Chapter 1: What do you know about being a Psychopath?

“Do I have any stories about what it’s like to conduct a forensic interview with a diagnosable psychopath?”

I repeated the question asked by one of my inquisitive students in class. A thoughtful smile played on my face as I remembered my long and intense career of interviewing those referred to me for forensic evaluations.

“Well, something like that would take quite a bit of our class time to tell.”

I glanced around the room only to be greeted with looks of disappointment. These undergraduate forensic psychology students obviously didn’t care if I wasted an entire class period ranting about a time I interviewed a psychopath. I mean, they were interested and I supposed that that was the main reason most of those students were there in my forensic classes anyway—they wanted to learn about the media popular psychopath.

I suppose I was feeling particularly generous and decided, “What harm could it do to indulge the student’s request?” In my mind, the story I was about to tell would weed out the men from the boys, as the old saying goes. Every year I get students coming into my class expecting a fabulous job (as portrayed by the media) when in fact, being a Forensic Psychologist is rather boring most days. On a rare occasion, I’ll get a real wacko. However, on this one particular case, I was assigned to the most monstrous human being I’d ever met in my life—and probably ever will meet.

I guess telling the story would deter the weak of heart from Forensic Psychology, which I suppose is a part of my job as a college professor teaching Forensic Psychology. Forensic
Psychology is no walk in the park and these kids needed to be warned of the possibility that you could have to confront real intraspecies predators like the psychopath in the story I was about to relay. However, before I began my story, I had to inform the students what it meant to be a clinically diagnosable psychopath—not what the shows they watched on television portrayed a psychopath to be.

“Alright then. But you’re going to get a little lesson about what it really means to have Psychopathy first. It is not what the media today portrays it to be. We’ll go into a deeper discussion of it in the actual Psychopathy chapter; but for now, I want to give you a basic understanding, because it is of such utter importance to know at this very second.”

I glanced around the room, looking at the smirking faces staring at me with eagerness, and grinned.

“Psychopathy, as we use it today, isn’t a stand-alone diagnosis. It is diagnosed as a very specific form of Antisocial Personality Disorder. ASPD is typically diagnosed in individuals who consistently commit criminal acts, behave irresponsibly and have an overall disregard for authority or the law. Psychopaths take these symptoms to a new level. In 1941, a man by the name of Hervey Cleckley published a book named _Mask of Sanity_. In this book, he described what he believed to be a true Psychopath. Some of the additional criteria included superficial charm and good intelligence, insincerity, lack of remorse, antisocial tendencies, incapacity for love, and a poor affect. Not only do Psychopaths possess all of these qualities, but they also possess physiological deficits in the brain. They have reduced fear and anxiety activation in the associated brain centers, such as the Amygdala. They also have more activation in the occipital lobes, or the vision centers, as opposed to the frontal lobe. What does this mean? Well, it means that they see information such as facial expressions, the affect, of another person without
problems, but that is as far as it goes. They cannot process facial expressions the way that we can. They cannot physiologically comprehend fear or anxiety, among many other emotions you and I easily can comprehend. Their prefrontal cortex, the decision-making center of the brain, is significantly smaller in size than a non-Psychopath’s. All of these abnormalities, plus others I haven’t mentioned, make judging a Psychopath in court very hard. We hear every day that Psychopaths are evil and heartless creatures and that they deserve to be put on death row regardless of what criminal act they have done. While yes, they are typically heartless and cold, the true question is: can they help it? The answer, as I see it, is ‘no’. That is why I find it difficult to view Psychopaths in such a simplistically negative way. Psychopaths have the inability to feel love and empathy just like an anxious person has the inability to see reason and have comfort in day to day life. Psychopathy is characterized by not only cognitive malfunctions, but by physiological ones as well. We would not say to an anxious person, ‘Stop being so anxious. You’re so annoying. What you’re feeling isn’t real.’ No, what they are feeling is real. Their physiological functions are in a state of disorder and they cannot help the way that they feel. They are sick people who need our love and compassion regardless of their illness. Same goes for Psychopaths, in my opinion. They are sick people who truly cannot help the way they behave and deserve sympathy just the same as any other person—even if we think they are ‘evil.’"

The entirety of my class looked at me as if I was insane. However, as I stood there in silence, I could see a select few students having a lightbulb moment and was I extraordinarily pleased.

“I’ll get off my soap box now.” I laughed. “With all that being said, I think I can begin the retelling of my experience interviewing a real Psychopath.”

Ooo’s and ahh’s swept through the crowd sarcastically.
“Oh, shut up. You know you’re jealous.” I replied, rolling my eyes and smiling.

Chapter 2: Getting Some Information

“What’s his name?” I asked the attorney who had contacted me about this particular case.

“Peter,” she said. “Peter Vetrov.”

“Russian?”

“Well, the heritage is there, sure. But he’s a Brooklyn native.”

“Alright. Well, what’s the story on this guy?”

The attorney laughed. “He’s definitely an interesting character. Has no remorse whatsoever—about anything.”

“What did he do?”

There was a lull in the conversation after I asked this question. The attorney finally spoke softly.

“He brutally tortured then murdered two men and a woman. He desecrated the woman’s corpse by raping her, then taking her brain and frying it up for dinner paired with a fine wine. It was horrible, Dr. Campbell. He’s the real life Hannibal Lecter—only worse in my opinion. He has no capacity for love and understanding. Even Hannibal could do that. I was appointed by the State to counsel him, only I don’t know how good of a job I can do because he proudly admits everything he did and doesn’t feel sorry for a lick of it. My only option at this point is to try for a sentence mitigation on the account of his mental state. That’s why I contacted you. I believe there is actually something wrong with him. Mentally. Healthy people don’t just go around
bashing people’s face in with a sledge hammer on a horrific medieval torture device and commit cannibalism and feel nothing emotionally besides, ‘Oh, what a wonder dinner I’ve made!’”

