

the

PSYCHOPATH WHISPERER



THE SCIENCE OF
THOSE WITHOUT
CONSCIENCE

Kent A. Kiehl, PhD

The Psychopath Whisperer

The Science of Those Without Conscience

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For Mom and Dad

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Acknowledgments

Notes

Maximum Security

Fact: One in four maximum-security inmates is a psychopath.

Day 1

The snap of the lock releasing shattered the still morning air as the large metal gate, adorned with rows of razor wire, crept open along an iron rail. The “lock shot,” as it was known, echoed off nearby buildings, amplifying the eeriness of an already macabre scene. Two twenty-foot-high parallel chain-link fences stretched a quarter mile in either direction of the gate. In the space between the fences was an eight-foot-high column of razor wire, a gauntlet not even the most agile convict could vault. There was not a soul in sight. The gate appeared to mysteriously recognize someone was approaching and opened to welcome me to my first day working in a maximum-security prison.

That morning I had driven sixty miles through the rain from my residence in Vancouver to the town of Abbotsford, the home of several high-security prisons in the lower mainland of British Columbia, Canada. The Matsqui complex is just minutes off the freeway, surrounded by a collection of gas stations and delis, no doubt to feed the hundreds of vehicles and staff who commute to the location each day. The entrance to the compound is nondescript except for the sign indicating that all visitors and vehicles on the property are subject to search and seizure for contraband. The vista stretches as far as the eye can see, rolling hills of dark green grass dotted with castle-like structures surrounded by moats of high fences topped with razor wire and fifty-foot-high turrets placed strategically at each bend in the fence. At the end of the long road is the Regional Health Centre (RHC)—a name that belies its guests. RHC is a maximum-security treatment facility for sex offenders and violent offenders. Its 250 beds contain some of the most dangerous criminals in Canada. It was my new place of work.

I was a twenty-three-year-old freshman graduate student. On the early morning drive, I thought about how wholly unprepared I was for my first day of interviewing prisoners in the violent offender facility. For the past several years, I had divided my time between studying the research literature on psychopaths, undergoing training in brain-imaging techniques, and engaging in a loosely related line of research on a study of the brain electrical activity associated with auditory processes of killer whales, comparable in many ways to those of humans. Becoming ever more fascinated by psychopathy research, I had also been vigorously pursuing mentorship with my academic hero, the founding father of modern research on psychopathy, Professor Robert D. Hare, who only recently had accepted me as a graduate student. Yet now, as I walked past the metal detectors at the entrance to the compound surrounded by razor wire, I paused and wondered what the hell I was thinking. I would be working, all alone, on the forbidding task of conducting in-depth interviews with the prisoners.

most violent inmates, many of whom had been assessed as psychopaths. After the interview I planned to administer EEG (electroencephalogram) tests, measuring electric impulses in the brain in response to emotionally loaded words—data that would help us understand the connections between psychopathic brain processes and behavior.

I cleared security, received my ID card, and was given directions to the department of psychiatry by a guard, pale and gaunt, who looked like he had spent fifty years behind bars. The next lock snapped open with a now familiar audible crack and the heavy lead-lined door popped open; I gently pushed it forward. As I took my first few steps into this new environment, I smiled to myself that my first concern, a cavity search, had not come to pass as I went through security. I made a mental note to get even with the senior graduate student who had told me that cavity searches of new staff were common in Canadian prisons.

Inmates dressed in white T-shirts, jeans, and dark green jackets milled around the laundry, barbershop, and chapel as I walked from the administration entrance to psychiatry. The hall smelled like disinfectant, and I pondered what chemicals were used to clean up blood.

I entered the large, ominous building at the end of the walkway. I wandered down the hallway like a lost child until I came upon a sign on an office door that said DR. BRINK. Sitting there, oddly facing away from the open door, almost inviting me to sneak up and scare him, was Chief Forensic Psychiatrist Dr. Johann Brink. I'd met Dr. Brink just three months earlier at the NATO-funded Advanced Study Institute on psychopathy in Alvor, Portugal. Over numerous dinners and bottles of wine, I had convinced Dr. Brink to collaborate with me on my EEG studies of psychopaths. He helped me get my protocols approved by the prisons and the university ethics boards. With all this paperwork in hand, I tapped lightly on the door frame to his office. He spun around, only partially startled, and greeted me with a huge smile.

"Kent, great to see you! Welcome to maximum security!" he bellowed in his distinctive South African accent.

Johann proceeded to walk me down the hall and show me my office, empty except for a phone, desk, and two chairs on opposing sides. A bright red silver-dollar-sized button was positioned chest high, right in the middle of the wall.

"I recommend you take the chair closest to the door; just in case you piss one of them off, you can run out quickly. Better than getting caught on the other side of the desk. If you can't get out, hit that red button and the guards should come running." He spoke so casually I could not help but wonder if he was kidding.

"And here is your key—don't lose it!" I was handed a six-inch brass key with large, odd-shaped, forbidding teeth. The key, made by only two companies in the world, was specific to prisons. It opened most doors.

He pointed down the hall to a large door. "The guys' cells are through there. I've got to run now; we can check in at the end of the day, eh?" Johann smiled and turned away as he was finishing his sentence. As I inserted my new key into the shoulder-height lock in the door, I faintly heard him say what I thought was "Enjoy!" as he closed his office door tightly—no doubt to keep the next visitor from sneaking up on him.

I pushed open the hallway door to the prisoners' cells, turned and closed it, inserted my key on the other side, and spun the heavy-duty lock 180 degrees. I tugged on the door to make sure it was locked, took a deep breath, and proceeded down the 100-foot-long hallway.

to the inmate housing units.

I arrived at a “bubble”—a round security room, with one-way, tinted windows, no door apparent. I gazed down the four hallways that radiated from it like spokes, as maximum-security inmates milled about, staring coldly. I wasn’t afraid, but rather nervous about whether anyone would agree to talk with me. By way of training, Professor Hare had handed me a worn copy of the introductory book on life in prison titled *Games Criminals Play* the previous day and said, “Read this first, and good luck tomorrow!” It was trial by fire, sink or swim. *I should have read the book last night*, I thought.

A small office with glass windows and a half door was across the hall; a forensic nurse was handing out shaving razors to a line of inmates. She looked at me curiously and waved me over.

“Can I help you?” she asked cautiously.

“I’m the new research guy from UBC. I’m here to sign inmates up for interviews and EEG studies.” UBC stands for University of British Columbia, where I was a freshman doctor student studying psychology and brain science. EEG stands for electroencephalography (also electroencephalogram), or the recording of brain electrical activity using noninvasive sensors attached to the head, amplified, and recorded on a computer for subsequent digital analyses.

