

The Wall

Scott Wittenburg

Smashwords Edition

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This book is dedicated to the residents of Portsmouth, Ohio, past and present, who made growing up there in the Sixties such a rich and memorable experience.

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Norwegian Wood lyrics by Lennon, McCartney
Old Friends/Bookends Theme lyrics by Paul Simon
Hooked On A Feeling lyrics by Mark James

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ONE

Portsmouth, Ohio - October, 1969

I roll over onto my side and read the clock radio: it's 10:33. Where the hell is Samson? He should have wakened me by now with a barrage of puppy kisses. I hope that little mutt hasn't slipped out of the house like he did the other time. Took me nearly an hour to find him.

Shit!

I spring out of bed and run into the living room.

"Samson! Where are you, boy?"

No response. If he slipped out when Dad left for work, he's long gone by now. What if he's gotten run over by a car? Like what happened to poor Sloopy? I would die.

Maybe he's down in the laundry room with Mom. I run through the kitchen to the basement taking two stairs at a time before realizing that the lights aren't even on. Nobody down here. I sprint back upstairs and glance out the kitchen window at the backyard. Not a soul. Maybe Mom is running an errand and took Samson with her. But surely she would have let me know, wouldn't she? I go to the living room and peer out

the window through the parted drapes. Her car is parked out front on the street as usual. So where is she? And where is Samson? They have to be around here somewhere—

The attic—that’s it! Mom’s probably rummaging around for something and can’t hear me up there. The attic used to be my bedroom before my sister got married and left me her bedroom, which has a Dutch door that leads out to the front porch. I can still hear my father lay down the law: “No sneaking out of the house late at night, Pete, or you’re right back in the attic.”

“Mom, you up there?” I call from the foot of the stairs.

I scale the stairs, taking care not to knock my head on the slanted ceiling at the top. My old twin bed is still here and the walls are plastered with Beatle posters, Sixteen Magazine photos of the Rolling Stones, Peter and Gordon and a few other British Invasion bands. But no sign of Mom or Samson.

I return to my bedroom. Something is really wrong here. Could it be that Mom told me her plans for today before turning in and I’ve just forgotten? I think back to last night and suddenly realize that I have absolutely no recollection of last night!

In a daze, I sit down on the bed and slip into a pair of jeans, scanning my bedroom for a clue to what I was doing before going to bed. Along the wall is a long wooden bookcase that supports my stereo and stacks of vinyl LP’s. On the lower shelf is a gold and white striped carrying case that holds my 45’s flanked by more record albums. Propped against the book case, my Stella twelve-string acoustic guitar. My favorite poster of the Beatles holds court in the center of the wall. Music is my life. But nothing is ringing any bells—

I think back to what I did earlier yesterday. Nothing comes to mind. Jesus, I must have some kind of amnesia—I don’t even know what day of the week it is! It must be Saturday because I’ve been allowed to sleep in. But my parents wouldn’t leave me alone in the house like this without leaving a note—sometimes they treat me like a child instead of a senior in high school. I run to the kitchen to see if there’s anything posted on the fridge. No note. I pick up the phone and call Dad’s workplace. I let it ring ten times but there’s no answer. That’s really weird.

I have to find Samson. No matter what the story is with my folks, I can’t waste another second here while my dog is out there somewhere, no doubt getting himself in trouble.

I grab my keys and jacket before bolting out of the house. I hop inside my ’67 VW bug and fire it up, greeted by the low drone of its modified exhaust system. I take care backing down the steep driveway. As I pull away, I shove Simon and Garfunkel’s *Bookends* into my eight-track tape player. The music has a calming effect on my rattled nerves.

A Time it was

And what a time it was, it was

A time of innocence

A time of confidences

Long ago it must be

I have a photograph

Preserve your memories

They're all that's left you

I open the dash compartment, pull out a crumpled, half empty pack of Marlboro's and light one up. Cruising slowly along North Hill Road, I check the neighbors' yards and in between the houses on both sides of the street for my wayward pooch. By the time I've searched the entire street I wonder if by chance he could be roaming around Miller's Market like the other time he pulled this stunt. I make a hairpin right onto Coles Boulevard. After a couple of blocks, I pull over and park across the street from the tiny neighborhood grocery store.

I go inside to find no one standing behind the check-out counter. Walking down an aisle toward the rear of the store is surreal; I can't remember the last time I was here. How long ago was it? As I approach the deli counter I see that it is also untended. Mr. Miller is usually standing there, cigarette in mouth, head cocked to avoid the smoke stinging his eyes, weighing meat or making his delicious ham salad. I go over to the doorway leading to the stockroom and poke my head inside.

"Anybody back there?"

When nobody answers I return to the front. I'm starving, so I scan the snack rack and grab a bag of potato chips. I go over to the pop machine, stick a quarter in, open the narrow fridge door and pull out a bottle of Pepsi. My change trickles down the coin return. I take a swig and notice the daily calendar hanging beside the cash register. *Monday, October 13, 1969.* Seeing the date is a mind-blower. *This is a school day, not the weekend!* How come my parents never made me get up to go to school?

