

Stanley Walker Hall was waging a war against sin and, with peccancy lurking around all four corners of the Earth, there was no shortage of transgressions for him to forestall. He had been surreptitiously fighting sin every Friday for a year now. In his briefcase he carried a brown leather journal, white paper, and a red crayon. These were his armaments against the insidious influence of sin.

This Friday was like any other Friday in Bradshaw; Stanley woke up at 5:30 AM, fixed himself a breakfast of oatmeal and black coffee, wrote his sermon while the coffee cooled, and made his list. Today, Stanley would deliver Billy Hayes, Ida Baker, and Edith Warner from vice's embrace. He kept a detailed record of all of his good works in his brown leather journal. It was not unusual for him to flip through the journal and reread some of his glorious tales of altruism.

It was only 8:30 when Stanley left his house and the sultry summer air had already begun to encumber the little town of Bradshaw. He sauntered into his car, and though the air was muggy, the warmth of the leather seats was not in the least bit bothersome. As he drove to the store he continuously reminded himself that he'd be able to fight sin after just a few quick chores: grocery store, the quilting shop, and the shoe store in Woodland.

He hurriedly paced up each necessary aisle, marking off each item on his list as he obtained them. Coffee? Yes. Milk? Yes. Eggs? Yes. A new journal? Aisle five. He strode toward aisle five. His current journal was about to be retired; the pages were filled with blue ink and coffee stains, the spine was broken, and the leather was cracking. Retiring the journal would be bittersweet. He had developed a familiarity, an emotional attachment, with the journal. Yet, starting a new journal was a small price to pay for the excitement of being able to place his journal on the shelf with his others. Stanley had twenty-six journals and each journal featured greater works than the last.

"Pastor?" a voice called out from aisle four.

He turned around to see Mrs. Cook standing on a ladder, stocking a shelf. "Good morning, Victoria! How are you doing today?" he smiled.

"I'm doing quite well," she sighed, "How are you doing?"

"Victoria, how are you really doing?" he asked.

Her greasy hair was pinned up into a mess on top of her head, her clothes were covered in stains, and yesterday's make-up still clung to her face, smudged off in last night's slumber.

"Well, Garth is out of town," she sighed, "and the children are running wild. I just can't keep up with them!"

"I'm so sorry to hear that. Is there anything I can do to help?"

"No, Charlie is coming over tonight to help me with the children. I'm more concerned about what's going to happen when Garth returns tomorrow."

"Why is that?" he earnestly inquired.

"You didn't hear? His mother isn't doing so well. When he comes back, he's going to tell us if he thinks we ought to make a trip up as a family. I just don't know how to tell the children; they adore their Grandma Ruth."

"Victoria, you have my number, don't you?"

"I do." She nodded.

"Please call me if you or Garth need anything."

Stanley made himself a mental note to check in with Victoria later that evening. He knew she was overwhelmed yet too afraid to request some much needed help. He silently lamented the

pitiful effects of such pride as he put a new journal in his basket. After bidding the cashier farewell, he hied towards his car, chasing transgression with each stride.

After putting his groceries in the trunk, he began the long drive to Mrs. Fortner's Fabrics. There was a closer quilting shop right outside of Bradshaw, but the journey to Cobbtown was well worth it. Mrs. Fortner's had more to choose from, and in Cobbtown he was free from the gossipy folk of Bradshaw. With only 271 people in his town, and most of them members of his congregation, rumors spread like an infection. He could just hear them bleating "What on Earth is Stanley doing with five yards of red satin?" He laughed at the thought and applauded himself for being clever enough to make the trip to Cobbtown.

Stanley drove along the lonely highway with nothing but long stretches of crops and his fantasies to keep him company. Occasionally, he'd spot a billboard along the desolate road. His favorite billboard was one of the older ones. It had been standing for at least thirty or forty years and, with no one to take it down or tend to it, it might stand for forty years more. "The devil is alive in this town. Repent!" Stanley smiled as drove past the billboard knowing he had repented and today he would lead others to repentance. He rolled down the windows to let the breeze flow through the car, and continued fantasizing about his today's grand victories.