I rubbed my temples. “Yes, I realize that, but you know if I don’t classify your client as having a legitimate psychological disorder, I’m obligated to stay true to that in my written report. You can ask a different psychologist to do another evaluation and report afterwards, but you’ll more than likely get the same general consensus that I give you. I’ll give you my professional, unbiased opinion on the matter.”

“From what I’ve heard, you are very good at helping win cases like these. The best around, some say. I trust your opinion; but if you can’t help me, this very sick man will fry. He needs to be understood, not killed.”

“What have been the court proceedings thus far?” I asked.

“Just because of the nature of the crimes, a competency trial was held in the beginning. But of course, he was able to correctly answer the questions we typically ask in this situation. He’s not an ignorant man; he’s exceptionally smart. The trial came and went with hardly any components brought to the attention of the court that could prove his innocence. I mean, come on. He proudly exclaims he did it from the roof tops, his finger prints are all over the crime scene, and there are multiple eye-witnesses that saw him leaving a bar with all three of the victims the night they were killed. He’s obviously guilty. My only conscience problem is the fact that he couldn’t help but do it. It’s just the way he is. Guilt has been determined, so there is nothing I can do to help him there. But, the sentencing trial is going to be coming up soon and I can’t let the prosecution take his life, which I know they are going to try to do. That’s why I ask you to come into this matter—to help me uncover some mitigating mental health factor that may lessen this otherwise
inevitable sentencing. For the safety of the community, I don’t ask of the court for anything so dramatic as a lessening of jail time. He can never be set free. He’s told me time and time again he’d kill someone without a second thought about it if they’d only leave him unguarded for five minutes. I just won’t be able to sleep at night knowing, if they kill him, that I could have done something to save a very mentally ill man.”

“I’ll see what I can do.” I said quite plainly.

I mean, what else could I say? Especially after all that? What was I getting myself into? This sounded like a very high profile case, and a very gruesome one at that. I had been doing quite well as a Forensic Psychologist thus far and I didn’t want this big of a stain (if it turned ugly) so early in my career. Then again, if I helped Peter get off death row (if he was indeed mentally ill), my reputation would be pretty much secured forever with the contents of the case being what they were. Because it was such a big decision to make, I told the attorney to send me her paperwork regarding Peter and I’d look over it and decide whether or not I wanted to get involved. As you all know, I decided to take on this monster of a case or I wouldn’t be telling this story now.

From what Peter’s attorney had written in her case notes, Peter Vetrov sounded extremely Antisocial. Possibly Psychopathic. Of course, I couldn’t be sure until I met him face to face. As you can figure, I decided after I met him that he was in fact highly Psychopathic. Cases like these become sticky situations because psychopaths do score highly on the repeat offenders list (as one might imagine). This being a situation in which a psychopath kills someone and gets off with a minimum sentence wasn’t going to fly. Instead, what we were pushing for was (at least for murders like in this case) lifetime imprisonment but with no parole and no option for death row.
If it were any other mental illness, I’d say hospitalization and therapy. Unfortunately, there isn’t a cure for psychopathy because the Psychopath’s brain does not comprehend the necessary emotions to regain human compassion that therapy and hospitalization could give. Besides, this man needed the constant and strict supervision that a prison would give. I couldn’t risk putting him in a hospital environment where he could more easily hurt someone.

Chapter 3: Interview with the Psychopath

It was a Thursday. I had been studying Peter’s case file for a little over a week to prepare myself for the forensic interview. Throughout this week, I was having frequent conversations with the attorney—asking about Peter and the contents of the case just so I was sure of the facts before I met him so he could not confuse me if he decided to lie about anything (as Psychopaths are notorious for doing). I also did my own research. I studied the gruesome case photos intently, familiarizing myself with Peter’s world. I went to libraries and internet databases searching for any news stories done on the case to enlighten myself with not only the official police report, but also what the public knew about the case. I wanted every objective angle I could get my hands on. Also during this time, I set up phone interviews with Peter’s former bosses, roommates, lovers, and even his imprisoned father. This was useful because I could get an idea of how Peter behaved while not in a clinical interview, as many individuals I had previously interviewed for different cases tried to make themselves seem like better (or worse) people than they really were.

I arrived at the state prison Peter was housed in at promptly nine a.m. It was going to be a very long and emotionally draining day. I walked inside and after I told the desk worker what I was there for, I was directed to a broom closet of a room that only contained a table, two chairs (one of which was equipped with shackles attached to the floor), and a dim overhead light. Peter was
already seated and bolted by his hands and feet to the lock on the floor. As I walked in, Peter—seated facing opposite the door—stood up to the best of his ability.

Of course, I had (in the case file) been given the official mugshot of Peter. However, the small picture I was given was in no way able to prepare me for the actuality that was Peter Vetrov.

When I saw him in the flesh, everything I’d read about him finally sank into my head. He wasn’t some fictional monster such as you might read about in books. He was a real person who had done very real and horrific things—and he was just on the other side of this small room.

He was well over six feet tall—6’8”, in fact. He had a very attractive and masculine face, with a strong, square jawline, and thick black brows that sat above pale green eyes. I could tell his build was very fit (even though his orange jumpsuit was quite baggy on him) and he had thick, wavy, black hair that cascaded down to the middle of his back. I’d almost call his looks otherworldly as it seemed everything about him physically was damn near perfect and symmetrical. He definitely wasn’t what was in my mind’s eye as to what a murderous psychopath should look like. He should’ve looked ugly, wild and rugged, not like this. Anything but this, really. But, here he was—Peter Vetrov, the murder, the torturer, the rapist, the cannibal. All that, and seemingly stone cold about it. I motioned him to sit, which he did, and then I slowly (almost cautiously) took my own seat across from him. He was the first to speak.

