

GREY COAT

Named Wayne Jordan after a dog his father owned and had to put down when he himself was a boy. He was never as good-looking as his father had been, but he was also never as ugly-spirited. He'd never known his mother, for she died from childbirth related complications. He was her first and only child. He was born in Jacksonville, FL and stayed with his mother's parents — an older couple, living under the thumb of God in a one-story house with no yard. His father would come visit often; however, he would rarely speak to his son. Wayne always believed that his father blamed him for his mother's death, and he wished the man would simply stop coming around. Wayne was fine without him. His grandparents were strict but affectionate and engaging. When Wayne was nine, his father showed up on his grandparent's porch with a pretty, young Cuban woman he said was his new wife. He boarded Wayne on a plane and moved them to Detroit. There, Wayne lived with his father, his stepmother, her four-year-old son, George, and her son Junior, who was a beautiful, soft-featured kid the same age as Wayne.

Wayne couldn't help but follow Junior everywhere. He found that when he was around Junior he was enlivened. He was curious and social around Junior. He loved hearing Junior talk, so he learned how to ask questions, engage him in conversation — even fighting with him was better than nothing. Wayne would do anything to get any kind of reaction from his stepbrother. Junior, however, avoided Wayne as much as possible and quickly grew to hate him. He hated being around Wayne, which was difficult because they shared a room in the little apartment and because his mother always yelled and whooped him for leaving Wayne out of things. Making friends became almost impossible for Junior with Wayne tugging at his shirt sleeve all the time, so he began to stay home more and pretend to sleep all day. He would try to skip meals and once ran away, but Wayne never noticed or assumed any of this was his fault. He couldn't tell the difference between Junior's anger and the gift of his acknowledgement. Wayne loved Junior in a way neither understood.

Wayne's father and Junior's mother were relatively happy for their first few years of marriage, but when they fought, they were loud and violent. Wayne and his father still rarely spoke a word to each other. Wayne, however, didn't care. He had Junior. When they were twelve, Wayne accidentally walked in on Junior masturbating. Junior punched him twice, bloodying his nose and bruising his eye, before he stormed out and disappeared from the house for 12 hours. While Junior was gone, Wayne sat in their room and masturbated to the thought of Junior and the painful throbbing of his face. The boys never spoke of the incident, and Wayne lied about where he got the bruises; he could not, however, stop thinking about it — simply pressing down on the blue flesh under his eye got him hard. He thought about the incident every time he masturbated, and when his face healed, he would bite down on the skin of his arm to summon up a similar sensation. These sexual inclinations were confusing and shameful for him. He didn't have the tools or the vocabulary to parse out why he felt this shame — whether it was his attraction to a boy, his attraction to his stepbrother, or his attraction to the pain — so he began to avoid Junior as much as Junior avoided him. The boys grew distant and by the end of that year, their parents divorced. Junior's mother took him and George back down to Florida, and Wayne's father remarried one of the women he'd frequently cheated with.

Wayne, his father, and this new wife lived quietly in that same apartment in Detroit. An apartment that, for Wayne, was haunted by Junior's absence. After Junior had left, Wayne fell into complete silence, he focused on school and spent all his extra time in the library until he graduated and left to study engineering at a community college. He took out loans, moved into a shitty apartment of his own, paid his rent through tutoring, and stopped speaking to his father almost entirely. In college, he began to re-explore sex. Though he was still shy, he'd learned more of the language he needed to help uncover the feelings he had suppressed around Junior. He still struggled to approach people, so he began to have sex with prostitutes. He found that he not only enjoyed sex with men, women, and anyone between those binaries, but he craved it — specifically the more violent acts he encountered in the BDSM community. He found that community welcoming and open — he began to unfurl himself and gain confidence. He was able to satiate his submissive sexual desires with those he met on the internet and in specific bars and clubs; however, the monogamous relationships he tried to cultivate rarely lasted long due to his voracious and violent sexual requests.

He graduated college and found a job working as an engineer at an airplane parts factory. He was making close to six figures by the time he was 30; however, he lived modestly, sending money to his father for rent on the apartment still standing in the middle of the increasingly gentrified neighborhood, and spending the rest on sex-workers, online pornography, and the younger, casual partners whose lifestyles he paid for. He lived alone, he had no friends and few work-acquaintances, he never took drugs or drank much, and he managed to keep up with his work despite his extracurricular distractions. When he was 30, his father passed away. His widow moved to live with her niece somewhere in the suburbs, and the apartment was given up. During this period, Wayne was flooded with painful memories of Junior and those lonely childhood years. He began to search around for Junior on the internet only to find his mother, who was sweet to him when they got on the phone, apologetic about his father's death, and terse when she had to tell him about Junior's passing five years ago. Her tone suggested that she didn't want to speak much about what had happened to her son, so Wayne let it be; instead, he spiraled deeper into his sex addiction.

The few relationships he had begun to fall apart, and his work began to suffer. Trying to abstain and pull himself together, he fled to the church for a few years; in the end, this only further confused and ostracized him, and only worsened his dependency on sex. He was throwing money away on individuals who took advantage of him — he would often search purposefully for these abusive relationships — drinking more heavily, and spending time in more dangerous scenes. He was fired from his job five years into this descent. He was able to live off his savings for three of those years during which he was lonelier than he had ever been or had ever known to be possible. He was arrested for a domestic abuse charge after one of his drug-addicted partners had an episode. Though he was not found guilty, the incident used up almost all his savings and made it difficult for him to find work. When he was 40, he took a job driving the 305 Line bus. He had never left Detroit, so he knew the streets and the neighborhoods well. The job made him feel useful and calm. He began a relationship with a woman who was kind and patient and stayed with him for eight months until he was fired from his job for masturbating on the clock.