Stanley was promptly greeted upon entering Mrs. Fortner's Fabrics. "Owen Harris! I haven't seen you in a month of Sundays. How have you been?" Mrs. Fortner beamed.

"It has been quite a while indeed," he said, "I've been doing very well, how have you been doing?"

"Just peachy. Is there a specific project you're working on? Are you starting something new?"

"I'm starting something new. I'm making a red dress--for my sister. Do you have any red satin?" He asked, "I should need about five yards."

"I believe I have three reds: a cherry red, a wine red, and what the factory is calling a 'crimson' red" she said as she led him over to her selection of satin fabric.

"I like the cherry red!" he exclaimed.

The accidental display of elation prompted a question from Mrs. Fortner. "What's the occasion, Mr. Harris?"

"Mrs. Fortner, you may call me Owen. And I'm going to attempt bridesmaid dresses." Stanley hushed. "I decided I'd better start with just one and see if she likes it. I'll be back for more fabric if she does."

"When is the wedding?" She asked as she measured out the fabric.

"They're thinking next summer. I should have plenty of time to make the dresses for her if I begin now."

"It seems like just yesterday you were in here picking out material for her prom dress. You know, I tell my customers about that dress whenever I sell some blue satin. I tell them it was one of the most dazzling dresses I've ever seen. If I had known you were selling it, I'd surely have bought it for one of my daughters." she said as she began to put his fabric in a bag.

He smiled at her, "It's hard to imagine I sold it two years ago."

Stanley continued his journey north toward Woodland, the last of his chores. In some ways Stanley really enjoyed Woodland, and in other ways he deeply pitied the town. Woodland wasn't really a town, it was more of a small city. With a population of about 50,000, people living in cities live in a fog of anonymity. In Woodland you don't know the cashier or their parents and, most importantly, the cashier doesn't know you. They don't ask about your

purchases because they don't care about your purchases. On the other hand, large towns like Woodland are a breeding ground for the devil. Sin can slither through a city and infect an entire population faster than it can in a small town. People looked out for each other in small towns like Bradshaw—after all, it only takes a little yeast to work through an entire batch.

The delightful cashier did not request any information about Stanley's purchase, yet he offered it up anyway. "These shoes are for my wife. Her feet are sized unusually--may I return them if the size eleven is too large?"

"Yes, Sir." she responded "It's awfully kind of you to buy your wife shoes; my husband tells me I have too many."

Stanley found himself grinning uncontrollably. Whether it was from completing the most daunting task on his chore list, or completing his chore list entirely, he was not sure. In this moment he could only bask in the excitement of being free to fight the good fight. It was only 1:30 PM and he was already headed back to Bradshaw.

Ida Baker lived in a tiny yellow house at the end of a dirt road. Stanley caught her eye as he turned onto Daffodil Lane. She was a rotund woman with crude, plump features. She wiped her short, blonde hair out of her face, and swatted at a fly buzzing through the muggy air.

"Ida, your garden is going to engulf your little cottage!" He observed as he got out of his car. Ida's pink roses were climbing up the left side of her house. The left side was so engorged, only a few streaks of the yellow siding could be seen peeking through the vines. The white picket fence could scarcely contain the overgrowth that was her garden; and some of the garden even seeped out onto the dirt road.

Ida was not pleased to see Stanley--and he knew it too. Ida attended church on Christmas Eve and Easter, and some years, if her children were particularly bothersome, she could be seen being dragged to a service on Good Friday. Naturally, she felt a feeling of discomfort when she saw the pastor visiting her home.

She feigned a smile, "Good afternoon, Pastor Stanley."

"Do you have time for a visit? I came because I was concerned about you. Your children have asked me to pray for you; they told me you've been very sick."