“Why, hello doctor. How are you this fine morning? I say fine, but alas, it could be an ugly-assassin day and I’d never know. As you could probably guess, I don’t get out much.” He grinned impishly.

His voice was very deep, husky, with a strong Brooklyn accent.
“Hello, Peter. I’m just fine, thank you for asking. My name is Dr. Campbell, by the way. I am a licensed Clinical Psychologist, sent here by your attorney to evaluate you. But how about you? How are you doing?” I asked almost mechanically, attempting to establish rapport as I spread out my paper work and note pads on the table between us.

“Oh, I can’t complain,” he said, smiling. “At least for someone in my…” He looked up as if searching for the right word. “…condition.”

“Your condition?”

“Incarcerated, doctor. Incarcerated.”

I glanced at Peter’s hands, crossed over his broad chest. They were enormous. Monstrous. Definitely capable of murder. I suddenly felt a stab of fear in my gut. I couldn’t show how I felt on the outside as that would have shown him I viewed him as a superior to me, which would have been detrimental to the interviewing process. I swallowed my fear to the best of my capability and continued.

“Shall we get started then?”

Peter leaned back in his chair and with a condescending smile, he said the single word, “Shoot.”

And we began.

“Alright Peter. First, let’s get some housekeeping things out of the way. Do you know why I’m here?”

“Why, you’re here to see if I’m crazy, doc.”

I rubbed my face and shook my head. What had his attorney told him exactly?
“No, I’m here to assess your psychological wellbeing before, during, and after the offenses. Do you understand?”

“Of course, doc.”

“Alright, Peter. With that being said, I’m not here to be your therapist, to tell all of your internal struggles to. You are to tell me the facts of your case and nothing more.”

“Harsh.”

I narrowed my eyes towards him, to which he threw up his hands in defeat.

“My apologies, doctor.” He grinned. I continued.

“Your responses will obviously not be private. As an incarcerated individual, you have no rights here to confidentiality. This means—“

“This means that you’re gonna tell every little dirty detail of my conversation pieces to the feds. Isn’t that right?” Peter said with a cocky grin.

“If you want to put it that way, sure Peter. That’s exactly what that means. I also want to alert you that I must record our session together so I may review it later.”

“Go ahead, doc. I’ve got nothing to hide. I’m an open book.” His smile brought back another stab of fear. I was suddenly grateful that there was a guard just outside the door.

I leaned forward and looked across my notes spread across the table in front of me and pressed the record button on the tape recorder I had placed in front of Peter. I began the tape by stating who I was, the location, the time, and the interviewee.

“State your name for the record.”
“Peter Thomas Vetrov.”

“Where are you from?”

“Brooklyn, New York.”

“How old are you, Peter?”

“I’m thirty-three years old. Born April 14th.”

“How tall are you?”

“Six feet, eight inches.”

“Are you religious?”

“Oh, I’m what you’d call your typical Hypochristian.”

I couldn’t help but laugh. He was very charismatic and well versed in diction. I continued.

“Have you or a family member ever been diagnosed with a mental disorder? If yes, say who and what the disorder was.”

“Mom was an undiagnosed, violent Schizo. Dad was just an asshole. I don’t think that is necessarily a mental disorder though.”

“You’d be surprised. What about you? Any symptoms?”

“I’ve never been assessed. Professionally, anyway. Never thought I needed to. I’m as healthy as a horse.”

“What do you mean you’ve never been assessed ‘professionally anyway?’”
“Well, plenty of girlfriends have called me an ‘insensitive narcissistic bastard.’ I wouldn’t necessarily call them professionals in diagnosing someone though. Like father like son, as they say. I guess you could call me single at the moment.”

“That was my next question.”

Peter laughed. “Maybe I’m psychic?”

“You think so?” I smirked. “How long would you say these relationships lasted?”

Peter rolled his eyes. “Too long. I typically like to—‘ He made a popping sound with his mouth and jerked his thumb, “—and go. If you catch my drift. Women are nothing but toys to me. And I play with them like toys—only playing with them until the next best thing or newer model comes along.”

“Really now?”

“Of course. Although, I’m sure you’re different than all those uneducated whores. You’re a doctor after all. So there’s nothing to be jealous of, dear. You could have anybody or anything you could ever want.” He said, never breaking eye contact.

He was being exceptionally charismatic. All my years of training in graduate school could not prepare me to be face to face with someone like Peter. It took everything in me not to go along with his games, even though I knew he was bullshitting me.

“Refer to me as Dr. Campbell, please. What ethnicity do you identify as?”

Peter laughed. “Straight to the point. As if that wasn’t obvious enough.”

“Please just answer the question.”

“This is the last of the demographic questioning. Can you tell me what you are charged with?”

Peter raised his hand in the air, palm facing him and made bullet points with his other hand’s index finger as he recited his charges like a child reciting his ABC’s.

“Murder: 1st degree. One count. Murder 2nd degree. Two counts. Rape: 1st degree. One count. Desecration of a human corpse. Three counts. Battery of a Police Officer. Two counts. Resisting Arrest….there could be more I’m forgetting.” He said with a smile, like a child showing off to his parents that he can ride a bike without hanging on to the handle bars—“Look, Ma! No hands!”

“No, that about covers it.” I said, trying to hide my disgust. “Before we talk about the offenses, let us talk a bit about your childhood, if you don’t mind. What was it like?”

Peter crossed his arms again and looked up at the fly that was buzzing around the dingy yellow light overhead. “Well, I was the only son of a wealthy banker. My father, Thomas, was a very stingy man and didn’t pay for a sitter for me so I was left alone in a big house most of the time.”

“What about your mother?”

