

The Phone Books

# The Phone Books

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A young child witnesses a string of brutal murders as the whole world goes insane during the World Cup.



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I pondered if they could feel fear. It sure didn't seem like it. I sat on the hard ground memorized by the hundreds of ants that swarmed in and out of a small crack. Every few seconds I would crush one under my finger for no particular reason. I suppose I did it for the sole purpose of examining how they would react to a fellow comrade being squashed by an ominous force coming down from the heavens. After several minutes of destruction, I took a break to enjoy a long sip of homemade lemonade. The icy beverage provided me with a temporary relief from the sun's magnificent inferno.

This day was special. The U.S soccer team had successfully progressed in the World Cup and I was told today's game was of crucial importance. It was estimated that over 160 million people would be tuned in the United State alone. I had no interest in the sport but even at the age of nine I still recognized its significance.

The distant sound of cheerful human interaction drifted into my ears causing me to remember the game would be starting shortly. I could hear my father talking to all his friends about adult matters that I had little interest in.

"A measly 30 seconds of advertising for \$4.2 million. It's absurd I tell you. Any corporation with that much extra income should be forced to invest it in profitable projects that promote the advancement of society. If it takes them \$4 million to convince the American public to buy their product than they shouldn't be in business anyways," complained my father in an unusually passionate voice.

"You don't understand how the economy works Jim," replied his friend Ricky.

The argument persisted for several more seconds and ended in mutual laughter and the sound of popping bottle caps.

I listened to the sound of my mother Katie slaving away in the kitchen. She was one of the greatest cooks I've ever come across in my lifetime. Everyone in the neighborhood adored the lavish meals that she would frequently entertain famished guests with. Her name eventually spread outside the community and one day she was asked to manage a fashionable downtown restaurant. In her spare time she would cook for the homeless population and had an esteemed reputation among social workers and non-profits.

My father was the greatest person in the world. He was always willing to lend a helping hand and had a deep sense of empathy for his fellow man. About a year ago he got caught up in a gas station robbery and one disoriented assailant shot him in the head. He miraculously made a near full recovery, but at times experienced difficulty thinking the way he used to.

I could now hear vicious shouts and screams coming from the TV room. I began to drift into deep thought again as I listened to the adults roaring at the unresponsive plastic box. Sometimes I felt like they were a bunch of savage animals. They reminded me of a time I was at the Zoo and saw about a dozen monkeys screaming in a fit of rage at their keeper. There were even days when I went as far as experiencing obscure delusions of originating on some distant planet and somehow found myself on Earth. Why couldn't I share in their joy and frustration?

I began playing with the train set my father had given me for my birthday that year. It was my dearest possession and I loved it almost as if it were human. I was starting to feel bored but soon became absorbed in the fantasy that I was an adventurous conductor. After several minutes of playing I noticed that I hadn't heard a sound in quite some time. In fact the entire house was filled with a dead silence. For some unexplained reason a deep feeling of fear gradually began to overwhelm my entire body and sent me into an

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uncontrolled panic. Frozen, I tried trying to strain my ears to detect the slightest reverberation.

Suddenly I realized I could hear a man preaching on the television. He was screaming about something I couldn't understand. It certainly wasn't the voice of the earlier announcer. It seemed like he was trying to communicate something of great significance to the world. An odd instrumental tune began to play softly in the background of his voice. Now a new speaker began. He had a calm and serious tone that I felt I recognized from somewhere. Yes I did recognize this man's voice! It was Dan Lightman. He was a famous movie star that critics across the country praised as the greatest living artist. "An eccentric genius," they called him. Why was he on the television? He didn't play soccer. Suddenly Dan's voice stopped and the most extraordinary sounding music I've ever heard began to play. It was a peculiar muddle of trumpets and various instruments I couldn't identify. Possibly they were computer generated. My father must have doubled the volume because the music was now blaring throughout the entire house. It continued to grow louder and louder. What was going on? Then complete silence.

No one spoke. No one even dared to breathe. I could hear nothing. I clicked my tongue to see if I had gone deaf. Then I heard the TV turn off. Why had my father done this? The game couldn't have possibly been more than a quarter of the way over. Suddenly, all at the same moment, every cell phone in the house rang in beautiful unison. The unnerving vibrations and melodies sent a bolt of fear down my gulping throat. Nobody cared to answer the call they just let the phones continue to ring until all the sounds and vibrations came to a halt.