“Come in and sit down then; let’s talk about it.”

I leaned over the half door and looked for a latch.

“On your left,” she said. I found the latch and flicked it open and sat down in the closest chair. She finished handing out shaving razors to the last of the inmates and turned to look at me.

“The inmates get razors?” I inquired with a puzzled tone.

“Yes,” she said, laughing, “and they often disappear; I don’t ask where they go.”

I realized that Dr. Brink was wise to tell me to sit closest to the door during my interview.

Dorothy Smith was a twenty-year veteran of the maximum-security prison. Despite her long stay in prison, Dorothy was no worse for wear. Her slim athletic build was topped with an infectious personality that won over even the most hardened inmates. She would become one of my closest friends during my seven-year term in Canadian prisons. And she shared my interest in figuring out what made psychopaths tick.

“I’ll set you up with a nice one for your first interview,” Dorothy said as she glanced up at the housing chart taped to the cabinet. I followed her gaze and noticed headshots of inmates on the cabinets behind me, their names listed underneath: last name, first name, and index of crime. Attempted murder, rape/murder, arson/murder, murder 3x, murder/rape. I pondered if “rape/murder” and “murder/rape” were the same thing and was about to ask Dorothy when I thought better of it. I didn’t want to know; I had enough on my plate for my first day.

The inmate she selected, “Gordon,”* seemed courteous enough as he sat down in the chair on the far side of my office. He was forty-two years old, balding, gray haired, and soft spoken. The crime listed under his headshot was “attempted murder.”

A fascinating guy, Gordon turned out to be a serial bank robber. He told me his crimes had financed a lavish lifestyle, including first-class international airplane tickets, front-row seats at hockey games, and girlfriends and prostitutes in many different cities. After his most recent arrest, Gordon had to explain to the police why he had more than \$75,000 in cash.

despite being technically unemployed. With his lawyer, he negotiated immunity throughout Canada on the condition that he help police clear up a number of unsolved bank robberies. The number of robberies that Gordon was directly involved in reached close to fifty, but he was never charged in any of them. Gordon regaled me with story upon story of successful bank robberies. He told me how to case a town or city, then the banks, how to get in and out in less than sixty seconds, how to steal a getaway car, and how to launder the money. I asked him how a bank could keep him from robbing it? He gave me hours of insights. I started making notes about how to design a better bank—*Perhaps, I thought, I can consult with bank executives if my academic career doesn't work out.*

My interview with Gordon was designed to cover all domains of his life. We reviewed his upbringing, education, family, friends, sporting activities, work experience, career goals, finances, health, intimate and romantic relationships, substance abuse and impulsive behaviors, emotions, antisocial behaviors, and his index offense. The interview typically takes anywhere from one to three hours. With Gordon I spent six hours. We pored over all the details of his life. It was fascinating; if I hadn't been hooked on this career path yet, I would be now.

Our review of his work experience was brief. Gordon had had dozens of jobs, but he never held one for more than a month. He was routinely fired because rather than working, he preferred to play jokes, take long lunches, drink, and gamble. Most of his jobs were in construction or as an auto mechanic (he admitted to choosing this vocation so he could become a better car thief). When asked about his future plans, Gordon said he wanted to leverage some of his residual bank robbery proceeds to start a motorcycle dealership. He failed to appreciate the potential legal (and tax) implications of such an endeavor.

During our discussion of his finances, Gordon admitted he rarely used bank accounts.

"Afraid of someone stealing it?" I quipped.

"No," he replied with a wry smile, "I just don't like to have to explain to people where I got the cash."

"If you don't keep your money in a bank, where do you keep it?"

"I bury it," he said with a laugh, "all over the place; you can't just drive around with hundreds of thousands of dollars on you after a job. Or I FedEx it to a five-star hotel in Asia, Europe, or South America where I have a reservation under a false name; once in a while I will FedEx it to a girlfriend in another town, tell her it's a present but not to open it until I get there, stuff like that. You always have to be careful when you get to the hotel to make sure the cops are not on to you. I usually wear a disguise and scope out the place. I like to send the package two-day overnight and fly there first, then watch the delivery to make sure there are no cops. I've only lost a few packages." He paused, then laughed again as he told me about a prostitute he had sent \$50,000 in cash to a few years back. She never picked him up from the airport and he never saw her again. "I knew better than to trust that girl."

"Money belts used to work through airports too, but it's harder to do that now, more risky," he mused. He continued. "Mules sometimes, but really, I just like to go for a hike and bury it. Then I know it's always going to be there when I need it. I have lots of good places to bury it, but I don't talk about that stuff with anyone."

We turned to talking about his views on relationships, family, and friends. Gordon was a loner; he'd never felt the need to be close to anyone. He'd had hundreds of sexual liaisons

starting at the age of eleven. When asked if he had ever been in love with someone, he replied quickly and with a large smile about the time he was with three prostitutes at the same time—for a week.

“Ah, I loved them all,” he said as he took a deep breath, remembering.

Gordon equated love with good sex. He’d been married six times, all in different countries all under aliases. When asked why he got married, he replied: “Makes the girls happy, keeps the sex coming for a while, and they are more willing to help mule or receive stolen money.” Gordon admitted the prostitute he sent the \$50,000 to and never heard from again was wife number three.

He had not talked to his parents or siblings in years; the last time he bumped into his sister he heard that the family was fine, living the “white-picket-fence dream.” Inmates commonly refer to the presumed tedium and boredom of having a simple job, wife, and house as the “white picket fence” syndrome. Actually, the majority of inmates admit they would be very happy out of prison and residing behind the white picket fence; psychopaths, however, cannot fathom it—they laugh at others who would dwell in such monotony.

Gordon viewed others as untrustworthy, but he was affable, engaging, quick witted, and full of stories. I didn’t believe all the stories—lying is common in psychopaths—so I had to trust my gut feelings and review his file again later. Because you can’t trust a psychopath telling you the truth, you have to carefully review all their files in order to be able to verify everything they say. If you catch them in a lie, you have to be willing to call them on it and see how they respond. Just sit in the chair closest to the exit—in case you piss them off.

After another hour discussing his upbringing, I started asking questions about what Gordon liked to do when he was a kid. He grew up in Abbotsford, not far from the prison where we now sat. Nestled up against the mountains in BC, Abbotsford has wonderful views of Mount Baker to the southeast, and the local mountains are full of excellent fishing, hiking, and mountain bike trails. Gordon told me stories about his favorite fishing spots, remote lakes, and places with great views. He started bragging about the enormous fish he caught—lies, I figured. He liked to hike alone even when he was a kid. After talking about a bunch of his favorite spots to go as a kid, he abruptly stopped, looking at me and then the video camera recording our interview.