“Like I said, Mother dear, Anna, was a Schizo. She wasn’t there mentally. She was all the time hitting me, calling me evil, the child of Lucifer—those sorts of normal things. Swore she saw horns growing out of my forehead. Heard demons whispering to her at night. She was bat-shit crazy, Mom was.” Peter said matter-of-factly. “Got on my every last nerve. I was so happy when Dad finally killed her. He hit her all the time so I didn’t think anything of it when I heard her screaming. It was only when he left for work and I came in to the kitchen that I saw her lying
there all bloodied up. Being the little rambunctious scamp I was, I laughed and laughed and
laughed as I kicked and spat on her. My spineless coward of a father finally worked up the
courage to kill the bitch. I was overjoyed!”

“Did you love your Dad?”

Peter sighed. “No. Can’t say I did. More like he was a gateway drug I used to shape the way I am
today. Although, he was stupid, my Dad. He got caught.”

“So did you.”

Peter threw back his head and laughed. “Yeah, I guess I did. Like father, like son, as I said
before.”

“What happened then?”

“After Dad went to prison, I got sent to multiple foster homes.”

“Multiple?”

“Yeah, none of them seemed to like me much. Mom must’ve came down from heaven and
whispered in their ears about what a demon I was.” He grinned. “I suppose she was right. I never
liked them anyway. I killed every pet I was given and was always starting fights at home and
school.”

“How were you in school?”

“I wasn’t the teacher’s pet for sure, but I made straight A’s in everything I did. In college too.”

“What did you major in?”

“Physics.”
“Impressive. Did you ever do anything with your degree?”

“No. Everyone treated me like I was inferior and useless. So, I quit every job I had having to do with it.”

“You felt inferior and useless?”

“Well, not necessarily. Rather, I got that impression from the others. I knew I was superior in every way.”

“I see. What did you do before you were incarcerated?”

A pause. “I was in between jobs.”

“Alright then. Tell me more about your foster families.”

“Well, the last Brady Bunch of a foster family was a real doozy. How they ever got to be foster parents is beyond me. Drug addicts. Both of ‘em. Felt like 20 something kids. Welfare checks out the ass. The place was a complete shithole. The man of the house was gone all the time probably knocking up any hole he could get a piece of while the mom at home was screwing around with me. I was a teenager at the time. Wasn’t the best pussy I’ve ever got but it was something. I have a real big sexual appetite, doctor, and when she wouldn’t willingly fill it, I took it. She never told ‘cause I threatened to kill her. Hell, I knew how to do it after all the practice on pets I’d gotten and she knew it to. Half of the time, she didn’t even care. She was so doped up on heroin, she’d just lay there unresponsive and take it. What a trooper. I loved to see her scared though—she often was when I was around and she wasn’t drugged out of her god-damned mind. When I turned eighteen though, I flew the coop and got my own place.”

There was a lull in the conversation as I processed all I was told.
“That’s some childhood.”

“You’re telling me.” He said. “As Horace said: Seize the day.”

“You enjoy literature?”

“Yes,” he said almost cheerfully. “Especially the classics. I’ve always been interested in the ‘good old days.’ Medieval times and all that jazz. Dad had a library filled with information about that era and I was fascinated with it—especially punishment and the torture devices.”

“The wheel.” I said plainly. I had read in Peter’s attorney’s notes that he had used the Medieval torture device, the Breaking Wheel, as a means of torturing and killing his pre-meditated victim.

Peter laughed joyfully. “Yes, the wheel. My Catherine Wheel. Do you know why they call it that, doc?”

“No, can’t say that I can.”

“Saint Catherine of Alexandria was condemned to be killed on the Breaking Wheel for worship of Christianity in a pagan time by Emperor Maxentius. Every attempt to kill her by means of torture failed. The second to last attempt to kill her was by way of a spiked Breaking Wheel. As soon as she touched it, the wheel broke. She was eventually beheaded for her crimes. Can’t really go wrong with that one, can you Maxy?” He laughed.

“You definitely know your history.”

“It sorts the intelligent from the lesser half, I say.”

“Tell me about the days leading up to the murders.”
“Alright, doc. I see you’re getting antsy. Well, it was all planned out, you see. Ever since I began killing the neighborhood animals back when I was a teenager, I couldn’t help but want something more, shall we say, challenging? I didn’t want to get caught, of course, so I just stalked a night club for a couple weeks determining who were the regulars and who was just a single nighter. I wanted to choose some poor bloke who had just stumbled randomly into the bar that night—someone who wasn’t a regular so no one would miss him if he were to go away for a while. I made my choice one night on a lone, homeless looking man. I figured I was going to do him a favor, in a way. I like to play God like that, you know. I figure the Man upstairs, if he exists, is bogged down with killing kids with cancer and all that shit and not the homeless that plague the streets. I just took it into my own hands. Clearing out the scum of the earth, one hobo at a time.”

I snorted and arched an eyebrow, but Peter never lost a beat.