I sat awkwardly on the floor too numb and panicked to move. My legs were shaking violently. I tried to control them but it only made it worse. I glanced over at my train set and it too was now shaking. The whole house seemed to be shaking. Sweat poured from my face down my neck and onto my shirt. Then I heard it. The powerful sensation of mighty jet engines roaring across the blue sky. I leaped to my feet and galloped in the direction of the doorway. Ripping the door open with the energy of more than two boys I propelled myself outside and stared dumbstruck into the immense sky. Hundreds maybe thousands of monstrous planes flew above me dropping packages as far as the eye could see.

"What in God's name is happening," I whispered under my breath. I locked my fear-stricken eyes onto one of the uncanny packages that had almost completed its descent. To my surprise it landed almost right at my feet. It appeared to resemble a condensed phonebook. Like the ones that had been delivered to our house before. As I was about to reach down to retrieve whatever this was I felt a cold hand placed softly on my left shoulder.

"I'll be taking that Sam," said my father in the most monotone voice, causing my heart to almost jumped through my body.

"Dad, what's going on? What is that? What's happening Dad? I'm scared."

"Don't be scared Sam. Do you see all the magnificent planes? Today one of man's greatest achievements is delivering us the solution to tyranny. Come, we all have work to do now."

Never had I heard my father talk in such a style. It was as if some hidden force was feeding his brain a list of commands. He turned slowly around and walked inside. I closely followed. When we entered the house there was once again complete silence. A moment later my mother entered from the kitchen with a small hatchet gripped firmly in her hand. When her eyes met mine she stopped dead in her tracks. She seemed to be staring deep into my soul. Her eyes appeared lifeless yet powerful. Then a full-sized smile emerged slowly until it was plastered across her face. She began laughing almost hysterically.

"What's so funny mama? What's happening?" I pleaded.

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She began to laugh even harder and louder. She sounded like someone who was possessed by a mischievous sprite. She was now laughing so hard that she had to bend over as to not lose her balance. I noticed a little saliva flow outside of her mouth, landing silently on the kitchen floor.

“Katie get a hold of yourself, we have work to do,” said my father in a serious voice.

“Oh Iâ€™m terribly sorry Jim,” she chuckled back with a sarcastic tenor. Her words were slurred and barely audible. She sounded like someone who was mentally challenged.

Something was wrong with my parents. I had never seen them behave in such an unexplainable manner and it scared me to the bone. I decided to enter the TV room to consult with our guests on the matter. What I saw sent shivers down my spine. Everyone was sound asleep except Ricky. He was loading my fatherâ€™s pistol.

“Ricky whatâ€™s happening,” I asked. No reply. “Ricky whatâ€™s happening?”

He slowly stopped loading the silver bullets into the gun. I noticed his hands were fidgeting. He looked up at me and opened his mouth. For about a good five seconds his mouth remained wide open with drool leaking from the sides. It was as if he desperately wanted to say something but couldnâ€™t quite get it out.

Suddenly he summoned the strength to yell out, “Child rapists! Mad bastards! Destroyerâ€™s of Mother Nature! Power hungry devils, trying to suck up the souls of innocent youth to convert into a weapon of supreme devastation! I will not tolerate the insanity of Luciferâ€™s disciples!”

“Ricky, what are you talking about,” I called out in a perplexed cry of agony. Ricky didnâ€™t respond. He simply lowered his head to its original position and continued the task of loading my fatherâ€™s pistol. At that very moment it was as if a mighty giant had punched me in the stomach. I felt like oxygen was being ripped out of my brain. I pleaded with God to fill me in on whatever madness had plagued this household.

I rushed back into the main room with the intention of interrogating my father once more. My mother was perched in a corner still laughing feverishly and wielding the hatchet. I stared at her but she couldnâ€™t see me. I watched a thin red line of blood from her nose trickle down onto her blouse. I listened to her mumble unintelligible drivel similar to what youâ€™d hear out of lonely street drunk.