He said, “That was good. You are nobody’s fool. You got me to talk about all the places I liked to go hiking and fishing as a kid so you can try and figure out where I buried the dough. People have been trying to get me to talk about that for years. You’re good.” He laughed.

I also laughed and told him that getting all the details of his childhood was a necessary part of the interview. I was bluffing. As soon as he told me he buried his bank loot, I had been tailoring the interview to find a way for him to give up the locations. I knew Gordon had spent much of his adult life in prison. I figured the locations he selected to hide his treasure had come from his childhood. Also I leveraged his abundant grandiosity to get him to tell me stories of the “big” fish he had caught.

My main motivation was to perfect my interviewing techniques—could I successfully get my subject to talk? But a part of me couldn’t help but think about how I could train my black German shepherd to sniff out cocaine. A high percentage of \$20 and \$100 bills have trace residue of cocaine on them from the drug trade. It certainly would make hiking more exciting if your dog was able to dig up a bag full of cash!

I finished my interview with Gordon by asking him to describe his latest offense. It seemed that he was quite good at robbing banks, but not so good about keeping his temper in check. Gordon had “poor behavioral controls,” another classic trait of psychopathy; he was constantly getting into verbal altercations that escalated into physical fights—with little or no provocation. His current index offense was for almost killing a lover of one of his girlfriends. He had suspected she was seeing someone else, followed her, and confronted them. Temper flared and Gordon wounded the other guy with a knife. He was arrested the next morning. It was noteworthy that, in prison, Gordon was pretty well behaved. He knew that fights in prison often led to hard time and additional charges, so he kept his temper in check. He wanted to get out as soon as he could so he could dig up his cached treasure.

When Gordon left, I pulled out my copy of the *Manual for the Hare Psychopathy Checklist-Revised* (PCL-R).¹ The Psychopathy Checklist, created by Professor Hare, is the instrument we use in the field to assess psychopathy. It contains twenty items that capture the essential traits of psychopathy—including lack of empathy, guilt and remorse, glibness, superficiality, parasitic orientation, flat affect, irresponsibility, and impulsivity. These traits are assessed based on the individual’s entire life and in all domains of his or her life. That is, to “lack empathy” on the Psychopathy Checklist, you must have evidence of this trait in the majority of your life—at home, work, school, with family, friends, and in romantic relationships. Each of the twenty items is scored on a three-point scale: 0, the item does not apply to the individual; 1, item applies in some respects; and 2, item definitely applies in most respects to the individual. The scores range from 0 to 40, with the clinical diagnosis of a psychopath reserved for those with a score of 30 or above. The average inmate will score 22. The average North American nonincarcerated male will score 4 out of 40.

Gordon scored 31. He was my first psychopath.

I finished my notes justifying my Psychopathy Checklist item scores on Gordon while wolfed down the two peanut butter and jelly sandwiches I had packed the night before. I needed energy to continue with my next interview. It’s taxing to focus for hours interviewing inmates, ever cautious about walking the line between getting the information you need, challenging them to be forthright, and monitoring the door to make sure you can make a speedy exit if need be.

I returned to the housing unit and was approached by Gordon’s roommate, “Grant,” my second interview. Gordon had told him that I was fun to talk with and to “try me on.”

Grant had the kind of conventional appearance and manners that would suit a car salesman, except for the bold, spiraling tattoos covering his arms and hands. He had been involved with the legal system since birth—his mother was incarcerated when he was born—and he was currently finishing out a fifteen-year sentence for two murders he committed at age thirty. Grant was charged with manslaughter in the killing of his two accomplices to robbery. Apparently, a disagreement occurred about the splitting of the proceeds. Knives were flashed but they were no match for Grant’s 9mm handgun.

“Bam, bam ... bam, bam ... two down,” he said, pointing his index finger and thumb in a classic gun pose. “One of my better shooting days.” The killings were spoken of with such calmness, such “matter-of-factness” that I wondered if they were true. The files confirmed it: two shots center mass on both accomplices. Grant received fifteen years to life for the

slayings, largely because of a plea deal—there was not enough evidence to convict him of first- or second-degree murder and he had disposed of the weapon. Interestingly, he was distraught when he talked about getting rid of the gun, his favorite, a Glock 17 with extra magazine capacity. He had decided to plead out the case when his attorney told him that the prostitute he had hired to be his alibi witness was likely to break down on the stand.

When I asked if he had done anything for which he hadn't been caught, Grant laughed with what seemed like childish mischief, and said, "Lots ... arson, robberies, breaking and entering, car theft, check and credit card fraud, and of course there are a few bodies around." He'd shot a few strangers, he said, for getting in his face, and drowned at least one girlfriend in a pool ... which is when I realized I was sitting across from a bona fide serial killer, albeit an extraordinarily friendly one.

I eventually got Grant to concede that he had ten murder victims. Oddly, he'd never counted them up; in fact, he hardly ever thought about them. I tried to place Grant's murders within the context of a classic serial-killer profile. It didn't fit. Most serial killers are driven to commit their murders, usually in association with sexual dominance or sadism. Serial killers like Ted Bundy would meet criteria for psychopathy *and* they also have a paraphilia (a sexual-based disorder), like sexual sadism. The drive to kill comes from the latter; the lack of emotion, empathy, and guilt comes from psychopathy. When you combine psychopathy with a paraphilia, you get a very dangerous person. Fortunately, such people are very rare.

Grant didn't have any sexual disorders like sadism. He described a relatively normal social life. Yes, he admitted, he'd been a little rough from time to time with women, but he didn't get turned on by inflicting pain. In fact, most of Grant's murder victims were male. He seemed to resort to violence easily, quickly, and without much thought. He was lucky to have been caught for only two of the ten murders.

The rest of my interview with Grant revealed he'd been getting in trouble since his early teens, had been arrested many times, had been in lots of fights, and was unable or unwilling to stick to any occupation, profession, or job for more than a few months. He had collected social assistance under multiple names, been married a few times, and had four kids—as best he could remember. This latter point was quite interesting. Grant didn't recall the birthdays of his children; in fact, he knew only two of their names. He'd led a nomadic existence, moving from place to place—often on no more than a whim—living out of his van, camping, occasionally shacking up with women, occasionally getting them pregnant, and always moving on to the next adventure.

