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# True Story

By Rupert Goold

"A big stick.  
Sometimes a metal chain."  
Where?  
"On the back."  
Is it bad?  
Does he bleed?  
"Sometimes."  
And it's his master  
who's doing this?  
It's okay.  
Tell him I'm from  
The New York Times.  
I want to help you.  
But I can't help you  
unless you help me.  
I think he wants, you know...  
I know what he wants.  
You see this?  
He can have this.  
But only when we're done, okay?  
Again.  
Is it his master from  
the cocoa plantation  
that's doing the beatings?  
"Yes."  
All right.  
And his parents are dead?  
"No." He says  
they live in the country.  
Okay, so it's...  
It's his parents who are dead.  
Yes, I think so.  
Wait, wait, wait.  
Will you ask him  
to take his shirt off,  
so I can see his back?  
Tell him we need to take  
a picture for the paper.  
It's okay.  
This is me.  
Mike Finkel from  
The New York Times.  
Excuse me.  
Do you speak English?

A little.  
I can't figure this out.  
This takes coins, right?  
I think so, yeah.  
Ta-da.  
You did it.  
Why do they light candles?  
So people get to heaven?  
Um...  
I'm not Catholic.  
Are you German?  
Yeah.  
What brings you to Mexico?  
Some winter sun.  
Yeah.  
You?  
Um...  
I'm a journalist.  
Journalist? Cool.  
Yeah. Whatever.  
It's just a job.  
What is your name then,  
Mr. Journalist?  
Me?  
Mike Finkel,  
with The New York Times.  
Lena. Nice to meet you.  
Nice to meet you.  
Ten minutes, Mike. We gotta  
put this thing to bed.  
I'm on it.  
Raise \$250.  
You serious?  
You heard me. \$250.  
Motherfucker.  
So how long  
are you back for, Mike?  
Just tonight.  
I just came back to make sure  
they didn't sub  
the shit out of me again.  
Where do they put me?  
The fucking Hilton.  
Nice.

Yeah.  
It's a circus out there.  
Call.  
Yeah.  
You know, when I arrived,  
at the same hotel as me,  
a guy from Reuters,  
two from Le Monde,  
and that Kwiatowski from CNN.  
- Turn. Ace of spades.  
- Hello.  
\$500.  
Bullshit.  
Mike?  
I'm on it.  
It'll need proofing.  
No, it won't.  
I'm out.  
The whole thing stinks.  
People are starving on the coast  
and 200 miles inland,  
it's all Bon Jovi  
and French fries.  
But what do they care?  
As far as they're concerned,  
they're getting a cigar box  
from Gaddafi at Christmas.  
Know what I want for Christmas?  
6,000 words.  
Are we playing poker, or what?  
King of spades.  
Here, pussy, pussy, pussy.  
\$750.  
He's got the fucking Jack.  
I'm out.  
We all ready to drink this town?  
Come on, Mike, show us.  
You got those Jacks, or what?  
He doesn't have to.  
You folded.  
Come on, asshole, show us.  
Me?  
I don't have shit.  
A pair of deuces.

My...  
Really?  
Can someone help me  
scoop up all this money  
I just won?  
You're paying  
for drinks tonight.  
Mom.  
This is 42nd Street,  
with transfers to  
the ACE and E train.  
Stay clear of the closing doors.  
So did you read it?  
Read it?  
What do you think?  
I'm framing it now.  
Seriously.  
You don't have to do that.  
What? I'm, like,  
your biggest fan.  
Mike, that's nine covers  
in three years.  
Ten, but who's counting?  
Nine, ten, whatever.  
You going to give yourself  
a day off now?  
No, I'm actually  
going into the office.  
Marcus and Karen want to see me.  
Really? What about?  
No idea, but I have a hunch  
it rhymes with Smulitzer.  
I wish I was there  
to celebrate with you.  
If you lived here, you would be.  
You know I can't.  
Come home soon.  
I will. I love you.  
I love you, too.  
- What's up, man?  
- My dude.  
Hey.  
Hey.  
Hey.

Listen, I don't want to  
bother you with this,  
but Marcus got a call  
from Save the Children about  
that article of yours.  
The cocoa plantation piece.  
They say that's not  
Youssef Mal on the cover.  
This is.  
I can't remember.  
I interviewed both of them.  
They wrong?  
They must be.  
Hey, these things happen  
all the time.  
Let's go tell him.  
Sure.  
You better bring  
your old notebooks.  
They've also taken issue  
with some of the content.  
It's all checkable.  
None of it should be a problem.  
Fifteen minutes?  
Sure.  
Is this him or not?  
Everything I wrote about Mal  
happened to at least  
one of the boys.  
Is this or is this not  
Youssef Mal?  
This boy with scars  
like a mountain range.  
Yes, it is.  
You sure?  
Yes, I'm sure.  
Okay, great. So just show us  
where his details are in here.  
I can't do that.  
Why not?  
Because I didn't  
take notes that day.  
It might not be him?  
This article was about

saving young people's lives.  
I wanted to write about  
all the kids I interviewed.  
I came back with  
a plan for that.  
A more aggressive story about  
the corruption within  
these aid agencies.  
But we felt it was too broad.  
Don't imply  
this has anything to do  
with anyone  
other than you, Mike.  
You said write about one boy.  
Suggest the issues  
through one boy's story.  
A personal portrait.  
And you were right.  
You were absolutely right.  
I assumed you had the research.  
I did, just not  
all in one place.  
Then that's not research.  
Mike, you must understand  
how damaging this could be  
for the charities  
who work with these children.  
Not to mention the paper.  
You said write it up.  
I... I thought it could work  
on a higher level.  
I said write it up,  
not make it up.  
The higher level is the truth.  
You didn't have the research,  
that's the only fact  
that matters here.  
Do you think this stuff  
writes itself?  
You hire people like me to  
get on the ground and hunt.  
That's how this paper  
has competitive advantage.  
I did the best with what I had.

