*What Lies Inside Us*

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*Trigger Warning: This story contains intense language regarding murder.*

**January 5th, 2016**

It was Christmas Day that I found out my seven-year-old sister had been brutally murdered. The day started out normal, I guess. I awoke around 7 am, anxiously awaiting the reveal of what Mom and Dad were gifting me this year. Snow was falling heavily from the sky, each fireplace in our house was spewing flames, warming the air and filling it with the tasteful smell of wood. My room was full of Megan Fox and Margot Robbie posters. Life was good—I was in my Junior year of high school, and boy, was I ready to get out of that place.

I’m the eldest child in my family. My parents, both full-time lawyers, were rarely home to play with Lily and me. I can’t even tell you how many nannies Mom and Dad hired for us. I really despised it, because every new nanny that they hired would approach Lily and me with different rules. If we did not obey those rules, our nanny would leave a stern note for my parents, and Lily and I would be punished for a week. I never felt that close to Mom and Dad. They were always busy working on a new case. “This case is extremely important, son. Go play outside with your sister and don’t come back in for a few hours, I need some silence,” my Dad would explain to me. I was a good kid, but it was always clear to me that Lily was the favorite child. Lily—she was beautiful. She had deep locks of golden-blonde hair, her favorite color was pink, and as a seven-year-old, she had the maturity of a sixteen-year-old. Lily was not like most girls her age. She was kind—patient—*especially* patient, and she adored me. I adored her. Lily was my best friend. Our three-story home contained 100 acres, a lake, and a stable. In the winter, I taught Lily how to ice skate on our lake. I will never forget how she slid her mittens on her little hands, adjusted her helmet, inhaled a deep breath, grabbed my hand, and took her first step onto the ice. This was Lily: fearless, strong, and curious. She watched me. She learned from me. I taught her how to ride her bike, I taught her how to pump her legs on the swing, I taught her where the best places in the house were to hide during hide and seek, and I taught her how to imagine beyond her wildest creative thoughts. My sister was my everything.

“Ryan, you murdered your sister”, Detective Barnes said.

I snapped back into reality. My hands interlocked, sweaty. I was having difficulty breathing. I glanced up from the table, Detective Barnes was sitting directly across from me, staring at me like I was some sort of pest. *Fuck.* I began to feel unstable; my mind was an abyss of darkness—darkness so loud and deafening like I was standing in the center of a nu-metal concert, people relentlessly screaming at the top of their lungs into both of my ears. I couldn’t see straight. My hands slid to the arms of my chair. I clutched onto them until my knuckles turned white. I was profusely sweating. I’m being watched, why am I being watched?

“Ryan” Detective Barnes barked at me.

I jolted. “What?”

Detective Barnes reached for his walkie-talkie and voiced into it, “We’ve lost him again. Let’s try again tomorrow.” Before I could move, three security guards snatched my arms, kicked the chair from under me, and held my head down. My arms felt like tree branches being forced to twist around each other in excruciatingly painful ways. The lights were blinding, I began to scream.

“Help me! Somebody, please help me!” The security guards reached for my mouth, attempting to hold it close. I couldn’t breathe. A nurse came intruding into our room and injected me with a sedative. It felt as if someone was pounding my head with a hammer, over and over again until I felt as if I had no more life to live, no more ounce of strength in my body. I felt defeated. My eyes drooped. I was helpless. Before I knew it, my world was black.

**Dec. 24th, 2015**

It was Christmas Eve! Christmas is my favorite holiday because of all the presents I receive from Mom and Dad. They always spend thousands of dollars on Lily and me. Every year, I present my parents with a two-page list full of things I want for Christmas. I ask for a new Rolex every year and I refuse to ask for anything that is not a designer brand. Mom bends over backwards to give me everything I want on that list. I love it!

I examined myself in the mirror, sprayed myself three times with the new men’s cologne I had just purchased at Nordstrom, and I ran my fingers through my hair one last time. I adjusted my tie, like I knew how to adjust one, and I proceeded down the spiral staircase. Mom was in the kitchen finishing up our meal for dinner. Her body was arched over the oven, one hand on the oven railing and one hand inside it with a toothpick. Dad had just gotten out of the shower and scurried into the kitchen while simultaneously adjusting his tie. He kissed my mom on the cheek and gave some half-ass heartfelt compliment to my mom in regard to her cooking. Lily was sitting on the kitchen counter, replete with one of her gorgeous plaid dresses with tights and black shoes.

Every year, my family hosts a monumental Christmas Eve dinner for our friends and family. Everyone important is invited—the Mayor and his wife, a married couple whose relatives were passengers on the Titanic, a newly-wed couple whom inherited millions of dollars from their family fortune. If you are someone important, you are invited to this dinner. My Mom always outdoes herself with her cooking. She views this night as if it is the most important of her life. I secretly think my parents couldn’t care less about getting to converse with their friends and family. All they care about is who is attending so they can look popular and respectable in the photo that is to be published in the newspaper the following morning. Nonetheless, I enjoy this evening every year, because it is an opportunity for me to get drunk with my family, even though I am underaged. I can even scoff at these attendees who believe they are so important, simply because they have a couple dollars to put to their name.