Psychopaths rarely know details about their children. Like Grant, they often don't even know how many children they (might) have. I would come to realize during my research that psychopaths' lack of connection with their children is one of the most salient features of the condition.

It was getting late in the day, so I wrapped up my interview with Grant, indicating to him that I might want to do a bit of follow-up later. He stood up, reached forward with his hand extended, and we shook hands. "Let's do this again," he said. "It was fun." And he walked off as if he had just given a press conference.

A bit confused, I sat down and pulled out my PCL-R manual to assess Grant on the Psychopathy Checklist. I leaned back in the chair and, for a moment, wondered if I was dreaming. The day had been surreal; after all the years of reading about psychopaths, I

finally conducted my first two interviews.

Grant scored 34 on the Psychopathy Checklist. I was two for two.

I finished up my notes and dumped the videotapes of the interviews into my locked file cabinet. We record all our interviews so that another scientist can rate the psychopathy scores too. In this way we “double-rate” everything, making sure that the interviewer did not get a biased impression of the subject.

I closed and locked the door, returned my monster key to the nearest lockbox (the bra keys don't leave the facility), and walked down to Dr. Brink's office.

Dr. Brink's door was closed; he was busy typing up notes on his computer, still facing away from the door. I tapped softly on the window. He turned, smiled, and got up to let me in.

“How did it go today?”

“Fascinating. It's just like I imagined, only better,” I told him. “No problems. All is going well. I got to meet Dorothy, did two interviews, and got leads on more inmates to interview tomorrow. I'm ready to head home for a beer.”

“Excellent. Well, don't let me keep you from that beer. Have at it the rest of the week and stop by and see me if you need anything,” said Brink.

I wandered back out the maze of hallways, past the chapel, laundry, and barbershop. All were empty at 6 p.m., the inmates already locked up for the night. It was quiet, almost peaceful—until I was startled by the lock shot of the final gate opening. I passed through the gate and was overcome with a feeling of freedom. I would never forget my first day in prison. Nor, I would discover in the years ahead, would I ever walk out of a prison and not feel a small sense of relief to be back on the outside.

I climbed into my Toyota pickup and began the long drive to Vancouver. That day, at the beginning of my career in the prisons, my truck had 40,000 miles on it. By the time I retired it years later, it had more than 280,000 miles on it—a *moon unit* as I called it, referring to the fact I had accumulated enough miles driving back and forth to prisons that I had traveled the equivalent of the distance between the earth and the moon (238,857 miles).

On the ride home, I couldn't stop thinking of how I might have given better interviews. I thought back on my interview techniques, trying to think of ways I could have gotten more details out of the inmates, how I could make the scoring of the Psychopathy Checklist easier. I realized that I needed to edit the default semistructured interview that comes with the Psychopathy Checklist, and I needed to find the right balance between asking more questions—probing to get all the details from different areas of an inmate's life—without making the inmates angry. By the time I pulled into my driveway an hour and a half later, I had come up with a dozen new questions to add to the interview.

My 110-pound black German shepherd, Jake, raced around the corner from the backyard to greet me as I opened the gate. Seeing him, I was reminded of my idea to train him to search for cocaine so we could track down the loot from my new bank-robber friend.

My roommate, Andreas, a starving artist and conservationist, returned home from his double shift at Starbucks.

“Did you bring the drugs?” I asked Andreas.

“Yup,” he said, pointing to the overstuffed backpack he had dropped in the corner of the living room.

Andreas had been promoted a few months back to shift manager at Starbucks, and one

his responsibilities was to monitor the age of the coffee beans being used and sold in the store. He was told to throw away any coffee beans that had expired. But the beans were still quite good. He couldn't bring himself to throw them away, so he brought them home where they decorated the living room in our small apartment like beanbag chairs. Before long we had over a hundred pounds of coffee in our living room. I finally convinced him to give them away, and he started shipping them to family and friends all over Canada.

"How was your first day?" Andreas asked, a little nervously.

"Amazing. Interviewed my first serial killer."

"I don't know how you do it—it would freak me out," he said.

It's a common question—"How do I do what I do?" Or even more often, "What are psychopaths like?" But what questioners are really wondering is, "How did I develop such an interest in psychopaths?"

I grew up in Tacoma, Washington, a couple blocks away from the house serial killer Ted Bundy was raised in. My father was a writer and lead editor at the *Tacoma News Tribune*, the local newspaper. I was just a kid when the story of Ted Bundy broke in the '70s; my father would come home and tell stories he'd just edited for the paper of the child from down the street. My family would sit around the dinner table and wonder how someone like that could grow up in our sleepy little middle-class suburb. How indeed? That seed just sat there in my brain, waiting to germinate.

I was not much of an academic in high school. I skated along with a B+ average, opting to put my energy into sports: football, lifting weights, and track. My dad was a big reason I was successful in sports. My father never missed a single sporting event of mine—twelve years of baseball, ten years of soccer, four years of football, and four years of track. A sportswriter, he could rattle off every stat from every professional baseball player. He was born with a muscular condition known as *nemoline myopathy*. He lacked the fast-twitch muscle fiber to participate in sports himself, but that never left him short of enthusiasm for sports. He coached my friends and me for years in baseball and soccer. During the high school football season, he would scout games by our rival high schools, giving me insights into how to prepare for the next team we would face. He was as dedicated as my high school football coaches.

My parents worked very hard to put all four of their children, myself and my three sisters, into the best private high school in the state. Bellarmine Preparatory High School was a place with highly dedicated teachers and an amazing community environment. Ninety-eight percent of my graduating class went on to a four-year university, so it was peer pressure that got me to apply for college. But it was sports that got me accepted.

I applied to a number of different colleges and was recruited to play football at the University of Washington, Washington State University, and a few others. Don James, the University of Washington football coach, told me that I could come play for him, but that I would not likely start in Division I all four years. James thought that with continued progress, I would be a good third-down wide receiver or free safety. I had started high school as a scrawny five feet, nine inches, 150 pounds, but I played my senior year of high school football at six three, 205 pounds. James told me if I wanted to start all four years of college I might consider the top Division II football program in the country—which at the time was

the University of California, Davis.

So I sent my films to UC Davis football coaches and they recruited me. They also helped get my application accepted, and I decided to head off to California.

My football career was short-lived; my knee folded over at the end of my first year at UC Davis. After rehabbing for a year, my dream of catching footballs for a living officially died. I was struggling to find something to sink my teeth into. I turned to Dr. Debra Long, professor of psychology and my undergraduate adviser. One of the wonderful things about the academic environment at UC Davis was that undergraduates were encouraged to work closely with professors. I had gotten to work a great deal with Dr. Long over my first two years at UC Davis and she knew me very well. When I visited her at the end of my second year seeking advice, she told me, "Kent, you have a scientific mind; I want you to go away this weekend and come back Monday and tell me five things you would love to study in your life. I think you should consider being an academic."