I run outside and take a quick look around for Samson. Although I need to look for him, I also need to know why I'm not at school now. Maybe we're out today for some reason—like Yom Kippur or some other religious holiday. I'll go see if Nugie is home. Hopefully my best friend can shed some light on all of this craziness.

As I get into the bug, it dawns on me that I've not seen a solitary soul since leaving the house. Nor a single moving car on the street. *What the hell is going on?* I drive slowly, hoping to see some oncoming traffic. I look to the left and right for signs of life in the neighborhood. I'd settle for a random glimpse of someone sitting on their porch or a car backing out of a driveway. Nothing.

I take a left onto Cypress Street and pass by my old house on the corner, where I lived when I first met Nugie many years ago. My friend's house is a couple of doors up on the other side. I spot his '65 Mustang parked in the driveway, thank god. So there isn't any school today after all. I pull in behind the blue coupe and get out.

I knock on the door and peer through the living room window, anxiously waiting for Nugie or his mother to answer the door. After a moment or so I knock again, perhaps a little too hard, but I'm growing impatient. I need to see another live person desperately and the wait is killing me.

Another moment passes by. Why isn't anyone coming? I try the doorknob and it turns. I decide to go in—maybe Nugie's up in his bedroom listening to Steppenwolf with his headphones blasting. The moment I step inside I sense a stillness that gives me the creeps. A stillness so absolute I can almost sense that I'm not going to find anybody at home.

I make a spot check of the first floor on my way to my friend's bedroom. Like me before my sister left, Nugie has the whole attic to himself. I walk briskly up the creaky stairs, only half expecting to find him here. The room is vacant. I go back downstairs

imagining the odds of Nugie's car being parked outside and neither he nor his non-driving, non-working mother being here. Slim to nil.

On the way out, I eye the telephone on an end table and pick up the handset. The first friend I think of calling is Roger, who has a younger brother and sister plus a mother who also doesn't work—somebody should definitely be home. I let it ring a dozen times and hang up. I try Steve next, but nobody picks up. My hand is actually trembling as I dial the next number. My friend Bob has no less than six siblings—a fine Catholic family. Surely *somebody* will be home. It rings and rings until I finally give up and slam the phone down.

I recall a Twilight Zone episode about a guy who wakes up and discovers he's the last man on earth. As ludicrous as it seemed at the time, I now find myself actually considering the possibility. But of course that's impossible, so on my way out the door I'm determined to prove that's not what's happening now. I back out of the driveway throw it into first gear and continue cruising Coles Boulevard. I need to resume my search for Samson.

I'm heading west toward Scioto Trail, which is also Route 23. This state highway runs north to Columbus and south across the Ohio River to Kentucky. It also intersects Route 52, another well-travelled highway that runs west to Cincinnati and east to the West Virginia border. I'm all but certain to see some moving traffic very soon.

I'm close enough to see the traffic light ahead but there's no north or southbound traffic. Maybe there's been an accident and the traffic is being held up. Please God, let that be the case. When I stop at the red light I peer anxiously up and down the highway, straining to catch sight of a moving vehicle. There isn't a single motorist in either direction. For the first time since waking up this morning I am genuinely terrified.

I sit at the red light a moment, feeling like an idiot because I'm yielding for cross traffic that doesn't exist. *Is this really happening?* I glance over at the gas station on the corner and instinctively check my fuel gauge—I'm on reserve tank and this could take a while. I pull up to a gas pump, pop the trunk, noting the price. Thirty-five cents a gallon. I only have forty cents so I pump in one gallon, wondering how long that remaining five cents is going to last me. I walk toward the convenient store, all but certain there isn't going to be anybody inside. Sure enough, I step into an absolutely deserted place.

I keep my forty cents and split with a clear conscience. After filling up the tank, I decide to follow Route 23 downtown in hope of possibly finding Samson there. If not Samson, at least a living, breathing being of some kind. I drive slowly, casing out the fast food joints and gas stations along the way for any activity. There are cars parked here and there but that's it—a bunch of driverless vehicles. I blow through every red light.

I drive over the viaduct and continue until I get to Tenth Street. The moment I see it, I stomp on the brake pedal, which nearly catapults me through the windshield. I let out a gasp. Up ahead, where the U.S. Grant Bridge crosses the Ohio River to Kentucky stands a massive wall! From where I'm sitting, it looks to be several hundred feet tall. I remain frozen in place, my eyes fixated on this formidable spectacle ten blocks away. *When in the holy hell did this thing go up? I can't even see the Kentucky hills!*

It takes several moments to gather up the nerve to proceed. I creep past Tracy Park, transfixed by a thing that looms larger and more intimidating the closer I get to it. I approach the Esplanade in the heart of downtown and can now see that Chillicothe Street actually dead ends smack dab into this dull, gray mass of solid concrete. The bridge to

Kentucky is nowhere in sight, nor the river that it crosses. I drive the remaining few blocks past J.C. Penney, Atlas Fashions and Bragdon's to Second Street and stop at the traffic light. There's nothing but this towering wall visible through my windshield that appears to go on forever in either direction. It's as though the wall is a vertical extension of the flood-wall that runs along Front Street.