“Anyway, I knew I wanted to use Medieval torture as a means of killing but I just couldn’t pick which one. Between you and me, I only chose the Catherine Wheel out of ease of access. Hard to buy an Iron Maiden or large spiked cage, easy to pick up an old wooden wagon wheel. Well, I found myself a wheel easy enough and rigged it up in the basement of this old rickety colonial house I bought real cheap from some old man who couldn’t afford it anymore on his fixed income. So, I befriended this homeless looking guy in the club, and got him as drunk as humanly possible before I suggested we go back to my place. Gave him that sense of false security, you know? What I didn’t intend was for this girl to fall head over heels for me despite having a boyfriend there with her. Who could blame her though? I’m not one to pick and choose and I needed a good screwing, so I boozed them up too and brought them along. Once we got back to my house, I locked the young couple up in my bedroom (they were passed out so they couldn’t
protest) and then proceeded to drag my old pal downstairs to my set. While he wasn’t paying attention, I grabbed a bottle of Chloroform I’d bought online and doused a rag with it. Isn’t that amazing? How sadistic is it that you can purchase a bottle of Chloroform on the internet for any Joe Blow to buy and use as he chooses? You can guess what I did from there. After he was knocked out, I tied him up on my Catherine Wheel and went upstairs to wait on him to wake up. I wanted him to be conscious when I killed him. Otherwise, it would’ve been no fun, you see. In the meantime, I walked into my kitchen, picked up a butcher’s knife, and walked back into my bedroom were the young couple was passed out. I knew they weren’t going to make it out alive right then and there. I was in too big of a murderous mood, you know? So, to just pass the time, I quietly snuck up to the man who was laying on my bed and sliced his neck open! His blood sprayed all over my face like warm summertime water coming out of a garden hose. I quickly covered his mouth with my hands in an attempt to keep him quiet while I continuously stabbed him in the abdomen. I loved the fear in his eyes. It was reminiscent of the fear my mother had in her eyes when I found her lying dead in the kitchen. Once his struggling stopped, I released him. I placed my hands in the pool of blood that had collected on the bed and slowly put my stained hands on my face and neck. It felt so cool and soft almost. I rubbed my hands together, just enjoying myself for approximately fifteen minutes when I heard a scream come from downstairs. My time had come.

“I practically flew down the steps to the basement. I was greeted with the man on my wheel screaming in fear and pulling on the ropes I had used to tie him down with. I stared at him with the same fascination that a child has with a small insect, obviously in pain, under a magnifying glass. I walked slowly over to the corner of the basement and picked up this sledge hammer I’d bought on sale at a hardware store. The sight of the hammer made the man scream even louder. I
was grateful we were so far away from town because this man sure had a set of lungs!” Peter laughed and ran his fingers through his hair. “Anyway, I just couldn’t wait to get started. I started to spin the wheel as I begin to sing a German children’s song, bashing a limb at a time in between each sentence. ‘Ein Männlein steht im Walde ganz still und stumm.’ SMASH! Screaming! ‘Es hat von lauter Purpur ein Mäntlein um.’ SMASH! Even louder screaming. ‘Sagt, wer mag das Männlein sein,’ SMASH! ‘Das da steht im Wald allein,’ SMASH! He was crying, begging for mercy. ‘Mit dem pupurroten Mäntelein!’ SMASH! Finally, the Coup de Grâce to the face. There he lay, a mangled and bloody mess. A perfectly beautiful sight, to be honest. A piece of modern art. I was so proud of myself and had had such a wonderful time, I was already planning for the next murderous routine I was going to have as soon as all my current occupants were off to join the bleeding choir invisible. I was covered from head to toe in blood by that point in time. I couldn’t help myself from continuing to smash his brains in with the hammer until he was laying there just a bloody pulp. I have a slight problem in restraining myself, you know.

“My testosterone was soaring! Suddenly, I remembered that I had a very sexy girl sprawled out in her boyfriend’s blood in my bed upstairs just ready for me to take her. And take her I did, doctor. I stripped her and fucked her over and over and over again. She screamed and fought and clawed at me, but that only made me want her more. I grabbed the knife I had used to kill her boyfriend and started to slash at her as I thrust into her. It was the best day of my life, honestly. I picked her up and started throwing her limp body against every wall in my room. Her skull eventually caved in and I saw her delicate brain beginning to protrude. It was then that I suddenly realized I was feeling a bit peckish, doc. Looking at her like a ravenous animal, I thought to myself how wonderful she must taste. After all, various animals such as cats, rodents,
a variety of aquatic and insect life, and polar bears eat their own. Why not me? I picked her up and carried her into my kitchen. I took what I could grab out of her skull and threw it into a frying pan with some Italian spices. The smell it emitted was incredible, let me tell you. I’ve never been much of a cook, but what I made for my dinner that night was fit for royalty. Unfortunately, the girl I had taken was quite popular. Friends of hers had seen her and her boyfriend leave with me. I was too excited and got careless. Police found me trying to burn the bodies. I bit a police officer trying to arrest me and fist fought with another. No one wants to go to jail. So that’s how I’m here.”

“That’s quite a story.”

“Yes, well, I’m quite the guy.” Peter smiled.

“I can tell. Would you say that you’d do all this over again if you knew you’d still get caught?”

“Oh, of course. I had a blast.”

“And did you know, Peter, at the time, that what you were doing was morally wrong and illegal?”

“Yes, I did. And like I said, I’d do it again.”

“Well, Pete, I want to thank you for telling me your side of things. I’ll be back later this week to ask some more questions. But for today, the only thing left for us to do is for you to take these tests I have here and I’ll be on my way. They are pretty long tests so get comfortable and take your time. Answer truthfully. I’ll be here if you have any questions. We’ll be meeting a couple times this month just so I don’t miss anything on my report.”
The two tests I gave him were the MMPI and the PCL-R. The MMPI was to assess his psychopathology and the PCL-R for obvious reasons. The PCL-R stands for Psychopathy Checklist-Revised. He scored positive for Psychopathy, imagine that? He scored a 36 out of 40, with a score of 30 indicating Psychopathy. After I found that he scored positive, I told his attorney that I wanted an MRI done on him in order to assess his brain structures to be absolutely certain he did have Psychopathy and not just ASPD. Indeed, the brain structures involved in fear and decision making were smaller than normal, further supporting my suggestion to give him the leniency on his sentence on the basis that he suffers from a legitimate psychological and physiological disorder, Psychopathy. What I haven’t told you is that this is an ongoing case. I haven’t heard the outcome of it. I’ll read to you what I had to say in my case report to the court.