"Oh yes, I've been so very sick. I've been so tired, I haven't been able to go to church. The doctors think I've got diabetes." She paused, "I suppose I have time for a visit. Go'on in the house. I've gotta plant two more of these flowers and then I'll be in."

Stanley had been confident that Ida was too lonely and too polite to turn him away. However, he did begin to worry when she began talking about how she hadn't been to church due to "illness." He considered what he might say to her regarding her absenteeism as he made his way into the kitchen.

Stanley seated himself at the dining room table in Ida's cramped kitchen. "A tiny kitchen for a tiny house," he observed as his eyes darted around the kitchen. It appeared as though Ida had been hard at work with canning this summer. A great pyramid of homemade jams and jellies sat in a basket on top of her counter. He gazed at the window and through the lacy curtains he caught a glimpse of Ida's quilts on her clothesline, dancing in the wind. His eyes continued to dart around the room like a fly looking for a place to land. Finally, his eyes landed on a box on top of the fridge. He peered through the window to verify Ida was still in the garden--she was--and he stood up and seized the box. The tin box read "Luxury Chocolates".

Stanley opened the tin box. It appeared Ida had been gorging herself on chocolates. He glanced over to the window again; Ida was still in her garden. He promptly dumped the

chocolates into his briefcase and pulled out a white piece of paper and his red crayon. In his left hand he scribbled “Abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. The devil’s got a hold of you, Ida.” He considered writing more, but he realized Ida was no longer in her garden and thus probably on her way into the house. With great frenzy, Stanley shut his briefcase and returned the tin to its rightful place on top of the fridge. He was just in time; he heard Ida open the front door just as he returned to his seat.

“Well, I’m starving.” Ida announced upon entering the kitchen. “Have you eaten yet?”

“I have not. However, I’m not sure if I’m hungry.”

“Would you like some lemon tea? Delilah just picked this up from the market a week ago. It goes delightfully with these raspberry cakes I’ve made. She’s coming over for dinner and perhaps we’ll have tea afterwards.” She said as she began filling up a kettle. “But, I’m going to have tea and cake before she comes over. I can’t have her fretting over how many cakes I eat. She might say something if I have more than one--she did last month. She said ‘Mom, I really worry about your health.’ Can you believe it? The audacity children have these days! Stanley, you don’t have children yet, is that correct?”

“Yes, ma’am, that is correct; I’m not even married. Ida, I’m sorry to change the subject, but you mentioned your health earlier today as well and Delilah and Edgar have asked me to pray for you. If you don’t mind me asking, what’s going on?”

“Well, let me get the tea--you’ll have some, right?”

“Yes, please.”

“All right, I’ll tell you what’s going on.” Ida got up to get the tea and returned with two dainty pink tea cups and a pot of tea. “Hold on, I need to get the tea bags and the cakes too.” She pulled the tea bags from the drawer by the sink and, before she returned to the table, she took out a large platter of cakes from the refrigerator. Though these cakes were small, they were anything but modest. The bottom and top layer were yellow sponge cake and frosting and raspberries were sandwiched between the layers. If for no other purpose than to add to excessive decadence, the cakes were topped with powdered sugar and a generous dollop of pink frosting. Stanley’s eyes fell hungrily upon those cakes. In an instant his thoughts raced back and forth, sanctimoniously debating each other. Should he have one? What is the harm in just one? If not just one, then how about just one bite? Surely there cannot be any harm in just one bite. Stanley glanced around the room for any sign of relief. He found his willpower as his eyes landed upon Ida gormandizing her first cake and reaching for the second.

“Your health problems.” He said, reminding her of the matter at hand.

“Yes, well, you see it’s my chest. I have these chest pains that start up sometimes, especially when I’m working in the garden. And I get these headaches--I think it’s because I can’t sleep--and oh, they’re awful! I couldn’t go to church last week because of one. I get really tired and woozy. I went to the doctor just yesterday. He thinks I ought to get tested for diabetes. Oh--Delilah, did I tell you what she said to me? She thinks I need to watch what I’m eating! I told her to mind her own business. She thinks since she’s a twig that everyone can be a twig. You know why she’s so skinny, don’t you? It’s that husband of hers, Edgar, beat the appetite right outta her. I never liked him, no, not ever. Tawdry family, he’s got. Why, his sister is so senseless she sits in a sump yet thinks herself royalty. I hear his mother’s nearly an idiot.”

