not the overly emotional kind. Seamus Fitzpatrick: six foot two, ex-army officer, but he did love my mother. My mother was a nurse. She was working at the veteran hospital when my father walked in with the biggest gash on his hand that she had ever seen. The man was deployed overseas and trained in combat, but a kitchen knife took him out. My mother immediately rushed over to help him. That's when he looked into her emerald, green eyes. He needed 15 stitches and barely missed his tendon. Somehow, he got my mother's number and said he would stop by the hospital in a few days to properly ask her

out for a date. The rest is history after that. A wedding, five children, and a farm. This showed the selflessness of my mother. She gave up being a nurse to create a farm with my father because that was his dream. Their love only seemed to grow. No matter what hardship, illness, or death bestowed on our family, my parent's love was always there. I have always dreamed of a love story such as my parents. This was the foundation of my upbringing and morals. Always treat people with kindness, help when you can, and most of all forgive the ones you love.

I have three older brothers and one younger sister. Mark is the oldest. He played football and was very into sports, a typical jock. He received a full-ride scholarship to the big college in the city. He was the first of our family to attend a four-year university. Then there's Sean, also very athletic but he did not have the book smarts that Mark did. Sean enjoyed working on the farm and working out. Jackie was the closest in age to me. He was a nature enthusiast. He loved camping, swimming, and spending time outdoors. I am the fourth child, Daniel. Another fitting Irish name. I enjoy working with my hands. Helping my mother in the garden and when computers started to emerge. I loved to tinker with those. Sean liked to work on cars, so I was often his assistant with that.

Having three older brothers and an ex-military father, I understood my gender at a very young age. I was meant to be strong, provide for a family, and not have emotions or at least public ones. It oftentimes felt like the world was on my shoulders. I remember once when I was younger, I found one of my mother's old baby dolls, I thought it was beautiful and started to play with it. I only had it for a day when my father came home and yanked it from me, exclaimed no son of his will play with a baby doll, and threw it at the ground. Shattering the doll, my mother was extremely saddened by this but knew what her role was

as his wife. From that moment on, I made sure I did manly things by playing sports, woodworking, and being outside. This was the late 80s but unfortunately, the town of Starlight looked more like a scene from the 1950s, especially in their socially acceptable roles, morals, and laws.

Finally, the baby of the family, my little sister, Erin. Erin was six years younger than I was. My father thought they were done at four, but my mom wanted a girl. Erin was just that. The girliest of girls you can think of. Which sometimes does not work when you live on a farm. She loved to dance and cheer. She was a spoiled princess. An Irish princess who knew. My parents treated her incredibly differently from how they treated us. She got everything she wanted but she too also learned her role as a girl early on. That's how she learned to cook and clean after us. I knew it angered her as we got older. Erin is strong and independent and sometimes I wished my mother would have remembered that about herself before she met my father.

In the summer of 1997, tragedy would fall on my family for the first time. Jackie was 15 when he passed away. He drowned at the lake. The paramedics could not save him, and my parents were devastated when they learned of his death. He was a great swimmer. I think a part of my family died that day. I was 12. No 12-year-old should have to stand at their 15-year-old brother's grave, wondering how this could happen. The only thing that gave me comfort through my grief was her. But we will get to the story soon.

I would give anything to see my family. Apologize to them. I don't know how this happened. Not when I had my parent's love as an example. I just don't know.

Victoria

Death...I don't think I ever expected it to be quite like this. My poor baby girl did not deserve this. She never got the chance to do the things that I did. Why...Why...Why...

I grew up on a southern plantation in the heart of northwest Georgia. My father was an attorney, and my mother came from old Southern money. We were considered high class. I had two older brothers, William, and Robert. The three of us spent our early lives on that plantation being taken care of by Laura Jean, our nanny. She taught my brothers and me how to read, write, and do basic mathematics before kindergarten. She also taught me how to play the piano and helped me to learn the flute. William is five years older than me, and Robert is three years older. It was difficult to be the only girl, I begged my mother for years to give me a baby sister. Her answer always was that the ship had sailed. Honestly, I think I never got another sibling because my parents did not love one another.

My parent's marriage was a business deal between my grandfather and father. My father needed money to start up his private practice and my grandfather was afraid that my mother had feelings for other women. To protect his family's reputation my grandfather drafted a prenuptial agreement with my father and married his only daughter off to a young thriving attorney. I wonder if that is why my mother always seemed sad. My ideals in love never came from my parents because there was hardly any love to give. My mother had a nanny raise us from infancy, she barely hugged or acknowledge us. My father on the other

hand while being the breadwinner and gone for long hours, loved his children. He would come home and help with bath time and would always read me stories. I had my father wrapped around my finger and my brothers were his pride and joy.

When I was five, I got extremely sick. This was the only time I ever saw my mother panic, her icy blue eyes filled with tears as my father rushed me to the emergency room. Laura Jean stayed at the house with Robert and William but called every hour to get an update. Doctors determined I had a rare kidney disorder that warranted a kidney transplant. Both of my parents ended up being matching donors. My mother was the one who ultimately gave me her kidney. This made me feel so much closer to her. It is amazing how the neglect of a parent can make you crave it even more.

I was ten when my father received an interesting business opportunity. A business associate of my father was living in a small town in Nebraska called Starlight. He had a large private practice with many clients unfortunately for my father's business associate his mother was sick in Uganda. He needed to go back home as soon as possible. He proposed giving the entire practice along with his clients to my father. He would also sell his large plot of land to my father for a very cheap price. My mother was against the entire idea, but since when does my father ever listen to my mother? We moved to Starlight, Nebraska in the summer, we lived in a fancy apartment until our house was built. The house finished in October. It was the largest farmhouse in the town, and we stood at the top of the hill like we owned the entire place. My room was grand and had hand-painted daisies and roses on the wall. I never wanted anything; my life was cushy. From a young age, I knew I would stand out against my peers and now more than ever did I feel that.

Little did I know what Starlight, Nebraska would hold for me. The people I would meet and the relationships that would bloom. The tragedies that would befall this small town that I once grew to love.

Daniel

I can remember the day I met her. The love of my life. The one who changed everything about me. Victoria Elizabeth Raleigh. I never expected our ending to happen the way it did. I can never forgive myself.