For those of you still wanting to become Forensic Psychologists, this is the type of work to be expected of you so pay close attention to how I word everything and what my topics of choice are. After I finish reading it, you may be dismissed. I also am obliged to tell you, I changed all names and personal information in my retelling so don’t go looking a ‘Peter Vetrov’ up on Google. Also, remember that what I’m about to read isn’t the full extent of what was written—so just as a forewarning, there is much more writing involved than what I’ll read.” I heard groans from the classroom. I excused myself to fetch a copy of my report from my office and returned to the classroom.

Chapter 4: The Forensic Evaluation

“Peter Vetrov is a thirty-three year old, single Russian-American male who was referred by his counsel for a Sentence Mitigation evaluation. Mr. Vetrov is charged with one count of Murder in the 1st degree, two counts of Murder in the 2nd degree, one count of Rape in the 1st degree, three
counts of Desecration of a human corpse, two counts of Battery of a Police Officer and Resisting Arrest.

Mr. Vetrov was interviewed in the Indiana State Prison in Michigan City, Indiana. Mr. Vetrov was interviewed for one hour and ten minutes on September 19th, 2013. He was administered, in addition to a general interview, the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory as well as the Psychopathy Checklist-Revised.

Mr. Vetrov was told that his time there would not be kept confidential between the two of us and he verbally stated he understood this. Records of the interview and test were given to Mr. Vetrov’s attorney, Ms. Sparks.

**Social History**

Mr. Vetrov was born in Brooklyn, New York on April 14th, 1980. His father, Thomas Vetrov, battered and killed Peter’s mother when Peter was 11 years old. Peter, an only child, found his dead mother in the kitchen of their Brooklyn home. Mr. Vetrov claimed that his mother, Anna Vetrov, had Schizophrenia as she frequently had delusions and hallucinations of both the auditory and visual type. However, this is not clinically documented and only self-reported. His father, Thomas Vetrov, has had no self-reported or clinically diagnosed mental illness. After his father committed murder, Peter was sent to live in foster homes until he was eighteen. He claimed he moved foster homes frequently because he caused strife in the lives of his foster families through the actions of killing family pets and causing fights in home and school. In his final foster family, Peter claimed he had sexual relations with his foster mother while his foster father was away. He also claimed that he would rape his foster mother when she would not comply and said that he threatened to kill her if she would not let him have sexual relations with
her. In addition, Mr. Vetrov claimed that during his stay with this final foster family, the foster parents were unemployed, receiving welfare checks from the government, and were abusing illegal substances.

**Relationship History**

Mr. Vetrov claimed he never has had any serious relationship as he views women as “toys” and only uses them to satisfy his libido.

**Education and Work History**

Mr. Vetrov graduated high school and college with straight A’s. His degree in college was in Physics. However, he claimed that in every job that he had that had to do with Physics, he felt belittled by his colleagues so he would quit his position. Before he was incarcerated, Peter claimed he was currently “in between jobs.”

**Mental Health History**

Mr. Vetrov has no known professionally diagnosable mental health disorders or history within the mental health setting.

**Mental Status**

Mr. Vetrov looked and behaved his stated age of thirty-three. He was 6 foot 8 inches tall. He was dressed in a prison uniform and was well groomed. Mr. Vetrov was easy to establish rapport with and answered questions readily and succinctly. His speech was very casual and he was very extroverted. He stated that he felt that he had no mental illness whatsoever, as he felt “healthy as a horse” and therefore had no notable self-reporting symptoms.

**Test Results**
Individuals who scored similarly to Mr. Vetrov on the MMPI exhibit symptoms that align with Dr. Hervey Cleckely’s list of Psychopathic Characteristics which include: superficial charm, intelligence, absence of delusions or other irrational thinking, absence of nervousness, unreliability, insincerity, lack of remorse or shame, poor judgement, failure to learn from experience, incapacity for love, egocentricity, inability to process affect, loss of insight, no suicidal thoughts, poorly integrated sex life, and failure to follow any life plan. Mr. Vetrov exhibited most of these characteristics. With this in mind, he was also given the PCL-R, or the Psychopathy Checklist Revised, to evaluate his true Psychopathic tendencies. Mr. Vetrov scored a 36 on the PCL-R—a 30 being the starting score for being Psychopathic. After reviewing this test score, I sent Mr. Vetrov to have an MRI of the brain to conclude whether or not Psychopathy was the cause of his misbehavior. It was a general consensus among his doctors that his paralimbic grey matter, frontal lobe, Hippocampus, Anterior Cingulate Cortex, and Amygdala were either faulty or smaller than average, resulting in his abnormal personality traits. All of these brain regions are essential in fear processing, decision making, feeling empathy, and judging the emotions of the self and others.

**Psychiatric Diagnosis (DSM-V)**

1. Antisocial Personality Disorder
   - Major Psychopathic traits

**Forensic Opinion**

It is in my professional opinion, considering the facts presented here today that Peter Vetrov, now clinically diagnosed with ASPD with Psychopathic traits is to be granted the sentence mitigation—that being the adjustment that he does not receive the death penalty. Peter Vetrov
has been deemed guilty in the eyes of the court. Regarding his sentencing, it is in my professional opinion fair for him to receive life in prison with the accompaniment of no chance of parole as he is and will continue to be a danger to himself and others. Psychopaths like Mr. Vetrov are not just individuals who choose to have no empathy or refuse to acknowledge the law; they are individuals who have legitimate psychological and physiological abnormalities that are clearly documented in their brain pathology. It is important to realize this behavior is not a choice, but rather a disposition Mr. Vetrov was born with and is clearly documented in his MRI and fMRI scans as presented here today. It would be cruel and unusual punishment to grant capital punishment on an individual who had no choice in the manner of his or her actions. In no way am I trying to overstep my boundaries as the clinician assigned to this case for sentencing mitigations, however, if I had been assigned to the case at an earlier date, I would have suggested to the court that Mr. Vetrov not be deemed guilty as Psychopaths like Mr. Vetrov have no choice but to act on their antisocial or criminal tendencies. I urge the court to entertain this fact the next time an individual like Mr. Vetrov is presented before the court.