You lied.  
I just can't understand why.  
It's not like you had anything  
to prove to any of us,  
you're an exceptional  
journalist.  
It just bewilders me.  
We'll have to be open with  
our readers about this, Mike,  
which is no small embarrassment.  
Explain what you've done.  
Do you know what that means  
for those poor kids?  
For the support your article  
gave them, for their futures?  
For your future?  
What the fuck were you thinking?  
Okay, that's enough, Karen.  
All right.  
I can, um, write a retraction,  
if that's what you want.  
That's what I can do.  
I can go... I'll go right now.  
I'll go and I'll  
just write you a retraction,  
if that's what you want, okay?  
Just, can you not print  
the apology?  
If you print the apology,  
no one will touch me.  
Can you just...  
Can you do that?  
Can you just not print  
the apology?  
Just that, please?  
You have a great future  
ahead of you, Mike.  
But not here.  
Ladies and gentlemen,  
this is your captain speaking.  
We're about to begin our descent  
into Bozeman, Montana.  
For those of you returning,  
we would like to



welcome you home.  
For those passengers visiting  
Montana for the first time...  
I can be working again  
by summer.  
If I can find something good.  
I can ask the university  
for a raise,  
or take on some  
high school teaching.  
No, I'll make some calls.  
It'll be nice to have you  
back for a while.  
Tonya, it's Mike.  
Finkel. Yeah.  
I know, it's been a long time.  
Anyway, listen,  
I have this great idea.  
It's a snowboarding piece.  
I'm going to shoot with  
my war photographer, Chris,  
okay, so it's going  
to look like...  
But this is...  
This is winter sports.  
This doesn't have anything  
to do with what happened.  
Hi, Ed, it's Mike Finkel.  
Since the A.P. awards dinner,  
yes.  
So, listen, Ed,  
I have this thing  
I've been working up  
on black ops in the Marine  
Corps from my war days.  
And it feels like a GQ piece.  
Right, but none of my other  
work has any suspicion.  
How long have  
we known each other?  
Don't make me beg here.  
Right, but it's 11:30.  
I know he can't  
be at lunch because

Playboy doesn't even

**open until 11:**

I understand.

Okay.

Hey.

Hang on, hang on.

Here.

Hey, it's okay.

It's okay. It's okay.

I'm sorry.

It's okay.

Hello?

Hi, my name is Pat Frato.

I'm a reporter with

The Oregonian.

I'm sure you're buried

in all this by now,

but I wanted to get your side  
on the Christian Longo story.

Who?

Christian Longo?

The child killer?

He murdered his entire  
family out here in Newport.

You must know about him.

They finally took him down  
in Cancun last week.

You hadn't heard?

No. Why are you  
telling me this?

Because when  
they apprehended him,  
he said he was Mike Finkel,  
of The New York Times.

Hello?

Hello? Mr. Finkel?

Hello?

Hold on one second.

When they picked him up  
in Mexico,  
he denied all knowledge of it,  
but the cops clearly felt  
they had enough to bring him in.

He was just a regular guy,  
an intelligent, sane man  
from a good family.  
Comes home one night  
and kills his wife and kids.  
It makes no sense.  
At any rate,  
this turned out to be  
the end of the line for them.  
He... He drowned them.  
Although there is evidence  
to suggest  
that his wife and baby  
were strangled first.  
Where are they holding him now?  
Lincoln County Jail.  
He'll stay there until  
it comes to trial, I suspect.  
I'm going to have to start  
getting back. I'm afraid  
it's quite a drive.  
But you can keep all of this.  
Thank you so much, Pat.  
I really appreciate...  
No, I wanted to meet you  
as much as you me.  
I love your writing.  
Hey, listen.  
Did he say anything at all  
about why he claimed to be me?  
I'd hoped you might  
be able to tell me that.  
Just one for your diaries,  
I guess.  
Thanks a lot.  
Yeah.

**Dear Mr. Longo:**

This is Michael Finkel.  
I am told you've been  
using my name.  
I can't say I understand why,  
as I don't recall us  
ever meeting.

But, actually, I don't mind.  
In fact, in a way,  
it makes me feel kind of honored.  
I know you are facing  
an upcoming trial  
and have been instructed  
to avoid people like me,  
but I was wondering whether  
you would agree to meet.  
You see, I've been through  
a kind of trial myself.  
And at the very same time  
that you were using my name,  
they stripped me of it.  
Since then, I've been doing  
a lot of soul searching.  
I've been trying to find out  
who I really am.  
I thought maybe  
you could tell me  
what it's like to be me.  
You get 15 minutes.  
Guard will be in attendance  
the whole time.  
No physical contact  
during any part of  
the meeting, understood?  
He'll... He'll be  
in the room with me?  
Lincoln County doesn't  
get many cases like this,  
so he gets the only room  
we've got.  
I thought because  
he's accused  
of multiple homicide...  
Visiting privileges are determined  
by your behavior in here,  
not your crimes out there.  
And how's his behavior been?  
Longo? Exemplary.  
Thank you for  
seeing me, Mr. Longo.  
Call me Chris.