“Katie, Sam, Ricky come; we are going to Dr. Lakeâ€™s house, called my father in a way that would make you believe he was a corporate boss ordering his employees. Richard Lake was a brilliant professor who lived down the street and had previously taught Philosophy at the cityâ€™s university. Two years ago he was fired because of some project he embarked on with several colleagues. I knew little about the whole affair except that it was highly controversial and had angered many people. I could still remember the subsequent demonstrations that followed his untimely departure. Disgruntled students and faculty protested outside the university for almost a week until they were arrested for disorderly conduct. I was very pleased we would be going to Mr. Lakes. If anyone knew what was going on it was him. My father opened the door and the four of us headed down the street with my mother lagging behind, hatchet still in hand. Other people were beginning to walk outside of their houses as well. Some carried wooden bats others were armed with sharp kitchen knives. The whole scene looked like something out of Frankenstein.

When we arrived outside of Mr. Lakeâ€™s house I noticed that all the curtains and blinds were closed. Not a single light was on and the front yard looked like it had been neglected for months. I thought maybe he had gone on vacation. We all walked up to the door and without a warning my father kicked it open. There, at the other end of the house, I saw Richard and his son who was around my age trying desperately to pry open the back door. My father broke into a sprint and spear tackled him to the ground.

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“ Jim, what are you doing? You know me Jim. You don’t have to do this. Get control over yourself. We practically grew up together. This is utter nonsense. You’ve been manipulated, brainwashed. Oh please just snap out of it,” begged Mr. Lake. His son began to cry uncontrollably as Ricky grabbed him from the back and put him in a firm head lock.

“ I’m sorry Jim but you’re on the list. It’s our duty. You must understand. You chose to go down this path and now you must pay for your decision.”

“ Just at least let him go, Jim! He’s done nothing wrong. He still has the innocence of a child.”

“ I’m sorry I can’t do that, look at the list. You have already infected him. Incurable damage has been done to this boy’s decision making processes. No good can ever overcome the evil that has been instilled in this boy’s soul.” My father put the phonebook to his face.

Next to Richard Lake’s name was the word “ GENETICS” in all caps. Richard cried out in pain, like a mortally wounded antelope who understood that the lion had defeated him. Out of nowhere my mother let out a piercing squeal and violently swung her hatchet at Mr. Lake. She missed by a long shot and fell clumsily to the floor. She began laughing so hard I wondered if maybe she too was crying. Without a word Ricky released my father’s pistol from his possession. With one swift motion the man I had once known snatched the gun and with two rapid squeezes delivered a single bullet into both heads. The professor lay motionless on the ground as his child convulsed ferociously on the floor. Blood was pouring out of his broken skull onto the wooden ground on which he lay. I stood stationary in a stupefied pose staring at the blood spewing into my visibility. Ricky commandeered the hatchet from my mother’s hands and with all his might drove the rusted metal into the young boy’s skull reducing his face to something Picasso couldn’t even fathom. The echo caused from the crack bounced off the walls, bringing me to my knees.

“ Daddy what have you done. You killed them. You murdered them. Why? What did they do to you?” I was balling in a puddle of my own tears. The room became dizzy and my knees wobbled back and forth. I couldn’t clearly see my father but I could still perfectly hear his response.

“ Performing my duty to this country son. To protect and serve. To preserve the freedoms that the creators of this God fearing nation died for.” This wasn’t my dad. I didn’t know this man. It was some eccentric general rallying troops on the battlefield. I could see my mother in the corner of my eye rolling on the floor. Her face was covered in red and she was pointing at me, still smiling. I saw thick blood pouring out of her eyes, nose, and mouth. She was slowly losing her mind.

With a great grunt she began to lift herself onto her feet and limped to the front door knocking over flower vases and chairs. As she opened the door to the outside sun poured into the house illuminating the pond of fresh blood. I watched her sluggishly step down two concrete steps then collapse on a patch of dying brown grass. She began to seizure violently on the earth and I could hear her gasping for breath. I quickly wiped the tears from my swollen eyes and ran over to her side to see what had happened.

> “ Mother are you alright? Please Mom say something, anything!” Her eyes met mine and for a good minute we just gazed at each other. Then she leisurely opened her blood filled mouth and in a light whisper said “ Sam, I’m looking for the child rapists. Have you seen them? Come closer Sam.” I leaned my face in the direction of hers. Without notice she gripped my shoulders with remarkable strength and spit blood in my face. I screamed in horror crying out to anyone who might hear my desperate plea for help.

