

THE GHOSTWRITER'S GHOSTWRITER:  
HOW I BECAME A GHOSTWRITER'S  
GHOSTWRITER  
A TRUE STORY

by

CONNOR M. GLEIM

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Book design by Rebecca

First published on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017

ISBN:

978-0-692-87256-7

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*IN LOVING MEMORY OF  
MARSHALL DAHING GEYER*



We will never forget you. Your life-threatening illness came too soon. Even though you technically got killed by that truck that t-boned you, the illness would have taken your life a couple days later. So, you were going to die either way. Anyway, we miss you.



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# PROLOGUE

Ghostwriting. That's what they call it. I prefer 'Alternative Composing,' but I see why they don't use that term. The concept of ghosts – or, in this case, someone being invisible – is exciting. It intrigues people. In fact, it intrigues me, too. I, Connor Gleim, am never in the spotlight. No one knows about the written work with my name on it. I have non-ghostwritten nine books that I am proud of, but when I'm out in public, I might as well be a ghost. An invisible ghost. The people I write for range from celebrities to politicians to famous writers whose careers would get demolished if the secret leaked. In a way, I like holding that secretive knowledge and power. I get paid large sums of money – more than most revered authors, – not to write a book, but to keep those secrets. Trust me, you've definitely read something I wrote. My name just wasn't on it. I'm a nobody. A ghost. A writing ghost. And this is the story of my ghostwriting career and how I became a ghostwriter's ghostwriter.

- *Connor M. Gleim*



## CHAPTER 1

# GHOSTING MEMORIES

I don't remember before the age of 12. Ironically, it seems I must have been a ghost from my birth until that age. At least, my memories of the distant past have ghosted me. What I do remember: I was never really fantastic at making friends. Once middle school started I only had one thing on my mind, and that was to establish a life-long friendship with anyone – literally anyone – in the school. Girl, boy, lunch lady; I didn't care! I was more pathetic than those loser kids on television shows where they eat with a teacher during lunchtime because they don't have any friends. I didn't even have an adult to eat with!

One time I spotted a custodian eating his lunch at the corner table in the back near the door to the tennis locker rooms. I approached him shyly and grew more and more anxious with each step I took. Lunchbox in hand, I was ready to finally eat a meal with another human being, and not with Arnold, my imaginary friend. As I reached the table I froze.

“H-Hey,” I stuttered.

“Yes?” replied the custodian. He was in the middle of eating his apple and had to talk with his mouth half-full, a sight I didn’t want to see, but also didn’t deter me from finally making a friend.

I mustered up the courage to spout, “Can I eat my lunch with you!?” I almost shouted it. I’m surprised the entire lunchroom didn’t go quiet and turn around in my direction.

“Sorry, kid, I gotta take out the trash bins before the lunch period ends. Principal Easterwood doesn’t know that I didn’t take them out after lunch yesterday, and she’ll get suspicious when all of the students don’t have anywhere to put their trash in about two minutes.” He seemed sincere, but it didn’t

soften the blow that I had just been rejected by the last person I expected to say no.

I put my head down and was about to run off in an embarrassed fit when I heard, "But how about tomorrow?"

"What?" I inquired. Did I just hear correctly? I know I hadn't had a hearing test for quite some time, but I think he just offered to eat with me. Someone offered to eat with me!

"Tell you what. I eat at this exact spot every day from 12:04pm to 12:24pm. I know your lunch is a bit longer than mine, but I'm always down for someone to help me with my crossword puzzles or to talk with about Madonna's radio hits. Meet me here tomorrow and you've got yourself a friend."

Friend!? I had never heard that word from another person's mouth when referring to me! Loser? Sure. Dickweed? Maybe. But friend? That was one word I was looking forward to hearing every day at 12:04pm.

And my new friend would prove to be someone who would help me with my ghostwriting for years to come.



We became lunch pals for the rest of middle school. We exchanged laughs, stories, – heck – even lunches sometimes. We played this game called “What’s In The Bag?” I would guess what was in his lunch bag, and he would do the same. Then we would eat. I quickly learned his name was ‘Teddy, which was my uncle’s name out in Ashland, Pennsylvania – a place that would become integral to me later. However, I didn’t know it yet. And neither did Teddy.

During one of our lunch dates in seventh grade, Teddy handed me a piece of paper that he folded eight different times.

“What’s this?” I asked. I knew I could have just opened it to figure it out, but I wanted to see what he had to say.

“A drawing my daughter made. Sometimes I tell her stories about lunch; she’s always wondering if I packed the same meal for myself as I did for her. Well, in art class yesterday, she decided to draw you and me eating lunch together for her art assignment. I thought you should have it.” I could tell any

drawing by his daughter was very special to him. She was his world.

I began to open it as quickly, but carefully, as I could. "Thank you, Teddy." It wasn't that good of a drawing, considering his daughter was only seven-years-old, but I found beauty in it regardless. "Thank you so much." I saw the name 'Rebecca' scrawled in red crayon on the bottom left corner. "And tell Rebecca I said thank you, too."

Teddy was the best friend I had during those years. He didn't judge me, he was always there right on time, and he wasn't afraid to talk to me, unlike my fellow students. Sure, we didn't have too much in common, but we were always willing to learn from each other and entertain each other's interests. Every day for almost two years, we sat with each other. 289 days total. 5,780 minutes. 346,800 seconds. And I cherished every moment.

One day in eighth grade me and Teddy were having our normal lunch date – still at the back corner table – when he told me news that would break my heart.

"I met with Principal Easterwood

yesterday...,” Teddy started.

“Are you getting a promotion? Oh! A longer lunch!?” I was so excited at the possibility of spending more time with Teddy that I didn’t even think of the possibility of bad news. In fact, Teddy was one of the best employees I had ever met at the school.

“She told me that the school board met. They need to let some people go because they can’t afford to keep up the expenses in the athletics department. They’re starting with the custodial department.” He sounded calm. That’s one of the things I liked best about Teddy: he always remained calm, especially when I was in a time of need.

“So... no more lunches?” I softly asked.

“Well, of course lunch will still be here! I don’t think they can fire all of the lunch ladies!” he jokingly retorted.

“You know what I mean!” I usually enjoyed his humor, but I couldn’t find it in myself to laugh.

“I won’t know anything until next week – right before spring break. Stac-, uh, Principal Easterwood just wanted to warn me so I can look for other jobs just in case.” Again, he

was calm, cool, and collected. I would have been freaking out if I were him.

“Oh! Well, that means you might keep your job!” Even though he wasn’t worried, I was still trying to make him feel better. I had become immensely more positive because of Teddy.

“I don’t know, buddy. I have a meeting after work today with a career consultant to update my résumé. Just to be safe, I will be applying to other jobs. I know there’s a custodial position open at McMurry Middle School. It’s better than nothing.”

*Teddy CAN’T go to McMurry, I thought. My neighbor goes there and he’s worse than any student that goes here.* Of course, I kept these thoughts to myself. I just wanted Teddy to be happy.

“What are you thinking about?” he questioned.

“Oh, nothing. Just... that you’re gonna have a great time no matter what happens! Let’s just enjoy this lunch,” I said, hiding my worry.

He quickly looked at his watch. “Shoot! It’s 12:27pm. I hardly noticed all of the students rushing out of the cafeteria with

nowhere to put their trash. Gotta go! See you tomorrow.” I attempted to say bye, but he sped off faster than a racecar.

The next day Teddy wasn’t at our usual table. In fact, he wasn’t at any table at all. I waited the entire lunch period for him. I couldn’t even eat my food. I stayed positive, told myself that he was just meeting with Principal Easterwood again and that he would walk in at any moment. I kept my eyes on the cafeteria doors the entire time, and prematurely rejoiced every time it opened. But no Teddy.

Teddy wouldn’t come that day. Or any of the following days for that matter. That would be the last conversation I had with him at our table, his final words lingering in the air. He was gone – whether at McMurry or someplace else, I wasn’t sure. But what I was sure of: I had absolutely no friends again. I was going to end my time in middle school the same way I started it: as a ghost. And Teddy would haunt me for years to come.



## CHAPTER 2

### INVISIBLE FEELINGS

Ah, first day of tenth grade. I was wiped from the summer activities, tired of eating my mom's cooking every day, and... still friendless. I tried making friends in everyway I could think of: at the community pool (I went there four times a week!), at the skating rink (too bad I didn't know how to skate), and – heck – even at the bingo hall (although I'm not sure how much me and a 95-year-old person would have had in common back then). Regardless of everything I tried, I still ended up friendless. There was a situation in which I thought I had gotten some guy's attention, but he ended up waving to the people behind me. Classic! So, alas, I was

going to start the new year of high school empty handed in terms of friends. Not even Johnny Finkle would talk to me for more than a minute when I saw him at the baseball fields – and he was a bottom feeder on the popularity food chain! Oh well, at least I was a little bit more used to the silence and isolation considering I had to endure it more and more ever since Teddy left. It had only been around a year and six months without Teddy, but it felt like an eternity. One thing was for sure: I was not even going to attempt to sit with anyone at lunch this year. No, for the unforeseeable future, I would eat my lunch in the bathroom.

Every day I would spend five extra minutes in Mrs. Kirkpatrick's science classroom after the bell for lunch rang. She didn't mind. She was old and held a pretty big delay in what she noticed. Half the time, I would pretend like I had a science question, but most of the time she would just assume I was leaving with everyone else. I did this to ensure I arrived to the bathroom in Hallway C without anyone noticing. All of the students would be at lunch while the teachers were

either on cafeteria duty or in conference period, so I glided into the bathroom without a single eye on me, except, of course, the cameras. But Mr. Humphrey, the school security guard, was constantly either dozing off or figuring out his word search. Give me a four-letter word that rhymes with hazy!

I remember one particular day in January of that school year. The 26<sup>th</sup>. I was walking swiftly to the bathroom when I happened to see another person walking down the hallway. How could this be? I had gone more than half of the school year walking to this bathroom daily, and not once had I seen a living soul; it was as if ghosts roamed the hallways at this time. But she was no ghost. She was Misty Meisner. I had seen her at the community pool a couple of times this summer, and she was always the most popular girl – scratch that, person – there. I wouldn't dare try to speak to her. If I were lucky, it would take me until I was a senior to even get near her, and that would be if I could somehow climb the social ladder. And yet, here we were: the only two people in all of Hallway C.

“H-hi, Misty,” I stuttered. I honestly don't

know how I even mustered up the courage to say those words! Must be the ghosts giving me a shove.

She looked straight at me and continued walking. Right past the bathroom and right into Hallway B. The only noise that emitted from her sounded in between a scowl and some type of onomatopoeia – not exactly inviting of more words. I let her go. I felt stupid even trying to be in the presence of such beauty. I had had an undeniable crush on Misty since sixth grade, and I possibly just ruined my only chance of her knowing who I am.

Suddenly, a sharp light hit my eye and turned my head towards the ground where Misty once stood. A diamond heart pendant laid on the ground with the initials *M.M.* on the side facing up. I picked it up. I knew it was hers, but she was already gone. And with the school being as big as it was, there was no telling when I would run into Misty again, and there was definitely no hope of seeing her alone again. I had to keep the pendant safe and return it in the same condition to Misty myself. I would be her knight in shining

armor. Her prince charming.

“Do you have somewhere to be, young man?” I heard a female voice half-shout. It was Principal Easterwood. I forgot she had transferred to the high school from the middle school. I had spent an extended amount of time dazzling at a piece of jewelry that had touched Misty that I didn’t even realize I was out in plain sight.

“Uh... I was just going to the bathroom?” I managed to spit out, unconfidently.

“Gleim, it is lunch period and you are at the opposite end of the school. I hardly believe that you were simply looking to relieve yourself.” Her eyes were cold and ghost-like. She was waiting for me to say something, but I couldn’t. “Now off you go to the cafeteria! I’ll escort you there myself.”

Great. *Not only am I going to have to be in the same room as the rest of my fellow students, I thought, but also I’ll be forced to eat alone in front of everyone.* The only upside to this situation is that I had someone showing me where the cafeteria was; I had never been, so I wouldn’t have even known where to turn if she had made me go there by myself.

After arriving in the cafeteria, which is not where I was expecting it at all, she showed me to a table with an empty seat. There were three guys who all seemed more athletically inclined than me. I'm not sure if she noticed what kind of trouble she was setting me up for.

"You will sit here, Gleim. You know these boys, correct?" she asked.

"N-no, ma'am," I said. Who was she kidding? I hardly knew anyone.

"Well, then, get to know them. Brewers, ensure Gleim gets acquainted with your... friends." I think she knew these boys were trouble. *Why was she doing this? I have to ask if I can sit at another table,* I thought. I turned around, but before I knew it, she was walking off with her head held high and her heels clanking against the tile floor.