I met my best friend Zach when I was 4 years old. His family moved into the farmhouse next door to ours. His bedroom faced mine and I noticed him looking over at me one summer afternoon. I was four and did not know any better, so I chucked one of my brother's baseballs at his window. This was my way of initiating play. Well, I broke his window. My parents were furious with me. They paid for the window and apologized profusely. His parents were very calm about the whole thing. About a week later there was a knock at our front door and my older brother answered the door. There he was a four-year-old blonde hair and a blue-eyed boy named Zach. He came by to return my baseball and from there we were attached at the hip.

Years pass and we are now 11. We are in our last year of elementary school and Miss Smith has been our teacher for the last two years. Being a part of a small town, you always know everyone in your class. There is rarely someone new unless a homeschooled kid gets enrolled in public school for the first time. However, that first day of school in August was completely different. There was a new student. Someone I nor Zach had ever seen before. Miss Smith introduced her to the class as Victoria and that she had moved here from

Georgia. Georgia! That is so far away, what was she doing here in Starlight? She looked like she was from Georgia, with her pale skin and light freckles, chocolate brown curled-to-perfection hair that fell to her lower back. She wore a pastel pink and light green dress and a matching pink bow. The one thing that looked off about her was the shoes she wore. Everything else about her screamed rich and proper but when I looked down at her feet there, she was in a white high-top Converse. I looked down at my own feet and noticed my dirty white high-top Converse. Maybe she was nothing like I thought she was.

At lunch, all I could talk to Zach about was how cute I found this girl. He told me, I should stop talking to him and go talk to her. I was a popular kid, not an athlete or asshole type of popular but she drew everyone into her. I looked over at the lunch table she was sitting at, and a group of girls had already attached themselves to her. So, I waited for recess. When you are in upper elementary recess turns into finding a place and talking. I noticed her walking the trail by herself and ran up to her. Unfortunately, for me, I would end up tripping a foot away from her, scraping my knee, and landing face down in the dirt. She ran right up to me and asked if I was okay. I was not but I wanted to play it cool in front of her and said I was fine. She asked what I was running for anyways. I responded with well I wanted to talk to you. She giggled, the cutest giggle I had ever heard including my baby sister. We sat in the dirt talking all recess. She was nothing like I thought she would be, she was better. Sweet, sassy, kind, and extremely smart. She loved the simple things in life like a good rope swing and Christmas time. By the end of our first conversation, I knew this girl would be mine forever. Every moment to come would be with her by my side. Before the bell rang, she looked at me with her brown eyes and asked, "Do you want to be my friend?", I of course said yes.

I can remember every moment of that first interaction and yet I would be the one to destroy forever.

Victoria

I do not even know where I am. Heaven...Hell...some sort of purgatory. I just want my daughter. I want my baby. Wait...Am I still pregnant? It does not look like it. Daniel never got to find out. I cannot forgive him, but I want to. I love him, he was my world. God, I do not know where I am...

I met the love of my life when I was just 11 years old. I would make many other friends as I grew up in Starlight, but nobody compared to him. Daniel James Fitzpatrick. I would come to love that name and the person to whom it belonged. I would even come to be good friends with his best friend Zach, we were like three peas in a pod. My father hated the idea of me hanging out with boys, especially at such a young age. To which I would always reply, I only have brothers, I am a proper woman in public but socially I only understand boys. I was always too smart and sassy for my good. Teachers and other adults loved me as I was soft-spoken and well-mannered. But when I was left alone or I got to hang out with my group, all hell broke loose.

We often would get in trouble because as typical preteens are we were extremely annoying. We would ride our bikes through the freeway at night or ding dong ditch elderly neighbors. I am not proud of these moments, but they helped me live a little. Especially coming from the pretentious family, I come from. The times that I loved the most were when we would find a corn field and star gazing, or we would hang out and play video games in

Zach's tree house. I came to love Daniel's family. His mother was one of the sweetest and kindest women I have ever met. She reminded me of Laura Jean who I greatly miss. Mrs. Fitzpatrick would make the most delicious pies, but I think the thing that made me the happiest was how she treated her family and eventually me. She was like the mother I never had. This saddens me as my mother is very much alive and well, she just refuses to take on her role as a mother. Daniel's older brothers made me laugh, they loved to tease him and mess around with him. Jackie who was only two years older than him always made sure I felt comfortable even though I reassured him that my brothers were exactly like them. Mark and Sean were surprised by my football and baseball skills and that fall helped me pick apples off the trees because I was too short to reach them. Daniel's father scared me at first, he seemed intimidating but that all changed when I saw how he interacted with his little girl and how he cared for his wife and boys. Finally, little Erin, was five years old when I first met her, and I became her instant best friend. She would always ask me when her brother and I would get married (we did not even know we had romantic feelings for each other yet) and have me braid her hair. She was the cutest little girl and was so happy to have this small person look up to me. I felt honored to be somewhat part of their family.

The summer of 1997 will forever be burned into my memory. It was supposed to be peaceful and warm. Full of laughter and sunshine. The summer after our first year of middle school. I received a call one afternoon from Zach telling me something happened at the lake and that I needed to come as quickly as I could. When I arrived the family, I had come to love like my own was in shambles, Daniel was a wreck. Jackie was swimming in the lake and a random current came and pulled him under. He was unable to make it out in time and the paramedics got there too late. Jackie was 15 when he passed. Two years older than us.

Barely about to start high school. Mark was about to leave to go to college in the big city and Sean was playing varsity for the High School's baseball team and was thinking about applying for college. This would change their lives forever. I remember standing next to Daniel holding his hand when they laid Jackie in the ground. That night we would walk the cornfield together in the dark and announce our feelings for each other for the first time. Daniel said he did not want to waste any more time not telling me his feelings. We shared our first kiss that night and it felt almost as magical as any sappy romantic comedy. I just always felt guilty that it came from Jackie's tragic accident.

Middle school came and went, we were all in High School now. We have been dating for the past three years now and I could not be happier. Daniel is the most supportive and loving boyfriend I could ask for. I know my father expected me to fall for a rich or powerful man similar in stature to him. But Daniel is all I have ever wanted. He expects nothing of me but will drop the world at my feet. Zach is still as close to us as ever. We have never made him feel like a third wheel when we hang out together. I think high school will be some of our best years yet and I am so happy to have Daniel by my side.

I was right high school would be the best years of our lives filled with many memories of homecoming football games, kissing in the rain, summer tubing, promposals, and graduation. How did I end up making the biggest mistake of my life just 10 years later?