While Stanley could not care less about Edgar’s family--they did not even live in Bradshaw--he was quite interested in Edgar’s methods of discipline. Stanley had always respected Edgar as a godly man but, perhaps, it was time to add Edgar’s name to next Friday’s

list. "I'm sorry to hear about that, Ida. I know Delilah misses having you in church. I'm sure she's just pestering you because she wants you in church with her and Edgar."

"Well, that's the problem with church people. They're always trying to change people. Nobody's changing me! I'm not changing anything for anyone; if Delilah wants me in church, it's her problem. I'm not changing my diet so I can attend some gathering that tries to convince me to change even more. No way! She can get off her high horse!"

Stanley sat there, worried for Ida, as she may not come to church again for a very long time, but also relieved to know there is plenty of plausible deniability as to who left the note in her chocolate box. He quickly began to ponder how to respond to such a statement when Ida interrupted him.

"I am so terribly sorry for being so rude, but It's nearly 3:00. I need to get ready for Delilah's visit." She said, clearing the table. "Would you like a cake to go?" She offered, before returning the plate to the fridge.

Stanley considered this. While he certainly should not have one, he knew Ida would eat them all after Delilah's visit. "Sure, that'd be lovely. I sure enjoyed our visit."

"Oh, yes, anytime. I do apologize it was so short." She said as she packed up two cakes in a tin. "We can visit again when you return that tin--hopefully for longer," she said while hurrying him out the door.

While Stanley knew her words were not perfectly genuine, he would not hesitate to drop by for another visit in a few weeks. Now it was time for him to visit Billy Hayes. Billy Hayes was a 15 year old boy. Red haired and freckled, you'd almost consider him the picture of innocence, especially considering the family he came from. Jack and Judy Hayes had three boys, Billy, Brennen, and Benjamin, ages fifteen, nine, and six, respectively. They were fine children from a fine family. Though Jack's job title was plumber, he was also a handyman. The people of Bradshaw joked that if Jack couldn't fix it, it's probably too expensive to fix. Judy was a homemaker--and a good one at that. She saw to it that the children always made their beds, did their homework, and went to church. The Hayes children were mild mannered and polite. They did not throw tantrums and they did not speak unless spoken to.

Stanley trusted Judy to keep an eye out on her boys, but what harm could a second opinion do? After all, Judy had never been a fifteen-year-old boy. There was no way she could even begin to fathom the sin fifteen-year-old boys can get themselves into, and it was for that reason he stood on her porch, waiting for her to answer the door.

Judy, unlike Ida, was thrilled to see Stanley. She was humbled and grateful to have such a caring and attentive pastor. She warmly welcomed him into her home and asked if he might like to have some lemonade.

"I would, thank you, Judy. I'm so sorry to drop in unannounced. I know you requested a meeting with me next Tuesday, but I felt it might be urgent. We can still meet next Tuesday, if you'd like, I just want to make sure everything is okay."

Judy's countenance fell. She looked behind Stanley, at the clock, noting the time. She then turned around to observe her boys playing in the backyard. In just a few moments, Judy's complexion turned pallid. "It's Billy." She mumbled.

Of course it was. There was something unnatural about that boy, there always had been. Stanley had never been able to put his finger on it, but it was there all right. Billy had this gaze--this grotesque, ersatz stare. Stanley had noticed it during his sermons; Billy had always seemed away in a reverie. "What's the matter with Billy?"

“On the last day of school I offered to take the boys out for dinner and milkshakes. Brennan and Benjamin were excited, but Billy just wanted to stay at home. By the time we got back, Billy was in tears. He said Coco ran out in front of a car and was struck,” she whispered and, while holding back tears, she managed to choke out, “Jack and I don’t think it was a car.”