Nice to meet you, Chris.  
Nice to meet you, too.  
What are you writing?  
Sorry. It's...  
It's a habit.  
First impressions?  
Yes, first impressions.  
What did you put down?  
Brown eyes.  
That's not very remarkable.  
I'm sure 70% of the world  
has brown eyes.  
I guess so. I don't.  
You know, there's a  
mathematical technique  
that will determine  
how ordinary a person you are.  
Not just your looks,  
but your whole life.  
Really?  
From my calculations,  
I'd say I'm pretty ordinary.  
I've been decent and regular for  
92.88% of the time.  
But you couldn't tell that  
from reading the papers.  
They write about me and  
I'm just another...  
Pariah.  
Yeah. Exactly.  
So why... Why me?  
Picked up The Times  
and you thought  
the name sounded funny?  
No, I... I've followed  
your whole career.  
What?  
I've always found  
your writing appealing.  
The adventure.  
The way you stand up for people  
that don't have voices.  
I've probably read  
everything you've done.

I guess I felt like I knew you.

So I read the paper.

Did you do it?

I should be asking you  
the same thing.

I'm gonna take that as a yes.

Why?

I don't know.

I needed the story  
to be ahead of the game.

But deep down, I don't know.

And now you're here.

Well...

All the networks  
have been chasing me,  
and I've had a bunch of requests  
from different newspapers.

The Times?

Not yet.

I know I'm very valuable  
to people like you.

And not everything's  
been said yet.

But most journalists  
they're only interested  
in writing  
what their readers want to hear.

They don't want to take  
the time to find out  
the truth about  
what really happened.

But maybe at this point,  
it doesn't matter.

Of course it matters.

The truth always matters.

It always seems  
to matter to you.

When I was being you,  
it was the happiest  
I'd been in a long time.

Do you think you could  
ever imagine being me?

Longo! Time to go.

Okay. Mike.

I want to tell you  
my side of this.

Only you.

But I know that eventually  
you're gonna want  
to write about it,  
so I'm gonna need two things  
from you in return.

What?

I need your word  
that you will not tell anyone  
what I tell you  
until after the trial.

And in return,  
I will grant you  
exclusive access.

Okay?

I promise.

But if I write about you,  
you may not like what you read.

I understand.

What's the second thing?

I want you to teach me to write.

- This him?

- Yeah.

You might not even  
hear from him again.

I will.

I think he trusts me.

Can you trust him?

Don't do that.

What?

You think after what happened,  
I didn't cross-check  
the police reports?

This is a  
once-in-a-lifetime story.

Don't you see this  
as a second chance?

**Dear Mike:**

Write what you know?  
Well, here is a list  
of all the ways

I've gone wrong through life,  
so I may better understand  
how I reached this path  
I now find myself on.  
My father was a strict man.  
I once stole a roll  
of quarters from...  
We married pretty young  
and definitely struggled  
for work at first.  
And eventually, because  
they liked what I was doing,  
they put me on  
the executive fast track.  
I also made a few stupid  
decisions about what  
we spent our money on.  
We traveled a lot.  
The children came  
like a flock of starlings.  
No one tells you how hard  
it's gonna be  
when you have kids.  
Providing for them  
was all I sought to do.  
You just get through it.  
No matter what.  
These were the boom years  
in America.  
No matter where we traveled,  
I could never find enough to  
give them all  
what they truly deserved.  
We had to forfeit  
all our property.  
We went from Ohio  
all the way to Oregon.  
Motels, takeout.  
Being brought up  
a Jehovah's Witness  
was a blessing in my life,  
because it was there  
I met my wife.  
For two months, we had to



sleep in the warehouse.  
We went on the run.  
Shame is a terrible emotion  
for a man.  
To lose your dignity in front  
of your wife and children...  
I took any work I could find.  
I spent four months  
in Starbucks,  
making coffee for kids and guys  
who used to work for me.  
The car we had broke down,  
so I just drove off the lot.  
All my friends  
were going to college.  
We were teaching our kids  
how to walk.  
I wish I could have  
gone to college.  
It felt so good  
just to make M. J. happy.  
When I think back to my life  
before that awful night,  
it's like looking  
at a watercolor.  
The outlines are clear,  
but they fade at the edges  
leaving blurs and smudges.  
Everything after that  
is dark.  
How long are you going for?  
A couple days.  
What was her name?  
The wife?  
MaryJane.  
And the baby?  
Madison.  
How old was she?  
She was three years old.  
Look, I know  
what I'm doing, okay?  
I know.  
Take care.  
I'll call you, all right?

Love you.  
So this is it?  
Second floor,  
the one on the left.  
Can we see it?  
Well, it's totally empty,  
the cops cleared it out.  
But I can show you  
where they were found.  
According to the coroner,  
MaryJane and Madison  
were beaten  
and strangled to death,  
and then zipped inside  
two suitcases  
with free weights  
and dropped here,  
breaking a water pipe  
on the way down,  
which is noticed  
the next morning  
and becomes part of  
the reason the canal  
was searched the following week.  
It's pretty public here.  
I know. Crazy.  
And then Zach and Sadie  
are driven 15 miles south  
and dropped in the water  
at Waldport, over there.  
Why drive 15 miles  
to dump bodies on the edge  
of the next town?  
Don't you find that odd?  
Maybe something in him  
wanted to get caught.  
Then why'd flee?  
I guess he changed his mind.  
So this is  
where he dropped them.  
It's not high enough  
to kill them outright,  
so they would have drowned.  
Unless the cold made them

go into cardiac arrest.  
It was well below zero  
that night.  
Terrible thing for him to do.  
If he did it.  
If?  
He's gonna plead innocent.  
How do you know?  
He told me.  
You spoke to him?  
I met him.  
Why?  
I wanted to hear  
his side of the story.  
I'm not sure Christian Longo  
deserves to have  
his story heard.  
Everybody deserves to  
have their story heard.  
Mommy!  
I know you did it.  
You know you did it.  
We don't need the how or why,  
just three little words.  
They can be spoken real quick.  
I just can't right now.  
I'm sorry.  
Chris, your letter was  
an extraordinary thing.  
But this story  
between the two of us,  
it's not an article I can write.  
But it could be a book.  
Really?  
But if we're gonna write  
something like that together,  
it's what you tell me,  
not how, that's important.  
I know. It's just that,  
you speak so beautifully,  
you have such  
a mastery of words,  
and I want that.  
- It inspires me.