“ Why mom? Why are you doing this? Why?” At that moment I looked up and saw two soldiers standing at my side, staring at my mother rolling on the ground.

“ Your mothers a little sick, but she’ll be alright,” said one of the soldiers in a soothing voice.

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“What’s wrong with her, please tell me what’s wrong with her.” I pleaded.

“Complications, son, it’s happening to a lot of people. Don’t worry your mother isn’t the only one. We’re going to need to take her with us so we can help her. In the morning we’re going to send her back to you good as new. Yup she’ll be all better in the morning.” The soldier had a sense of sincerity to his voice but I didn’t trust him. The man who was doing the speaking had a thick accent. He didn’t even look American. Their outfits didn’t match the traditional military apparel I had been raised seeing. I wiped my mother’s blood off my face and stepped out of their way. They lifted her up and she began to kick, scream, and groan. I tried to remove my eyes from the terrible mess set before me. When I finally did I caught sight of my Father and Ricky. I could see them through the open door of the house digging a hole in the backyard. The two soldiers slowly made their way to a mid-sized steel truck and one opened the back door. I could see about half a dozen people stuffed in the back, some appeared more alive than others. They tossed my mother into the truck like she was a stack of hay. Before they bolted the door shut I saw her beginning to fiercely strike an unconscious woman in the face. It was all too inhuman. The soldiers quickly entered the vehicle and began to drive before I even got the time to say “wait.”

I wasn’t crying anymore. My eyes were dry and burned terribly. My head throbbed and sharp shooting pains attacked my back. I felt like I was going to collapse dead on the ground when I noticed a phonebook nearby. I walked over, picked it up and flipped to the first page and began reading.

### A MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

There are two types of people in this world. Good and Evil. Good people exist for the sole purpose of serving their neighbor, country, and family. They are always willing to sacrifice in times of dire need and never want more than what is absolutely necessary. In contrast the evil exist for the sole purpose of exploitation. Evil people are incapable of feeling any sort of remorse for the wrongs they’ve committed against society. Evil only looks out for itself and will do anything to prosper. However within evil there are two breeds. The breed that acknowledges itself and that which doesn’t. The form of evil that isn’t aware of its own darkness poses the greatest threat to the modern pillars of society. Surprisingly this type of person is often marked by immense intelligence, good leadership skills, and a subconscious need to dominate. This individual may come in the form of a journalist, scientist, the leader of a peace march, a corporate executive, a professor, or simply the computer guru down the street. The common characteristic that this evil shares is the urge to bring about a radical change. One that is so sinister and barbaric that modern science can’t place a name to it. The evil often preaches about vast government and corporate conspiracies to enslave the nation. Of global cover-ups and ultra-secretive government programs. They fill the minds of innocent men, woman, and children with fairytales of obscurity in order to govern their minds. They spread fear across the lands like a virus with an end game of infecting the entire populace. This type of vile being will have you believe that they want to fight by your side to stop greed when really they want to use you to gain power. If this evil goes unstoppable it will surely mean the collapse of today’s technological society. It will be a reversion back to the dark ages of tyranny, uncertainty, and chaos. It is our duty as the Good of the world to destroy this diabolical evil before it destroys us.”

-GOOD LUCK!

What this all meant was far beyond me. I skimmed through several dozen pages which contained the names and addresses of a few thousand people in and around the city. I looked for my own last name but couldn’t find it. I remembered seeing Mr. Lakes imprinted on the phonebook and assumed that those who found themselves listed would suffer the same fate as he. The thing I just couldn’t comprehend was how someone became listed as evil. Richard Lake was an honest man, a devout father, an acclaimed author, and played an active role in the community. Since his departure from the university he became deeply involved

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with several other prominent men that opposed certain U.S interests in Northern Africa. I once overheard a neighbor saying that if he could only be half the man Richard Lake was then he would consider himself a success. Yet this phonebook listed him as some evil monster that had to be eradicated from the planet. I dropped the book on the lifeless grass on which my mother had laid.