Daniel

In the same cornfield where I kissed her for the time, said I love you for the first time, and asked her to the senior prom, was the same spot where I asked her to marry me. She of course said yes. My love, my life, I never imagined my anger would take us here. Can you ever forgive me, I miss you.

I had asked her father's permission before I asked her to marry me. He told me no, they always assumed we would grow out of it. To be fair we were freshly 18 and I was planning on attending community college to obtain my degree in software design. Victoria was working as an assistant preschool teacher. Her parents were furious when she decided not to go to college. Her brothers both followed in her father's footsteps of attending law school. He expected more from his only daughter. Eventually one day, I felt defeated and sat on the steps outside their house and stared out to the town of Starlight. Victoria's mom came and sat down next to me. I was genuinely surprised when she sat next to me. She told me, she wants her daughter to be happy and feel loved in her life, and at that moment her mother permitted me to marry her now.

We decided to get married on September 21st, 2003. The planning process was awful, but Victoria created the most beautiful wedding. The day finally came, and both our families were joined together at the cathedral to celebrate our love story. Victoria floated down the

aisle like an angel, tears rolled down my cheek as she walked up the aisle. It was one of the most important days of my life and I vowed to love and protect her at all costs.

We bought our first house at 1216 Mockingbird Lane. It had a white picket fence and a large wrap-around porch, and my new wife's favorite detail included our light blue front door. I planted an apple tree in the backyard from one of the apple seeds from the family farm. I hope it grows big and strong so our future children can have a tire swing to swing from. I cannot wait to spend my life here.

The college has been more than interesting. I do have a passion for tinkering with computers. I enjoy creating new software, I even recently sold a new one to Google, and they found my profile to be very interesting. My professors say I am top of my class, and I could go into any field I want to. I could even move away from Starlight. That may be in the cards but for now, I still consider Starlight home. I still work weekends on my family farm to help support Victoria and I. Zach decided to attend college in the big city to get his degree in business. He calls often and most recently told us he has a date with a girl from his economics class. He states that everyone in the big city is completely different from everyone back home. He oftentimes finds he has differing ideas and ideals from them and wants to engage in dialogue. I remind him to center himself, listen to others, affirm his feelings, respond, and add to the discussion so others can learn to understand him, and he can learn to understand others.

Victoria loves her job and loves being a wife. She loves to interact with children and brighten their days. I cannot wait till she is a mom. I know she has a strained relationship with her mother, but she will be one of the best moms around. Our life is perfect. Everything fell into place just as it should.

She will make me the best mom and the best father. Until my mental snap. I ruined it all.

Victoria

Time seems to fly when you are in this dark place. I keep waiting for myself to just wake up and it all be a bad dream. When will I find any comfort, I want to know.

Our life has been beautiful. The perfect house, the perfect husband, and soon the perfect baby. I just recently found out I was pregnant. I went to the hospital to confirm, and it came back positive. I cannot wait to tell Daniel over dinner tonight. I went to the new Walmart we just got and bought an adorable baby onesie, and I will wrap the pregnancy test in it. I decided to make one of his favorite dinners, meatloaf, and mashed potatoes. I even asked his mom to make us a pie, she asked what the fancy occasion was, and I said soon she would know. He came home from work, and I could not hold my excitement any longer, so I handed him the nicely folded onesie and he undid it. I have never seen a man happier; he picked me up and off my feet and spun me around our living room. I went back to thinking of my own family, I wondered if my parents were excited to have children or if that was all a part of the deal. But then I remembered I was not my parents, I married for love, I work with children because it is rewarding and brings me joy, and I am pregnant with my first baby, and I could not be happier.

April 22, 2005, Michael Keaton Fitzpatrick was born at 8:42 in Memorial Hospital. He was 7 pounds and 6 ounces and was 20 inches long. We brought him home in a light blue

outfit where his grandparents and aunts and uncles plus cousins were all waiting to meet him. I know Daniel's parents were thrilled to have another grandbaby, including Michael they were now up to 6. As Mark and his wife had two, Sean and his wife had twins and another new baby, and now we have Michael.

I love watching Michael grow and learn more things. His first birthday is just around the corner, and we are doing a Winnie the Pooh theme. Zach and his wife will be coming into town to celebrate, and I am so excited to see them. Their wedding was 6 months ago, and we did not get to see them much as we had to get back to Michael. I am so glad that after all this time we have remained friends and can be a part of each other's lives like this. My parents will not be here as they are in Georgia dealing with my grandfather's estate. But Daniel's family will be here, and Erin just turned 15. She is so precious to Michael; I hope he knows how loved and treasured he is.

Happy birthday to you... Happy birthday to you... Happy birthday baby Michael...happy birthday to you. Just as there was happiness and love that day, this would not be the last time a candle blew out. It is so dark here.

Daniel

My precious boy, how could I hurt you and scar you like this? I think they said child protective services placed you with my parents. I cannot imagine the pain and nightmares you must have; you are only 10. I am a terrible father; I am a monster.

Michael has grown into such an inquisitive young boy. He is three years old now. He loves to play with building blocks and hit baseballs off his tee. We signed him up for little league and swimming lessons this summer. His giggles fill me with joy. He is the spitting image of me, with dark brown hair, and emerald eyes just like his grandmother. My parents often take Michael back to the farm and let him help picking berries or collecting eggs. He loves when he gets a grandparent's day. Victoria's parents do try to make time for him but with Victoria's mother going through chemo and doctors' visits, it is often hard for them to take Michael.

I have asked Victoria how she feels about her mother being so sick and she always just gets quiet. I know her relationship is strained with both her parents. She has no idea that her mother was the one who permitted me to marry her. I think she wants to be angry at something. Her mother has only been given a few months. It breaks my heart to know I cannot shield her from the pain that will be coming. I promised to protect her at all costs, but this is one pain, I know I cannot protect her from.

I heard sobs come from the bedrooms. I ran upstairs, Michael in my arms to find Victoria on the floor. December 14th, 2009, Victoria's mother passed away from leukemia. It was a hard-fought battle. I tried in every way to be there for my wife and my son. Zach and his wife Reya spent a lot of time at our house to help Michael and provide Victoria some comfort. They had a two-year son named Anthony, and he was obsessed with Michael. Victoria was depressed she closed herself off from her family, took bereavement leave at her work, and generally wanted to do nothing. One night we got into an argument, and she stormed out of the house. I asked Zach if he would find her and take him back to his place just for the night. I assumed Reya and Anthony were there and could provide a sense of comfort. I just wanted to see my wife happy again.