- I need it.

Okay.

Let's make a trade.

I give you a note,  
you answer a question.

Okay.

All right.

All right,

so on page 23 you write,

"When I lost my position  
at the realtor's,

"MaryJane thought

I'd tried to get fired,

"but I never said it was  
a job I didn't want."

So that's a double negative,

"never said I didn't want."

Okay.

It's weak, a double negative.

In good journalism,

we would write,

"It was a job I wanted."

I get it.

Two negatives

don't make a positive.

Okay.

My turn.

Okay.

Why did you hook up with  
that German girl in Mexico?

How'd you know about that?

I spoke to her.

I don't know.

I was...

I was grieving so much,

it was as if the old

Chris Longo was dead.

But you slept with her

on the first night.

I don't know.

That's what she says.

Chris,

did you do what you're accused of doing?

I loved my family.

I only wanted  
what was best for them.  
I'm really sorry, Mike.  
I can't do this right now.  
Do what?  
I can't tell you  
what really happened.  
Okay.  
Okay. Then...  
Then why flee to Mexico  
right after they were found?  
You have to understand,  
that makes you look  
incredibly guilty.  
Sometimes,  
you have to accept  
looking one way  
in order to protect  
something more important.  
Chris, if you're hiding  
something from me,  
I will find out.  
That's what I do.  
I look everywhere.  
Why did you kill them?  
I didn't kill them.  
It's part true crime,  
but it's part mea culpa.  
It's really about  
writing itself.  
And you're sure  
it's a full book  
and not an article?  
You're really feel that  
there's enough there?  
It's a book, it is a book.  
We're not gonna find out later  
it's like the African story?  
You can imagine how difficult  
that would be for us.  
Of course, of course.  
And I...  
You have nothing to worry about.  
It all came at once,

and I had five mouths to feed,  
so I took any job I could get.  
That was when  
you started stealing?  
You know about that?  
It was just small amounts.  
Food and clothes,  
and diapers. Books.  
That  
teddy bear  
they found with Madison,  
with her body.  
That was originally Zach's.  
And it was handed down to  
Sadie and then to Madison.  
All because  
I couldn't buy new toys.  
I mean, what kind  
of loser can't even...  
That says more about you  
than anything.  
It does?  
That's exactly what I would  
want to use in the book.  
Chris, it's not easy  
to relate to someone  
who's accused of four murders.  
But everyone understands  
a child needing a toy.  
And the teddy bear ending up...  
It's like it died when she died.  
I never thought of it that way.  
This is my notebook from Africa.  
You gotta see this.  
Look.  
That's weird.  
Two men, same age,  
from completely  
different worlds,  
different educations,  
and yet there's something  
so similar about us.  
Some of what  
he writes is really...

It's moving.  
You think he's innocent,  
don't you?  
I don't presume  
anything anymore.  
I'm going to say a word,  
then we just write  
the first thing  
that comes to our mind.  
Don't even think about it.  
All right.  
Okay? The future.  
Future?  
I wrote  
"always another opportunity."  
I didn't write anything.  
All right, you try one.  
Love.  
"Something  
I always screw up."  
That's depressing, but true.  
That's really weird, because  
for "love" I wrote  
"Mike and Jill."  
What?  
I guess I was just  
looking at you  
and I thought you were  
writing about her.  
Maybe you were, in a way.  
I'd have thought  
you would have written "M.J."  
I couldn't.  
Why not?  
It's too complicated.  
What was she like?  
Beautiful.  
Supportive.  
She was a great mother.  
Loyal.  
We made a pact  
that we would never lie  
to each other.  
That was very important.

You must miss her.  
Yeah.  
She was like the ocean.  
How so?  
She was deep.  
Rolling.  
Sometimes stormy.  
That's really nice.  
Let's do one more.  
All right, but they're so hard.  
It's good that it's hard.  
That's why it's a good exercise.  
Yeah. Okay.  
"Lies."  
"Lies"?  
I'm a liar?  
Yes.  
I'm a liar?  
Um...  
You stole my identity.  
I was in Mexico.  
Who was I supposed to choose?  
I don't know. Dr. Seuss.  
No, I needed somebody  
that nobody knew.  
I'm sorry.  
No, it's okay.  
I know I'm a nobody.  
Not to me.  
You know his real name  
was Theodor Geisel?  
Yeah. Dr. Seuss.  
Yeah, I knew that.  
You knew that?  
He was born in Wisconsin.  
There's a park there,  
with statues of all  
the Dr. Seuss characters.  
You out-Seussed me.  
That's impressive.  
I have kids.  
We went to Seussland.  
Time to go.  
All right, buddy.



Thanks, Mike.  
Let's go.  
The more I dig into this thing,  
the more I think  
it could be the best thing  
I've ever worked on.  
Do you have a title in mind?  
"True Story," I think.  
True Story, right.  
And when do you think  
you might be able  
to get us something?  
Soon. Incredibly soon.  
Let's wrap it up, Shortstop.  
Shortstop.  
It's my nickname.  
Long-go.  
Short-stop.  
Shortstop.  
We'll give him the dedication.  
Dedicate...  
For the book.  
"For Shortstop." Like a wink.  
What's a wink?  
A wink is  
when a writer puts in  
a secret message  
for someone special.  
Like a private joke.  
Cool.  
My mom will be proud.  
Chris, you know,  
if you're found guilty,  
I can't give you any money  
for the book.  
Even if I wanted to,  
the law wouldn't allow it.  
I understand.  
Just as long as  
you're not hoping I am.  
Am what?  
Found guilty.  
Thank you.  
I just got off the phone

with HarperCollins.