"Roger," the boy that Principal Easterwood called 'Brewers' said. The only thing noticeable about him was that he had two parallel scars on his right cheek.

"My name is Connor," I said unenthusiastically.

"You got a last name?" asked another one

of the boys, without having told me his yet.

"G-Gleim." Their attitudes were making me nervous.

"Gagleim? What kind of last name is that?" retorted the third boy.

"Actua-"

"Anyway, this table is off limits from here on out. We don't want any trouble, so we'll let you sit here today. But when the clock strikes 12:42pm, your butt better be out of that seat and gone for good for the rest of the school year. You got that?" I couldn't even correct myself before he gave me that news. Did they think I cared to sit with them again? I planned on leaving early if I was allowed.

I caught one of them looking at my binder. I was incredibly uncomfortable with anything they did, so I knew I wasn't going to enjoy what was about to come out of... whatever-his-name-is's mouth.

"Who the hell is Rebecca," he said opposed to asking, "and why does she suck at coloring? Seriously, look guys!" He began to take my binder in order to show it off to Roger and the other guy at the table. But before he could put it in their line of vision, I

hit it out of his hands.

“What the hell, dude,” he screamed. For a 15-year-old, this guy’s language was pretty foul and sorely lacking.

“Don’t touch my things,” I whispered, “and... this drawing is from an old friend. It doesn’t suck.” I have always lowered my voice when someone else would raise theirs.

“Yeah? You gonna tell on us to Principal Easterwood? Don’t forget, you were the one in trouble with her in the first place. What’s she gonna say about you starting a food fight?” he vindictively asked.

“B-but I didn’t start a food fi-,” I began until he dumped his tray on himself.

“WHAT THE HELL! CONNOR GLEIM JUST THREW SPAGHETTI AT ME!” he shouted for the entire cafeteria to hear.

While he was shouting, the second boy put the mashed potatoes from his plate on his head. Once finished, he screamed, “DUDE, MY HAIR WAS PERFECT BEFORE YOU DUMPED MASHED POTATOES ON IT!”

At this point everyone in the entire cafeteria – including the lunch ladies – seemed to be looking at us. Before I knew it, Roger



stood up and screamed, “FOOD FIGHT!” before throwing his opened milk carton straight across the room, milk slinging all over.

I wish I could say my first cafeteria food fight was exciting, but who would I be fooling? How did I, Connor Gleim, go from eating lunch in a secluded bathroom every day to “starting” the school’s biggest food fight? At this moment, I definitely wished I were a ghost.



The inside of Principal Easterwood’s office looked much different than what I had expected. Not only did it look different, it also *felt* different. She wasn’t your typical high school principal; she made sure you knew she was on top of the school. Lining every inch of her office walls were framed documents sporting every accomplishment she had ever received. Donned on the east wall was a taxidermied moose head, even though there were absolutely no moose anywhere near our

town – or state, for that matter.

I was sitting in a red gaudy chair clearly picked out with the specific order to make those who sat in it feel lesser than the room itself. Principal Easterwood sat across from me, essentially on an elegant throne compared to my seating situation. She had pride in one eye and disappointment in the other. Pride for the fact that she was able to catch a student misbehaving TWICE in one day, and disappointment because... well, that part was obvious. I tried to minimize my punishment.

“I told you, I didn’t start the food fight,” I sternly stated. Funny how the truth can make someone confident.

“I will not hear another word about the incident. It is going to take days before the cafeteria can be considered clean again. The school will have to hire multiple custodians from around the area just to help our own clean it up. What do you have to say for yourself?” She was cold and motionless. I knew nothing I said would stop those haunting eyes from piercing me.

“I’m sorry-,” I started.

“That is more lik-,” she attempted.

“-but I didn’t start the food fight,” I finished. If I was going to get in trouble regardless, I might as well save my dignity.

“Gleim, it is safe to say I am entirely disappointed in your decisions on this day. I already had Mrs. Gleaton call your parents before our meeting. They are on their way up to the school as we speak. You better get your story in line because they will be in those chairs right there.” She pointed at two slightly-more-elegant-than-mine-but-less-elegant-than-hers chairs. *Is all of the décor in her office chosen to psychologically torture students?* I questioned in my head.

“I have to go to the bathroom. My parents talk for a long time and I know I’ll be more focused if I don’t have to worry about peeing all over this chair,” I blurted.

I think she was concerned about her precious chair above my wellbeing, but she let me go freely anyway. “Run along. BUT do not dare go to a bathroom across the school. The one down the hall will suffice. Be back in five minutes.”

I quickly got up and opened the huge mansion-like door to the outside. I speed-

walked down the hall as fast as I could, right past Mrs. Gleaton's office, and opened the bathroom door. Once inside, I locked the door immediately and looked at my watch. 1:05pm. I pulled out the pendant that Misty had dropped. There were crumbs from the food fight all over it. *Oh no!* I thought. *This thing cannot be damaged in any way when I give it back to Misty! If it is, she'll never talk to me again... or start.* I grabbed some toilet paper and began almost-violently wiping the pendant down. Soon enough it was in pristine condition.

I looked back down at my watch. 1:10pm. *Shoot!* Five minutes was up. I jumped at the door as it began to open, almost understanding what I was about to do. I thought a ghost had somehow taken control of the school, but then I heard, "Connor?" My father.

"I-I was just about to walk back down to the principal's office," I muttered. Great – another truth that seemed like a lie.

"Come on, your mother is in Principal Easterwood's office waiting," he said. I could just imagine her looking at the clock waiting for the second-hand to strike 1:10pm so she

could immediately fetch me.

“Okay,” I said. I was running out of words. I really didn’t know what was expected of me, or what was going to happen.

We walked together back to the principal’s office. I walked in to find my mother seated in the chair farthest away from me, and Principal Easterwood still sitting upright with that cold stare in her eyes. It was as if she hadn’t even moved in the past five minutes.

“Hello mother,” I offered, not expecting much in return. All I received back was a stare even more haunting than Principal Easterwood’s.

“We are here today because your son, Connor, seems to not understand the phrase ‘don’t play with your food,’” started the principal. “He started a food fight. One of a magnitude I have not seen in my entire 30 years working as a principal. The cafeteria is currently pathetic to my eyesight, and there is no telling what kind of manpower we are going to need to clean it up before tomorrow.”

“I’m sure there’s some kind of misunderstanding, ma’am,” my father stated.

“Connor doesn’t even like attention. Why would he perform an act that would obviously put all eyes on him?” *Finally! Someone understands.*

“Oh, don’t be so deceived, Patrick. He doesn’t even talk to us! How are we so sure that he’s not responsible?” my mother chimed in. She was always so unforgiving.

“On second thought, I guess we should hear from Connor himself before jumping to the conclusion,” he said. *Never mind.*

“Go on, Connor.” I didn’t enjoy how suddenly it was three-against-one.

“I already told you: I didn’t start the food fight. Roger Brewers and his stupid friends set me up,” I stated again.

The principal’s eyes shifted to my parents. “If Connor does not provide a proper confession, I am afraid I have no other option than to suspend him.” She suddenly had a smirk on her face in addition to her proud eyes.

My father immediately pleaded, “There has to be something else he can do to repay the school. Volunteer work, maybe? He’ll even offer to pay for the damages by doing

cafeteria work.”

My mother just sat there.

“I apologize, but I believe there is just no other option. Consider Connor Gleim suspended from McNover High, effective immediately.” She banged her fist on her desk as if it were a gavel and the room a court.

I had been suspended. For a crime I didn’t commit. No possibility of an acquittal, for the jury was composed of all the odds stacked against me. I was now considered a ghost at McNover High: Forgotten.



As I was stepping into my parents’ car, I noticed several buses pulling up. Before I had time to think about why buses would be bringing students to school at 1:23pm, several men in white full-body suits began pouring out of them. The engine revved and my dad put his foot on the gas pedal. I thought this would be my final time exiting the school parking lot. Guess I didn’t have to worry about sitting in a cafeteria full of people every

day now. Now *there* was a positive outcome.

“I hope you’re happy,” started my mother. “You made me look like a fool in front of Stacy Easterwood. You know she’s on the board of the local Charity Organization™. I have been trying to get accepted onto that board for years, and now you’ve ruined my chances.” As usual, I don’t think she had fully comprehended that this wasn’t totally about her.

I didn’t respond.

Suddenly I caught a glimpse of a crossword puzzle book lying on the ground. I had only met one person in my life who still did crossword puzzles. While staring at it confusedly, a hand entered my field of vision and picked up the book. I followed the hand with my eyes and searched up the arm to the shoulder and finally to the face. ‘TEDDY! *Oh my gosh*, I thought, *Teddy is finally back!* As I was staring in excitement, Teddy turned around and continued walking towards the school with his back to me. The words “CUSTODIAL EMERGENCY TEAM” were fitted across the back of his suit. I began to think, *Teddy is only here because of the mess I*



*supposedly made. I have to do something. I have to talk to Teddy. He is the only person who would believe that I didn't start the food fight.*

I began to bang on the window and scream, "TEDDY!!!"

"What in the world are you doing, Connor? And who's Teddy?" my dad shouted. I almost forgot that I was with my parents.

"You- jus- you gotta- you gotta let me out! I wanna say goodbye to my friend Teddy!" I managed to let out in a hurried fashion.

"Sorry, son, but you've gotten yourself into enough trouble as it is. I'm sure if Teddy is truly your friend, he will keep in touch with you while you're not at school," my dad replied, attempting to calm my nerves.

"No- but- you don't understand!" I tried to argue. I didn't want to come off even crazier to my parents by stating I had sat with a custodian for lunch period all of middle school, and that that custodian was now being summoned to the same school as me – well, formerly – because of the situation that got me into this mess in the first place. I gave up.

Teddy disappeared into the school. Like ghosts, I was leaving the school and he was

leaving my life... again.

## CHAPTER 3

### DISAPPEARING ACT

Five days had passed with no school, no friends, and nothing to do. My parents weren't even talking to me. You'd think that because of my "troublemaking" that they wouldn't trust me at home alone, but they knew I was too nervous to go anywhere and didn't have anyone in my life to do it with. So goes the life of Connor Gleim.

It was almost 5pm and I was sitting on my bed looking at Misty's diamond heart pendant again – it must have been the tenth time that day alone. I kept it in a small sealable bag to prevent damage. I knew if I was ever going to garner friends at school and win the heart of Misty, I would have to return it to her safe

and sound. Heck, she must have been freaking out – the thing looked expensive!

I was attempting to concoct a plan on its safe return when I heard the engine of a car roll up and a door slam shut. My parents were home. Time to be a ghost in my own house again!

“Connor!” screeched my mother. Wow, that was a first. If I thought my father wasn’t talking to me, then my mother was absolutely non-existent. “Come down! We have news!”

I thought about rushing downstairs considering I had not heard any news my entire time being suspended. *Am I finally going back to school?* I thought to myself. *Not like it’s that exciting, but at least I wouldn’t have to be in this house any longer. Come to think of it, I was never told exactly how long my suspension would be. Hmm.*

I walked down the stairs and through the dining room to the living room, where my mother was standing. She stepped aside, and suddenly appeared my uncle Teddy. I hadn’t seen him in at least a decade, so I hardly noticed him.

“Hi, U-uncle Teddy,” I shyly said. *What the heck is he doing here? He lives clear across the United*

*States!*

“Your uncle is here to discuss moving in with him and his wife, Janet, for the remainder of the school year. Considering you can’t continue school at McNover, we feel it would be best for you to have a clean start. Plus, Pennsylvania might be good for you to reflect on your recent actions.” My mother was still as mad and cold as she was in the principal’s office. No surprise there.

“But. I don’t know if I want to move there. Isn’t it just farmland?” I half-argued. I wasn’t exactly opposed to the idea, but I was a little irritated that my parents thought that they could just uproot me from everything I’ve known and plant me somewhere else.

“Actually, this isn’t really a discussion. Your parents have asked me to drive all the way down here from Pennsylvania to take you back starting tomorrow morning. I’m sorry, Connor, but you only have the rest of today to pack up your belongings and say goodbye to your friends,” my uncle nicely stated. At least someone was finally talking to me like a human being.

I began to say that it wouldn’t be necessary

for me to say goodbye to my friends, but what was the use? Teddy was gone. Misty didn't even know I existed. Roger and his minions were the only ones who had spoken to me this year, and I was not about to say goodbye to them.

"I'll go pack now," I whispered before heading up to my room. Once in my room, I began to reluctantly push my clothes and toiletries into my suitcase. I began to think about my other possessions, such as my comic books and my fan, etc. But I decided that if my parents wanted me to "start over," I was going to do so with my possessions, as well. Plus, it was only for the next three months. I zipped up my suitcase half-full and began my trek back down to the living.

