

CLOSET

by

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Chapter 1

“This seems like an interesting title for a book, ‘Secrets to Having a Life that Matters,’ I think I’ll pick it up.” John looked inside the book as he stood in the aisle of the local bookstore located in downtown area of Skunk Creek. The sound of snowmobiles could be heard over the sound of a shovel scrapping snow off the sidewalk in front as they made their way to the local tavern near the railroad tracks located a few blocks away.

“What book did you pick up now? It seems like the colder it gets the more you tend to read. You realize that we have a baby to consider now.” Megan made her way to John with Derek in a portable car seat all bundled up in his blue stocking cap with many warm blankets. His eyes went back and forth as he took in the stacks of books surrounding him. Megan stood on her toes as she attempted in vain to glance over the shoulder of her husband with her shoulder length blonde hair brushing against her husband’s neck. “So, who wrote the book? Is it written by someone you read before?”

“Actually I never heard of the author or the publishing house, but the concept looks interesting. You know I could be spending our money on snowmobiles, beer and smokes, so in light of that I’m actually saving us money.”

“You should have gone into politics.” John could see Megan’s eyes roll upward as he turned to face her. She still had the baby in one hand and now placed the other on her hip.

“Did I ever tell you how attractive you look carrying Derek around like that?” John had a sparkle in his eye as he looked into the eyes of his wife. The sound of the snowmobiles had past and now there was only the scrapping of the shovel outside.

“Save it for later.” Megan’s eyes started to burn a hole in his soul, but just then Derek started to squirm in his portable car seat and Megan went to look down to see how their baby was doing. “We really need to start a budget. I’m sure getting a book once in awhile doesn’t seem like a big deal,

but eventually it adds up. Besides I don't know the author and it seems like it was written by someone in the area. The Wiccans are getting more and more popular around here. Not everything is worthwhile to read."

"You're right of course. I don't plan on getting any more books for awhile. Besides it's very cheap, I think we can manage it. Hopefully the weather will get warmer soon so I can get back to doing some mason work. It has been a long dry spell, but I'm sure things will only get better in a month." John went to pay for his book at the cashier with Megan and Derek along his side. Megan's hands were starting to get wet, her throat was dry and her heart seemed to beat louder as John laid down the money.

It was a short walk down the sidewalk now clear of snow and around the corner to the parking lot in back. The sun was out after the slight dusting the other night, but it added no warmth to the cold north wind that was blowing across a white landscape that seemed devoid of life with the exception of a few farmhouses out in the distance. The wind cut through the jeans that John and Megan were wearing, sending what felt like ice cubes going down flesh. They both walked in silence, yearning to get into the warm interior of their car. John made sure Megan made it to the car without slipping and then spent little time getting the car started and Derek strapped into his car seat in back.

As John looked over to Megan he noticed the look of someone who was just told she would spend the remainder of her life in prison. "Are you alright? I get the feeling that somehow something isn't right between us. When we took our marriage vows we became one and I can tell when something isn't right between us. Is it the book?" John had by this time made his way to the road and had both of his gloved hands on the steering wheel with a constant vigilance for deer as he made it out of the parking lot. Even in the downtown area there had been sightings.

"Ever since Valentine Day something just isn't right between us. We don't seem to be close anymore. I remember you use to do spontaneous things, but now it seems like we have fallen into a predictable routine. Don't get me wrong. I appreciate the flowers you gave me, but we really haven't spent any quality time together. I have been trying to do my best. I made a candle light dinner and let you grill out your steaks in the bitter cold. I have been doing what I thought best to show you how much I care, but nothing seems to affect you. I wonder if you caught the concept that you are actually

married now. We are not two single people living together, but rather we are one. Things you do impact me and the things I do should influence you in some way. For instance you have a son now. You have more blessings compared to many guys your age. In fact many would be envious of how God has blessed you.” Megan’s chest started to heave up and down with tears flowing down with nothing to stop the pouring. The tears were starting to get mixed with her newly applied makeup from the morning resulting in dark stains careening down her cheeks.

“Maybe it’s just the weather. All the cold and being inside has made me quite lethargic. Then being out of work since Thanksgiving hasn’t helped either. But better things are bound to happen. This book I think will help. I don’t think my life has really made an impact yet. I’m bound to get a break through somehow and somewhere. My chance will happen and when it does I will be back to the person you married last year.” John glanced over at his wife to see if his words made any kind of impression. He was only greeted with a blank stare of a tiger trapped in a corner.

“Don’t give me that. Stop blaming the weather for your depression and laziness and start fulfilling the role of father and husband in this family. Reading books is nice, but you have all the information locked up in your heart. What kind of impact did you want to have in life anyway? Is it not enough to have a son and a wife who will do anything for you? You are everything to me. Is that not enough? Sure money is tight, but God knows what we are going through. Is there something wrong with placing our trust in Him?” Megan’s chest started to heave up and down again and then her head went down to her knees. Her sobbing sounded like that of a mother who just lost her only child. This continued through the remainder of the drive and only stopped when Megan reached in back to unbuckle Derek from his child seat upon arrival home. No eye contact was made between John and Megan as they entered the house.

Derek was placed in his crib while John turned up the heat in the house and Megan started supper. The silence seemed to persist while Megan set the table. John cleaned up the fireplace then placed some logs in to supplement the furnace.

“You really should return the book tomorrow. I didn’t want to argue in the store, but you know we can’t afford it. Derek is more important and we need to make sure we have enough money to pay for his formula.” Megan

made her way to the living room where John was paging through the book. Her usual calm demeanor was replaced with piercing eyes that seemed to penetrate John's soul. John got up from the chair and started to pace the living room. All Megan could do was roll her eyes and get back to her cooking.