If I knew what I knew now. I never would have sent her there. My trust is broken. My family is a lie. My life is ruined, all due to this fateful night.

Victoria

I see a light, there's someone there. Mom... Mom I am coming...wait for me. How I have missed you.

When my mother passed, I was an emotional wreck. I did not think her passing would impact me as much as it did. I was fighting with Daniel and did not want to be around Michael. I wanted my life to stop. I wanted everything to stop, the pain, the crying, the people saying I am sorry, I wanted all of it to stop. I stormed out one night, not wanting to be around Daniel. I was not much of a drinker but the night I stormed out I was already tipsy. Daniel had Zach pick me up and take me to his house.

I thought Reya would be home with Anthony, but they were visiting her family. Zach did not know I had been drinking so when I suggested we do some more drinking he was okay with doing so. We both got wasted, but I do remember kissing him. I regret that kiss with every fiber of my being. Daniel is the love of my life, and I would never want to do anything that would purposely hurt him. I thought all we did was kiss; little did I know we took it much farther than that. It would be years before this mistake would turn into my reality. Zach is like a brother to me; I did not ask him if he remembered anything about the night before. I went home back to Daniel and made love to him. I pushed that night deep into my memory and shut it out. I never thought of it again once I was with Daniel.

A few months later I was feeling unwell and took a pregnancy test. It was positive, I told Daniel by buying Michael a big brother shirt. He was wearing it when Daniel got home. He was so shocked and excited. Michael was already four and we were not sure if we wanted to have more children. But our little miracle was here already. This baby made up its mind for us. A few weeks later, we had our first ultrasound. I was a lot further along than we thought and they asked if we wanted to know the gender. I was hesitant at first, but Daniel wanted to know. I caved and said yes, that is when a little “It’s a girl!” wording popped up on the screen. I broke down crying. I never knew how much I wanted a daughter until I saw those words. Daniel shed a few tears as well. We were both completely in shock. We went out and bought her this little white bunny stuffed animal.

Lily Ann Fitzpatrick was born at 11:11 AM on November 18th, 2010. She was 5 pounds and 5 ounces and 17 and a quarter inch long. She had beautiful blue eyes. Daniel got his first-ever speeding ticket the night before her birth. He was worried we were not going to make it to the hospital because I was in severe pain. I thought she was coming. Daniel’s mom brought Michael to see his baby sister later that afternoon. He was the sweetest boy to her; he kept saying that was his baby and that she was a cutie pootie. My son was the gentlest and most caring person I know. So, seeing him interact with his newborn baby sister made my heart swell. Lily loved her bunny even as a newborn. Michael loved to hold and play with his baby sister. Daniel loved taking the kids on walks and putting them to bed. I had the most perfect family I could ask for.

Perfect, I seem to use that word a lot to describe a lot of things in my life. My life was never perfect. I was always ruined. What made me think I was perfect? My mistake with Zach was not perfect and soon would haunt me every day of my life until my dying breath.

Daniel

I not only took the life of the woman I loved most in the world. I took the life of my little girl. My sweet Lily. How could I do such a heinous thing to someone who is only five years old? I deserve death, I want to die.

Somehow, the second time around time flies even faster. Lily hit all her firsts and I could not be prouder. Somehow, watching my two children play together, learn together, and even just be together, makes me feel like the most invincible father in the world. Victoria is thriving at being a preschool teacher all the kids love her. Michael recently started kindergarten. He loves to come home from the bus and tells all about his learning. I've caught him on the weekends trying to teach her sister her ABCs and 123s. She's only just a baby, but I feel like she's retaining some things.

Saturdays are my favorite day of the week. We go to the park, and I play with the kids while Victoria comes up with lesson plans for her kiddos. Then Zach and his family come and join us. It feels just like when we were younger except, we're in our 20s with children and wives and everything is completely different, but it still feels the same.

Flash forward. Lily just turned two and Michael is seven. Lily goes to the daycare where Victoria teaches, and she is now learning her ABCs and colors. Sometimes it's still mystifying to me the beauty that Lily has. Her long, blonde hair, and those bright blue eyes

they're remarkable. I must assume she looks just like her grandmother, Victoria's mom. Otherwise, she looks almost nothing like me and a little like Victoria but she's perfect in every way. She still brings that little white bunny with her everywhere. Whether it's daycare, the park, or bedtime, it doesn't matter. She finds comfort in that stuffed animal, and it makes me so happy that it was the first thing we ever bought her. There is a special significance to that.

Time flies, how do my kids keep getting older? I feel like I was changing diapers and rocking them to sleep only yesterday. My sweet Lily Bear is three and Michael is eight. Lily is in her mom's preschool class. It is Halloween time, which means Lily will soon turn four in November. They grow up so fast when you blink your eyes. Michael recently got into playing baseball and football. That boy has a passion for sports however, he's so gentle and kind. He has a love for animals and spending time with his grandparents. He makes friends so easily and can make an entire room full of adults laugh. He has such a charismatic personality. It is one of my favorite things about him.

Victoria and I try our best to make time for ourselves. We have gotten into a much better routine than when Lily was firstborn. She is still the most beautiful person I know. Sometimes I take her to our cornfield and watch the stars together. She has given me a beautiful family and she never makes me question who I am as a person. My identities and her identities merge like water and jello mix. She makes me a better person every single day.

How could something like this happen to my family? Lily was playing on the playground during her recess and collapsed. Victoria was a mess and called me on the way to the hospital. After hooking her up to an IV and getting a blood sample. Doctors found out she had an extremely rare kidney disorder. I did not know this, but Victoria had the same

disorder, but her mother gave her one of her kidneys. The doctor explained that one of Lily's kidneys was starting to shut down completely while the other kidney was okay. Eventually, though the shutdown of her right kidney could start impacting the other organs on the right side of her body. I had never heard of such a disorder and believed that the Doctors were lying to us. Victoria told me it was all true, that she had the disorder. Lily needed a kidney and it had to come from a parent or we risked her body rejecting the new organ and Michael was too young to be a donor. Victoria could not donate on the fact she had already had a transplant. So, I hoped I was a match.