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**Chapter 5: Interview Take II: The Highlight Reel**

“How do you see yourself?”

“Same as you, doc. Through a mirror.”

“You know what I mean, Peter.”

“Yes, yes. I know. Only having fun. I see myself as a simple kind of a guy. I like to indulge myself.”

“Why is that?”
“Don’t you? I want to feel alive. How many people out in the world truly know they’re alive? They’re out there doing the same boring routine every day. They don’t fly off the handle every once in a while and do something truly insane.”

“What makes you feel alive?”

“Doing somethin’ real…stimulating.”

“Like what?”

“It takes a lot to stimulate me, doc. Go big or go home, as they say. Driving in Lower Manhattan maniacally. Screwing a pestilential hooker. Going bezoomy and sending a man back to his maker. All that cal.”

“Interesting.”

“Does your father know you’re incarcerated?”

“Oh, most definitely.”

“How’d he find out?”

“I told him. He was my one phone call. Although, I imagine after what he said to me that he already knew.”

“What did he say?”

“The conversation went a little something like this. ‘Hey, Pop!’ I said. ‘Son,” I hear him grumble. ‘How stupid could a man be?’ ‘Whatcha mean, Pop?’ ‘You’re a fucking idiot.’ ‘Well, well, well! No need to get confrontational! I was only doing what I thought would make you proud!’ A lie of course. ‘Not one. Not two. But three people. Torture. Cannibalism. Rape. How
“Did you ever find that during the course of the various…activities…you were second guessing yourself or trying to stop?”

“Nope. Not in the slightest. I was having a really great time. In fact, in retrospect, I wish I had elongated the process. It all seemed to go by too quickly.”

“What do you mean?”

“What I mean is I was sloppy and didn’t know what I was doing. My passion got the best of me and I was a whirlwind of destruction. Before I knew it, there were three corpses in my house and a huge mess. Although, I have to say, if I was to do it all over again, I can’t say I would be any neater about it. There’s just something about the ruggedness of it all that is oddly charming. Kind of like myself.”

“How did you feel after you did what you did?”
For the first time since we met, Peter’s tone grew dark and serious. He didn’t say anything for the longest time, like he was contemplating on how best to answer my question because he didn’t fully understand it. Finally, he spoke up—his face void of any emotion.

“I felt nothing.”

And I believed him. He had previously said things alluding to this idea that he had moods, like being extremely joyful to turning exceedingly livid. However, I came to realize that it was all a front. He was having these mood swings on the outside, but on the inside, it was a wasteland of nothingness. And that, my friends, was truly horrifying.

“So, the results of your tests came back. I’ve reviewed them and the findings are quite interesting.”

“Go on. Tell me more about me.”

“You’re intelligent. You don’t have any physical health problems. You don’t have psychosis. You are a generally cheerful person. Very extroverted and charming. But you are also very manipulative. No respect for authority or the law. Extremely impulsive and aggressive. There are feelings of grandiosity. You have issues determining others’ emotions. You have essentially no fears. Significant juvenile conduct problems. Problems connecting with others on an emotional level…”

“What does all this mean?” he interrupted. “What is your diagnosis?”

“I normally don’t like to come right out and say it.”

“Oh, come on now. Be a sport. It’ll be fun!”

“Alright. Only because I know you can handle it.”
“Well, go on then.”

“You have Antisocial Personality Disorder with psychopathic traits.”

“Interesting.”

“What is?”

“Well, that diagnosis must make helping me quite hard.”

“Not really.”

“What does this mean for me then?”

“It means we are using…certain aspects of your biology to try to prohibit the state from killing you.”

“Well, isn’t that just a dandy?”

“You may have done some horrible things, but I don’t think you should be put to death over them. I don’t think you had much of a choice, did you?”

“Are you insinuating I have no free will, doc?”

“No. I’m saying your brain won’t let you obey the law. Among other things.”

“With that logic, all raping, murdering, cannibalistic people should get off death row immediately.”

“No, not all. Some maybe. If they exhibit your symptoms.”

“I’m not sick.”

“I’m not going to argue with you about it.”
“Agree to disagree, dearest doctor. Agree to disagree.”

“There are others just like you. What do you think about all of them?”

“What sick bastards! I bet you’d like them to suffer, wouldn’t you? I bet you’d like to see them dead. Killing is fun, you know. You should try it sometime. Very liberating. In fact, you’re in a great position to do some illustrious work. No one would ever suspect the doctor. You could even blame it on me. I’m already in prison till death do I part. What’s another murder or two on the record? What could they possibly do to me that they haven’t already?”

“They could kill you.”

“Touché, Frau Doktor.”

“You don’t want that, do you?”

“Of course not. I’m too vibrant of a person to be exterminated so easily.”

“How do you want to die?”

“I don’t know. Don’t really give it much thought, to be honest. I’d like it to be something extraordinarily spectacular, though. Like being gouged by a bull while I’m a matador in Spain. Or being ripped apart by a dozen sharks. Perhaps being directly squashed by the meteor that is going to kill us all one day.”

“You know, you have a much higher chance of being shanked in your prison cell.”

“Being killed with a toothbrush by some hardy criminal. How cosmopolitan.”

Chapter 6: The E-mail
After the last of my students had left for the day, I was able to finally check the day’s e-mails. Typically, all I received was e-mails from my boss, the head of the psychology department, or frustrated students. However, today I received a very uplifting e-mail from none other than Ms. Sparks—“Peter Vetrov’s” attorney. The e-mail read:

Dear Dr. Campbell,

I was just writing to inform you that “Peter” was granted the sentence mitigation! The judge found your report especially insightful and informative and said that you gave him a new insight on future cases involving those diagnosed with ASPD with Psychopathic traits. What you are doing for the misunderstood community of Psychopaths is very encouraging to say the least. Not many people would fight for their rights as humans. Hell, not even myself when I first took on this case. You’ve given me a new hope that mental illnesses everywhere will one day be accepted and understood to the extent that you accept and understand Psychopaths. Your passion and empathy towards them is very admirable and I wish to be more like you. Have a wonderful afternoon and thank-you.