She told me I had way too much energy to pursue a nine-to-five job. I needed a career, she said, not a job. I ruminated over the weekend and returned to give her my list of subjects I wanted to study: (1) the brain, (2) psychopaths (inspired by my childhood curiosity about serial killer Ted Bundy), (3) killer whales (another seed planted in childhood when a killer whale looked me right in the eye while on a fishing trip with my dad in the Puget Sound), (4) teaching, and (5) women. She got a good laugh out of the last one.

Dr. Long called a couple of other professors, Dr. Michael Gazzaniga, the founding father of the field of cognitive neuroscience (the study of how the brain processes information), and Dr. George Mangun, an attention researcher, both of whom had just relocated their laboratories from Dartmouth University to UC Davis. She told them that she had a motivated undergrad she was sending their way. Next she called Dr. Carolyn Aldwin in the human development department. Carolyn was married to Dr. Michael (Rick) Levenson, a research professor who studied psychopathy, among other conditions. She also set me up to see a lecture by Michael Szymanski, a graduate student who was studying brain electrical activity in killer whales. Wow! Dr. Long still receives free drinks anytime our paths cross. All of the individuals she contacted that day became mentors and lifelong friends, and eventually, I am honored to say, I came to be called a colleague by them.

My life was transformed. I realized that I had found a path forward in life. I wanted to be a professor and learn everything I could about psychopaths. I wanted to master brain-imaging techniques and teach the world what is different about these individuals, what's going on inside psychopaths' minds.

I quit partying and became serious about my studies. I went from a hundred buddies to three or four good friends. I went from a B average to straight A's. I was advised that if I wanted to study psychopathy, I should do my graduate work with the most prominent scholar in the field, Professor Robert Hare of the University of British Columbia.

And that's how I started down the career path that brought me to maximum-security prison.

Day 2

In the distance I could see the sun rising behind Mount Baker as I pulled into the parking lot.

of the Regional Health Centre. I grabbed my backpack off the passenger seat and walked to the gates.

The same ancient guard who had let me through security the day before waved me past the metal detectors without a second glance. I stopped and knocked on the bubble's window.

"You forget the way?" the voice heckled over the speaker.

"Nope. I thought you might like some coffee." I reached up, showing him a one-pound bag of Starbucks breakfast blend (courtesy of my roommate, Andreas). The lock shot of his door fired instantly and he pushed open the door.

"Absolutely," he said. Smile lines creased across his face. "Thanks much!"

I pushed the heavy entrance door open and headed down toward my office. I was not more than twenty feet into the prison when Grant emerged from the laundry carrying his bag of clean clothes.

"Hey, Kent," he said. "You got a second."

"Sure," I said, "what's up?"

A worried expression appeared on Grant's face. After looking up and down the corridor and seeing no inmates, he said, "I'm not sure what you did, but rumor has it that one of the sex offenders doesn't like you. His name is Gary. Just keep away from him. Okay?" He pulled away and went back into the laundry.

"Sure," I managed to choke out.

My mind started racing with what happened yesterday. I couldn't think of anything I had done to piss off an inmate. It's the last thing I was trying to do.

The RHC is divided into a number of different housing divisions. On the west side of the complex is a wing of thirty or so beds for inmates who have a severe psychiatric illness, like schizophrenia. These latter inmates typically don't interact with the main population because they are very ill. The other housing units are contained within a two-level complex with four tiers radiating out from a central hub. The four arms of the first level house mental health-challenged inmates. This includes inmates with low IQs or other mental problems. The top four tiers are split into two arms for the violent offender treatment program, and two for the sex-offender treatment program. Each of the arms houses twenty to forty inmates, depending upon whether they are double bunked or not. Each of the top-tier treatment programs operates on a rotating schedule such that twenty-five new inmates turn over every three months as the nine-month treatment programs conclude. This schedule provided a steady stream of inmates for my research studies.

Normally, sex offenders and other offenders are segregated from one another. This is done because in the prisoner hierarchy inmates who have committed crimes against women are scorned by the other inmates. Inmates who have sexually assaulted a child are considered to be the "lowest of the low," and they are often victimized in prison. So for their safety and for the safety of the staff (who might have to try to break up assaults), sex offenders and other offenders are kept separate.

But at RHC, sex offenders and violent offenders share the same treatment schedule and are allowed to intermix. This sometimes leads to conflict, but because the offenders all volunteered to be part of the treatment program, they are generally much better behaved than they would be otherwise. For most offenders, the RHC treatment program is a stepping-stone to early parole, so their tolerance levels are fairly high for changes to the prison routine.

So during my time at RHC, I found it was not uncommon for vanilla inmates to socialize with sex offenders.

I wandered up to my office in a daze. I could not understand what I might have done to set off an inmate.

I figured I would just try to avoid this Gary until I could figure out what to do.

I updated my interview schedule for the Psychopathy Checklist with a couple dozen new questions and printed off two copies. I grabbed my consent forms, a bag of coffee, and removed my brass key from the lockbox. I instinctively palmed the brass key, mimicking the self-defense technique taught to women to fend off attackers using car keys.

I headed down to the housing units and went straight into the nurses' station, not waiting for an invitation to enter. I just unlocked the door and walked in, making sure that no inmates came up behind me. I handed a bag of coffee to Dorothy. A smile widened across her face as she took the coffee and started a fresh pot.

"This is a nice surprise," she said. Then she turned and looked at me. "Something the matter?" Dorothy had world-class clinical skills honed after twenty years of reading the faces of inmates. I thought she must be a fantastic poker player.

"Umm, do you know a sex offender named Gary?"

"Sure," she said. "He's over there. He's a troublemaker, that one."

I was not sure how to deal with Grant's earlier statement. I had promised him confidentiality, and I was not sure if the details he gave me could be shared with someone else. I decided to keep my conversation with Grant confidential, but I felt it safe to get details about Gary from Dorothy.

Dorothy volunteered that Gary was always into something. He caused a lot of problems with the team leader running the group therapy sessions; he had punched a hole in the wall recently after a yelling match with the therapist (apparently the treatment team was pleased with this outcome because it was progress for Gary, since he hit a wall and not the therapist); he'd been caught making brew (a concoction of yeast, fruit, and water that ferments into an alcoholic beverage and is usually stored in the inmates' toilets); and he had been suspected of beating up a couple of other inmates, although nobody had come forward with complaints.