My father was now standing with my mother and Uncle Teddy. "Connor, I hope you know that this is for your own good. Your mother and I wouldn't be doing this if we weren't sure that you will grow from it. Maybe even understand the error of your ways." *Wow, it sounded really sweet up until that last part.* The idea of getting away for an extended period of time was starting to grow

on me and I was a little bit excited to stop this “discussion” and just start doing.

“Do we have to leave in the morning?” I asked.

“Connor, we already told you that this is a done deal,” my mother shot at me.

“No, I mean, how about we leave tonight,” I said as I looked towards my uncle.

I think they caught on that I was starting to become more than pleased to leave, for they all looked at each other before Teddy stated, “I’m all right with that. Of course, we’d only have half a day of driving before we’d have to stop tonight, but if it gets me closer to my wife, I’m willing to leave now.” *Has a good relationship with his wife*, I mentally noted. If I was going to be in a car with this guy for a couple of days, I needed to get to know him. And as it stood right then, that was the only thing I knew about him.

Uncle Teddy and I both stared at my parents while they looked at each other. “Uh...,” my father started before my mother continued, “That’s perfectly fine. We’ll see you again in three months.”

And just like that, me and my uncle were

on our way to Ashland, Pennsylvania: a haunting almost-ghost town in the middle of nowhere.



I'll save you the boring car ride details and multiple-state-line journey and just discuss what I learned about my uncle and step-aunt. Although Janet didn't come along for the ride, I learned that she loved to travel and has been to all seven continents – even Antarctica! My uncle rarely went with her, as it was often work-related travel. However, he wouldn't tell me more than the fact that she was a "businesswoman." My uncle was a farmer and raved on and on about how much land he took care of and the different types of animals he owned. There wasn't much information about myself that I could offer him in return. I was 15, had no friends, and was recently told I had to start life over. *C'est la vie!* Or whatever.

The car pulled up to his house in the center of a ranch. Janet was standing in the



doorway expecting us. She was a thin woman – much thinner than my uncle, who was pushing 300lbs it seemed. We got out of the car and she immediately walked down the steps and gave my uncle a hug and a kiss. They seemed incredibly happy to be reunited after just a week.

She turned to me and said, “Hi, I’m Janet! I know you don’t know me, but I’ve heard all about you and cannot wait to have you live with us until the summer!” She was rather enthusiastic, at least compared to my apathy.

I extended my arm for a handshake and started to say, “Hi, I’m Connor” before she put her arms around me.

“No need for formality! I’m a hugger.” She squeezed me so tight that I couldn’t understand where the energy was coming from – she was so small!

I shyly hugged back, but before I knew it, she let go and was rushing us inside. “We have to give you the grand tour! C’mon, honey, we need to show Connor his room and everything else.” Quicker than I could say my own name, we were inside of the house.

It was beautiful. The type of house you’d

see in a magazine that only moms read. The walls were eloquently painted and decorated. The furniture perfectly matched not only each other, but also the rest of the room. The rugs were where they were supposed to be and everything was in impeccable condition. I was in awe, and I didn't even care about household aesthetic!

"Here is the living room," started Janet, "where we have movie night every Saturday. Don't worry, we're not like those lame old couples who only watch Grease. We're up to date on the latest flicks." She said the word "flicks" in a cool fashion, clearly trying to win over my approval. I didn't care. I was just happy to have people who seemed to care about me. Movie Saturdays sounded awesome!

We moved along to a room with a HUGE rectangular table in the center of it. The chairs at the table were even more elegant than Principal Easterwood's! I bet she would be jealous.

"And this is the dining room, where we eat breakfast AND dinner every single day. I hope you don't mind, but we sort of talked

about it and we want you to join us every time. We promise to make wonderful company!” Even though it might have seemed like they were forcing me to participate, Janet made it seem like I was being offered the most incredible time. And I loved it.

I hadn’t talked much the entire time they were showing me the large amounts of rooms in their house. They understood that I was new and shy to their world. I felt bad for staying so silent, but I could tell that it didn’t effect how they thought about me.

Suddenly we were in the kitchen. I was too deep in my own thoughts and quiet excitement that I hadn’t even realized how we traveled there. I would have to ask Janet to redirect me around the house sometime.

“Here’s where I home cook *all* of the meals. We’re a bit of health-nuts. Organic, grass-fed, etc. I always ensure that a meal that’s going into our bodies is healthy AND tasty!” I liked the sound of that. I was never good at following the food pyramid growing up.

She did seem like the type of person who would be experienced at cooking. I noticed

several stacks of cookbooks sitting on the countertop, and they looked used. I finally garnered the courage to say something.

“Do you use any of your farmland for your cooking?”

Janet seemed pleased to discover my interest. “Yes! Your uncle Teddy here is incredible when it comes to harvesting various crops, fruits, and vegetables from our farm. He has quite the green thumb! Not only that, but we treat our chickens and cows ethically. The chickens lay eggs when they want and the cows live a wonderful life providing us with milk and meat when they naturally pass away.” I had never met anyone who lived or believed in such an ethical and organic lifestyle. This fact, combined with their house, led me to believe they were quite possibly the happiest people alive.

We began to walk down a hallway and past a door when I looked in and saw a typewriter sitting on a desk with a large amount of books and music sheets being held in bookcases on both side walls.

“What room is this?” I found my curiosity asking.

“Oh! That’s my office. I’m a professional songwriter. Well, a ghostwriter for musicians,” she replied nonchalantly.

“So you wrote all of those books?” There were so many. It would take me forever to count them all, let alone read them.

“Oh heavens no! That’s just my collection of books written by my favorite authors. The music sheets and CD collection over there,” she said as she pointed to a small cabinet I hadn’t noticed before, “are remnants of songs I’ve written over the past 40 years.” 40 years!? She either started her career extremely young or her organic diet was really working on her livelihood.

“So... you write for musicians but don’t get any of the credit?” I asked before I could realize how it sounded.

“Yes! Exactly! Except, I get paid a LOT of money to not be in the spotlight. I help people become and/or stay famous, and I get a hefty percentage of the royalties to keep secrets. So shhhhh.” She said that last part almost scandalously, but I could tell she didn’t take herself too seriously, and she knew that I wouldn’t say anything.

“Honey, I thought you weren’t allowed to tell anyone about your career. Hell, I told the boy you were a businesswoman. Couldn’t even think of anything more creative,” my uncle chimed in. He didn’t seem mad or anything, but he was a little confused.

“Oh, Teddy, I trust Connor. I have a sixth sense when it comes to understanding people, and I can tell he’s a good person. No need to keep secrets in this household. If Connor is gonna have a life-changing experience here, we’re gonna have to be honest.” *Did she just say she trusts me? Not even my parents say that!* I thought.

“You know Madonna? Guess who wrote most of her song ‘Material Girl.’” Janet gave me a wink. Was she serious!? That was Teddy’s favorite song! *Wow, I haven’t thought of Teddy since I left for Ashland.*

“I used to listen to that a lot with an old friend. We listened to it so much that I was sort of forced to know every line,” I admitted. I was still in awe about this fact.

And it must have been visible because Janet said, “It’s not like I wrote all of it. I worked with my good friends Peter and

Robert, who contributed quite a bit. But that's enough talk about my career. Let's get you up to your room."

We walked up the stairs and turned right down a long hallway that seemed to never end. We finally reached a door that seemed bigger than any door I've ever seen. Inside the room I noticed a bed donned in my favorite color: green. In fact, most of the items in the room were also green, including the walls.

"Do you like it, Connor? Janet put it together while I was on my way to get you. It used to be our guest bedroom, but we have so many of those that it wasn't hard to convert one into a place that you'll love," my uncle softly said.

I did love it. It was the first time I ever felt at home. I had finally found a home. I knew that there, I wouldn't feel like a ghost.



The days turned into weeks and the weeks turned into months, and suddenly, before I knew it, it was May. I spent my learning days

at the local high school – the only one this town had. I’ll admit, I still didn’t make any friends. At least, not any to write home about. However, the kids did talk to me there, at least. I could actually ask someone for help on an assignment in the middle of class without getting made fun of. And I ate in the cafeteria like the rest of the students! Aside from not hanging out with people after school or on the weekends, I felt like a regular person. But I didn’t really need friends when I had my uncle Teddy and Janet. They took great care of me. I was always excited to come home from school to the smell of a home cooked organic meal. We ate dinner pretty early, but I didn’t mind because it immediately took my mind off of school every day.

The school here wasn’t as nice as the one back in my hometown, but what was nicer was the principal. His name was Allen and he insisted that we call him by his first name so he could establish a “friendship” with every student, opposed to being seen as their superior. Overall, everyone seemed to get along and there were no food fights!

However, there weren’t really many girls



either. Not that I cared – I still thought about Misty Meisner every day. I carried the diamond heart pendant in my binder, right next to Rebecca's drawing, so that I would always be near it. I couldn't seem to get rid of my ghosts, but they kept me hopeful that when I would return back home, I'd have something to look forward to. Two somethings: finding Misty and giving her the pendant back, and finally confronting Teddy. Even if that meant I had to start another food fight. (*Maybe this time I'll actually do it and blame it on Roger Brewers!*)

But until then, I actually wasn't ready to leave my uncle and Janet. There would be no hope of me seeing either Misty or Teddy during the summer because Misty's family always vacationed and I assumed Teddy had summers off thanks to having worked at a school. And I was not about to repeat my previous summers of attempting to talk – neigh, stutter – to people at the community pool or the skating rink. Plus my parents wouldn't really believe I had changed if I came back home and immediately secluded myself in my room for the entire summer. *I*

*have to convince them to let me stay in Ashland, at least for the summer, I thought.*

I told my uncle and Janet the plan during dinner one day. We were having amazing shepherd's pie made with various vegetables from the farm. When I could finally put my fork down, I said, "How about I stay here for the summer? We could have more Movie Saturdays and go to the Sovereign Majestic Theater until we get tired of it!"

I waited anxiously for a response. Janet finally said, "Well, I think that's a wonderful idea, but we're already two steps ahead of you. Me and your uncle called your parents last night and told them how much you have enjoyed living here. We asked if they'd consider letting you continue your time here until you absolutely had to go back to school at McNover High."

"Yeah, it's really no problem to us. And your parents agreed to it. They rather encouraged the idea strongly," Uncle Teddy chimed in.

"Wait, Principal Easterwood is letting me back in McNover?" I asked. I had never heard word of my situation at the school since I got

suspended.

“Well, of course, silly! It was just a food fight. She was going to let you back in eventually. She just didn’t expect you to move across the country for the remainder of the school year!” Janet replied.

I wasn’t necessarily excited to hear this news, but at least it made it easier for me to concoct my plan of winning Misty’s heart and finding out just where Teddy was.

I must have looked like I was in deep thought because Janet then asked, “What’s the matter, Connor? Isn’t this what you wanted? You literally just asked to stay here for the summer.”

“Oh, yes! I was just daydreaming. I look forward to extending my stay, but on one condition: you let me shadow you during work one day,” I said to Janet.

“You know my work is just me sitting in my office and writing lyrics to songs! How fun could that even be for you?”

“All I know is that English has always been my favorite subject in school. And I don’t mind the possibility of it being boring. I’ve lived in boring my whole life!”

We all started laughing at that before my uncle said, “What do you say, honey? Who knows, you could turn Teddy into a ghostwriter!” he said in a spooky tone. “It could become a family tradition!” He gave me a wink.

“All right! It could be nice to have someone fetch me papers from the bookcases while I’m writing. Sure, you’ve got yourself a deal, Connor.”

Well, it wasn’t an internship or anything, but I finally had summer plans! I ran up to my room after dinner to start writing everything I wanted to do during the summer. My checklist included: learning how to ghostwrite, spending time with my uncle on the farm, visiting the local ghost towns of Centralia and Byrnesville, and making plans to return Misty’s pendant to her once I arrived back in my hometown. *Summer here I come!*



Before I knew it, the summer had ended. I guess time really does fly when you’re having

fun. I got to see the steam from the underground mine fires in Centralia. I learned how to garden and grow tomatoes and watermelons. I even watched Star Wars one or nine too many times on Movie Saturdays. The best part: I helped Janet with her ghostwriting! She had a project that she was working on all summer, but she said the song wouldn't be released for almost another year. She also told me that I couldn't say a word about her letting a teenager write the lyrics: "One day he goes and takes a glimpse in the mirror / But he doesn't recognize his own face." It was only two lines, but I technically helped write a song for a major music group, even if I didn't know who yet!

Then it became time to head back home. My dad was on a plane headed to the Harrisburg International Airport, so I had to get my belongings together. This time I packed more things to bring home than I brought with me. Ashland didn't make me want to start over; it made me want to continue the happiness I had found there.