The evening went on like normal—Mom and Dad poured endless amounts of wine in our guests’ fancy wine glasses. Dad carved the ham and presented it on a sparkling, silver platter. There were significant amounts of binge drinking, games, more drinking, shots even, poker, cigars, condescending jokes, and before I knew it, everyone was belligerent. Mom put Lily to bed around 10 pm, even though it was far past her bedtime. Lily always got to stay up late on Christmas Eve because she absolutely loved being a part of the party. She was the center of attention; everyone adored her. I wish I could say this didn’t bother me. Every year, she decides to put on some sort of show for all of the guests. Whether it be a magic show, a talent show, a fashion show, Lily executes it well and achieves to mesmerize every member of the party with her bold personality and gracious heart. This year, Lily decided to perform a captivating dance routine. She wore a black hat, took her ski pole from the ski closet, and performed a tap dance in front of the entire party. At the end, everyone cheered and screamed for Lily. Mom and Dad threw money at her, as she curtsied and held her ruffled dress in both of her hands. Mom and Dad were good at making us feel special every now and then. I noticed they did this especially when we were around family friends or strangers. Honestly, I think my parents wanted to act like we were this perfect family, and they wanted everyone around them to believe it. We were a perfect family, right? Mom and Dad gave Lily and I everything we asked for, and I know they are willing to provide us with endless financial support. I guess people would call Lily and me, trust fund babies?

“Son, your tie is out of place,” my Dad interrupted.

I kicked a wine glass off of the table as I arose from the couch to fix my tie. I was angry. I stared deeply at myself in the full-length Victorian mirror. I applied more gel to my hair, inhaled, straightened out my tie, and grinned at my reflection. I proceeded to return to the party.

Our grandfather clock struck 5 am, and I was awoken abruptly by the sound of the chime. I was in a deep slumber on one of the large, lavish yet comfortable couches our family room. I glanced around-- my eyes had felt groggy. I blinked, twice, three times. No one was around. I wiped my left eye with my hand and squinted my eyes in attempt to focus more. There were empty bottles of wine laying on the floor, wine glasses scattered everywhere, and there were wine stains on the couch. *God damnit.*

“This happens every year” I growled out loud. I grabbed a blanket and hauled it around my shoulders like it was my cape, and I proceeded to go upstairs to find my bedroom. Mom and Dad must be in their room, and everyone else must have left the party around 2 or 3 am, I thought to myself. It is strange I did not wake up from noise as everyone was leaving our house. I entered the long hall leading to Lily’s bedroom and my bedroom, dragging my feet while silently remarking to myself about how much of a pain in the ass it will be for me to clean the leftover mess up tomorrow morning. I know Mom and Dad won’t—they always leave the cleaning for me. As I approached my room, I twisted the doorknob and my bedroom door made an extended creak as it opened. I scurried to my bed and noticed my bathroom door was open. I wondered why, as I always close my bathroom door. As soon as my head hit the pillow, my eyes closed shut and I fell into a peaceful sleep.

“Tomorrow is Christmas” Ryan said, smiling to himself in the empty darkness. A vast darkness that would engulf anyone passing through.

**January 4th, 2016**

Detective Barnes had just shoved a handful of peanuts in his mouth. He was a tall man with a rather large beer belly and had a beard that wrapped around his chin. Detective Barnes was a highly reputable detective and had worked his way up to the top of the Boston Murder Squad. He was known for solving cold cases that were deemed “impossible” to solve by the firm. Detective Barnes was awarded “Most Valuable Detective of the Year” in 2014, and he interprets this award as some sort of validation that he has proved himself and perhaps, “made it”, in the police force. He purchased his own mini pedestal for his office in which this award sits tall and proud. Detective Barnes certainly is not the humblest detective, and he certainly means nothing but business when he works. He is also not the most accessible person with whom to interact, because Detective Barnes believes his time is a gift not everyone has the pleasure of receiving.

Detective Barnes entered the meeting room with all of the other detectives, slammed his large binder on the table, and cleared his throat as an order to gather the attention of everyone in the room. Everyone on the Murder Squad recognizes that when Detective Barnes enters the room, you best shut up.

“Evening, Detectives” he remarked.

“Good evening, Detective Barnes”, the other detectives responded synchronously.

“We have a very interesting case to tackle. A 17-year-old boy murdered his seven-year-old sister on Christmas Day. Their parents awoke early to place their children’s presents under the Christmas tree, and when they went to check on their daughter, Lily, she was not in her bed. Her parents proceeded to find their daughter in their son’s bathtub, filled with blood and absolutely no sense of life. She had been left there for hours.”