I saw under Gary's photo on Dorothy's housing chart that he was serving time for two rapes with a sentence of fifteen years. He'd served fourteen years and was up for release soon. He was at RHC because the Canada Department of Corrections was trying to get him some treatment before they were forced to release him on completion of his sentence. I later learned that Gary had been rated as very high risk to reoffend, and the administration was trying to find a way to mitigate that risk.

Gary was gigantic. Many inmates are ripped from working out several hours a day, but Gary was well over six feet tall, barrel chested, with huge shoulders, and he weighed in at nearly 275 pounds.

I twirled the brass key in my hand ... my anxiety increased a bit as I realized the futility of trying to stop 275 pounds of angry sex offender with a tiny brass key.

As Gary walked by on his way to group therapy, I could feel his eyes on me. I relaxed a bit once I saw him pass through the doors on his way to the therapy rooms.

Gordon meandered by, spotted me, and headed over to the station.

"I got some new guys signed up for you," he said, reaching into his pocket and pulling out a crumpled piece of paper with over fifteen names written on it.

"Thanks for helping out," I said.

"No problem. Hey," he said, looking around and making sure no one could overhear. "Do you think I could get a commission or something for helping you out?"

I smiled.

"Nice try. I'm afraid that the best I can do is let you go first on the next phase of the research. We are not allowed to involve the participants in the recruitment of other subjects. But I appreciate your helping out."

Gordon replied, "Oh, well. It was worth a try ... so when's the next phase start?"

"A couple weeks. Just putting the equipment together now," I said.

"Cool." Gordon turned and walked away.

I looked down the list of names and saw that it appeared Gordon had gone cell to cell the preceding night and gotten his entire tier to sign up. Or more likely, he just wrote down the names of everyone in his cell block and never even bothered to talk to them. Had I become cynical after just a single day?

I exited the nurses' station, looking left to make sure the door through which Gary exited had not opened to let anyone back into the housing units, and walked down to the small common room at the end of Gordon's tier. Inmates were milling around. I called out the first name on my new list, "Mike West. Is Mike around?"

"Yup. That's me," a voice called out from the back of the room.

"You got a minute to talk about doing a UBC research study?" I asked.

"Sure" came the answer. A tall, thin man walked over to me and said, "Let's go. Gordon told us all about it last night."

I began to think that I might have been too quick to judge Gordon's intentions or, rather, his motivation to get a commission.

"Mike" had a drug problem. He started out our interview by quickly volunteering that he wasn't as violent as the rest of the guys in here. He just did a robbery that got a little out of control, and people got hurt.

"I was just trying to get money for my next fix," he recalled.

Mike grew up just outside of Toronto. He made it through high school and started working in construction, gradually moving up the ranks till he was an operator of heavy machinery. He had a number of jobs, with the longest lasting over four years. He was pushing forty when I met him, having completed five years of a six-year sentence for aggravated assault and battery, evading police, reckless endangerment, and a few other charges. Mike was married, going on ten years. His wife had moved so she could visit him frequently. She lived only a few miles from the prison and worked as a waitress in a local restaurant.

He started using marijuana, a gateway drug he called it, in high school. Dealers started him off using, then selling, then asked him to try some other stuff. He tried heroin and was hooked right away. Mike tried to use recreationally, but eventually he was using regularly. He kept it hidden from family, friends, and even his eventual wife, until he had no way to explain where all his money was going. He started doing burglaries, pawning stolen TVs and electronics equipment. He fell into debt, took out loans, sometimes from the wrong people.

and eventually started doing armed robberies. Simple stuff, he explained—rob a mom-and-pop place and get four hundred to five hundred bucks, enough to buy a week's worth of drugs. He had tried to stop using, he told me, but it just wasn't in the cards. Then "D-day," he put it. As he completed a robbery of a 7-Eleven, he ran outside and jumped into his car. A cop car happened to be passing by and got the call. A high-speed chase ensued and ended with a crash. He put the family of the car he hit into the hospital with serious, life-threatening injuries. As he told the story toward the end of our interview, tears welled up in his eyes.

"I really messed up," he said. "But now I've been clean and sober for more than five years."

Mike spent a year in jail prior to trial and being sentenced to the federal prison. In Canada, sentences less than two years' duration are served in provincial facilities, similar to county or city jails in the United States. Sentences longer than two years deserve federal time and are served under the Canadian Department of Corrections, a nationwide entity with prison facilities in all the provinces.

Mike detoxed in the provincial jail and received psychological and pharmacological treatment—substance abuse cognitive behavioral therapy and medication to help with the withdrawal effects, the dosage of which was eventually titrated down till he was clean. He wasn't going back to that life, he had promised his wife and family. He was doing his time and going to go back and get a construction job and start a family. The white picket fence. He didn't have to say it; it was clear that his dreams only went that far.

Mike was emotionally connected to his family, his wife, and even other inmates. He taught rudimentary math and English to other prisoners and received good behavior credits. He did not have a single institutional infraction, instance of drug use, or a fight. Mike steered clear of problematic inmates. He had been originally sentenced to a medium-security facility, but within a year had been transferred to minimum security. He was deemed to pose little escape risk and was a model inmate.

"How did you end up here in maximum security?" I asked.

"For the young guys," he said. "They [the prison psychologists] told me it would be good for me to participate in the therapy so that I don't fall back into any violent behavior and that kicking the drug habit, as I did, was useful to show the other kids here that drugs are not good for anybody. So that's what I do. I tell them about my life and how I could have been so much better."

Mike scored an 11 on the Psychopathy Checklist. It's a very low score for an inmate in maximum security, well below the average inmate score of 22 on the Psychopathy Checklist. Mike's not going back to prison, I figured; he's learned from his mistakes.

Mike suggested that I interview his roommate. "I think there is something wrong with him. Maybe you can figure it out, eh?"

I followed Mike back up to his cell and chatted up his roommate, "Bob." Bob was full of energy and enthusiasm, up for just about anything. Bob was a character. I could barely get a word in during our interview. I'd ask him a question and then next thing I know he's been telling me stories for fifteen minutes. It was the first interview where I laughed out loud. I wasn't exactly sure if someone in my position was allowed to laugh out loud when conducting a clinical interview, but I just rolled with it, egging him on and telling him that he was hilarious. And honestly, the things he'd gotten into—well, they were funny.