I took one last look at Misty's pendant before packing it away. It was shiny and

incredibly beautiful – even the *M.M.* initials displayed on the back put me in awe every time I looked at them. It reminded me of this time I was in downtown Ashland getting pizza. I was sitting at a table looking at the pendant and I must not have realized someone was hovering over me because before I knew it, this deep voice said, “You related to any Molly Maguires?” I jumped a little and then turned around. He was staring at the pendant. I was so frightened that no words came out of my mouth. By the time I mustered up the courage to say something, he was gone. To this day, I still don’t know what that was about.

I packed my stuff into the car and got into the backseat. Only an hour remained to have fun and joke around with my uncle and Janet. Even if my final time with them was spent in a car, it was always a blast. We arrived at the airport just as my father’s plane landed. He didn’t want to stay long. We were on the next flight out of the airport.

## CHAPTER 4

### UNCLEAR EXPECTATIONS

Ah, my birthday. A time of the year in that part of my life where I invited no one to the party because there was no party, and also no one to invite. I was turning 17-years-old and the only plans I had consisted of getting my ghostwriting career off the ground. In a way, I was glad that I had no one to spend my birthday with; it just meant that I had more time to focus on pushing my ghostwriting services. I started by submitting a post to the local paper. “Ghostwriter for hire. Has written lyrics for a major music group. Willing to work on any project.” I concluded the post by providing a phone number to a secret house phone I had bought. I learned from Janet that

if I was going to become a successful ghostwriter, I needed to keep my identity a secret. Now all that was left to do was sit and wait.

School started back up. I decided to stop eating in the bathroom and actually sit in the cafeteria this year. I made sure to sit as far away from Roger and his friends as possible. I doubt they even remembered me. As it turns out, my 15 minutes of fame at McNover High really did end with the food fight. There was never any gossip of my departure and everyone continued on with their school year as if nothing had happened. For once, I was glad to be invisible in McNover High School. I had too much to focus on anyway. I needed to get the pendant back to Misty. Every day that passed increased my anxiety related to the possibility of losing it.

One day I was going through the lunch line to get a hamburger when I somehow found myself asking the lunch lady, “Do you know where Misty Meisner sits?” *Why did I just ask that?* I thought. *She’s probably the last person who would know anything about Misty.*

“Why, Misty hasn’t gone through this



lunch line since May. I remember the last time I saw her, she told me her family was moving to Florida – some place called Margate – and that she was going to miss all of her friends,” replied the lunch lady.

“Oh... well, thanks.” I couldn’t believe the love of my life moved away while I was gone. And what was I going to do with this pendant? I couldn’t just travel all the way to... wherever, Florida to return. I would seem like a crazy person!

I got home that evening and plugged in my secret house phone. I had to make sure it didn’t ring while I wasn’t at home, or my parents might have thought I was up to no good again and send me over to the next relatives. I began flipping through one of the cookbooks that Janet gave me. I told her I wanted to start making my own meals when I got back home. Suddenly the phone started ringing. I jumped. It had been two weeks and no one had responded to the posting in the newspaper. I almost didn’t know what to do, but I knew I had to think fast because it was only a matter of time before my parents would wonder where that ringing was coming

from.

“H-hello,” I answered. *Should I give my name? Ask them how they’re doing?* I asked myself. This was my first phone call!

“Yes, hello. Is this Connor Gleim?” The voice sounded confident. I was a little intimidated.

“Yes, sir. May I ask who’s speaking?” I was trying to be professional.

“My name is Montgomery O’Donnell and I am a local businessman. I want to speak with you more about your ghostwriting services. Would it be fine if we met in person to discuss the specifics?” Janet had warned me this might happen. The people who often want ghostwriting services needed everything to be kept a secret. This meant no phone recordings. I had to physically meet with him, something I was not necessarily prepared for at the time.

“Uh... yes, sir. That sounds perfect,” I nervously stated.

“Great. Meet me at my house tomorrow at 6pm.” He gave me his address and told me he looked forward to meeting me before he hung up.

I officially had my first ghostwriting meeting.



I walked to Mr. O'Donnell's house. I didn't have a car and I knew my parents would ask tons of questions, so I just decided to walk the 3.2 miles. Once I arrived, a guard stopped me at the front gate. It seemed entirely too elaborate for a person's 'humble' abode.

"Reason for arrival?" the guard asked immediately.

"I'm here for a meeting with Mr. O'Donnell," I answered.

"Reason for meeting?" *Boy, this guy sure was curious*, I thought.

"I'm not sure I'm allowed to disclose that information. I'm sorry." I was unsure of the rules when it came to discussing ghostwriting. *Am I supposed to lie about everything to everyone who isn't Mr. O'Donnell? Seems exhausting.*

The guard pulled out a walkie-talkie and whispered into it. Before I knew it, the gate

opened and the guard said, “Montgomery will see you now, sir.”

I walked up to the front of the house, which was at least three times the size of my uncle Teddy’s. It was practically a mansion! I had never seen one in real life. I walked up the steps and the door swung open. Mr. O’Donnell- er- Montgomery walked out and said, “Welcome to the Montgomery Manor, Mr. Gleim!” Then his face fell a bit. “Why, you’re a lot younger than I expected.”

“I-I’m sorry,” I spit out. *What was he expecting? I mean, sure, I neglected to put my age in the post, but he needed my services.*

“It’s quite okay! I’ve just never been in business with a ghostwriter before! To tell you the truth, I had to do a lot of research before I had the courage to call you,” he responded.

I couldn’t believe a guy like him – a guy with a house like that – had to build up the courage to respond to my post. I began to wonder if I should put on a mask of professionalism and knowledge. But the truth was, I hadn’t even done much research into ghostwriting. I only knew what Janet had taught me, and that was: don’t get caught. I

began to wonder if I should even be there.

“Well, sir. I might be young, but I have worked with professional ghostwriters before and I even wrote the lyrics to a sure-to-be huge hit that will be coming out within the next half a year!” Okay, that was only half true. Janet was the professional I was speaking about, and that one line in that one song I had minimal details about was my only work – and I wasn’t even receiving royalties. But I wasn’t going to let him know those facts. Just like his secrets, I was going to keep my own.

“Oh, wow! I’m sure you can’t tell me specifics, as I wouldn’t want you to disclose my project to anyone else. But that’s impressive! I’m willing to work with you regardless of your age, as I kind of need this project to be rushed,” he nicely stated. “Is that okay?” I could tell he really wanted to work with me opposed to telling me what to do. I liked that.

“Uh, yeah. How long are we talking?” I asked.

“Two weeks. It will be my autobiography. I want it to come out just in time for the start of the election. I’m running for City

Comptroller. ‘More With Montgomery!’”

*Wait, this is my first ghostwriting project and I’m tasked with writing some rich guy’s autobiography to help him win a citywide political role? I thought. Am I too in over my head here? Or should I take it as a challenge? What would Janet do?*

I think he knew I was pondering it because he looked at me sternly and said, “You can tell me if it’s an impossible project. I have never written a book, so I’m not exactly sure how long it should take. But that’s my timeline and this autobiography will ensure my victory. Are you in?”

I put all of my thoughts aside and decided that Janet would take this project head on. *She’s never ghostwritten a book, but she would readily say yes to any project.*

“I’m in,” I found myself saying.

And just like that, I was an employed ghostwriter.



Over the next week and a half, I was with Montgomery every day. I made him believe I

worked during the day – I still didn't believe he would like a high school student writing his autobiography – and walked to his house from the school. Luckily it was much closer than my house. I told my parents that I joined an organization at school and somehow they believed that we had meetings every day after school. Sure, I was lying to everyone, but wasn't that what being a ghostwriter was all about? I also kept this project a secret from Janet because I didn't want her to talk me out of it.

It proved to be an incredibly tiring experience. Every day in all of my classes, I was scribbling in my notebooks – taking what life stories Montgomery had given me the evening before and incorporating them into inspiring tales of a man who deserved to represent the people! I wrote so fast that I would often fill an entire 70-page notebook in one day. Each evening I would present the day's notebook to Montgomery and he would read it out loud. That usually took two hours of our meeting time. Then we would spend the next two hours jotting down ideas on how to move the book into a more heroic story,

and he would tell me more tales about his life. If I'm being completely honest, his life was kind of dull. However, I was only a ghostwriter and I was tasked with making this guy seem like a modern-day superhero and as relatable as a common person. And so I would do just that.

Montgomery proved to be a very kind and amazing individual. I considered him the closest friend I had since Teddy, even if we never expressed the friendship verbally. Every time I came over, he had a meal prepared for me. Every time we finished our session for the day, he was curious as to what was happening in my life. And every time I had a question or a concern about the project, he enthusiastically answered. He wanted to make sure I was just as comfortable ghostwriting his autobiography as he was putting it out.

I even learned more about the position he was running for! Apparently City Comptroller handles the finances of the entire city! Sort of like the Chief Financial Officer of a business. He was running because he had successfully run his family business, O'Donnell's Consulting, and thought that he could help



out the city in terms of money and the economy. He seemed like a likable guy who only wanted to do good in the world.

One day I was in a session with Montgomery when I began to wonder why he even needed the book in order to win. "So, why do you think an autobiography is going to ensure your victory? And how come you don't write it yourself? It's not that I don't want to write it, but you just seem like an honest and genuine guy who could persuade anyone with his life stories," I said.

"Well, to answer your first question: every politician has an autobiography nowadays. It's how they get their personable stories out there, and why the crowds believe in them. They suddenly become more human after daring to put their life in a book for everyone to read. As for your second question: I've just never been a good writer. I was originally going to write it myself, but when I saw your post in the newspaper, I couldn't lose the opportunity. And now here we are! I'd say it's coming along greatly."

Coming along greatly was one way to put it. Don't get me wrong, I was beyond happy

to be ghostwriting a book. But this project was taking everything out of me. I was behind in all of my classes, I was never home, and I was beginning to become delusional. Luckily, we were on the last chapter of the book, and I wasn't responsible for any editing. Montgomery was going to pass the book off as his own to his editor.

He told me how he wanted the direction for the last chapter to go and then sent me on my way back home. I somehow still had him fooled into thinking I was driving to and from his place every day. But I didn't mind the walk. The scenario the entire way was beautiful, and it was a chance to reflect on how the book was coming along, and to think about how I was going to write the next chapter.

I was walking down Indian Creek Road about to turn onto Crestridge Drive when I saw a figure in a black hoodie walking the opposite direction of me. It was dark, but this was a residential neighborhood, so I wasn't too scared. However, the wind picked up and blew the hood right off of the figure, revealing beautiful blonde hair and a fair face.

I suddenly realized I was looking at Misty Meisner! *Is she back from Florida?*

“Hey Misty!” I found myself yelling. *Where was that courage when we were the only two students in Hallway C last school year?*

She looked at me and began to walk faster away from me. I started to run after her, but decided that what I had to say would more than likely stop her in her tracks.

“I have your diamond heart pendant! I know it’s yours because your initials are on the back! M.M.,” I blurted out.

She stopped. I knew that would do it. Then she pulled her hood back over her head and started running.

*What?* I thought. *Why is she leaving after my telling her about her lost possession? She doesn’t despise me that much, does she?* I began to run after her, but soon realized that she had turned into an alleyway and was nowhere to be found. She was as gone as a ghost. I was defeated. Misty Meisner had successfully exited my life once again.

I arrived home to an empty house and a note on the kitchen counter that said, “Your mom and I left for a short vacation. – Dad.”

*Great.* I had the house to myself for the next couple of days to do... nothing with. “I might as well work on the last chapter of Montgomery’s autobiography while I still have peace and quiet,” I said aloud to myself.

I stayed up all night ironing out the details. He really wanted this final chapter to be a homerun; he claimed that if there was going to be one part of the book to help him win, it would be this chapter. Before I knew it, it was six in the morning and I hadn’t slept at all. I decided that if my parents weren’t home, it wouldn’t hurt to miss school in order to sleep in for the day.

I woke up around noon and went to Montgomery’s house. He always came home for lunch, a fact he kept repeating to me “in case I could get off work and focus more on the book.” He was delighted to see me. It was the first time I had skipped “work” and met with him. He had his housekeeper prepare us a home cooked lunch that was almost as good as Janet’s cooking. Then we got down to business.

“So?” he asked.

“So what?” I questioned back.

“How’d the last chapter go!? I’m assuming it’s finished considering you’re here early! Tell me all about it!” Montgomery exclaimed.

Shoot, I hadn’t even had the time to reread the chapter. Sure, it was finished, but there was no telling what I wrote in my tired state. He was really looking forward to it being finished right then and there though, so I handed him the notebook.

“Here’s everything. Your book is officially finished,” I stated.

