

## Irredeemable Narrator

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I want you to pay attention to my name. I will only say it once, so I want you to remember it now and in perpetuity. My name is Lawrence Forger. People try to call me Larry for short. However, I despise nicknames. I despise a lot of things, honestly. This is especially true in regards to everyone in this town in which I live. The townspeople refer to it as Lovely Springs. I do not. What most people will tell you is that Lovely Springs is a quiet town tucked away in suburbia, away from the crime of the city. They would tell you that everyone knows each other and get along peacefully. “No one would hurt a fly around here”, I would wager at least one person would say if they were interviewed on television about Lovely Springs. As for me, I know better. This whole façade of kindness and community is a complete farce, and I will tell you why. A very unfortunate incident took place today, on a school day no less.

It was a Tuesday morning. I woke up at 6:00 AM, right on the dot. I refuse to be late to school, or to anything else I have scheduled. Tardiness is uncivilized and I will not be part of it. Those seniors at my high school engage in tardiness regularly, but even in my sophomore year I will not allow such bad habits to set in. This morning was unusual because my closet door was blocked by a shoe. It was not any shoe of mine, I assure you. My shoes are clean and kept in proper order inside of my closet. This shoe was worn and dirty...not so dissimilar from the owner who left it here. I did not want anyone to see this eyesore, so I kicked it back in and quickly closed the door. Thankfully, none of the filth got on my favorite hoodie. You see, I was known for a very particular hoodie that I wore every day. I cut eye holes in the hood so that I could pull it farther over my face for warmth, but still see out of it. It took a lot of time to get it just right and I would hate to have to do it again.

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With the hoodie properly positioned, I left my house and walked quickly to school. I took a different route than usual, as I did not want to be seen. I am trying to avoid certain people that want to make trouble for me. There was only one person I wanted to talk to that day, and it was my girlfriend, Sydney Langston. Naturally, she was the most beautiful girl in town. She was also the nicest, the most considerate, and the most observant person in town. Sydney was one of two people in the entire world that I care about. The other was my brother, Charles Forger. We were not twins, but we looked very similar. Honestly, it would not be too hard to mistake us for each other in passing. Charles was a bit of an outcast. A lot of people made fun of him. Some folks even said he was crazy. They said it was his eyes that were crazy. Considering his eyes are almost identical in color to mine, I do not buy that explanation. After all, no one ever accused me of being crazy. Charles, however? It is a daily occurrence. But in my view, Charles was misunderstood. He was a wonderful person that was just set in his ways. There is nothing wrong with knowing what you want, after all.

I found Sydney right away. I needed to discuss something with her immediately, but it could not be on school grounds. There was something urgent at my house I needed to show her. As they say, it was a matter of life or death.

“Sydney, thank God.” I said to her, legitimately relieved. “There is an emergency at my house. Charles is in bad shape on his bedroom floor, and I do not know what to do!”

“Oh my gosh, Larry, why are you here? Why didn’t you call 911?!”

She called me Larry...she knew better than to call me Larry. Well, that is not important right now. Also, I was lying completely about my brother. However, I needed to get Sydney to my house at all costs. So, I said what I must.

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“I panicked!” I exclaimed in my best possible panicked voice. “Besides, you know how it is with him. He has been caught with drugs before. I think he may have overdosed this time, but he could face jail time. If I can just get him past this, it will save a lot of trouble. Can you please help me?”

Sydney looked at me very carefully. She looked deep into my eyes. Next, she gave quick glances at my clothes and shoes. Then back to my eyes.

“Is there something else wrong? Your voice sounds...off today.” Sydney asked, suspiciously.

“My brother was trying this nasty incense that stunk up his room. I think I must have breathed some in while I was checking on him and it burned my throat.”

Sydney seemed cautiously appeased by this answer. I am glad she was because she did not miss a detail. She was a sharp one. It was one of the many reasons why I loved her so much.

“Ok, Larry.” Sydney finally responded. “Let’s hurry over to your house.”

We quickly left the school and headed back home. Along the way, she asked me more questions. I expected this and was not caught off guard.