“Fuck. Have you gotten the kid to confess?” one of the detectives questioned.

“Not yet. His parents are lawyers, and they also have lawyers lined up to save his ass, but forensics has proof that his DNA was all over his sister’s body” Detective Barnes stated.

“How did he—”

“Strangled her and suffocated her” Detective Barnes interrupted. “I believe he had suffocated her in her sleep and continued to strangle her to death to finish off the job. He filled up the tub with water and cut her wrist with a razor to make it look like it was a suicide. We have her DNA all over the pillowcase that was used to suffocate her. Gentlemen, I know a murder when I see one, and I am confident this bratty seventeen-year-old murdered his sister. Why? I don’t know. That’s what I am going to find out”, Detective Barnes announced.

“Who is this, anyway?” Detective Phillips asked.

“Ryan McCallister” Detective Barnes loudly declared.

“The filthy rich McCallister family?” Detective Andrews added.

“That’s the one” Detective Barnes smirked.

The silence in the room was deafening.

**Dec. 25, 2015**

I heard Mom let out a piercing scream that was the most terrifying sound I had heard in my life. It was not only ear-piercing, it was deadly. I had never heard anything like it. Mom was always even-tempered, and I rarely heard her yell-- not even at Lily and me when we would get into trouble as young kids. This scream was hysterical, angry, manic, panicked, an indignant roar, even more like a savage scream. When I saw Mom, all of the color left her face. She was as white as a sheet, and her eyes were the size of golf balls. She began to sob uncontrollably, while wailing and gasping for air. My Dad embraced my Mom in his arms, she began to act limp. My Dad rarely shows emotion, but this time, he was stiff. He seemed immobile. Speechless.

“What happened?!” I yelled.

Lily was dead.

**January 7, 2016**

White walls surrounded me. I was sitting at a table, my hands handcuffed. Directly across from me was what appeared to be a doctor. He was wearing a long, white lab coat and had a pen and paper in front of him. He was staring deeply at me I felt almost as if he was staring into my soul. He asked me questions, I answered. He was asking me questions about my sister’s death, questions that I did not have the answers to. He was asking me questions about my health, my mental health, whether or not I have experienced any dark or suicidal thoughts.

“No!?” I began to feel defensive.

“Ryan, I’m trying to help you. There is evidence that you murdered your sister. If you are honest with me, and tell me anything, *anything* at all that I should know about you, I may be able to provide you with some protection. If you don’t, the Boston Murder Squad will be all over you and will want to end your life in court. You could be sentenced to a lifetime in prison. “This is extremely serious” the man insisted.

“I don’t remember anything. I promise you. I don’t remember! I didn’t kill my sister. I would never do that. I loved Lily” Ryan pleaded.

**January 8, 2016**

Attention: Detective Barnes

From: Dr. Simon M. Herbert, MD

Dear Detective Barnes,

I wish to inform you that I have had countless meeting discussions with Ryan McCallister and his parents. As an outsider looking in, I do believe Mr. McCallister committed the heinous crime of murdering his younger sister, Lily. As his psychiatrist, I wish to inform you that I have diagnosed Mr. McCallister with Narcissistic Personality Disorder, Schizophrenia, and Dissociative Personality Disorder. I want to re-emphasize that I do believe Mr. McCallister murdered his sister; however, he does not recall any of these events due to his suffering from these personality disorders. In other words, he has blocked this horrific event out of his mind completely, and I can assure you that you will not get him to confess, because he believes he has nothing *to* confess. I compare this to a blackout. I know this information is alarming; however, I ask that you remember he is a seventeen-year-old boy with severe neurological disorders. As his doctor, I do not believe it is justifiably fair to press murder count charges against Mr. McCallister. Please do with this information what you want. You will find attached Mr. McCallister’s medical records.

Sincerely,

Dr. Simon M. Herbert, MD

**January 9, 2016**

My parents keep everything together. Life comes easy to them—they are the state’s most prestigious lawyers and they have been immensely successful. I am going to be just like them. I observed my parents through the glass window directly in front of me. They were talking to a nurse. My Father’s arm was resting over my Mother’s shoulders, my Mother looked as concerned as ever. They both turned to look at me through the window. I sat still and upright. I smirked back. My Mother stared blankly at me. She began to cup her mouth with her right hand, and tears began to stream down her face. She was as white as a ghost. My father stared at me with monstrous question in his eyes. It seemed as if they almost didn’t recognize me. I forgot I wasn’t the only one in the room. Detective Barnes and Dr. Herbert were sitting behind me, with a sealed folder resting on the table in between us. I glared at the folder. It read “Ryan McCallister Medical Records.”

“Are you ready to begin?” Detective Barnes inquired.