Stanley knew she had more to say. He sat there patiently as Judy collected herself.

“It was a grisly sight,” she continued, “Jack didn’t let any of us see Coco, and he buried her that night.”

“I’m so sorry for your loss. I know Molly died just a few months ago.”

“Molly was just the sweetest thing.” She said, desperately trying to hold back tears, “I never did much care for basset hounds, but she was just a delight.” The silence in the room was deafening. They both knew what had happened, but it was only right that Judy was the one to say it. After a few more moments of thick silence, Judy blurted it out. “I don’t believe teenagers did it. I know Billy swears it, but I don’t believe it. Not for a second. I think he did it and the younger two are too scared to say anything.”

“Judy, you’ll have to excuse me, I’m afraid I don’t know too much about things like this. However, I’m glad I came over today; I will be certain to prepare for our visit on Tuesday. Would that be okay with you? I will research the subject and pray over it.”

She nodded. “Please don’t tell Jack I told you. He’s just as eager to fix the problem as I am, but he’s quite embarrassed and very afraid.”

“Nothing you’ve said will leave this room. Is your bathroom still up the stairs and to the left?”

“Yes, it is.” She said, turning her head towards the backyard, “While you’re in there I’m going out to see what they’re up to. They’re awfully close to the neighbor’s yard.”

While Judy went outside to tend to her children, Stanley rushed up to Billy’s room. The bedroom is exactly what you’d expect from one of Judy’s sons: pristine, nothing left out of order. The bed was made, the desk in his room was clear of any papers, the closet and drawers were all organized. One might expect this would make it more difficult to detect depravity, but Stanley was a professional. He marched right over to the pillows and uncovered a thick novel titled *Juliette*. Stanley thumbed through the novel and skimmed the first page he landed on. He read: “My passions, concentrated on a single point, resemble the rays of a sun assembled by a magnifying glass: they immediately set fire to whatever object they find in their way.” Clearly, this material is not suited for a fifteen year old, in fact, it may not be suited for anyone. He seized the novel and wrote Billy a note, left handed and with red crayon. “But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”

He glanced outside, Judy was still tending to her children. He flew down the stairs and out to the backyard. “I’m terribly sorry, but I’m afraid I’ve just received an urgent call. Will you be all right if I leave?” He asked.

“Of course. I’ll show you out.” As soon as they were away from the children she added “It’s probably best if Jack doesn’t see you here; he’ll know I told you about Billy.”

Stanley responded by assuring her everything they discussed was confidential, and he would not betray that for the world.

The time was nearing 5:30 and Stanley remembered he needed to drop by the Cook residence. Victoria needed help; Stanley knew it. He knew she was terrified of being vulnerable to others. Pride was such a sad condition. He lamented the woes of a prideful soul as he traveled

down Pepper Avenue. Stanley was determined to march right in there and help out wherever needed, but iniquity caught his eye first. Before he could even appear in front of the house, he saw Charlie approaching with a bouquet of roses. At this sight he swiftly reached over and grabbed his polaroid camera.

That familiar click, the sound of transgression being captured, the feeling of pressing and releasing the button--it all made Stanley's world numb with gratification. Now that Stanley had the evidence, he just needed to decide what to do with it. Given that he lived within walking distance, over on Spice Avenue, he surmised could walk over in the middle of the night and set things straight. Yes, this would most certainly do. He looked at his watch; the time was approaching 6:00.

Since Stanley would have to wait until Edith left her house for bingo, which was at 8:00pm, he drove to his house and began to journal his heroic tales of rescuing the good people of Bradshaw from grotesque impurities. While Stanley did realize that some of these acts were mere peccadillos, he also recognized the ability of such vices to drag one into further depravity. Journaling the events of this Friday so far would take much more than two hours, but Stanley thought it would be best for him to get a good start on the events of this glorious day. By the time 8:00 rolled around, Stanley had already finished his account of his battles up until Victoria.