"I realize times are difficult, but perhaps this book can help me become the person I always wanted to be in life. Don't you want me to realize my potential in life? Don't you think God wants me to realize what I'm capable of doing?" All the sudden a pan dropped to the floor. The sound of socked feet on carpet could be heard as Megan made her way back to the chair where John was now sitting. Veins could be seen sticking out of Megan's neck and her right hand was formed in a tight fist. This gave way to an index finger pointed directly at John's heart.

"I ought to strike you for uttering such nonsense. Doesn't God satisfy? He should be everything we need in life because He is everything we have right now. What you have in your hand is sin and it will offer you something different from what God has already given, but there comes a time when you need to ask yourself if God is enough for you or do you need something more? If you want to realize your potential the best place to start is on your knees in prayer and not on some author giving some 'secret knowledge.' Don't you think that things are this way for a reason? Perhaps we need to start focusing on God more in our lives. For instance do we even know where the Bible is located in this house?"

John dared not look at Megan out of fear that she would start to accidentally spit in his face as she towered over him. Megan made her way back to the kitchen and picked up the pan she had dropped earlier. During the meal Megan and John ate in silence with the only sound being the occasional crying of Derek and the sound of the utensils rubbing upon the plates. Megan washed the dishes in silence and refused to acknowledge John's request to help dry. After Derek was given a bath he was put down in his crib for the night. Megan went to bed herself hoping to fall asleep before her husband made it to bed. After a few hours John made his way into the bedroom and spoke in hushed tones as he made his way to her side of the mattress. "I know I have to return this tomorrow, but I just need to find out what it says."

Megan didn't even stir as John made his way to the closet near the kitchen where the coats were hung. Right now with only two coats to move

there was plenty of room to read a book. As John started to look through the opening pages with a flashlight all seemed rather innocent, but was it true that death is neither friend nor foe and what did that have to do with achieving greatness in life? John was starting to feel something tugging from within him. The next section mentioned how everything was god and he needed to be the god of his own life. The author wrote down a phrase that needed to be repeated six times and after each phrase a candle was to be lit and placed in a particular pattern. John went though the house looking for candles so he could complete the ceremony.

John had no idea what he was saying, but after the first phrase and the first candle John could hear the wind wiping the branches near the kitchen window. Soon the second candle was lit and the wind seem to pick up outside. With the third candle a cold breath could be felt blowing down John's neck. Once the cold hit John twisted himself around, but in the dark nothing could be seen. John's heart was now beating faster and his throat was dry and his shaking palms were wet. With a quivering voice John repeated the phrase and lit the remaining candles. At first there was quiet, but then there was a voice that seemed to be located on the other side of the wall where the coats were pushed to one side. The voice grew louder as if attempting to get John to move within the wall beyond the closet. John started to shiver again as what felt like a north wind crept in. The drywall near the coats started to produce a blue haze and a pair of translucent arms dripping with ectoplasm was now emerging from the wall, making their way towards John. Beads of sweat were now forming on John's forehead despite the cold environment and his knees were shaking. John dropped the book on the floor and stared in unbelief with eyes as wide as saucers as the arms made their way to John's throat. A voice that only John could hear was beckoning him to stay in one place while all his nerves were telling him to run. As the hands made their way on John's throat he let out a scream that caused Derek to cry and Megan to wake up. Without a second thought for her own safety or well being, Megan ran to where she heard the scream. The hands now were around John's throat and pressing hard so that John could no longer breathe. Megan opened up the closet and tried to get the fingers pried off the neck of her husband, but the creature from within the wall was not about to give up its victim. Then a thought came to Megan to find a Bible and read Scripture, hoping that this would cause the creature to let go. Megan ran through the house in a

desperate search for any book that looked thick enough to be what she was looking for. Then out of the corner of her eye on the top shelf she noticed something. Megan knew she would not be able to get it in time, so she ran back to her husband who was now turning a dull shade of blue. “In the name of Jesus, be gone from this house,” shouted Megan with boldness and authority as she again tried to pry off the creature from her husband.

“Jesus I know, but do you know him? I have my prize, now I want you.”

As the body of John slumped to the floor, Megan turned pale and she started to shake from head to foot. The translucent arms made their way towards Megan, but when they were just about to touch her she fell to the floor like a rock and rolled to the kitchen area. The arms could be seen retracting back into the closet. Once back in Megan ran to close the closet door and went to see if Derek was alright. Once satisfied with Derek’s condition, Megan wasted no time in packing some clothes for herself and her son. The foul stretch of burned flesh started to fill the house and Megan was getting sick from the smell. No one dared to touch the corpse on the floor out of fear that whatever killed John would now come after them. As Megan and Derek made their way to the front of the house they were met by two figures. One seemed to be dressed in black and the other looked like a shadow. Both blocked the door and with careful, but deliberate steps made their way towards Megan. Megan took Derek in her arms and through smoke found her way to the back of the house. She reached down to open the door but it was locked. The two figures were now only within Megan’s range of sight. The shadow seemed to have what looked like a machete. Megan fumbled around with a shaking right hand to undo the lock in the midst of a racing heart. The shadow with the machete raced toward the door. The knife was hurled through the air, hitting the door just as Megan and Derek escaped from the house. Megan sprinted towards the car and as they started to leave there was the same shadow figure, but in the headlights it was clear that its face was covered with burnt marks along with two huge eyes. It came toward the car and threw another long knife at the windshield causing it to crack. Megan cranked the steering wheel hard to the right to avoid the burnt creature and made it the road where she proceeded to create as much distance as possible.