“Great! I don’t have any time to read it because elections start tomorrow morning. But I trust that you did a fantastic job.” He seemed more confident than me and I wrote the damn thing! I trusted his editor would perform a rush job and be able to iron out any mishaps I may have created.

He thanked me and with that, I was on my way. I would never again have to see Montgomery O’Donnell, another ghost in my life. Or so I thought.

BREAKING NEWS: A LOCAL ASPIRING  
POLITICIAN CAUGHT CREATING A  
FAKE BOOK, SOURCES SAY HE HIRED  
A ‘GHOSTWRITER.’

LOCAL BUSINESSMAN-TURNED-  
HOPEFUL-POLITICIAN BECOMES  
HOPELESS AFTER ‘GHOSTWRITING’  
CLAIMS SURFACE.

MONGOMERY O’DONNELL, OWNER  
OF O’DONNELL’S CONSULTING,  
ACCUSED OF PUBLISHING A  
‘GHOSTWRITTEN’ BOOK WITH  
INTENTIONS OF WINNING  
ELECTION.

Those were just some of the headlines that I saw in the newspapers when I woke up on October 10<sup>th</sup>. I hadn’t talked with Montgomery since I gave him the last chapter. I heard no word about the editing process or the publishing process. I assumed I would just see the book the next time I went down to the local bookstore, but I hadn’t been able to

make it out there yet. I was too busy catching up on schoolwork. One thing was for sure: I was in big trouble.

I quickly left my house, found a stray bike, and biked over to the bookstore. I asked if they had any copies of a book by a man named Montgomery O'Donnell. I didn't even know what he ended up naming the book.

"You mean the guy who hired someone to write a book for him so he'd win the election? Sorry, no. It sold out and before we could order a new batch, we got wind of the scandal, so we decided against it," said the person at the checkout counter.

"Uh- thanks!" I spit out before running out of the building. I had to get to the Montgomery Manor and FAST.

It only took me eight minutes to bike there, but it seemed like forever. The entire way, I tried to figure out what to say, but the more I thought the more I became clueless. I jumped off of the bike and ran up to the guard at the gate.

"Is Montgomery in!?" I near-shouted.

"I'm sorry, Connor, but Montgomery is in a bit of a predicament – no thanks to you, – I

might add. He is not currently accepting visitors,” he callously replied.

“You don’t understand. I need to know what happened. I can’t find his book anywhere, and I’m really not sure what I did.” I was red all over, half because I biked so fast and half because I was embarrassed – and I didn’t even know why!

He whispered into his walkie-talkie and then looked back at me and said, “Montgomery wants you to leave his premises immediately. I have been ordered to call the police if you ever come near his manor again. Do you understand?”

I was so sad and confused that surely it showed on my face because the guard went into his station and returned with a book in his hands. “Here. Take my copy. Montgomery wouldn’t want me to keep it anyway. I don’t want to have to get you in trouble, so just forget about everything you’ve done here. Pretend this manor is invisible and continue on with your life.”

I put the book in my backpack and biked to school. I couldn’t afford to miss another day, regardless of how curious I was about



how I messed up. I attempted to read the book while at school, but the news was so widespread that every time I would take it out of my backpack, someone would make a comment about how despicable Montgomery is. “Can you believe someone would hire someone else to do their work?” I heard one girl say.

The book was called Up Until Now: The Unbelievably True Life Story of Montgomery O'Donnell and it was a whopping 300-pages long with a beautiful cover. I was momentarily overcome with joy at seeing my work in person, but then remembered exactly why I was even holding said work in my hands in the first place. I swore to read it after school that day.

When I arrived home, I told my parents that I had so much homework to do that I had to spend the rest of the evening and night in my room. I got to my room and immediately cracked open the book.

I took a break after reading four of the nine chapters. It only made me more confused; everything seemed to be exactly the way Montgomery and I planned it. I didn't

understand how people found out he hired a ghostwriter. Luckily my name was never thrown around in the news, so I could at least live in isolated torture.

I went to my bookcase to read over the notebook I had with all of the ghostwritten autobiography plans. When I pulled out the notebook, I noticed it was titled Chapter 9. *Oh no*, I thought. *This can't be*. I quickly launched myself onto my bed where the book was and flipped to chapter nine. Immediately, I saw the starting words, "Main Objective: Look like a superhero to the public and win the election." I had accidentally given Montgomery the planning notebook instead of the notebook containing the final chapter of his autobiography. He must have not had enough time to consult with his editor and, thus, immediately sent the book off for publishing.

There were all kinds of secrets written down that were not supposed to go inside the book, including the fact that Montgomery was not writing the book himself. All I could think was, *What have I done?*

I closed the book with the knowledge that

I was also closing my ghostwriting career. I would be haunted by this experience for years to come.

## CHAPTER 5

### BLIND SPOT

The rest of my high school years were not only spent alone, but also in devastation. I never saw Misty again. I never saw Teddy again. And I never got the opportunity to apologize to Montgomery. I graduated completely alone and as if I had harmed everyone in my life I had ever considered a friend. The only thing going for me was that my parents somehow thought I had been changed because of the time I spent with my uncle and Janet. They treated me a lot better as a result. Uncle Teddy and Janet even came all the way down from Pennsylvania to attend my graduation. It was a huge event for my family, but I didn't necessarily feel festive.

What made cause for even more celebration was the fact that I had been accepted into the local community college. I was only going to attend to complete my basic courses in order to save up enough money to attend a university. I had my eyes set on Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania so that I could be closer to my uncle and Janet. My parents didn't mind my decision. My uncle and Janet were ecstatic.

I spent the next two years working at the local bookstore, which had, luckily, committed to never reordering the book I ghostwrote. More luck sprung on me when I heard that Montgomery O'Donnell was too ashamed to leave his manor. He, obviously, lost the election and was too ashamed to show himself in public. He hired someone else to take over O'Donnell's Consulting. I felt bad for him, but at least I would never have to have an awkward encounter with him. I think it was too late to apologize anyway.

Juggling college courses and a job was a load of work I was not prepared for by high school. Unlike in my "forced education years" – as I like to call them, – I didn't have any free

time whatsoever. I didn't mind this fact too much considering it gave me less time to think about all of the ghosts in my life and, not to mention, the ghostwriting.

For better or for worse, I had forgotten about my love for ghostwriting altogether. In fact, I was so scared to write that I only did so when I absolutely needed to for classes. It would be another ten years before I began to write for fun again.

One day I was working at the bookstore and in walked a familiar figure. He started walking to the Fiction section and my eyes fixated on him. It must have been five minutes of me staring at him before he gathered up the courage to ask, "Sir, do you have something to say to me?"

I immediately shook out of my hypnotic-like state and said, "Sorry, you just look like somebody that I used to know.

"That's all right. Just wanted to make sure I wasn't causing any trouble in the store. You looked at me for quite some time," he replied.

A Madonna song I couldn't quite identify started playing over the small boom box on the counter behind me. The man's face

suddenly went from concerned mode to complete happiness. And he belted out, “You won’t believe me, you’ll think it’s strange...”

*Am I the sudden audience for a one-man flash mob? Or is singing in bookstores this guy’s kink?* I asked myself. Before I became even more confused, I realized what this guy was wearing. At the bottom of his shirt’s right sleeve was the acronym *M.M.S.* McMurry Middle School. **TEDDY!**

Suddenly I knew the song, too. I joined in with him just in time for the chorus. “Don’t cry for me Argentina, the truth is I never left you,” we both half-sang, half-yelled in front of the checkout counter. We somehow found our way to the Memoir & Autobiographies section. “All through my wild days, my mad existence. I kept my promise, don’t keep your distance.”

When the song ended, everyone in the bookstore was staring at us. We looked at each other and said each other’s names at the same time. We sort of giggled at the awkwardness and then I said, “I haven’t seen you in years. You left without saying goodbye. I was hurt. I haven’t forgotten about it to this

day.”

“Connor, it’s not that I didn’t want to say goodbye. You know that. Principal Easterwood told me McMurry Middle School was willing to hire me so I wouldn’t be jobless in the case that I got laid off. You know Rebecca’s art classes are expensive; I couldn’t afford to even miss a day of work back then,” he sweetly replied.

I sighed and then said, “I understand. I guess I was just so in need of a friend that I put all of my happiness in you. Once you were gone, I couldn’t bear the thought of being alone again. I suddenly replaced the happiness with sadness and my memories have just been stained with tears.”

I pulled Rebecca’s drawing that Teddy gave me years ago out of my pocket. Every crease was still there – still folded eight different times. The only difference was a small rip that had been caused by one of Roger’s henchmen before the food fight. “I still have it,” I said while holding it in front of Teddy’s face.

A single tear rolled down his cheek. “Rebecca still asks about you. She used to ask if you moved to McMurry Middle School, too.



I couldn't find it in my heart to tell her that we had to go our separate ways. She still thinks we eat lunch every day."

I was heartbroken. Maybe I didn't have any friends, but in Teddy's world, I was still his friend. And Rebecca's.

I heard someone clear their throat and then rudely say, "Hello?" I turned around. While me and Teddy were singing and having our moment, a line consisting of about ten people had collected in front of the checkout counter.

"I have to go," I said to Teddy. "Tell Rebecca I said hi, and come in whenever you want to see me. I work every day from 2pm to 6pm."

"Goodbye, Connor," Teddy said before giving me a nod and leaving the bookstore.

I had a friend again. Sure, we didn't eat lunch every day like we used to, but at least I knew he still thought about me the same way I thought about him.

Teddy would visit me at least once a week while I worked at the bookstore. He would come in to buy crossword puzzles (his favorite!) or art books for Rebecca. I would hang out with him by pretending to be helping him “find the books he needed” for an extended period of time. I would tell him all about the years after he left. How I went into high school and got suspended for a crime I didn’t commit – something he remembered cleaning up but didn’t realize I was connected to; we chuckled at that fact. How I lived in the middle of nowhere, Pennsylvania for almost a year. And even how I still had Misty’s pendant. I decided not to inform him about my ghostwriting venture and failure; I was still too scarred by the experience.

Unfortunately, I eventually had to leave town again in order to attend university in Pennsylvania. I ended up getting into Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania – only half an hour away from Uncle Teddy’s and Janet’s home in Ashland. I told Teddy I was leaving for at least the next two years, and he promised to

write to me.

At the start of university orientation, I was tasked with having to choose a concentration that would determine the schoolwork I would be doing until I graduate. I had my heart set on English with a certificate in Creative Writing. However, considering my past with writing, I ended up choosing Business Administration.

I took courses like “Supply Chain Management” and “Ethical Business Practices.” I by no means enjoyed these courses. They were the kinds of courses that high school bullies took – the same people as Roger Brewers. Every class was filled with stuck-up athletically inclined kids whose goal in *life* was to join a Greek Life organization and cruise to the top of the world. Suffice to say, I didn’t belong there. But I was determined to bury my past as a writer, and what better way to change then to completely switch career aspirations. Plus, it helped that no one in Pennsylvania, or at this university, really knew who I was. I could play it off as if I was just an introverted college student who was simply looking to graduate and move on

with his life – and I was.

I worked as an intern for a couple of different businesses around the eastern and central Pennsylvania areas. I hated every single one of them. I was unpaid, bossed around, and given work that could hardly be considered business. I'm pretty sure breaking down boxes did nothing for me in terms of learning information systems. Anyway, I should have taken all signs from the universe that Business Administration – or anything business related, for that matter – was not going to be fulfilling to me. But I ran straight through those red lights.

I became a consultant with LMI Consulting Firm in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. Although it was only an hour away from my uncle and Janet, I moved into my own place in the Harrisburg region. It was a nice little apartment that I lived in alone. My day typically consisted of me going to work from 8am to 5pm and then going back to the apartment to work out and browse the World Wide Web until I fell asleep. My uncle and Janet had bought me a wonderful Apple Macintosh home computer as a present for

graduating from university.

I worked as a consultant for the next ten years. I hated every minute – neigh, every second – of it. Don't get me wrong, LMI Consulting Firm was a great company; it was incredibly better than any of the places I interned at while attending university. However, I knew my passion lay elsewhere, and I was not gaining any happiness from being a consultant. Money? Sure. But joy? No way.

The only person I missed from back home was Teddy, but I received a letter from him at least once every other week. One day I told him all about my short-lived ghostwriting venture. I was trying to suppress the experience as much as I could, but I found myself spilling all of the details on a tear-soaked piece of paper with Teddy's name written at the top. I told him all about Janet and how I got to write part of the lyrics to the TCL song Waterfalls (the song eventually released and was a huge success). I told him about meeting Montgomery O'Donnell and ghostwriting his autobiography. And I told him about my slip-up and how it led me to

pursue a career in the business realm.