My father and Ricky were still hard at work digging. I noticed that several other men and woman came with shovels to help out. Every so often a military truck would drive down the block carrying odd looking men. They always stared at me when they passed. Some seemed to look confused when they saw me. It made me feel out of place.

I could now hear helicopters quickly approaching. Their motor blades generated the sound of rapid hearts beating against a microphone. When they got close enough I noticed that they were painted dark black and had odd equipment built onto bottom. I thought I saw naked women hanging on the sides but discounted the image as some type of stress-induced hallucination. When the helicopters were several hundred yards past me hideous female voices came howling out of whatever apparatus was attached. I was convinced my ears were going to bleed from the awful sound. Finally after about 30 seconds the sound ceased and I felt a feeling of relief. The feeling departed as quickly as it came. From the corner of my eye I saw my neighbor John Macphee running around the side of his house. He was closely followed by his two teenage daughters. It almost appeared as if they were playing a game of tag. The daughters were laughing joyfully. It seemed rather unusual that people would be frolicking around in the midst of such a chaotic hour. Out of nowhere a young man bashed a medium sized brick over Mr. Macphee's head bringing him to the ground. His daughters caught up and stood above their bleeding father. They both laughed and pointed at him as he rolled around. One of the girls took out a clear bottle and began dumping liquid onto her father. The other girl got into a silver sedan and drove right over the poor man going at a speed I estimated to be 20 miles per hour. She reversed over him several times before exiting the automobile. John Macphee was still alive. He slowly moved his right arm and his legs began to extend. I could see his mouth moving, trying to create words. I closed my eyes in disgust and when I reopened them Mr. Macphee was swallowed up by a blazing inferno. His skin began to boil and he jerked around like the dying ants I had killed earlier. His flesh began to melt and turned the color of bright pink. His daughters quietly departed like nothing had happened. A few moments later a military truck that was identical to the one that had picked up my mother drove up to the body. Three men got out, doused the flames and loaded the corpse into the back, then sped off.

Everyone in the world had gone mad. I was the last being of sanity floating around like some hopeless entity. There were dozens of people now in the streets walking in abnormal formations and going nowhere. Some were looking at the phonebooks while others just walked in circles or convulsed on the ground. A nasty feeling of anger came over me and I began punching a tree. I could no longer feel physical pain for I was emotionally dead. I felt like I no longer had anyone in my life to care for or to be loved by. I was charged with an unbearable sense of anger, sadness, and confusion. Then the sound. The roaring of the glorious flying fortresses. This time spraying beautiful contrails of red, white, and blue. I breathed in the odd smelling air with the remaining energy I had. I felt rejuvenated. I felt alive, full of vigor and adrenaline. The massive trees around me turned a vibrant shade of purple. It was as if someone had injected happiness directly into my heart. I felt like running a marathon or giving a stranger a hug. I ran to where my father was. When he saw me he scooped me into his arms, twirling me around while screaming like a blissful lunatic. I joined in the racket shedding tears of laughter.

âCome Sam, it's time to go to the parade,â said my father in a voice that tried to masquerade his exhilaration. We skipped together to the main street where hundreds of people had gathered. We started yelling and throwing our arms violently to the sky. I screamed and yelled. I loved my life. Strangers were embracing each other on the streets as the massive helicopters stared from above. I could hear the beautiful nude angels praising us. They sounded magnificent, like the finale of the most wondrous symphony. The crowd joined in faultless harmony chanting âGood has triumphed.â I howled out the mantra until my

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voice cracked and my throat dried. The world began to spin faster distorting the faces of military men who waved at us with their newly acquired masks.

I silenced my early morning alarm and darted out of bed. It was Sunday morning and the sun was already brighter than ever. I rushed into my parent's room to inquire my mother on what would be served on the breakfast menu. The room was empty. I walked to the kitchen and opened the door to the backyard. There I saw my father sitting on his rocking chair. He sat quietly like a motionless statue not even budging at my presence. His eyes didn't blink and it looked like he was staring off into space.

"Dad, where's mom," I asked. No response. Dad, do you know where mom is? Still not a response. I heard a brisk knock at the door and decided my mother must have been locked out. I hurried to the front entrance and opened the door. There before me was a handsome man, dressed in a fancy uniform holding a bouquet of flowers.

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