And?

They offered me  
a \$250,000 advance.

Wow.

They say it's exactly  
what they needed.

They loved the writing.

They're very excited,  
and they want me

to sign up immediately.

And he told you the whole story?

He told me what I needed.

Did he do it?

I don't know.

Hey, could you,  
be careful with that, please?

Sorry.

No, no. Um...

It's just that

I want to send them

a hard copy of

the first chapters.

You okay?

Yeah.

I'm glad it all worked out.

You should be proud.

So how have you been this week?

I'm just thinking

I should plead guilty

to everything,

so it'll all be over.

People are gonna think

what they want to think.

It doesn't matter what I say.

Chris, come on, of all people,

I know what it's like

to avoid the truth.

But I'm smart enough to know a

second chance when I see it.

I've never admitted this

to anyone, not even Jill,

but the things

that I got fired for,

I did them.  
When I wrote that Africa story,  
I didn't mix up my notes.  
I didn't combine  
the characters by accident.  
I knew what I was doing.  
I knew readers would care more  
if they thought  
all these things happened  
to one kid instead of five.  
And I needed people to care.  
I got so wrapped up  
in trying to tell a great story  
that I completely lost  
my obligation to the truth.  
Don't make  
the same mistake I made.  
If you're covering for someone,  
if you're lying for them,  
you may think it's easier,  
but it will eat away at you.  
It will destroy you.  
This is the plea hearing  
for the State of Oregon versus  
Christian Michael Longo,  
case number VRN1641.  
Is the defendant in  
attendance and represented?  
Yes, Your Honor.  
Would the defendant please rise?  
Mr. Longo, I will go over  
the charges one by one  
in the order they were filed.  
For the death of Zachary Longo,  
how do you plead?  
My client pleads not guilty.  
For the death of Sadie Longo,  
how do you plead?  
My client pleads  
not guilty, Your Honor.  
Hi, this is Mike Finkel.  
I'm calling to see  
if case number 641  
is out of plea hearings yet?

How did it go?  
For the death of MaryJane Longo,  
how do you plead?  
My client pleads guilty.  
For the death of Madison Longo,  
how do you plead?  
My client pleads guilty.  
Order. Order.  
Mr. Longo,  
you do realize how confusing  
the court will find this plea.  
And that unless you have  
been advised otherwise,  
you could be facing  
a life sentence  
at the very least.  
Yes, sir, I do understand that.  
Do you have any questions?  
I do not.  
But, Mike,  
everything you sent suggested  
he was pleading innocent  
on all counts.  
I know, I know.  
And now every news outlet  
in the country  
is covering the story,  
but you seem to be  
completely in the dark.  
Yes, I realize...  
I realize that.  
Mike, we need your word  
you'll get us  
something we can rely on.  
Without that, we have no book.  
Fuck!  
What are you doing?  
What are you doing?  
Mike...  
You told me you were innocent.  
I'm sorry about that.  
You should be  
fucking sorry, Chris.  
Who pleads guilty to two murders

and innocent to two others?

Look, I...

Stupid.

Yo, Chris, I don't understand.

And you seem to have

no interest in

telling me the truth,

so why should I believe

a word that you say?

Sometimes the truth

isn't believable.

That doesn't mean

that it's not true.

What the fuck

are you talking about?

Do you hear yourself?

Just stop.

Tell me something real!

Mike, I would, but I can't.

This isn't just about me.

Who? Who do you

have to protect?

I can't say.

I know better than to

blindly trust my sources.

If anybody on Earth

knows that, it's me.

But this is different, okay?

This has been months.

My whole reputation's

on the line,

or what's left of it anyway.

Mike,

you are a good friend.

And I owe you so much.

So, so much.

Mike, don't give up on me.

Writing with you

has been the only thing

that's kept me going.

How did it feel

to write about your family?

It was hard.

The trial for their murders

begins tomorrow.

I suggest you think  
about them tonight.

I think about them every night.

Mr. Finkel?

My name is Greg Ganley,  
I'm an investigator with  
the Oregon Department  
of Justice.

I'll be assisting  
the prosecution's office  
in its case  
against Christian Longo.

Okay.

I was wondering if we might  
be able to speak together.

Sure.

Great.

You want to go somewhere quiet?

More quiet?

Yeah.

Thanks.

I know you've been  
communicating with Mr. Longo.  
Maybe he's even been candid  
with you about matters  
directly related to the trial,  
I don't know.

But I need to ask you  
for help now for our side.  
So we can get some justice here.

Help how?

Tell us what you and Longo  
have discussed.

Let us review any letters  
or taped conversations  
between the two of you.

I can't do that.

I promised Chris I wouldn't.

Let me spell this out for you.

Your cooperation  
might make the difference  
between him being  
found guilty or set free.

Set free?  
What are you talking about?  
He pleaded guilty.  
We think he might be trying  
to confuse the jury  
as part of  
some bigger game plan.  
If he can sow enough doubt to  
force a mistrial, he's won.  
I know this doesn't make  
any sense right now,  
but I've seen a lot of killers  
in court down the years.  
Most of the time,  
they look like cornered foxes,  
wild and confused.  
Longo has this calm about him.  
He knows something.  
I believe we're dealing with  
an exceptionally dangerous man  
who has killed before,  
and he will kill again  
if he is allowed.  
So, what can you do for us?  
I'm trying to make  
you feel bad enough  
or guilty enough to talk to me.  
I'm putting the turd,  
so to speak, in your pocket.  
Are you really going  
to be the man  
who might set him free?  
You've done your thing.  
This is for the law now.  
I can't help you.  
Can I ask why?  
Is it because you don't want  
to share your scoop, is that it?  
You want to keep it  
all for yourself?  
All right.  
I said what I wanted to say.  
Why don't you give me a call  
if you're having

trouble sleeping.