He responded quicker than usual. I received a letter from the front desk of my apartment three days later. I was scared to open it. When I finally did, I couldn't hold back the tears. This was his response:

*Dear Connor,*

*It warms my heart that you would open up to me the way you are doing so now. I never would have guessed that you were in this much pain and agony — you always seemed so happy when I would meet with you at the bookstore. I just have one thing to say: never give up. I understand that your only ghostwriting job wasn't successful, but how many times did Janet have to write before she wrote a song that made it onto the radio? Have you ever thought to ask her that before? You may be making more money at your job than any of us right now, but I can guarantee you that your happiness and fulfillment should come from something you are passionate about. And that's one thing money can't buy. If I were you, I would be writing right away or at least keeping up with all of the ghostwriting news on the Internet, or whatever, until you are comfortable with writing again. Either*

*way, I look forward to reading “your” books.*

*Your Friend,  
Teddy*

That letter, alone, was enough for me to gather up the courage to type in “ghostwriter news” into my computer search bar. I started browsing a website called All Things Ghosts, Writings before realizing that it was really just a collection of short stories about ghosts and hauntings. After searching for almost thirty-five minutes, I finally came across a website that looked promising. It stated that it was a community of ghostwriters who posted on message boards and forums in order to share news and talk about the latest ghostwritten literature. I tried to click the enter button, but it required a passcode to join. If I wanted in, I would have to prove I had ghostwritten at least one book. I immediately logged into my email and began typing out a message about the Montgomery situation. This would be the first time I was admitting it to someone other than Teddy, which was nerve-wrecking, but his letter inspired me to continue. I wrote

about how I was the ghostwriter responsible for ending the career of a businessman aspiring to become a politician, and I proved it by sending photocopies of the notebook containing the final chapter that never was.

I was finishing up with the email when I noticed that the light shining through my window hit something shiny and reflected on my face. I looked down to see Misty Meisner's diamond heart pendant on the ground. *It must have slipped out of the drawer I had it in*, I thought to myself. I began to remember all of the old times I spent with it and thought about her. Just last month I had actually found her on Whitepages and retrieved her current email address. I had been planning to email her about having the pendant, but wasn't sure what she would think.

Mindlessly, I entered her email address into the "To:" box of the message I was writing and hit send. It didn't hit me until half a minute later that I had just sent Misty Meisner an email all about how I ruined the career of Montgomery O'Donnell. *Oh no*, I thought. *Not only is she going to think I'm a creep, but also she's going to know who was behind Montgomery's*



*fall. Surely she had heard the story – it made national news!* I attempted to compose another email to throw her off. I wrote an apology about how my email was hacked. *Delete. She would never believe that.* I wrote a spam-like message acting as if I was a Nigerian prince needing to borrow money. *No, no, that's too weird.* And finally, I wrote the truth. But I deleted that too. I was just going to have to live with the fact that Misty now knew my secret, and wait for her response.

## CHAPTER 6

### HAUNTED

I want to take a break from my true life story to talk about something that has been on my mind since I began this book-writing journey: ghosts. Real life ghosts. The kind that come out of your walls and spook you, or appear after your grandma Judy has died in order to haunt you for not having visited her enough. They are all around us, and I wholeheartedly believe in them.

There's a sort of irony in the fact that someone who has devoted his life to ghostwriting believes in ghosts. Most people nowadays write them off as superstition or a conspiracy theory created by the government. Not me. No way. I have had too many

encounters with these invisible beings to deny their existence.

For example, from the ages of 12 to 15-years-old, I had this reoccurring dream of a white-blanketed body figure chasing me around the local PetCo™. Every time I had this dream, I simply wanted to purchase a small animal or maybe a fish. However, this relentless ghost would ensure that I would have to run around the entire store over and over again in a frightened frenzy, essentially forcing me to forget why I was in the store to begin with. Sometimes I would come back home and think, *Oh! I forgot to get something at PetCo™, I'll just go right back.* And it would happen all over again. It was terrifying and I would often wake up in the middle of the night screaming, "I JUST WANTED A DAMN GERBIL, YOU VILE PHANTOM." Every time this would happen, my dad would run into my room and inquire about what the hell was going on. After telling him that I was being haunted by a ghost – possibly one that's intensely dedicated to ensuring people at pet stores never reach the checkout line, – he would laugh and tell me that even if ghosts

are real, they probably don't have any need to be in a pet store.

Likewise, I have memories of being haunted while lying in bed during high school. I would always be minding my own business – doing a homework sheet or two – when suddenly the audiobook version of The Communist Manifesto by Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx would play from my record player. “A spectre is haunting Europe,” started the record player before it would scratch and I'd have to unplug it. More like a spectre is haunting me. Soon after it stopped, the ghost-like memory of who I'm assuming can only be Karl Marx would appear. I think it was him because he would go on and on about how the industrial revolution was a hoax to front bourgeois-economic endeavors and that capitalism is going to be the downfall of every country, except the Scandinavian ones because they are actually doing pretty well on that front. Spooky.

After university, during my job with LMI Consulting Firm, I made one of my apartment rooms into an office. It was similar to Janet's and even had a typewriter on the desk. Each

morning I would wake up and type a sentence on my typewriter, even before showering. However, some mornings there were already words on the page. It would say things like, “Boooooo” and “2 for 1 shrimp deal at Red Lobster™. Bring this coupon in before December 12<sup>th</sup> to claim your free shrimp. Available while shrimp last.” I knew this was a ghost because I would attempt to take each coupon over to the local Red Lobster™ to redeem it only to have the manager tell me, “Please stop coming here with fake typed-up coupons. Who even uses a typewriter anymore?” It would be two years before I could convince someone at that restaurant to give me an extra shrimp for free.

But aside from my personal stories, I want to discuss why ghostwriters should pay homage to ghost culture and how astral beings may be more oppressed than we realize. Various ghosts may have haunted me growing up, but that doesn't stop me from treating them and their community with respect.

Ghostwriters live in secret. For all intents and purposes, they are invisible in their

careers. They reach great financial success solely from claiming invisibility. This fact is great for the ghostwriter, but when they say that they don't believe in or necessarily like ghosts, well, that's where the problem lies. Astral appropriation is very real and very harmful to the societal perception of the ghost community. Being seen as "scary" or "not real," as opposed to being attributed qualities of great success and hard work, is what ghosts have to deal with *every day*. Putting on Ghost Face and reaping all of the rewards from the heritage while denouncing their importance is one of the most socially unethical crimes a ghostwriter can commit. And it happens all of the time.

When I realized this, and looked back on all of the times I was haunted, I began to understand that ghosts were just trying to help me. The ghost in PetCo™ was attempting to explain to me the requirements for owning a small pet and keeping it healthy; he simply wanted to ensure the happiness of all living things, for he couldn't be alive and, thus, happy himself. The ghost forcing me to listen to an anti-capitalist novel from a different

country and era only wanted to ensure I understood the danger of a free-market economy so that I could intellectually adjust my political point of views. And the ghost giving me Red Lobster™ coupons was actually trying to ask me out on a date – one shrimp for each of us.

Ghosts are all around us, and they are harmless. Sure, we may not be able to see them, but that doesn't mean we should marginalize them. As a ghostwriter, I am taking a stand for ghosts everywhere.

## CHAPTER 7

### IN PLAIN SIGHT

“Janet is dead.” I got the call at three in the morning from a sobbing and tired Uncle Teddy. I put on my clothes, got in the car, and immediately drove to my uncle’s place in Ashland. When I pulled up, I saw the living room lights shining through the window. I got out of the car, ran up the steps, and found my uncle lying next to Janet’s body.

“What happened?” I asked. She may have been old, but Janet was entirely healthy and showed no signs of deteriorating anytime soon.

“She... had a hear- heart attack,” Uncle Teddy managed to muster through tears and deep breaths. He could hardly keep himself



composed; he was going in between wailing, crying, and calming himself down.

I walked over to him and lay down with him. It would be another two hours before he was able to get up and do something with Janet's body.

My uncle and Janet didn't believe in hospitals, graveyards, or getting anyone involved with their livelihood. My uncle ended up not calling an ambulance or taking her body to the hospital for an autopsy. He didn't go to a funeral home to purchase a lot of land or even buy a casket to bury her in. He didn't write her an obituary or inform the town of Ashland about her passing. He simply took her body out to the farmland and buried it next to her garden, where she spent most of her time.

I took leave from work and stayed with Uncle Teddy for the next week, tending to all of the duties Janet normally did. He was grateful to have me, and we even kept some of the traditions him and Janet had alive, such as Movie Saturdays.

Near the end of my weeklong stay with him, he caught me going through her things in

her office.

“Connor, you can have anything of hers that you want. The summer you were here, you spent more time in this room than I have the entire time I was with her,” he softly said.

“A-are you sure, Uncle Teddy? I was just reminiscing on old days and seeing what she was working on before she passed,” I replied. Janet was always busy. She seemed to have had 50 ghostwriting projects going on at any given time.

“I won’t have any use for them. She’s gone. What you don’t take, I’m just going to either donate or bury with her.” A single tear leapt from his right eye. I could tell even being near the room was hard for him. I decided to take him to the kitchen to prepare our lunch.

“You know, she wrote you a letter the night before she passed away,” he stated.

To this day, that was the saddest thing I have ever heard. One of her last living moments consisted of her thinking about me.

“What did it say?” I asked.

“I’ll let you see for yourself,” he said before handing me a piece of paper. Folded eight different times.

I began to open the letter, but saw that my uncle was staring at it and beginning to sob. I decided I would wait until I was back at my apartment to read it. I asked my uncle if he was going to be all right, and once I was sure of his wellbeing, I went on my way.

When I arrived back at my apartment, my cellphone dinged, indicating that an email was waiting for me. I decided to check it before opening Janet's letter in order to clear my mind.

The email was from Misty Meisner. *What could she want?* I initially thought. Then I noticed the "RE:" in the subject of the email and remembered that I had accidentally sent her a secret of mine last week. I felt nauseous.

"Okay, you can do this. Just open up the email, read it, and forget it ever happened," I said aloud. Luckily I lived alone and no one could hear me. I paced back and forth in my kitchen / living room at least ten times before I finally gathered up the courage to open the email.

*Connor:*

*I imagine the email you sent was not meant for me, but I am happy I received it. There is a lot you don't know about why I ignored you that day in the hallway back in 10<sup>th</sup> grade, why I was in a black hoodie on Indian Creek Road, and why my family moved to Margate, Florida so suddenly.*

*In short: Montgomery O'Donnell blackmailed my parents into moving out of town. You see, Montgomery O'Donnell is my mother's half-brother. Once my grandmother — their mother, — Margaret, died, she left my family with everything. Montgomery couldn't stand my mother receiving the entirety of Margaret's will, so he hired a private investigator to discover everything he could about my parents. Well, there are ghosts in everyone's closet, so to speak, and he dug up enough dirt to convince my father to step down from his position as City Comptroller and, thus, force my family to move away.*

*My mother called me during lunch to tell me the news, and that's why I was in Hallway C that day. I didn't want to speak to anyone, so I rudely ignored you and rushed away. I'm sorry for that.*

*As for witnessing me in the black hoodie: our family had gotten wind about Montgomery's run to take over my father's former position. If he had won, he would have had control over the entire city's*

*finances, essentially putting him in a position to embezzle from and blackmail the local government. My family knows how evil he is, so we devised a plan to send me back and convince him to drop out of the election through... shady means. When you saw me and exclaimed you had something of mine, I didn't know what else to do, so my family flew me back to Florida and we decided to forget about our past.*

*I wanted to tell you all of this and retrieve my grandmother's diamond heart pendant, but telling anyone about my whereabouts would compromise my family's safety. I understand if you no longer have the pendant.*

*I now see that you are the only reason Montgomery lost the election. And I cannot thank you enough. He seems to have become a recluse because everyone hates him. This fact gave my family the opportunity to move back and resume our lives a couple years after he lost.*

*Thank you,  
- M.M.*

By the time I finished reading the email, my entire jaw hurt from having it dropped for so long. *Montgomery is... evil?* I thought. *But he seemed like the nicest guy I had ever met. And M.M.*

*stands for Margaret Meisner, not Misty Meisner. I couldn't seem to gather my thoughts properly. I was jumping from one shocking fact to the next. Misty was forced to move to Florida? And I'm the entire reason why she was able to move back after I had already left for university. It was all mind-boggling. And I hadn't even read the letter from Janet yet!*

I knew I had to answer Misty before moving on to worrying about what Janet had written me. After telling me all of this, I owed her a response.

*Dear Misty:*

*I don't know what to say. I'm sure you can imagine the shocked state I am in right now. I barely knew you back then, so I am at a loss for words after hearing your story and how large of a part I played in it.*

*I would love to discuss more over email, but I believe it would be more appropriate for us to meet in person. Let me know where you reside nowadays and when you're free.*

*Take care,*

- *Connor*

I sent the email and then sat on my bed for a while. I had a lot to think about and I was not ready to read Janet's letter. In my mind at that moment, I decided to put it off until the next day. In reality, it would be much longer.