I received a call from the hospital while I was at work that I was not a match for Lily. I was devastated, I hated seeing my little girl in pain. The hospital said there was some good news though. They said there was already a donor in Starlight, whose kidney was a match to Lily's. They just needed to ask the person if they would go through the surgery. I asked how there could be a donor in Starlight when I was not one. They said sometimes it just happens that way. I was relieved but confused all the same. The doctors said the kidney had to come from a parent. I am not sure what is going on here. That's when a conversation between friends turned into my nightmare.

I received a phone call from Zach. He told me he needed advice on what he should do. We were best friends; I always was there to give him advice. He said he had received a call from Memorial Hospital asking if he would donate one of his kidneys to a little girl who is suffering from a rare kidney disorder. My best friend was the donor match. No one knew that Lily was in the hospital for a kidney disorder. Zach asked if he should go through with the surgery, I told him he should, as it would benefit the little girl greatly. Wheels started turning in my head, and a wave of panic started to form in my stomach. Was Lily, not mine?

She had to be. Her conception lined up correctly. A nagging feeling washed over me when I thought of my best friend of so many years, his blonde hair is bright, and blue eyes, and freckles, just above the nose. She was the spitting image of my best friend. I called the hospital and asked if they could do a paternity test. I would send a sample later, I had to know.

Lily, I am so sorry. Daddy loves you. Daddy loves you. Daddy loves you...

Victoria

One night. One stupid drunken night. It ruined my marriage. It took my life, my daughters, and my unborn children. If I could take it all back, I would.

Lily had her transplant surgery within a week of her being hospitalized, as they found a donor in Starlight. When I looked at her discharge papers, I noticed something I was unaware of. In the notes, there were the results of a paternity test. Which showed that Daniel was not Lily's father. It showed that Zach was Lily's biological father. Lily is only five years old. Daniel is the only father she has ever known. Why did Daniel want a paternity test done?

I thought of the one memory I tried so hard to ignore. I only ever thought me, and Zach kissed. I didn't wake up the next morning thinking I had betrayed my husband more than I already did. We were both drunk, which is not an excuse. I genuinely believed Daniel was Lily's father. Daniel was at work when Lily was discharged. Lily and I returned home, and I put her to bed with her white bunny rabbit. Michael was off at a friend's house for the afternoon. I checked my calendar for June 15th. It was a warm sunny day. It was beautiful.

Daniel returned after work, coldly. I knew why but I was unsure of the angle he may try to pull. I asked him about his day. He did not respond to me. I was in the kitchen making dinner when I yelled Daniel James Fitzpatrick! That was what set off the explosion.

It was my fault. I should have never acted that way toward him. I knew he was furious. June 16th was the day my love burned up in flames.

Daniel

The trial is quickly approaching. My lawyer thinks I should take the plea deal. I can't take the plea deal. I deserve to plead guilty. With everything I know now. I deserve what's coming towards me.

I was furious. I was humiliated. I was heartbroken. The love of my life cheated on me with my best friend since childhood. My daughter was not my own. I could not focus on work after the results were given to me. All I could think about was how I was going to confront Victoria. All my life I have never been one just start an argument, or even finish an argument. I have always been a huge believer in dialogue before argumentation. Which I guess can be ironic since I married a lawyer's daughter. My blood was boiling. My heart was pounding. My head felt like a tsunami and a tornado were whirling inside it.

My workday ended. I drove home angrily. I entered the house angrily. I didn't speak to Victoria when she asked how my day was. I did not know if Victoria knew that I knew. She yelled my name, my full name. That set me off. We started to argue, and any tactic of collecting myself flew out the window. I asked her how she could do such a thing to me the person she claims to love the most. She said she had no idea that she and Zach had done anything but kiss. I screamed at her; you kissed him! You knew you kissed him! You never thought to tell me that fact. She claims she was extremely drunk and so was Zach. It happened five years ago. The night that Lily was conceived.

I never intended to hurt my wife. Something inside my brain just snapped. Rational thoughts stopped firing. Anger and betrayal filled my head. We were standing in the kitchen; I saw the butcher knife on the counter. I grabbed it. Victoria screamed, what are you doing? I stabbed her. Then again and again. I had not realized that Lily had come downstairs. She was holding her white bunny. Again, anger filled my body and I lunged at her. Victoria grabbed me bleeding. She said I will not let you hurt my baby. I pushed her off me. I stabbed her and somehow in the chaos, Lily got in the way. I accidentally stabbed her too. I finally stabbed Victoria in the neck, where she bleeds out immediately. When I looked to the side of me, Lily lay motionless. A pool of blood began to surround Lily, she was curled in a ball with her bunny tucked into her a single tear was rolling down her face.

I heard the creak of the door, in my anger I did not notice, Michael standing in the doorway. Tears were rolling down his face, he looked horrified. That's when I turned to see what I had done. Instant regret and a wave of sickness made their way up my throat. I ran to the kitchen and vomited. I ran to Michael and held him in my blood-soaked clothing. I told him I was sorry, and that I loved him. He did not say anything. I could hear sirens in the distance. I guess the neighborhood heard what was going on. I put the knife on the counter and sat in my chair and waited for the arrival. Michael sat on the porch swing, lightly swinging.

If I could change everything about this day, I would. This was the day my world shattered, and my life ended. Soon everyone would learn of what I had done and the reason behind it all. The end.

Part II
The Crime

Arrived on Scene

June 15, 2015. 1216 Mockingbird Lane, police are dispatched after several 911 calls, are received of a woman screaming. Blood everywhere, two victims, a terrified witness, and the person holding the murder weapon is Daniel Fitzpatrick.

Never, in all my years on the force, as an officer or detective have, I seen such a gruesome scene. It almost seems cliché to say, but they were the perfect family. That is what you notice in a small town such as Starlight, Nebraska. Everyone knows everyone. Secrets and rumors emerge. It is funny how those things get around. I do not think anyone thought Daniel could harm anyone, especially his wife, Victoria, and his daughter Lily Ann. Lily was only five years old. She had so much life to live, she did not even get to see her first day at kindergarten.

“Detective Anderson.”

I turned to see one of my detectives, holding the hand of a frightened 10-year-old boy named Michael Fitzpatrick. He was staring at the patrol car that held his father, who was shackled by handcuffs and blood smeared across his face.

“Michel? Did you see what your dad did?”

Michael shook his head yes.

“Can you tell me what happened? You are safe.”

Michael shook his head no. I told Detective Jones to take Michael to child protective services.