Stanley arrived at Edith's house at 8:21. The crepuscular sky began to attract lightning bugs, and though the sun had begun to set, the damp, oppressive air hung over Edith's sleepy home. Stanley slithered up the pathway and to the front door. He knocked twice, even though all the lights were off. Silence. He gently turned the knob and found the door, to his delight, completely unlocked. It was odd to have such a young girl living on her own, but Edith Warner insisted upon it. She got a job as a secretary in town and she even had plans to go to college. Stanley was certain he should find *something* sinful in this house. But there was nothing.

The house was spotless and, from many experiences of nearly being detected, Stanley had learned that a spotless house meant one had to be extra careful when searching for sin. He stood in the doorway of her bedroom, about to leave, when some cherry red satin caught his eye. The zestful fabric entangled in her closet called him. "I could," he gulped, "just *see* what it is." Stanley's trembling hands reached for the hanger. The hanger grasped a little red dress in its clutches. He swallowed again. While Edith *could* wear this in public, she absolutely should not. Since there was no conceivable reason for Edith to have this dress, he snatched it right up. He turned to leave, and then, once again, remembered he was forgetting something: a note of instruction: "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? Dress like that and the devil will get you!"

He stopped in the kitchen before leaving the house. He had not considered rummaging through Edith's kitchen since he had such great success in the bedroom. The only thing even the least bit out of place was a bottle of peach moscato. Stanley hemmed and hawed at the bottle and, with limited time, decided that it's probably best that he take the wine too.

Stanley arrived home at 9:30pm. Hungry from a day of fasting, he decided to enjoy a glass of the peach moscato. He concluded it would be just fine to have a glass since he had abstained from food all day. He began placing his plunder on his bed while he sipped his moscato. Chocolates, tea cakes, a novel, pictures of Victoria and Charlie, and a red dress. Typically when confiscating items of immorality, Stanley would use the practical ones and donate the rest. However, this Friday's spoils left a lot to be desired. The only thing Stanley could really use is the wine. He couldn't consume the chocolates or tea cakes; too much rich

food poisons the flesh as well as the soul. He was sure that a man like himself would not find the least amount of enjoyment in the novel. Stanley would mail the pictures he had taken as soon as Garth returned home, and then there was the red dress.

“It’s only a dress.” He said, aloud as he went to take another sip of the wine. He went into the kitchen upon realizing he had consumed the entire bottle of moscato. While Stanley had never been drunk, he certainly didn’t *feel* drunk. He began to consider that he’d been fasting since the morning and perhaps a little indulgence would be okay. Stanley poured himself a glass of merlot from his fridge and returned to the bedroom. “It’s just a dress. We’ve talked about this.” he said to himself. “There’s nothing sinful about a dress.” He felt the red satin slide across his finger tips, and with every gulp of merlot he fell deeper into desire, desire to be consumed by the little red dress. It’s just a dress. Just a dress. Just a dress--and it had been so long since he had worn a dress!

Stanley had sold the last dress he made himself. In an effort to be rid of dresses forever, he drove all the way to a far away town to sell his enchanting blue ball gown. It was such a dreadful mistake! It would take months for him to make another gown like it, and now, in his room was an opportunity to wear a dress again.

“There’s nothing wrong with wearing a dress. This one is too short to wear in public, but I’m not going in public! And while it is too revealing for a young girl like Edith, no one will see me in it. Being naked isn’t a sin; I shower without clothing, so why would wearing more clothing be a sin?” He reasoned aloud.

Half way through the bottle of merlot, he put on Edith’s red dress. Edith was an excessively diminutive woman so the back didn’t zip. He put on the heels--after all considerations, Stanley concluded they were just shoes and, in ancient Greece, men wore heels. He looked in the mirror; the whole ensemble was incomplete without some lipstick--and some eyeliner, and some eyeshadow. “There is nothing wrong with makeup,” he reasoned. “Actors wear makeup all the time. In Shakespeare’s time, women didn’t even play the female roles in the play. This is just a play, I’m not going anywhere. This isn’t hurting anyone.”