A month passed by and I had been in correspondence with Misty almost every day. We planned my trip to visit her in Austin, Texas, where she had moved after attending university in our hometown upon transferring from Florida once her family was in the clear to move back. I had never been to Texas before, and all I thought that I knew about it were cows and crazy people. She was very aware of my anxiety about visiting an unknown land, and promised to make it “feel like home” while I was there. Heck, home felt like central Pennsylvania to me now, but I knew what she meant.

Before leaving for Austin, I quit my job at

LMI Consulting Firm. I had saved up enough money throughout the years that I didn't necessarily need to work. Likewise, I was emotionally unavailable ever since Janet died and I received the email from Misty. I sent a letter to Teddy telling him about the situation. We made plans to meet up in Austin and hang out when I wasn't with Misty. His daughter was actually looking at graduate school at the University of Texas, so she would be joining us.

The day to travel to Austin came and I had never been more excited to jump on a plane and leave my one-bedroom apartment. Although I had lost Janet, I was suddenly going to be in the presence of several old friends – something I never thought I would find myself doing.

I landed and Misty picked me up from the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport. We drove back to her place in the Riverside area, where we sat down at her dining room table and prepared to talk about what was said during our email correspondence.

“So... this is the first time you're speaking to me in person. I imagine you're still popular



as ever,” I stupidly started off with.

Misty chuckled and then replied, “Is that how you remember me? That’s funny because I guess I just got so consumed by having to flee to Florida that I forgot about how many friends I had in high school. It’s a bittersweet memory, but I’m definitely more grounded nowadays considering I was on the run for a large part of my life.”

I felt bad. I started to say, “Oh, right. Sorry for assuming that. I just always knew you as the Misty who I had a crush on and wouldn’t talk to me. I didn-” but then she grabbed my hand.

Her face got red and she stuttered, “Y-you had a crush on me?”

“Well, yeah. Who didn’t have a crush on you, Misty? I thought I was going to be your knight in shining armor once I delivered your pendant back to you. I was devastated when I had to move away from you, and even more devastated when I moved back and learned that you had moved away.” I started tearing up. I didn’t realize how much of my life I placed in keeping that pendant safe. And finally, after sixteen years, I was able to return

it safely to a girl I had loved.

“Oh, Connor. That is the sweetest thing I have ever heard in my entire life!” she sort of squealed. She was crying, too. “Some part deep down inside of me always knew that pendant was safe. I was constantly scared it was lost forever, but that part of me kept me sane. And when I saw you on Indian Creek Road but couldn’t retrieve it then, my heart broke and I thought surely it was gone for good.”

She received a call on her phone. “I have to take this. I’m so sorry.”

I waited for a couple of minutes, playing out the perfect moment to give her pendant back to her. It was sitting in my pocket in the same sealable bag I put it in all those years ago.

She came back in sobbing. Apparently Montgomery was on his way to Austin, and he was looking for her. Her mother had just called her to tell her. She wasn’t sure why he was coming, or what he wanted. She told me I had to go.

“Misty, before I go,” I started, “there’s something I want you to have.” I placed her

grandmother's diamond heart pendant in her hands.

"Oh, it's beautiful! But wait a minute. Isn't this...?" She was dumbfounded and on the verge of fainting, it seemed.

"Yes, yes it is," I confidently said.

I had successfully become the knight in shining armor to the girl of my dreams.

Luckily, Teddy and Rebecca had just landed in Austin, so they picked me up from Misty's place in their rented car and we went out to eat.

While we were ordering, Rebecca and I realized that this was the first time we were meeting in real life. She had only heard stories about me and I about her. We immediately began updating each other about our lives and how far we had come since that fateful day that Teddy and I met. We actually chuckled quite a bit because more than half of our stories were already known about because of Teddy constantly talking about us to each other.

We ate our food and hung out for the next hour before I got a text message saying, "Montgomery is here. He wants to speak with

you.” It was Misty. *What does he want?* I was fuming. *Hasn’t he done enough!?*

I think Teddy and Rebecca knew something was wrong because they both chimed in, “Connor, are you okay?”

I told them everything, from Misty’s email to returning her pendant to the fact that Montgomery – the guy whose career and life I had ruined – was looking for me.

“Will you both come with me?” I asked. I didn’t want to put them in an uncomfortable situation, but I couldn’t imagine seeing Montgomery again without a gang of people on my side.

Teddy and Rebecca confidently agreed to come with me. They drove me back to Misty’s apartment, where her and Montgomery were sitting at the kitchen table inside. Except Misty didn’t seem as angry or emotional as I thought she would be.

“Okay, Montgomery, what do you want!? Can’t you just leave her alone!?” I began to shout before Misty stepped in.

“Connor, it’s okay. Montgomery isn’t here to harass my family anymore. He’s not even here to scold you for ruining his career. Just

hear him out," she said.

"Yes. Misty's right. I am actually here to thank you," he started before everyone in the room gasped.

"Thank me? But why? I ruined you," I responded.

"You may have ruined my career and, for awhile at least, my life. But what you did completely changed me. For the better. Before my dreams of becoming City Comptroller vanished, I was a despicable man. I mean, I blackmailed the only family I had left, for crying out loud! Thanks to what happened to me, I was able to be by myself and truly think about what my actions were causing for others, and also for myself. Because of what you did, I vowed to become a better person. And I'm starting by coming here today and apologizing." He turned to Misty. "Misty, I'm sorry for what I did to your family. I'm sorry for forcing you to move in the middle of high school and not being able to come back until you were in the middle of college." Then he turned to me. "Connor, I'm sorry for forcing you to ghostwrite my book in such a short timeframe. Also, I'm sorry for

turning you away from my manor when you were coming to apologize.” Finally, and surprisingly, he turned to Teddy. “And Teddy, I’m sorry for being responsible for your move to McMurry Middle School.” We all gasped, again. “You see, it was my consulting firm that advised Principal Easterwood to lessen the load of custodians in order to make room for more money to flow into the athletics department. I’m the reason you had to switch jobs.”

We all looked at each other with wide eyes and dropped jaws. Were we dreaming? Or was the villain in all of our lives not only confessing to his crimes, but also giving the most sincere apology any of us had ever heard right in front of our eyes?

Suffice to say, the rest of that day was filled with tears, hugs, and forgiveness. We all went to sixth street that night and had the times of our lives. At the end of the night, I started thinking about my life up until then. I was with Teddy again, Misty was finally in my life, and I didn’t have the weight of screwing up Montgomery’s life on my shoulders anymore. *Finally*, I thought, *it’s time to read Janet’s letter.*

## CHAPTER 8

### RECOVERED VISION

Montgomery, with his various financial connections, hosted all of us at a rented house in the West Lake Hills area of Austin, Texas. All five of us gathered in one of the living rooms and sat on the round sofa set. With letter in hand, I began to take deep breaths and close my eyes.

“C’mon, Connor! Open it!” “Yeah! Just read the letter, Connor!” “What are you waiting for!?” a variety of voices excitedly shouted at me. It was all too much. Janet had died over a month ago and in that small time, my life had completely changed. I knew I needed to just get it over with.

“All right, all right! Calm down. I’m going

to open the letter and read it out loud so each of you will know what it says. Here we go,” I said.

I slowly started unfolding the piece of paper. It seemed to take forever, but when I finally finished opening it, I began to read:

*My Lovely Connor,*

*If you're reading this, it's because I believe you are not utilizing your potential to the fullest extent. When you visited your uncle Teddy and I for the first time that one fateful summer, you were so ecstatic to learn about ghostwriting. You helped me find the right words and helped create a wildly successful song. So why did you stop after writing that failed autobiography? Don't be shocked – it was obvious to figure out. Once the entire nation got wind about a businessman / politician using a ghostwriter to win an election, I immediately bought a copy of the book. Don't think for once that I didn't recognize your writing. I knew it must have been a traumatic experience for you, but I didn't realize you would turn to Business Administration. I had always hoped you would find your way back to ghostwriting.*

*But it's not too late for you, Connor. You can still*



*achieve your dream of being a ghostwriter. And who knows, maybe someday you will even ghostwrite a book for another ghostwriter. There might be even more money in that. Just something to keep in mind.*

*Anyway, I hope this letter reaches you safely and that you consider everything that I have written here today. You have a gift, now use it.*

*Go On, Create,  
Janet*

When I looked up, everyone was crying. Those were not only Janet's final words, but also her last wishes before she died. She had wanted me to continue ghostwriting. I knew what I had to do. I swore in front of everyone that day that I would become the world's greatest ghostwriter until the day I die. I would keep Janet's legacy alive.

"I need to be alone," I found myself saying quietly under a face full of tears. Everyone understood and went back to their rooms. While alone, I began working vehemently on a plan that I would reveal to the others later. If I was going to become a ghostwriter again, I was going to do it with full force and put

everything I have into it. I started drawing out business plans and service ideas and realistic timelines and vision boards. I listed out the resources I had in my life, the amount of money I had stowed away, and the reasons why I should bring my plans to fruition. I even got on my laptop and posted on the ghostwriting forums that I found the other month. I wrote plan after plan and idea after idea, time flowing as fast as my pen. Before I knew it, I had gone through five whole notebooks in the span of three hours. Night was approaching, and I was finally done with my grand plan for my ghostwriting career. This time, it was permanent.

I called the others back into the living room with an exhausted, but excited, face on. I had everyone sit down in the same place they were at earlier, and said, “I took Janet’s words to heart and I have something to show you.”

I pulled out my notebooks and then grabbed an easel with big paper out of the nearby closet. I stood in front of everyone and said after a deep breath, “Presenting: C&T Ghostwriting Firm.”

Everyone looked a little confused. I decided to explain further. “I want to start ghostwriting again! But not only that, I also want to create a firm where ghostwriters are able to find work without having to feel secretive and alone. I did some research and posted on a ghostwriting website. Apparently a ghostwriting firm has never been created before. And with careful planning, it could become a safe place for ghostwriters to *find* work instead of constantly searching for it. And I think I have the perfect plan to execute it.”

I presented my action plan, mission statement, and everything else necessary to ensure the success of my very own ghostwriting firm. Immediately following my presentation, everyone stood up and began clapping. Misty even cheered. It felt amazing; I had finally found a group of people in my life that I could not only call friends, but also that would support me in everything I do.

“But what does C&T mean?” asked Teddy at the end of the applause.

Everyone turned to me for my reply. “It stands for Connor and Teddy. I want you to

be my partner at the firm. From my years at LMI Consulting Firm, I learned that every great businessman has a partner, and that partner should be somebody I love and trust.”

Teddy began to cry, and before I knew it, we were all crying and gathering in for a group hug.

We spent the rest of the night reviewing my plans for C&T Ghostwriting Firm. Suddenly the ten years I was a consultant counted for something. My current and future happiness were stemming from my past emptiness and lack of fulfillment. I suddenly realized everything I had gone through in life – Teddy leaving, the food fight incident, the ghostwriting mishap, Janet dying, etc. – was *supposed* to happen. These experiences MEANT something.

That night, I went to sleep knowing that everything was falling into place.



The next five years consisted of focusing on the ghostwriting firm. Luckily I had

enough money saved up to not only invest heavily into the firm's creation, but also stay unemployed while focusing on my upcoming business.

Here's a detailed list of everything that happened within that five-year timeframe:

- I moved to Austin, Texas! I loved the city while I was there and decided that a change of scenery would fit in with my new plans. Plus, businesses were constantly springing up and becoming successful at that time.
- Teddy and Rebecca also moved to Austin. Teddy felt he needed to be where the firm was in order to be an effective business partner, and it worked out because Rebecca got accepted into the University of Texas's Graduate School to study for a Masters in Fine Arts!
- Montgomery moved to Austin. This fact actually surprised everyone. We knew he was a changed man, but we didn't expect to become as close as we did with him, and for him to relocate to where his newfound family was.

- Uncle Teddy stayed in Ashland, but visited often. I guess he must have caught the travel bug from Janet before she passed!
- Misty and I got married! Once I moved to Austin, we started getting more serious, eventually moved in with each other, and then got married. It was the happiest day of my life.
- Teddy became a custodian at the University of Texas. He didn't need to do this considering we were running a successful ghostwriting firm, but he just couldn't take himself away from his passion. And that's what I've always loved about him.
- Montgomery created a new life for himself and broke out of the socially constructed prison known as everyone associating him with a scandal. He retired, sold his family's consulting firm, and spent the majority of these years at his lake house.
- Misty and I had a child. We named her Margaret after Misty's grandmother, and

passed down the diamond heart pendant to her.