When police arrived on the scene, they were greeted by 10-year-old Michael sitting on the porch swing, blood dried on his clothing and tears rolling down his face. He pointed to the front door, where Daniel told us the murder weapon was on the counter. He was arrested immediately and placed into a squad car.

Victoria was stabbed a total of 12 times including a fatal blow to the neck. Lily was stabbed fatally in the stomach. We began to collect evidence even though we were certain Daniel was the offender. This included blood samples, fingerprints, and hair fibers. We looked around the house for drugs or alcohol that may have been a factor in the crime. Nothing was found at the time of the investigation. Photos were taken of every detail of the crime. Including blood splatter, the positioning of the bodies, and close photos of the injuries observed.

Ambulances arrived to take the bodies to the medical examiner's office. Daniel watched the body bags come out of his house and were loaded into the ambulances. That is when we sent the squad car off to the jail so that Daniel could be booked and processed. My least favorite part of my job was next, notifying the family.

Notifying the Family

My partner and I arrived at Victoria's father's house around 7:15 PM. The biggest house in all of Starlight. As we climbed the hill to their house, dread started consuming me. Victoria was a pillar of the community, but her father was a very influential man in Starlight. Privilege is power and he held that power like a god. We turned the lights on and parked in his driveway. We knocked on the door and he opened it solemnly.

“Mr. Raleigh, your daughter Victoria and granddaughter Lily were stabbed to death by your son-in-law Daniel, he is in police custody.”

As we told him the details of the crime that was committed, I have never seen a man crumble faster. Then rage. We had to hold him back and tell him, he could not hurt his son-in-law. It would not bring his daughter and granddaughter back. We asked him to come with us to the morgue so he could identify the bodies and we informed him that his grandson had been placed into protective custody of child protective services. He asked us, why his grandson was not with him. We informed him that his grandson was a witness to the crime, so he must be placed in protective custody.

We drove to the medical examiner's office, where Mr. Raleigh positively identified the bodies of both his daughter and granddaughter. He sobbed when the sheet was pulled down revealing Victoria's face. I never thought I would see the richest most powerful man in Starlight break down sobbing. The medical examiner did inform Mr. Raleigh that they

needed to perform autopsies on both Victoria and Lily to determine the cause of death. Then they could send them to the funeral home for burial purposes. Mr. Raleigh signed off on all the legal documents and then asked us to bring him home so he could begin contacting family and deciding arrangements.

Typically, we do not contact the family of the offender, but Starlight is a close-knit town. We drove out to the Fitzpatrick farm, when we reached the farm Mr. and Mrs. Fitzpatrick were already outside. We walked up to the front porch where the Fitzpatrick's were sitting.

"Detective Anderson? What brings you out to the farm this late?" Mrs. Fitzpatrick asked.

"Your son Daniel murdered his wife and daughter tonight. He is at the county jail waiting to be booked and charged. I am sorry."

The Fitzpatrick's were speechless, they asked us several times if we were joking. We assured them we were not. A million different emotions seemed to hit them all at once. Mrs. Fitzpatrick began to sob and scream no. She said there was no way that it could have been Daniel. We told her he came willingly, and his son placed him at the crime scene. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked what would happen next and where their grandson was at. We told him Daniel's bond should be posted soon and since Michael was a witness he is in protective custody. We left Fitzpatrick's farm, leaving a family broken.

This is never the easy part of the job.

The Autopsy

The medical examiner conducted the autopsies the next day. It took a total of four hours to conduct the autopsies, two hours per victim. He called me that evening to go over the results. He said.

“Victoria’s cause of death was a fatal knife wound to her carotid artery, resulting in rapid blood loss. She passed within 5 to 15 seconds of that cut being made however during my examination there is something that I feel you need to know.”

I asked if it was how important and if it would impact Daniel’s sentencing and charges.

“It is extremely important; Victoria was 12 weeks pregnant upon her death. Lily’s cause of death was blunt force trauma. She must’ve hit her head somehow after Daniel stabbed her.”

I was in shock; Victoria was pregnant at the time of the attack. Did she know she was pregnant? Did Daniel know she was pregnant? A million questions began to flood my mind. Based on the results of the autopsy, I knew that I was going to file the charges against Daniel. Based on our investigation of the Fitzpatrick household it appears that Daniel did not premeditatively conduct this murder. He used a kitchen knife as a murder weapon, and we found no plan of action that he even wanted to harm his wife or daughter. We sent the

charges to the prosecution office as two counts of second-degree murder and one count of second-degree murder of an unborn child. The prosecution office accepted his charges.

The Booking Process

Daniel was booked into the Starlight County jail on June 15th, 2015. The only infraction that was on his record was a speeding ticket he received while trying to get Victoria to the hospital to deliver Lily. They took his fingerprints, then took mug shots including a picture of a tattoo he had gotten for his brother who passed when they were young. Officers then gathered personal information about Daniel like height, weight, sexuality, and if he had any known mental disorders, as well as documented the alleged crime he had committed. He had no outstanding warrants.

Officers stripped Daniel of his personal effects including his clothing, which was placed into an evidence bag to test for blood and DNA matches. He was given an orange jumpsuit to change into. After initial medical screenings were done, Daniel was placed into a holding cell. Where he would stay until he could be moved in the morning to the actual jail.

The judge received the prosecutors' charges of 3 counts of second-degree murder, one being an unborn child and within 48 hours the judge had set Daniels's bail at \$250,000. He ordered Daniel to stay in prison as he was a threat to society until his trial date, which was set, two months out from June 18th.

The Funeral

Victoria and Lily's funerals were held a week after their death. The weather forecast predicted a hot sunny day, but it was dark gloomy, and rainy. Almost like the entire town was sad. The Fitzpatrick family was not allowed at the funeral and Mr. Raleigh made sure of this by hiring off-duty police officers to patrol the area. Michael had not spoken a word since the 15th. He was allowed to attend as his service worker was with him. Victoria's brothers and other family members carried her casket down the church and then returned to do the same for Lily. Mr. Raleigh and Michael walked behind Lily's casket and sat in the first row. The entire town seemed to show up for this funeral. Victoria touched a lot of lives and children from the past ten years sat in the pews with their parents. Some were crying, others looked somber. Victoria changed the world for these kids and now she was no longer in ours.