Hello?

Jill, hey.

It's nice to meet you.

Meet your voice, anyways.

Chris?

Exactly.

Hi. I was trying

to reach Mike,

but I couldn't get him

on his cell phone,

so, um, I was wondering if

you'd take a message for me?

Okay.

Um, just tell him

that my lawyer said

he can get him a seat

when the trial

begins tomorrow. Okay?

Sure.

Great. Well, it's,

truly nice to talk to you, Jill.

You know,

Mike's such a sweet guy.

And he's been

a real friend to me.

I'm sure he's like that

with everyone.

No, I think you're special.

Yeah, well, exactly.

It feels like we've known each other,

like, from before.

And he really loves you.

You know. Even if he

seems like he doesn't

want to let it out.

He told you that?

Yeah.

He tells me everything.

Life in Finkelwood,

his record collection,

your old piano,

that bathtub

you bought together.



He just goes on and on.  
It's like I'm writing  
the book about him,  
rather than him about me.  
I know he must be under  
a lot of pressure, though.  
It must be hard for you to  
have him so preoccupied  
like that.  
You know nothing about me.  
It feels like  
I do, though.  
I don't mean to  
make you uncomfortable.  
I just hope that  
we can be friends, too.  
I'd really like that.  
Mike means so much  
to both of us.  
My credit's up.  
Will you let him know?  
Sure.  
Thanks, Jill.  
I'm standing outside  
Lincoln County Courthouse,  
where prosecutors say  
they will seek  
the death penalty  
for Christian Longo,  
who has been charged  
with aggravated murder  
in the deaths of his wife...  
Be seated.  
December 16th.  
It's a night we're going to  
spend a lot of time  
talking about.  
It was the last night  
in this woman  
and these children's lives.  
MaryJane Longo, 34.  
Zachary Longo, four years old.  
- Sadie Longo.  
- During questioning,

I asked him what happened  
to his family.  
And he said he'd sent them  
to a better place.  
A better place?  
What do you think he meant by that?  
Do you believe that  
he had murdered his family?  
That he had, or that...  
- Objection.  
- Overruled.  
A car like that up on a bridge

**at 4:**

I've lived up there  
my whole life,  
and that's unusual.  
Anyway, I heard  
a couple of splashes.  
So I called up  
and asked him what  
was going on. He said,  
"Nothing."  
Could you recognize  
that man today?  
Yeah... Yeah.  
Could you point to the man?  
Let the record show  
the witness points  
to the defendant.  
Do you know the defendant?  
Yes, I do.  
How do you know him?  
I am the manager at the  
Starbucks where he worked.  
How long did he work for you?  
About two months.  
When was the last time  
you saw him?  
December 17th.  
In the morning,  
he came in to work  
about an hour late.  
This was the day

after the murders.

Yes.

Did he say anything?

He said his wife  
had left him for another man.

A reporter.

How did he seem?

The same as always.

Very calm.

Very remote.

You say you know the defendant.

When did you last see him?

December 19th.

December 19th.

Two days after the murder.

Yes.

What was he doing?

Playing basketball.

He was playing basketball  
two days  
after his wife and children  
were murdered?

Yeah. We attend  
the same gym.

Neither of the children's bodies  
displayed any evidence of  
having struggled  
with an attacker,  
which suggests they likely  
knew and trusted their killer.

Both Zachary and Sadie  
had Play-Doh  
under their fingernails.

Sadie's toenails were painted  
with a pearlescent polish,  
the same as on MaryJane's toes.

They likely painted  
them together.

Madison

was found in the suitcase.

Tiny scratch marks here indicate  
Madison must have come around  
at some point  
before she drowned.

Dozens of facial  
capillaries burst  
as she struggled for air.  
MaryJane's body was found  
in this suitcase.  
This was a violent  
and frenzied act.  
A ferocious attack.  
Her neck has been broken.  
Though this looks like it may  
have happened after she died,  
when she was forced  
into the suitcase.  
The prosecution rests,  
Your Honor.  
Then we shall begin with  
the defense's first witness,  
Christian Longo,  
tomorrow morning.  
This court is hereby adjourned

**until 10:**

I'm very sorry.  
For what?  
This must be an incredibly  
difficult day for your family.  
Why are you talking to me?  
Do you need this scene  
for your book or something?  
No, not at all.  
But you're still writing it?  
I have a commission  
I have to honor.  
You had a choice of  
so many stories to tell,  
and you chose his.  
Actually, he picked me.  
You pick your wedding day,  
Mr. Finkel,  
your children's names.  
The important things.  
He didn't pick you.  
He used you.  
God.