“I understand you must be freaked out about your brother, Larry. You’re always taking care of him and trying to save him. But this isn’t like you to not call 911. After all, your mother is a doctor! And your father is a police officer! I would think they would know what to do better than either of us.”

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“I have no idea what came over me, Sydney. I am sorry. I just...something about the way he was laying on the floor really spooked me this time. I felt like I could only come to you with this. I realize it was not the best idea...”

I attempted to look disappointed in myself. Truly I was not disappointed because everything was going to plan, but I needed her to believe me. At least, just for a little bit longer.

“It wasn’t...but I love how much you trust me, Larry. I’ll do the best I can to help you.”

Sydney reached out and grabbed my hand into hers. It was exhilarating. So this is what my brother had told me about when I asked him what love was. You see, he was far luckier at it than I was for a time. But look at me now. Here I was, holding hands with the most beautiful girl in town. Perhaps I should have left it at that, but I could not help myself at that moment. We stopped running for a minute. With her hand already in mine, I reached over and kissed her. It was...bliss. But I suspect it was also my undoing. I kissed her a moment more, but she suddenly pulled away. She stared deeply into my eyes. Her icy stare was that of shock and appall.

“Maybe now isn’t the time to kiss me? Isn’t your brother in danger?”

“Yes. I am so sorry, Sydney. My head is all over the place today. We need to hurry.”

I did not give Sydney a chance to look at me any further. I ran ahead and she followed closely behind. Finally, we reached the front door. I reached into my pocket to pull out the key.

“Before we go in there...is there anything you want to tell me?” Sydney asked hesitantly.

I thought about what the best thing would be to say as I turned the key. I knew the truth would not suffice. I also knew a lie would not either. So, I told Sydney something that I had felt ever since I met her.

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“I love you, Sydney. And I always have.” I replied.

Sydney looked as if she were about to cry. I believe she figured it out at that point. There was now fear and uncertainty in her eyes. I was a bit surprised she did not try to run away. It was my hypothesis that she needed to see what happened in my house. And if she did not? If she did decide to run? I had a gun in my pocket ready for her. She was not going anywhere.

“Come on. Let us hurry back to Charles’ room.” I said as I opened the door. To my surprise, she ran right past me, going back to the room as fast as she could.

When I entered the room, Sydney was in there searching. She looked at the floor, then on top of and underneath the bed. She then turned and looked at me with disdain and fear.

“Where is he, Charles? Where is Larry?”

“Ah. So, you figured it out.” I said as I pulled the hood off my head. “Was it when I kissed you?”

“Yes. There was desperation...there was spite...and yet there was love, all rolled together. Larry has always been very simple, very loose, and free. You, on the other hand, have always been more complex and uptight. And now that I think about it more clearly, there were other clues. You didn’t use a single contraction when you spoke, did you, Charles?”

“Not a single one. I despise contractions. If one is going to speak, one should use all the necessary words. I despise shortcuts.”

“What don’t you despise?”

“I do not despise you, Sydney.”

“Where is he, Charles? Tell me now.”

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“Your boyfriend...my brother...is in the closet. Take a look and see.”

Tears slowly started to stream down Sydney’s face as she walked over to the closet door. As she opened the door, she saw what I had always seen. Lawrence was a lifeless pile of nothing. I meant what I said earlier. The only two people I care about in this world are Sydney and Charles. It just so happens that I am Charles.

“Larry...no! It can’t be...” Sydney gasped as she dropped to her knees next to the body Lawrence once occupied. Perhaps this ruined the mood a bit, but I could not help but chuckle after I noticed something. I saw that shoe I kicked back into the closet earlier this morning. It was a shoe that belonged to Lawrence, you see. The nasty thing always left dirt and scuffs on my floor whenever Lawrence used to come into my room. When I kicked it, the shoe landed right on his face. The scuffs have been given back to him, it seems. I quickly regained my composure and addressed Sydney.