- C&T Ghostwriting Firm was created and became an immediate success. Close friends of Janet's got wind about my plans for a ghostwriting business and spread the news like crazy. Soon we were the only thing being talked about on the ghostwriting forums website. Our clients came from all around the world to utilize our services.
- I ghostwrote dozens of books for celebrities and even famous authors who I assumed had always written their own books! Many of them became bestsellers and won several awards. I quickly became THE ghostwriter to know within the literature community.
- Rebecca became the cover-designer for all of our books considering her artistic side, while Teddy worked with Public Relations due to his upbeat and positive personality.
- And I met Nicholas Walsh.

## CHAPTER 9

### OBVIOUS PROPHECY

The streets of New York City were dreary and wet. I forgot to bring an umbrella, so I was soaked from head to toe. I kept stepping in the puddles to get around the abundance of people on 14<sup>th</sup> street. I was walking away from the Magnuson Convention Center Hotel, where I had just given the keynote speech at the inaugural Ghostwriters Convention, a seminar I helped create with other ghostwriters in the community.

The three-day-long convention started out with workshops and lessons pertaining to ghostwriting: “Ghostwriting 101,” “Non-Fiction Ghostwriting,” “Understanding Client Needs,” etc. It continued the next day with



mixers, ice breakers, and something we call “speed-ghosting,” where you have two minutes to try to successfully end the conversation with someone regardless of their wishes. During this day, people mingled around and met others with similar passions and overall had a good time. The convention concluded the next day with a masquerade dance – appropriately enough – designed to keep everyone’s identity a secret. Overall, it was a success, and my speech entitled Ghostwriters Who Believe: Why, Maybe, We Should Stop Appropriating Ghost Culture received the biggest applause out of the entire weekend.

But once it ended, and I was walking the people-filled-yet-lonely streets of Manhattan, I couldn’t help but believe something big was about to happen. It was almost as if I was having a vision, but it was too blurry for me to tell what was going to happen. I shrugged off my thoughts and continued to walk aimlessly. My flight wasn’t until the next day and I didn’t feel like heading back up to my hotel room. I had received numerous amounts of invitations to hang out, but I couldn’t

shake the thought that where I was in that moment – regardless of how pointless it seemed – was exactly where I was supposed to be.

I found myself walking past person after person, building after building, and street after street. It was as if I was hypnotized and ordered to continue walking down the street in the freezing rain until I snapped out of it. I must have been walking for the past couple of hours.

Suddenly a limousine pulled up next to me. The back window rolled down and a figure in a black hoodie and sunglasses turned their head to me and commanded, “Get in.”

I don’t know what came over me – maybe I was still in my hypnotic state – but I got into the limousine with him.

We started driving down the street and traveled a couple of blocks before he finally said, “Do you know how I am?” Truth is, I had no clue who he was or even what I was doing. It was as if I was having a lucid dream, but I wasn’t willing to wake myself up.

“No,” I answered. I couldn’t even think of anything else to say. I wanted to know who

this guy was, and I had so many questions, but all I could say was, “No.”

“My name... is Nicholas Walsh,” he said from behind the various black garments and accessories covering his face and body.

I began to come to and realized the seriousness of the situation. “Ha, ha. That’s very funny. I guess you discovered that I just came from a ghostwriting conference and wanted to scare me. Now pull over!” There was no way this guy was Nicholas Walsh. Nicholas Walsh *wasn’t real*. I began to reach for the door handle.

“Connor Gleim. The fastest-rising ghostwriter to come about in the past five years,” he eerily stated. *So what?* I thought. *Everyone knows this. I literally just hosted a conference in which that was my identifier.* “Too bad your first ghostwritten book failed and caused a man to lose his career.” *Okay, now that’s a secret nobody except my friends back in Austin know about.*

“What do you want? Money? Equity stake in my business? Name it. I don’t have time for your scare tactics and games,” I retorted. I was scared, but I refused to show it.

“No, no. I’m not here to hold that secret against you. I have been following you ever since your ghostwriting firm became a reality. I hired a private investigator – the same one Montgomery hired; she’s the very best – to put together a file of everything I needed to know about the most famous public ghostwriter there is. And as you know, I, Nicholas Walsh, am the ghostwriting legend that no one knows is real.”

I gasped. *Could it be? I always assumed he was a myth. A ghost in and of himself. It has been talked about amongst ghostwriters for decades that Nicholas Walsh ghostwrote the best and most iconic books that everyone knows about. There’s even a rumor that he ghostwrote the Harry Potter series. He’s so dedicated to the secrecy of ghostwriting that he’s never even written a book under his own name, nor has he ever revealed to his clients who he really is. To say he’s a legend would be an understatement. The man practically invented ghostwriting.* My thoughts were everywhere.

I think he could tell I was at a loss for words because he said, “Yes, I am real. You are the first person – save family – that I have ever revealed my identity to. I trust you will

keep my secret, as I am keeping yours. I only hold onto it for insurance purposes.” He was still talking in an eerie manner, but I wasn’t as scared anymore as much as I was completely shocked.

“So... what do you want? I’m really not sure what I could provide to such a ghostwriting god,” I slyly said to him, hoping he would pick up on my obvious compliment.

“I want you to write my autobiography.” *What?* I thought. *This is HUGE.* Then I remembered that the only autobiography I had ever written was Montgomery’s. And we all know how that ended. Ever since then, I had sworn off ghostwriting autobiographies and memoirs. But what was I thinking? Of course Nicholas Walsh knew this information – he knew everything about me. I didn’t need to tell him.

“I understand that you have found it in yourself to turn against autobiographies. That experience with Mr. O’Donnell must have been terrifying. However, I implore you to consider taking me on as your client. You would not only be the one who would reveal my identity and banish the myth, but also you

would surely climb to ghostwriting stardom and be secured as the greatest ghostwriter to ever live. Remember: what would Janet do?”

I had so many questions, but instead, I said, “You have no idea how happy Janet would be to hear you speak her name. She was your biggest fan. For her, I will. I will ghostwrite your autobiography, Nicholas Walsh.”

“Good. I’ll drop you back off at your hotel. You need to rest before your plane ride tomorrow,” he said.

“How did you kn-,” I started.

“Like I said, my PI is the very best.”

I looked out of the window to clear my mind from everything that happened. I couldn’t seem to process anything efficiently. Suddenly a homeless guy on the sidewalk caught my eye. The only reason I noticed him was because he had two parallel scars on his right cheek.

We arrived at the hotel and his limousine driver opened the door for me to get out. I stepped into a puddle and began to head for the hotel door. Suddenly I turned around and shouted, “BUT WHY DO YOU EVEN

NEED A GHOSTWRITER, ANYWAY? WHY DON'T YOU JUST WRITE THE BOOK YOURSELF?"

He looked at me, lowered his sunglasses, took off his hood, and replied, "I've always said I would never write a book under my own name. I have to keep some promises. Goodbye, Connor."

And just like that, I was ghostwriting for a ghostwriter.



The next day, I arrived at the airport and was picked up by my wife. While she was driving me to our house, my phone dinged. I looked down at it and noticed the name "Ken Easterwood" – Easterwood? I hadn't heard a name like that for quite some time. I opened up the email.

"Attached are the notes on my life required for you to write my autobiography. – N.W.," the email stated. At the bottom was an attachment to a 128-page document filled with notes about Nicholas Walsh's life. He

must have been using a pen name to keep his identity sealed.

Suddenly I realized where I had heard the name Easterwood before – Principal Easterwood! Before I could even think about what I was doing, I emailed him back, “Do you happen to know a Principal Easterwood?” I didn’t even think about the fact that I had just used her title opposed to her given name.

My phone dinged almost immediately. *Geez*, I thought, *that was fast*. Nicholas Walsh replied, “Ha, ha. Yes – Stacy. She’s my wife. I took her last name for my everyday life and legally changed my first name so that I could keep my actual identity a secret. Besides you, she is the only one who knows who I really am.”

I never thought I would ever be sharing a secret with my middle and high school principal, whom I used to be entirely scared of. I guess her owning all of those lavish things in her office made sense now – being married to Nicholas Walsh must have come with its perks. I smiled and closed my phone. My wife looked at me and asked, “What’s up,



Connor?"

"Oh nothing," I replied. "You'll see eventually." I gave her a wink. We arrived at our house in Austin and I gave her a kiss. We were greeted by our daughter, Margaret, who donned the beautiful diamond heart pendant.

The three of us cleaned the house before Teddy and Rebecca came over for dinner. While we were all eating, we heard a knock at the door. I wiped my face and walked over to open it. I looked through the peephole and noticed Montgomery standing there. "MONTGOMERY!" I shouted in excitement so everyone else could hear. They jumped out of their seats as I opened the door. We all greeted him with a group hug, and then escorted him to the dinner table.

After we were done eating, Montgomery asked if he could make an announcement. We all sat on the edge of our seats for what he was going to say.

"I went to my doctor today. Now, I don't want any of you to freak out or be worried, but he advised me to make a will," he softly said. Everyone began to get worried looks on their face.

“Ar- are you gonna be okay?” asked little Margaret. She was on the verge of crying. Montgomery was like a grandfather to her.

He looked at her and said, “Yes, sweetie. I’m just getting old. I want to make sure when I’m gone, you are still safe.” Then he looked at Misty. “I want to leave the majority of my assets to you, with a share going to C&T Ghostwriting Firm.”

Now Misty was crying. Which made me cry. Which made Teddy cry. Which made Rebecca cry. Soon, we were all crying so much that I thought it was going to flood the house!

Later that night, after everyone had left, I sat down in my office with Janet’s typewriter in front of me. I felt the only appropriate way to ghostwrite my biggest project would be the way she had ghostwritten all those years ago.

I sat down in that room every day for the next six months ghostwriting my heart out. I was constantly corresponding with Nicholas Walsh and sending him scanned versions of updated copies. The good thing about this time is that he would ensure the book was edited before sending it off to be published. I

wouldn't mess up this time.

When I finally wrote the last word, I looked up at the title: I Am Nicholas Walsh. I scanned the pages and sent him my final email with the book document attached. I typed the words, "After having written the worse autobiography, I have now written the best. Thank you," and sent the email.



The book was an instant success. Just like Montgomery's book, it made the news nationwide. However, this time, it was sending shock waves all around because the world's biggest and most secretive ghostwriter had just been confirmed as real.

Nicholas Walsh died shortly after the release of his book. His wife reached out to me to tell me that he was on his deathbed, which was why he felt the need to release an autobiography. He didn't want to become an urban legend. She apologized to me for my suspension for the food fight I didn't start. That was sweet.

After his death, I rose to the position of the greatest ghostwriter in the world. And I didn't even have to reveal that I wrote Nicholas Walsh's autobiography. I decided to keep that one a secret. ;-)

## EPILOGUE

So, you must be wondering where we all ended up. *How are Connor and Misty Gleim doing? Are Teddy and Rebecca still in Austin? What ever happened to Uncle Teddy?* You're probably screaming these questions at this book right now. Rest assured, I have provided you with the latest updates on our lives below:

### Connor and Misty Gleim

As you know, my wife and I had a beautiful daughter who we named after her great-grandmother. Well, Margaret is now six-years-old and plays “ghostwriter” with her friends in first grade. She says she wants to grow up to be the greatest ghostwriter in the world, just like her daddy. We are very proud of her. As for our marriage, it is better than ever. Misty is able to help out at the ghostwriting firm whenever we need her, and we vacation in central and eastern Pennsylvania.

### Teddy and Rebecca

Teddy and Rebecca still reside in Austin, Texas. When not helping out at the ghostwriting firm, Teddy continues his job as a custodian at the University of Texas, while Rebecca recently received a tenure professor position in the Fine Arts College of the school. They are happy and healthy.

### Montgomery O'Donnell

Unfortunately, Montgomery died late last year. He went peacefully in his sleep, and his will was executed exactly how he wanted it to be: given to Misty and C&T Ghostwriting Firm. Thanks to his generous donation, we were able to wipe out any remnants of his failed autobiography and vicious past before using the rest of it to secure him as the Posthumous Honorary City Comptroller of Austin, Texas. We also published a fitting biography about his life.

### Uncle Teddy

Uncle Teddy passed away shortly after Nicholas Walsh did. He lived long enough to see me become the world's greatest ghostwriter, and was then buried next to his

late wife, Janet, on the farm. Their house remains to serve as a vacation home for any of us to escape to whenever we need.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Connor M. Gleim is a 39-year-old Ghostwriter residing in Austin, Texas with his wife Misty and their daughter Margaret. He founded the famous C&T Ghostwriting Firm with his childhood best friend Teddy and has been running it for seven years now. In his spare time, Connor likes to cook organic meals, solve crossword puzzles, and advocate for ghost rights.