So, the night of the 15th,  
you were honest with her  
about your debts  
for the first time?  
Maybe it was too  
much all at once like that,  
but, yes, I told her everything.  
She had tears in her eyes.  
But I intended to  
put it all out into the open.  
Go on.  
So I told her.  
I told her that we weren't  
paid up on the condo.  
And that we'd have  
to move again.  
About the credit cards  
that I'd gotten  
by forging  
her father's signature.  
About the counterfeit checks.  
About stealing the van.  
I think that hurt her the most.  
I'd given it to her  
for our anniversary.  
She'd always wanted one.  
How did she react  
when you told her?  
She was pretty  
shaken up. Um...  
When I told her  
about the van, she hit me.  
She was screaming that  
I should get out  
and leave her alone.  
I'd never seen her like that.  
Zach and Sadie were  
asleep in the living room,  
so I just went and joined them.  
When I woke up, it was morning.  
I made the kids breakfast.  
I went in to check on MaryJane.  
She was, asleep with Maddie.  
When I woke her,

she pushed past me  
and went into the bathroom.  
So I took Maddie  
and sat with her  
in the living room  
with the kids.  
We made some animals  
out of Play-Doh.  
And then it was getting close to  
the time I was supposed  
to be at work.  
So I offered to call in sick,  
but MaryJane said I had to go  
because we were  
in such a deep hole,  
we couldn't afford  
any more sick days.  
So she got dressed  
and drove me to work.  
And  
I worried about her all day.  
But when I got home, late,  
the door was open.  
She was inside.  
She was wearing just her robe.  
And she wouldn't speak.  
And then she collapsed.  
I asked her what was wrong.  
And I was actually  
getting irritated  
because she wouldn't answer.  
She was just sobbing.  
So I went into  
the bedroom to change,  
and that's...  
That's when I saw Madison.  
She was  
tangled in the sheets.  
She looked sick. Purplish.  
She wasn't moving.  
So, I went over  
and sort of jostled her.  
That's when I discovered that  
she was cold to the touch.

Very cold.  
And I couldn't...  
I couldn't believe  
what was happening.  
I ran into the living room.  
I grabbed MaryJane  
and lifted her to her feet.  
And I was...  
I was yelling,  
"What happened to Maddie?"  
"What...  
What's wrong with her?"  
And that's when I realized,  
what about Zach and Sadie?  
And when I said  
their names out loud,  
MaryJane got hysterical.  
She started hitting me  
with her fists.  
And I was saying,  
"You have to control yourself."  
"You have to  
tell me what happened."  
I was just trying to shake her.  
She looked me right in the eye.  
And she said,  
"You did this."  
"This is your fault."  
And I didn't know  
what she was talking about.  
And then she said,  
"You did this."  
"You killed us."  
So, I had her  
up against the wall  
and I was just trying  
to get her to tell me  
where the kids were.  
I was shoving her,  
just trying to force her  
to tell me.  
But I know I...  
I lost control.  
I was so angry.

What did she say?  
She said,  
they were in the water.  
Order, please.  
She said they were in the bay.  
And she slumped to the floor.  
I...  
picked her up by her throat.  
She grabbed my forearm.  
But she let me do it.  
And I know that's how she died.  
What did you do then?  
I went and got the  
big suitcase  
and a little suitcase.  
And I put MaryJane  
in the big suitcase.  
And I intended to do  
the same with Madison  
when my heart stopped.  
Because  
she was still breathing.  
Not very well, but she was.  
So I laid her down.  
And  
even though she was breathing,  
I considered her already dead.  
There was nothing  
I could do for her.  
Nothing.  
So I,  
put my hand over her,  
little neck.  
And I squeezed.  
I could feel the life  
going out of her.  
And then she breathed again.  
So I squeezed harder.  
And then,  
I realized I couldn't...  
I couldn't put her  
in the suitcase like that.  
It was too big.  
I just wanted her



to be comfortable.  
So I... I lay in  
some of her clothes.  
I put in  
all her favorite things.  
All the things that  
would make her happy.  
And her favorite teddy bear.  
It was almost like  
the teddy bear died  
when she died.  
And then I took the suitcases  
out to the bay and I  
put them in the water.  
And I drove to the bridge.  
And I just...  
I just stayed there,  
thinking about my children.  
Why do you think  
she would do this?  
Why not just take  
the kids and leave?  
She told me once  
that if I ever left her,  
she wouldn't be able to go on.  
And so by doing this  
maybe she was trying to show  
me how much I meant to her.  
Maybe she thought she  
could make something good  
out of two things that were bad.  
Like a double negative.  
The defense rests.  
Court adjourned.  
I have something for you.  
It's my correspondence  
from Longo.  
Look.  
I have over  
100 letters back home.  
This one was over 80 pages.  
You should submit this.  
Did you write back?  
Sometimes.

Pen pals.  
You might want to  
look after them.  
You're gonna need them  
for that book.  
This is material evidence.  
You want to see what  
material evidence looks like,  
you come by my office.  
But you can put that away.  
It's done.  
If you had legally  
compelled me to testify,  
you would have had this.  
It could have  
influenced the jury.  
Yeah, I know.  
If they find for manslaughter,  
he might be out in a few years.  
But in the end,  
you wouldn't have made a very good witness,  
credibility-wise.  
You've been through a sort of  
trial of your own recently.  
And the verdict was  
you're a liar.  
We better hope the jury comes to  
the same conclusion about him.  
I thought you'd be taller.  
Why?  
I don't know.  
Maybe because  
he looks up to you.  
No. I look up to him.  
Is it too cold for you in here?  
No, I'm fine.  
Is... Is he okay?  
I was hoping you could tell me.  
Well, we don't talk  
as much anymore.  
That's two of us.  
I haven't seen  
a woman in so long.  
Looking at you is

like seeing the ocean.  
I'm more of a pond, I think.  
Can I play you something?  
"Se la mia morte brami."  
"If you crave my death."  
Carlo Gesualdo wrote it in 1611,  
a few years after killing  
his wife and newborn son.  
His wife had a lover.  
So he tracked them down  
with a hunting knife.  
He stabbed her many,  
many times all over her body.  
And as she was bleeding  
to death on the floor,  
he forced the lover  
to strip her naked,  
put on her bloody nightdress  
and humiliate himself.  
Before shooting him in the head.  
Then he went upstairs  
and beat his infant son to death  
against the side of his crib.  
That music is almost  
beautiful enough  
to make me forget him,  
listening to something  
written by a man  
who broke his baby's skull  
on a piece of furniture.  
But not quite.  
You see, Mike wants to  
try and understand you.  
I think he believes that  
if he can understand you,  
then maybe he can  
understand himself.  
But I don't want  
to understand you at all.  
You're a murderer.  
You kill women and children.  
You're a narcissist who resents  
every single second of  
attention not given to you.