All dressed up with nowhere to go, Stanley picked up the novel and began to read. It was a curious philosophical read with scandal sprinkled in between discourse. While the philosophies were in fact worth exploring, it was probably best for a sound mind to explore them as opposed to a fifteen year old boy with a penchant for torturing animals.

After finishing the bottle of merlot, Stanley became acutely aware of his avaricious appetite. He looked over at the chocolates he had left on his bed. His thoughts began debating one another again. He felt conviction wrap around his heart like a string, tying itself into an infinitely tighter highwayman’s hitch, each thought tightening the loaded string.

“These worldly luxuries will corrupt your heart and your body,” the conviction whispered
 “I could just have one!” He responded aloud

“There is no ‘just one’ look at yourself, Stanley!” the deep voice of conviction resonated even louder.

“Stanley” a female voice seduced his attention, “Look at yourself, Stanley. Are you *really* doing anything wrong? Did God *really* say you were only allowed to read certain books?”

“Stanley! You are dressed as a woman and reading libertine philosophy: Repent!”

“Stanley, there is nothing wrong with wearing certain clothing,” the female voice retorted. Her voice was the satin red dress, smooth and silky. From her voice he could feel her sleek embrace caress his yearning flesh.

“The Pharisees used the ‘letter of the law’ approach to justify their sin too,” the voice of conviction boomed.

“Stanley...” The seductive voice moaned, louder, “Stanley, is there really anything wrong with just one bite?”

“Go away!” he screamed at his empty room. “Go away! Go away! Go away!”

With the highwayman’s hitch of conviction wrapping itself tighter and tighter around his heart and, his body craving the silken sensations devoid of restraint, the duality of sensations overwhelmed him. In that moment time itself stopped--the world itself stopped. Consumed by temptation, he grabbed the most pleasing chocolate and shoved it in his mouth. As soon as he did, he felt a sudden pull on the quick release and the knot came undone.

One, two, three, four, five, six, six truffles--He ate all six truffles. Famished from a day of fasting, he greedily engulfed the two lavish cakes Ida had sent him home with. Then, just as he wiped the crumbs from his face, he remembered he still had work to do. Stanley grabbed a bucket of red paint and marched straight down to Victoria’s house.

Stanley arrived at Pepper Ave, intoxicated by a lifestyle of piety and self denial, he began painting a red “A” on her door. His spirits rose to increasing heights as he decorated the side of her car. This was the furthest distance he had traveled in heels, and combined with the wine, he struggled to tumble home.

Stanley awoke on Saturday at a disgraceful 8:24am. “Sloth! He exclaimed, as he rolled out of bed. Stanley could not remember the last time he had indulged in such lavishness. He had been so disciplined in his self denial that he struggled to accept his fall from grace. After a few moments of pacing around his bedroom, debating whether or not his actions were immoral, he decided that some were indeed immoral. While his conscience did not trouble him over the dress or the shoes, he was greatly disturbed by his indulgence of truffles and cakes, and the wine--Oh, and the novel. While it is not wrong to familiarize yourself with differing philosophy, having cyprian literature lying around was a recipe for depravity. He decided to punish himself most severely. Stanley would definitely not be eating for a few days, and he would need to double down on the good works next Friday.

Two loud and thunderous knocks on his door interrupted his thoughts of repentance. He strode towards the door and hastily flung it open to see nobody. There wasn’t anyone standing on his porch, but someone had left a pink envelope on his doorstep. “Stan” was written on it in red, cursive writing. The envelope contained two polaroids of him from last night. They captured him walking down Pepper Ave in heels and a dress, carrying a bucket of paint. Stanley examined the polaroids, hoping to find some clue as to who they belonged to, but the only clue was some writing on the back: “Satan is watching you too.”