It was a beautiful service, that celebrated life and motherhood. Both her brothers gave Eulogies and praised her for being different. They shared childhood stories and talked about how Victoria always wanted to be a mother. It was one her true-life callings. The processional led out to the only cemetery in Starlight, both Victoria and Lily were buried next to her mother. Immediate family dropped roses into the grave.

No one knew what I knew at that funeral. Her family did not realize they were burying three people. But I could not say a word of that knowledge as it was confidential and

part of an ongoing investigation. The trial was just around the corner, and I hope my police work will stick to the guilty verdict.

The Meeting of a Public Defender

Daniel's parents begged him to let them find him an attorney that would not be afraid of the prosecutor. Daniel refused and decided to go with a public defender. Mr. Crabtree was who Daniel got. Fresh out of law school and from a different state. Mr. Crabtree did not seem to be very promising. This would also be his first high-profile case.

The first meeting the two had together was quite the emotional roller coaster. The meeting took place at the jail. Mr. Crabtree interviewed Daniel and informed him of his charges. This was the first time that Daniel had heard of the charges. When Daniel heard the third charge of murder of an unborn child, Daniel lost it. He said he did not know she was pregnant; he regrets it all.

Unfortunately for Daniel, the past could not be undone. His attorney had some trouble trying to calm Daniel down so he said he would be back in a few days. When he returned, he again went over the charges with Daniel and wanted to come up with a game plan for him. He asked Daniel if he wanted to fight the charges and potentially bring the charges down to manslaughter or how he wanted to plea. Daniel said I plead guilty. His attorney was dumbfounded and said.

“But we could fight the charges, I am on your side and will defend you to the end. We could plead no contest. Which is neither guilty nor not guilty!”

Daniel agreed to this plea to allow his attorney to gain experience. Daniel did not want to go to trial, but he knew something must have been wrong with him to kill Victoria and Lily like that. He needed to know, so to trial they went. Mr. Crabtree had a plan of no contest or insanity.

The Interrogation

We first brought Daniel by himself to try and piece together what occurred on the evening of June 15th. But his lawyer found out and was present for the entire interrogation. We asked Daniel, what happened. Daniel first told us about the questioning of paternity and then the test that confirmed it. We asked him who Lily's biological father was. He stated it was his best friend Zach. There was a copy in the house of the results of the paternity test. However, we could also obtain a copy via Lily's medical records. We asked Daniel what happened after he got home from work. His lawyer stopped him. All Daniel said was he was not in the right state of mind when he came home from work. His lawyer asked if a psychological evaluation could be done for Daniel. This worries me as I think the public defender is going to try and put in a plea of insanity.

The next person we wanted to have a conversation was with Zach. Zach seemed frazzled as most of the town was beginning to learn about what occurred at the Fitzpatrick household. We asked Zach if he had a recent surgery. He said yes, he donated his right kidney. We asked if he knew whom his kidney was going to be, and he stated no, and that the surgery was supposed to be anonymous. We told him the recipient of the kidney was Lily Fitzpatrick, your daughter. Zach stared at us and said, daughter? She is like a daughter to me but no she is not my daughter. That is when we presented him with the paternity test results.

He began to sob uncontrollably. We wanted to make sure that Zach was not a part of this crime, based on his reaction I believe we can clear him of that. Zach was in disbelief that Lily was his daughter and that was when the realization hit him even harder. Lily was dead, his best friend killed her. Zach began to lose it and we needed a paramedic team to come in and provide a sedative.

The Psychological Evaluation

Per Daniel's lawyer's request. We set up a time for a psychological evaluation. He was paired with a psychologist who is trained in abnormal and forensic psychology. She also has been working within the prison system for the past ten years.

Once the psychological evaluation began, the psychologist performed several psychological tests as well as informal tests. She then interviewed so she could gain more information about Daniel's well-being and mental health. She also obtained a medical record, which did show that Daniel had no prior mental health, crisis, or illness. She then began to have a conversation. This was the most important aspect of the psychological evaluation. She asked Daniel about himself mainly his family and the verbiage. He used to describe both. She asked questions about symptoms that Daniel may have such as anxiety or trouble sleeping at night.

This was semi-difficult to determine whether Daniel was 100% of sane mind when the murder occurred. As he was currently suffering from elements of PTSD, anxiety, and depression. Based on the results, the psychologist found through the session, she determined that Daniel was not in a mental health crisis when the murder occurred. She believes he was not a full-sane mind; however, this was not enough evidence for him to attempt to plead

insanity. The psychologist believes that Daniel murdered his wife and daughter, in the heat of the moment or crime of passion.

The Psychological Interview

The only witness to the crime that can place Daniel at the scene of the crime is his son Michael. Michael still has not spoken a verbal word in weeks. This interview is to determine if Michael is a credible witness and can be placed on the stand. He was let out of custody to travel two hours to the big city where specially trained officers are ready to conduct the interview. When Michael arrived, he was taken to a room that had toys and drawing utensils, and he was greeted by a woman named Elizabeth. Elizabeth begins to build a rapport with Michael. She would have him Play with toys. He seemed to enjoy the race car toys the most. Eventually, Elizabeth got Michael to speak after weeks of him being mute. She asked Michael what he saw. He said I came home after being at a friend's house and I open the door and my sister was on the floor with blood and my mom had blood on her too. My dad had a knife, and I was scared. Eventually, my dad came over and hugged me. He said he would always love me. I was still scared. I waited for the police on the porch swing.

He was then asked to describe everything he saw in detail. By the end of their session, Elizabeth had determined that Michael would be a credible witness and an asset to the case. Elizabeth stated she felt that Michael would not want to say what happened due to it being

his father however, asking him what happened at least twice should allow him to discuss what he saw and potentially incriminate Daniel even more.

The Trial

The trial began on a wet and gloomy midsummer afternoon with the selection of the jury. Daniel's attorney attempted to move the trial to a different county (also known as a change of venue) due to Daniel and his family being well-known in the community and the crime is quite heinous. They were denied the change of venue.

The honorable Judge Stan Smith would be presiding over the case. The questioning of jurors which is called voir dire began promptly at 8 AM. Both attorneys from each side take turns asking questions of the potential jurors to determine if they were suitable and competent to serve this case. During this phase of the trial, both attorneys are evaluating potential jurors' biases and backgrounds. They also ask the potential jurors if they have conflicts of interest or any prior knowledge of the case. Once questioning is complete, both attorneys can begin to remove the potential jurors based on challenges for cause or peremptory challenges. A challenge for cause means a juror is not qualified to serve a particular case. However, a reason must be given before tossing a juror out. With peremptory challenges, no reason is required but only three challenges are given. The most important aspect of the picking of the jury is building a six-person panel that will be fair to the

defendant and not automatically decides based on the crime without hearing the evidence. In Daniel's case, it was quite hard to pick jury members that would give him a fair shot but Daniels's attorney, Mr. Crabtree feels confident in his decisions.