Respectfully yours,

R. Sparks

…I closed my laptop and I smiled.

Chapter 7: Journal Entry 43

Dear Me,
Hey there. I just had to get some things off my chest regarding my latest case. I normally don’t do trivial stuff such as writing a stupid journal entry, but seeing that I have no one to rant to about it, I figure my only option is to just rant to myself.

This case has taken a huge toll on me. They tell you that when you graduate, that you are ready to face the world. Let me be the first to say that is a bunch of bull shit. No amount of training within the safe confines of a university classroom or being under the strict supervision of a doctor during an internship could ever in a million years prepare someone for what I had to deal with. After you graduate at the doctorate level, you’re on your own, pal.

Growing up, you learn from Disney films that the bad guys have nasty green face warts or shape-shift into horrific monsters like dragons and sea witches. You can just tell by looking at a group of Disney characters who are the heroes and who are the villains. I despise Disney for corrupting my young mind into thinking that the evil people in the world also has a face to match, so that you can set them apart from everyone else. The cruel fact is that is not true in the slightest. Sure, you may have your stereotypical evil looking villain. But then again, you must be wary of the wolf in sheep’s clothing for the devil was once the most beautiful angel of all as he was God’s favorite.

Up until this interview, I held on to this idea that bad guys look like bad guys. Give me a break, I’m still new to this Forensic Psychology scene. But when I saw “Peter,” my entire world crumbled. The safety that was a university classroom disintegrated and I was left in the ash and rubble feeling completely unarmed.

He was beautiful. I had no idea how to go about handling this bizarre situation. It was exceptionally hard for me not to fall victim to his charm and good looks just because I was so
caught off guard. Sure, I knew going in that Psychopaths were exceptionally manipulative, conning, egotistical and charming. But like I said before….no amount of training….you get the idea.

As he sat there and calmly told his story, I was enthralled by the fact I felt myself developing empathy for him. Which was really strange given the contents of the case being what they were. The reason being that he has always been like this. His environment did not influence him to be a killer or a rapist. He was born with a disposition to be that way—with no choice to make moral decisions in life. Life had been unfair to him, so it would be unfair of us to take away his life when he is merely a puppet to fate’s cruel design (if there is such a thing as fate). I could not comprehend how you could give the death sentence to someone who has no choice in the way he behaves. I wouldn’t be able to sleep for weeks knowing that if I couldn’t convince the court that “Peter” was irreversibly mentally ill, he was going to die by their hand. Of course, he must pay for his crimes. But does he deserve death? I think not.

I wish that more research could be done to show that Psychopaths aren’t like individuals with ASPD who do have the choice to behave morally. I’m 110% for the separation of Psychopathy from ASPD in the new DSM 6 as Psychopathy is clearly biologically different enough to be considered a separate disorder and not just a subset of another. It is this connection to ASPD that creates issues when trying to get things like mitigating factors in place for Psychopaths. It pained me to diagnose “Peter” with ASPD when in fact he is psychopathic. There has been some research done on the matter, but not anywhere near enough.

As long as I have a breath in my body, I will fight tooth and nail for the betterment of Psychopaths. Individuals who have disorders like Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Major Depressive Disorder, Schizophrenia, and Bipolar Disorder have groups in place to protect their
rights. Why just them? Why single out only a select few disorders when there are hundreds that need protecting and understood more fully? We are such hypocrites to say that “All mental health disorders matter!” when we are excluding possibly one of the most ostracized groups of people within the mental disorders community. We call them evil and demented intraspecies predators, and I am not excluding myself. I have been known to use this terminology when referring to Psychopaths. The difference is I’m breaking the habit. I’m trying to understand. I want everyone to understand.

How can we as a scientific community promote mental health awareness when we ourselves are hypocrites to certain aspects of it? What kind of example are we leading? Love some and hate others? No. If the scientific community of Psychology cannot see past the veil that the world has created to cover up Psychopathy, then we truly are lost. We must remain objective and detach from our innate human response to recoil from the word “Psychopath” so that we can stop being such assholes (to put it bluntly) and learn how to go about properly treating Psychopaths (I mean treating not in the clinical sense). They are people too and deserve to be treated as such—not like animals, which we so easily do today, especially in the court systems with the “Oh, a Psychopath! Burn the witch!” mentality.

And another thing. Can we please educate the public what it means to be a Psychopath? Like really. People are on the street calling each other Psychopaths left and right, not giving a single thought to the ramifications of their actions. It is typically looked down upon when someone calls someone else unjustly a “Schizo” or “Bipolar freak.” That not only gives the public the wrong idea of what it means to be a schizophrenic or bipolar, but it also degrades the people who actually have the misfortune of having these disorders. Calling your mother-in-law a Psychopath
out of frustration is the same concept. Just because the symptoms of Psychopathy aren’t tragic or sad like, say, depression or anxiety, doesn’t mean it is any less of a disorder.

Christ. It’s three o’clock in the morning. I have work to get done tomorrow. My insomnia won’t let me fall asleep easily so I might as well stay up the rest of the night. I need to get my mind off this topic. Maybe I’ll watch some TV? Listen to music? Read a book? Just thinking of the injustice makes my blood boil. Wow. I really am tired. I’ll just leave this here I suppose. Maybe I should write a book someday…I have enough to say, that’s for sure. Ok. Seriously now.

Goodnight.

-TC