Because I wasn't in an adversarial role with the inmates, they tended to be very open and forthcoming in our interviews. Everything they told me was confidential. It was not going to end up in their files or get them in any trouble. (And, as I mentioned earlier, I've changed the names and details so that no one reading this book can identify about whom I am talking.) I was there because I wanted to understand them. I remembered feeling like Columbo when I first started working in prison; I wanted to know what made these guys tick, how they got this way. My goal at that time was to use what I learned in my interviews to try to improve risk assessments.

In the mid-1990s in Canada, thousands of offenders went up for parole every year. Parole boards, composed of appointed individuals with widely varied backgrounds, had the power to decide who got out of prison and who stayed in. When an offender came up for parole, the board wanted to know what the chances were that the guy was going to reoffend. This could be a life-and-death decision for the inmate and for the public. It's certainly a decision with enormous economic and, of course, emotional consequences for society in general and for future victims in particular. Parole boards could interview the inmate and make their own release decision (never a good idea); they could ask a mental health professional such as a psychologist, social worker, or psychiatrist to make a professional judgment (again, not a good idea); or they could order a risk assessment workup be done on the offender and use that assessment to inform their decision (always a good idea).

Parole boards are typically not very good at predicting whom to let out of prison. A recent study showed that psychopathic offenders are more likely to convince parole boards to let them out compared to nonpsychopathic offenders.² This is an ongoing problem because we know that psychopathic offenders are more likely to reoffend than nonpsychopathic offenders. Professional judgment from a psychologist or psychiatrist has also been shown to be very unreliable in predicting who is going to reoffend.³

Because of the limitations of relying on guesswork by a handful of individuals or the unreliable opinion of one individual, scientists have turned to creating risk assessment tools or procedures that consider a number of variables to create an informed, detailed assessment of a specific offender. Criminologists and forensic psychologists have studied what variables promote risk and, similarly, what variables promote resistance to crime. Some of the variables are "actuarial," like the age of the offender, gender of the victim, type of prior crimes, age of onset of criminal behavior, and so on. These latter variables do a decent job of gross rankings of who is likely to reoffend and who is not, but they are not particularly good at predicting who will be a violent offender or who will commit a sex offense. Then there are psychological variables, like intelligence and personality, including psychopathy. Finally, there are dynamic variables, things that change, like marital status, education, employment, family relationships, and so on. These variables are entered into large databases, and scientists analyze them and try to determine which ones predict which inmate is going to get in trouble again. Armed with this information, researchers develop tests that parole boards can use to help make their tough decisions a little bit easier.

This was the landscape at the beginning of my career. Risk assessments were just coming onto the forensic scene, and my first goal was to try to improve the diagnostic sensitivity and specificity of predicting risk. I wanted to help the forensic decision makers identify who the high-risk offenders were, in particular the psychopaths, so we could make sure that the

didn't get released, or at least not released without very special provisions in place so that they didn't reoffend.

The field of psychopathy research in the mid-1990s was still in its infancy. There had not been a single brain-scan study of psychopaths. It wasn't until 1991 that there was even a good way to do a clinical assessment of them (the year the first edition of the Psychopathy Checklist manual was published). The one thing that was known was that psychopaths were at very high risk to reoffend. An inmate who scored high on the Psychopathy Checklist was four to eight times more likely than an inmate who scored low to reoffend in the next five years—and more likely to reoffend violently.⁴ Clearly, it was a critical component of any risk assessment.

Bob told me a story of how he used to hike across the border to the United States (there are a few fences covering the three-thousand-mile border between Canada and the United States) and then hitchhike down to the Indian reservations to buy cartons of cigarettes, as many as he could fit into his large backpack. He would hitch a ride back to near the border and hike back to Canada bringing with him dozens of cartons of cigarettes. Then he would sell them in Canada for a huge profit. Cigarettes were heavily taxed in Canada. He made quite a bit of money.

"Who do you sell them to?" I asked.

"Oh, that's the best part," he answered. "You have to sell them to people who won't turn you in; I sell them to pregnant women. They are too embarrassed to go into the stores to buy them, so they are always willing to buy them from you at more than they would even pay at retail in Canada. It's great. Easy money."

Bob had done every type of criminal activity that I have ever heard of—and a few that I hadn't. He had done credit card scams, identity theft (I made sure my wallet was secured before I left the office), burglary, stolen cars, occasional mugging, random stints of drug use, and dealing drugs and prescriptions (he once blackmailed a physician to write false prescriptions for him, running all over town to different pharmacies to get them filled), and most recently, Bob had been convicted of manslaughter.

Bob also had a fetish. He liked to be a Peeping Tom, and he collected women's underwear. After one arrest, the police found over three thousand pairs of women's underwear in his closet.

Bob described being questioned in his apartment on suspicion of burglary by the cops and sitting there in handcuffs on the couch.

"I warned the cop," he said, "not to open the closet."

As the officer unlocked the door, the closet burst open and dozens of pairs of women's underwear landed all over the policeman (many of which were dirty; Bob seemed to prefer to steal them out of the laundry bags when he broke into a house—or from Laundromats).

I had tears in my eyes at this point from laughing so hard.

"Yup." Bob laughed along with me. "Even the cop's partner started laughing. What can I say? I love women's underwear. All kinds."

"You know," he said, "can you tell me if I have ADHD? As a kid I was told that I had ADHD, but I don't know if I do or not. I mean, do you know how hard it is to hold still sitting in a tree to stare through the cracks in a Levolor blind on a second-floor window for three

hours until someone comes into the bedroom and takes their clothes off?"

"Nope," I said.

"Well, it's not easy," he said, sitting back.

After another hour or so of stories, I was getting a pretty good picture of Bob.

"Okay, Bob. We've got to talk about your latest crime. What happened?"

"Oh, that. Well, it's pretty simple really. This girl I was living with, well, she pushed all my buttons. I mean, she hit all three, right in a row and I just got pissed. I ran after her into the bathroom where she was drawing a bath and pushed her really hard into the wall. She hit her head on the wall and slid into the tub, which was full of water. I just grabbed her around the throat and held her under the water. I was so pissed off. Then ya know, bells go off inside my head ... oh, shit. I'm in trouble. Look what I did. I got to clean this up, figure out how to get out from under this crap. I mean, she was such a bitch to me that night." Bob was animated, laughing at some of the "funny" parts of this story. He used his hands a lot, gesturing about the entire sequence of events.

Across the table, I was feeling nauseated thinking about what he had done. I'd stopped laughing a while ago.

"So I wrapped her up in a big blanket, took her outside [it was dark], and put her in the car. Ya know, it was pretty stupid. I put her in the front passenger seat. Then I drove down the way a bit to a bridge and threw her over into the river, threw the blanket away in a Dumpster, and went out to create an alibi."