“Oh yes it can, Sydney.” I began. “Everyone thought Lawrence was so perfect. Everyone loved him, especially you, Sydney. Meanwhile, everyone bullied me and that included Lawrence. They said my eyes were crazy even though I shared them with Lawrence. I have been beaten at school. I have been beaten at home by Lawrence, all the while having to endure the endless praise mother and father showered upon him for playing sports and getting mediocre grades. I got all the A’s, but the C’s Lawrence earned were so much more impressive for some reason. Why? Why does everybody love that absolute lump of mediocrity and not me? Why did no one realize the only reason I abused drugs was to try and escape this horrible reality? Why?”

“I know what he did to you, Charles...I do. I told him all the time to stop. That he was ruining your life. But he...”

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“He would not stop, Sydney. He never stopped. How could you love such a person? You are the most perfect person I have ever met. And yet you loved a rat. Why?”

“I don’t have a good answer for you, Charles. Especially since what you are really asking is why I picked Larry over you. And the fact is, you made that decision very easy. I met two brothers that I befriended. I got to know both of you over time. But where Larry was imperfect, you were hateful of everyone else in the entire world, including yourself. That made it impossible to fall in love with you.”

She was absolutely right, of course. I was a monster. I killed my brother, and I brought his girlfriend to my house to kill her too out of jealousy. It was the classic “if I can never have her, no one can” cliché. Her words still stung, nonetheless. At that moment, I almost wished I was a different person so I could be good enough for her. Specifically, I wished I was Lawrence. That wish really dug at me. The idea that my reality was so twisted that becoming my abuser was now appealing absolutely sickened me to my core. The thought of becoming the poster child of mediocrity in order to fit in sickened me even further. To dumb myself down and deny who I am to meet the standards of others...was that something I could ever do? But as I really thought about it, I would rather be my own brand of monster than something I am not.

“What happens next, Charlie?” Sydney asked as she stood up. She had a sad smile on her face. It was one of both defiance and resignation. “Did you bring me here to kill me too? Do you intend to kill someone you love?”

“Charlie, eh? That is where we are now, Sydney? Well allow me to answer your question.”

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I pulled out the gun my father thought he properly locked up. For an officer of the law, he was not nearly as careful as he should have been. Just because I am no longer a child does not mean that a weapon is any less dangerous in my hand. As I proved with Lawrence, it is the most dangerous it has ever been. When I pointed the gun at Sydney, the color left her face completely. The tears were streaming down her face. Her hands were visibly shaking.

“Charles! Please, Charles. I was...I wanted to lighten the mood. I didn't mean anything by it, Charles. I understand why Larry is dead on your floor, but why me next? I'm the only person who has ever been nice to you!”

She was correct. However, I clicked off the safety on the gun.

“Are you worried I'm a witness to this? I won't tell anyone, Charles. I won't say a word. I'll say Larry was robbed. Just take his money and run! He hides it in his top drawer!”

She was correct again. Lawrence has a fair bit of cash in the top drawer of his nightstand. However, I pulled the hammer on the gun. It made a satisfying click as a bullet went into the chamber.

“Charles...please. I'll do anything. I'll run away with you. I know I said before it was impossible to fall in love with you, but that was just because I could never imagine ruining our friendship! We can change that, Charles!”

Sydney practically screamed that sentiment, attempting to project intense conviction upon me. I wanted to believe her. After all, it was the very thing I have wanted for what feels like an eternity. However, it was about as genuine as Lawrence claiming he will never hit me again. Or perhaps as genuine as mother promising she will protect me from his abuse. Truly, it may even be as genuine as father insisting that he will punish Lawrence for his transgressions...but



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not this weekend because he simply should not miss the big championship game. I will not waver.

“I just don’t want to die...” Sydney’s voice cracked as she lost all remaining hope. Her voice was barely audible at this point. “Is there...anything I can say or do to change your mind?”

As I solemnly shook my head and pulled the trigger, let me just leave you with a few more parting words. I want you to pay attention to my name. I will only say it once, so I want you to remember it now and in perpetuity. My name is Charles Forger. People try to call me Charlie for short. However, I despise nicknames.