The trial is adjourned for the day and will resume tomorrow morning with opening statements from both the defendant and the prosecutor. Daniel's trial was public, the courtroom was filled the next day. His family including his siblings were there. Victoria's family also was present in the courtroom. Zach was present as well; his wife and son were not with him. Since the paternity discovery, his wife had moved back home to the major city to think things through. I think the whole town was in that courtroom. Rumors had spread like wildfire when Daniel was first arrested. So, hearing the truth, I believe, shocked some people in the crowd. The number of times the judge had to call an order in the court was astounding. Many people did not know that there was a paternity issue with Fitzpatrick's youngest child. This was also the first time that both sides of the family were made aware that Victoria was pregnant at the time of her death when this fact was revealed. Mrs. Fitzpatrick had to be escorted out of the room due to her sobbing. Both sides gave compelling opening arguments. The court recessed for lunch and would resume after lunch for cross-examination of witnesses.

After lunch quickly filled once again. I was the first witness to be called up. As I was one of the first detectives on the scene. I spoke only the truth and presented forensic evidence such as Daniel's fingerprints on the murder weapon and the blood on his clothing was a mixture of Lily's and Victoria's. I discussed Victoria's defensive wounds and the cause of death for each victim. They then called the responding officer to the stand where he gave an eyewitness account of what happened when they arrived on scene. A fifteen-minute recess

took place before they called psychologist Daniel spoke with to the stand. She stated that she believed Daniel took part in a crime of passion and was not in a stable mental capacity. Currently, he is suffering from PTSD, depression, and generalized anxiety disorder. There was a pause in the calling of witnesses as Mr. Raleigh wanted to give a victim impact statement, which is his right to do so as the next living person of the victim. His statement was emotional. He described who his daughter was, her passions, and how she lived her life. It made many people in the courtroom swell with tears. He concluded his statement by saying how much he loved and missed his daughter and stating how he would never forgive Daniel. The next witness called was the woman who did Michael's psychological interview. They called her to the stand so that she could testify of his competence to see what happened at the crime. I guess this was when Daniel had heard enough. Daniel stood up and said that this was enough. The judge ordered him to sit down. Daniel did not listen and told the judge he would not allow his son to relive what he saw. He asked to be called to the stand. He would tell the court everything that happened in full detail from the time of him, receiving the paternity test to when the police showed up. Daniel loved his son more than anything and wished that his son did not have to relive it and that he would take his place. The judge graciously granted his wish, and Daniel was called to the stand. In full detail, Daniel confessed to the entire crime. He discussed his emotions at his mental state. He never intended to hurt his wife or his daughter. He was angry and every peaceful dialogue tactic he had been taught, flew out the window when he received those results. Daniel stated he did not know Victoria was pregnant and that will haunt him 10 times more than it already does. He apologized to the Raleigh family. It was the time for closing arguments. Daniels's lawyer attempted to chalk the crime up to a crime of passion due to hurt and betrayal. While the

prosecution labeled him, a monster, a cold-blooded killer. The jury was given their instructions by the judge. I wonder what is next to come.

The Jury Decides

After Daniel's outburst, the jury was released to deliberate. After 8 hours they were ready to give their verdict. The Jury determined that Daniel Fitzpatrick was guilty on all accounts of second-degree murder.

The Honorable Judge Smith gave Daniel a sentence of 50 to 75 years in prison with opportunities to apply for parole after a minimum of 25 years. Daniel was taken away in handcuffs and was transported to the state's federal prison. Where the booking process began all over again. Daniel would spend many years here in this federal prison. Going to solitary confinement twice. He was also placed on suicide watch several times. Daniel's mental health only got worse while in prison. He would claim that he could hear Victoria talking to him. Sometimes I still do not know how the man who seemed to have the perfect life ended up in a place like this.

The Rest of their Lives

This story was never meant to have a happy ending. As it did not have a happy beginning. After Daniel was sentenced and placed in federal prison, he would spend 10 years in federal prison before his thoughts would consume him. Daniel passed on August 15, 2025. He did leave a note that was addressed to his parents and his son, Michael.

As Michael got older, his PTSD and general anxiety started to get better through all his therapies and medication. Victoria's father won full custody of Michael against the Fitzpatrick's. However, Michael does spend one week of the year with his father's side of the family. Victoria's father decided to keep the house that Victoria and Daniel bought. He wanted to keep the house, so Michael could decide what he wanted to do with it when he was old enough.

Michael graduated high school as one of the top kids in his class. Mentally and emotionally, he felt strong. On his 18th birthday, he decided to explore his old childhood home. That is how Michael found the notes his mother had written for both him and Lily. In the letters, she apologized to both, for not knowing the true paternity of Lily. Victoria stated in her letters that she had a bad feeling about what was going to happen on June 15. So, she

wanted her children to have some sort of memory of her. It was important to Victoria that her children knew how much they were loved. She also wrote about how much Daniel loved them as well. Even though she was worried that something was going to happen that day she still wanted her children to know that about their father.

These letters created turmoil inside Michael. He had spent many years, hating his father for what he did. At the same time, he spent many years angry at his mother for lying. After graduation, Michael decided to tear down the house and build a new one from scratch. He wanted to incorporate ideas that his mother loved, ideas his father loved, and ideas he thinks his sister would've loved. He built a beautiful two-story modern farmhouse from the ground up. He planted three trees in the backyard for his family that once was.

Michael would soon meet his future wife, Samantha at the local community college where he was taking classes. It was hard for Michael to leave Starlight even as he was offered scholarships to Ivy League schools. It was important to him to be near his grandfather's and be near his mother's and sister's graves. Samantha helped Michael grow as a person and an adult. She was there for him when he received the call that his father had committed suicide. They dated for six years before they got married. Michael became a teacher like his mother and Samantha worked from home as a personal assistant. They welcomed three beautiful children together, the twins Jackie and James and their daughter Elizabeth. The power of psychology, criminal justice, and dialogue is what got Michael through.

The End?