"Where did you go?" I asked.

"I went and ate and drank some beer at my local pub, ya know, to act like nothing had happened. Then I went out and got a prostitute. I wanted to pay with a credit card, ya know, to get a receipt, but she wouldn't let me, so I had to go and slap her around a little bit, ya know, so she would remember me and stuff since she wouldn't give me a credit card receipt. It was nothing hard, ya know, but just enough so she would remember me, for my alibi.

"And then I went home. Went to bed. It was a couple days later when things started to unravel. Her mom kept calling, looking for her [he says this with a confused look on his face as if he doesn't understand why his girlfriend's mother would worry about not hearing from her daughter], and I told her mom that we had had an argument and she had packed a bag and moved out.

"The police came by and questioned me a bit. I just told them the same story, told them where I was the night she left. Ya know, I went out with a prostitute. Go check it out.

"They [the cops] kept coming back and forth to see me, but I never changed my story. After about a month, the mom was driving the cops crazy and they kept coming back to see me, would handcuff me, tell me they found the body [they were lying], all sorts of stuff. They even put a camera on me. I played a good trick on the cops, though. When they were recording my interview, I told them I wanted a lawyer, I repeated over and over. And then they could just say, later, ya know, they refused to give me my lawyer.

"I figured that they would find the body someday, and then I would be really screwed. So I figured if I confessed on tape after they refused to get me my lawyer, I might get the case tossed out on a technicality, and then they could never charge me if they found the body and stuff. So, well, I kept asking for a lawyer while the camera was on, and then I finally told them that I did it, that I killed her. But I told them to get me a lawyer. I didn't tell them

where I dumped the body.

“So then they finally get me a lawyer. And I tell him the story about the videotape and failing to get me my lawyer and stuff. It’s like against my rights, eh?”

“Well, my lawyer tells me there is no tape the cops have given him, no record of any videotape. So, he says, you confessed. Now tell me where the body is and I will get you a deal. I got so pissed off, ya know? This shit works all the time on television. Anyways, the lawyer got me a deal, manslaughter, and I’ll do a nickel or so and then get parole and it’s a good. No worries.”

Another difference between psychopaths and other inmates is that psychopaths don’t get distressed by being in prison. Most inmates get depressed when they get inside, and they find prison to be a stressful experience. A hallmark feature of psychopaths’ disorder is that they don’t get bothered by much of anything. They don’t ruminate and they don’t get depressed.

Bob scored 35 out of 40 on the checklist, a clear psychopath. I thought about telling Mike what was wrong with his cellmate, but that would break confidentiality. Mike would have gone on wondering.

Five years later, while I was still at RHC prison, Bob came bouncing up to me and said, “Hey, still doing that research? I’d love to do that again.”

I stared at him. “What are you back in for?”

“Oh,” he smiled and said, “another chick pushed all my buttons. What’s a guy gonna do?” He laughed and walked away. Bob’s buttons? His girlfriend had called him *fat*, *bald*, and *broke*. “She hit all three of them,” he would tell me in his next interview, “but I buried the body real good.”

After my first interview with Bob, I headed back to my office. I passed Grant on the way.

“Hey, Kent, things go okay today?” Grant asked.

“Just fine,” I replied.

“Good, glad to hear it, we guys [he’s referring to the regular inmates] like you here. Just be careful around those sex offenders.”

“Sure will,” I answered. I opened the door and locked it behind me with my brass key and headed down to my office.

Something just wasn’t right. I’d been too careful to piss off an inmate, especially one I hadn’t even met yet, someone I hadn’t even challenged in an interview.

I left the facility, taking a deep breath as I passed through the final gate and inhaled my freedom.

Day 3

After the normal morning commute, coffee distribution, and visit to the printer to pick up fresh copies of my evolving Psychopathy Checklist interview, I headed to the main door of psychiatry and the now-familiar walkway to the inmate housing units. As I shut the door, I noticed a figure at the end of the walkway. He was unmistakable—the large, ominous figure was Gary. He was just standing there, right inside the door from the housing pods. I knew that there were no cameras in this little walkway. I was worried that Gary knew that too.

turned and slowly locked the door with my brass key, trying to avoid him noticing that I was aware of him. I tried to remember any self-defense moves I knew, in case my nemesis attacked me when I reached the end of the hallway. My heart was racing.

Behind me a door opened and I let two inmates pass by. It took me a second to realize that one of the inmates was Grant. He turned, gave me a little wave hi, and kept going down toward the housing unit.

Gary had been staring at me. He was standing up straight to see past the other inmates, keeping his cold stare on me as the other inmates approached him. Grant slowed and took another peek back at me and then at Gary. Grant walked right up to Gary. Gary looked down at him, and a few words were spoken. Gary looked hard at Grant. All this was transpiring as I walked as slowly as possible, while still walking normally. It felt like my life was proceeding in slow motion. Then suddenly Gary turned, shot one more cold look in my direction, and went back into the housing unit. Grant followed him, without saying a single word to me.

A few hours later I was sitting alone in the nurses' station and Grant appeared at the hallway door.

"Hey," he said, "I wanted to let you know that I took care of that little problem with Gary. Seems he wanted to get it on with you this morning, but I told him you were not to be touched or it would be like he had touched me. And nobody fucks with me. I'll see you later. With that, he disappeared down the housing unit hallway. I wasn't even able to choke out a word in reply.

A cold sweat broke out across my forehead. I might have actually been in a fight this morning with an enormous sex offender.

I left prison early that day and drove home in silence, deep in thought. I grabbed my dog Jake, and went for a run along the beach to decompress. Later, over dinner, I finished reading *Games Criminals Play*. I had an epiphany.

Day 4

I took a new route to my prison office the next morning, avoiding the common areas where the inmates had free movement. I passed out coffee beans to a couple of other guard pods, receiving smiles and thank-yous. I was smiling too, but I was a little nervous about what I was about to do.

As soon as I was settled in my office, I called over to the nurses' station. Dorothy picked me up.

"Do you have Grant down there this morning?" I asked.

"Hold on," she said. "Yes. He's still in his cell. Want me to get him for you?"

"Please. Send him down to psychiatry."

"Got any more coffee?" she asked.

"Yup. I'll be right down after this quick interview."

"He'll be right down then," she said.

I went out to the main door and waited for Grant, dangling my little brass key.

Grant appeared a few minutes later and walked quickly up the hallway. He was carrying a folder with paper in it.

"You got more research for me to do?" he said.

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