I'm here to tell you that  
whatever else is coming to you,  
you will never ever escape  
what you are.

Members of the jury,  
have you come to a verdict  
in the case of  
the State of Oregon  
against the defendant,  
Christian Michael Longo?

We have, Your Honor.

Clerk of the court,  
let the verdict be submitted.  
For the murder of Sadie Longo,  
how do you find the defendant?  
Guilty, Your Honor.

And for  
the murder of Zachary Longo,  
how do you find the defendant?  
Guilty, Your Honor.

For the murder of MaryJane Longo,  
should the defendant receive  
a sentence of death?

To this question,  
the jury has answered yes.  
For the murder of Madison Longo,  
Zachary Longo,  
and Sadie Longo,  
to this question,  
the jury has answered yes.  
The jury is dismissed.

Okay.

It's done. I'll be outside.

Order.

Order.

Mr. Longo,  
you had the opportunity  
to spare the relatives  
of your victims further pain  
by admitting the true extent  
of your crime.  
Instead,  
you manipulated this court  
like you manipulated your family

despite the overwhelming  
evidence against you.  
Blaming your wife  
for killing her own children  
was a grotesque betrayal,  
both of her and her memory.  
You must have realized  
no one would believe you.  
Quite frankly,  
you are a mystery to me.  
And, God willing,  
you will remain so.  
I therefore place you  
in the custody of  
the Oregon Department  
of Corrections  
for transport to death row  
at the Oregon  
State Penitentiary.  
Court is adjourned.  
I knew you'd come.  
You look good.  
I'm still writing.  
Nobody wrote me back  
at first, which hurt.  
And I must be getting better,  
because, I've had  
two marriage proposals.  
Good luck with that.  
The only good thing  
that came out of all this  
is that I got to meet you.  
And I even screwed that up.  
I regret that.  
Me, too.  
Yeah.  
Is that why you wrote to me?  
You're ready?  
To tell the truth?  
I did it.  
I killed MaryJane.  
When I got there that night,  
she was straddling the bed  
and she was pushing a pillow

down towards the mattress.  
Underneath, I saw Madison.  
Fighting.  
I don't know  
why she was doing it,  
but I was furious that  
she was taking it out  
on our daughter.  
And then I snapped.  
I went crazy, Mike.  
I must have killed  
Zach and Sadie,  
but I don't remember.  
I don't remember anything.  
I don't even know  
which one I killed first.  
It's just a blank.  
The first thing I remember  
is waking up in the airport.  
You blacked out?  
That can count  
as temporary insanity.  
Well, I have a new lawyer.  
He's filing an appeal.  
It's powerful.  
But it makes no sense.  
Even if MaryJane had wanted  
to kill Madison,  
she would have  
had the entire day.  
Why would she wait  
for you to get home  
so you could catch her  
in the act?  
Either she's calculating  
or she's out of her mind.  
You can't have it both ways.  
The only thing that  
makes sense is a break-in.  
You came home,  
you found everyone dead,  
you panicked.  
You thought someone  
was trying to frame you.

So you dumped the bodies  
and you went on the run.  
But somebody else killed them.  
Is that possible?  
Maybe.  
No, it's not.  
None of those stories hold water  
because they're  
all fucking lies.  
You killed them, you sick fuck.  
You killed all of them.  
Your lawyer called me  
for the appeal.  
He asked me to be a  
character reference for you.  
The first thing  
I tell the judge is  
look out for the lies.  
Look out for temporary insanity.  
Look out for self-defense.  
Look out for intruder.  
Look out for every wet-eyed  
piece of bullshit he serves up.  
How's the book, Mike?  
How are the sales?  
You didn't have to finish it.  
But you did.  
Because you couldn't  
help yourself.  
We're not so different.  
Yes, we are.  
All these stories.  
You know what?  
No one's listening anymore.  
One person is.  
You, Mike.  
I'm the most important thing  
that ever happened to you.  
From now on,  
you'll just be the guy  
who talked to the guy  
who killed his family.  
And that's it.  
And if I ever open my mouth,

you'll just come running.

"I hated him.

"I hated him in the intense way  
"that you can only hate someone  
"who you truly care about.

"I'd been fascinated by Longo.

"And also been fooled by him.

"He was gone, condemned to die.

"And I had the sense of  
having survived something.

"A storm of sorts.

"But although

I was alive and intact,

"that was all

I'd been left with."

Thank you.

If we could, Mr. Finkel,  
your publishers promised us  
a Q and A.

I know there are a lot of folks  
with questions.

Isn't that right?

Yes?

Mr. Finkel, do you think  
he'll kill again,  
like in prison maybe?

I doubt it.

He's locked up.

Will they have to restrain him?

With straps and stuff?

No.

Um, where would  
you place him on a list of  
comparable killers,

Mr. Finkel?

Like Ted Bundy?

Ed Gein, say?

Mr. Finkel,

may I ask you something?

Do you ever regret  
contacting him?

What do you mean?

Well, it seems to me  
that Christian Longo



has lost his liberty,  
but hearing you read today,  
I was just wondering  
what you might  
have lost as well.