I take a right hand turn, drive a couple of blocks to Washington Street and make a left. I feel a sense of upside down vertigo peering up at the towering structure. I ease onto Front Street and look toward the west. The wall runs exactly where the flood wall used to be—needless to say there is no way in hell the Ohio River could ever overflow this thing.

I follow the wall to see how far it goes. I pass by the area where there used to be a road that cut through the floodwall and ran down to the river bank—the same road that everybody took to launch their boats, enjoy Sunday picnics and watch the annual boat races on the Ohio River. I drive a bit further and arrive at Alexandria Park, where the Scioto River flows down from the north and empties into the Ohio River. I pull over and enter the tiny park. I walk over to where a scenic lookout point of the Ohio River once was but no longer exists. I proceed to the furthest edge of the park and see that the wall stretches across the Scioto River and appears to end just beyond the other side. The sensation of seeing the Scioto River suddenly dead-end into this massive wall is mind boggling. I wonder if the river is flowing under it somehow and realize that it *must be*—otherwise there would be a flooded lake here instead of dry river bottom. I can see a good portion of West Portsmouth beyond the wall, standing high and dry.

I hustle back to the bug and decide to drive over to the west side. It takes less than a minute to get back on Second Street to where a bridge crosses the Scioto. I pull onto the span and within a mile or so I can see what's going on. The wall doesn't end here but actually cuts sharply to the southwest and continues following along the Ohio River for god only knows how far, continuing to obscure Kentucky and the river from view.

I hear a click as the tape changes tracks. This gives me an idea and I'm amazed at my stupidity. *There's a radio in this car, dummy! Why not turn it on?*

I switch on the radio and hear nothing but whiny static. I turn the tuning knob, slowly scanning the entire AM band in both directions. Nothing. Had I done this twenty minutes ago I could have saved myself a lot of trouble; because no live radio stations equals no live people, unless this goddamn wall is preventing radio signals from getting through. I try to recall where the radio towers are located for the local stations, wondering if the wall is blocking their signals. It's not likely so.

How much worse can this get?

I continue on Route 52, which basically runs parallel to the Ohio River as it flows west to Cincinnati. I maintain a cruising speed of fifty-five and think of all the times I've spent out here on the west side since getting my driver's license. Shawnee State Forest is twenty minutes away and the best thing about living in Portsmouth. Many are the times my buddies and I have camped, fished, swam, ice skated and partied in the forest.

Ten minutes go by and I still haven't seen a single moving car or living person. I'll reach Route 125 any minute, which will take me into the forest. As I round a curve in the road I stare in disbelief at what I see up ahead: the wall is now cutting across Route 52! I slow down to a crawl. The wall appears to cross the highway about a half mile past the turnoff for Route 125. I keep driving until I dead-end into the thing. It runs toward the

Ohio River to the south and as far as I can see to the north, cutting through the forest like some huge, hideous eyesore.

The wall has changed its course. This totally freaks me out. I can no longer think of it as just an overgrown floodwall—it's obviously been placed here for a purpose that goes beyond holding back water. It has become a *barrier*—something deliberately constructed to keep people from getting to whatever lies on the other side of it. Why in the hell have they done that? For that matter, *who* did that and *when* did they do it? This wall had to have come into existence between the moment I lost my memory and the moment I woke up this morning, which is implausible.

Again, I strain to think of the last thing I recall doing before going to bed last night. But nothing comes to me. I seem to be able to remember everything up to a certain point in time—things like my classes at school, stuff that's happened while hanging out with my friends through the years and my basic day-to-day life in Portsmouth. It's what happened *beyond* that certain point that's not registering at all. But this is the least of my problems. Even more important is why I am apparently the only living, breathing person in this entire godforsaken place. And, where everybody, including my dog, has gone.

Up to now I've been pretty cool about all of this, all things considered. I've kept my head and remained rational. But now I feel like I'm being swept overboard. If I truly am the last living person on earth, what am I to do? How can I live like this?

A few moments later and with great determination I manage to pull myself together. Sitting here feeling sorry for myself and trying to predict the future is getting me nowhere. I must keep my head on straight and not allow this to freak me out. If I'm going to die the last person on earth, I sure as hell don't want to go bonkers along the way. I back away from the wall and turn around determined to drive through the forest and see where this thing goes.

When I pull onto Route 125 a myriad of things go through my mind. Looming above them all is the burgeoning sense of loneliness I feel driving along this desolate road. I've come out to the forest countless times, often alone. I actually enjoy being by myself, taking in the beautiful scenery, listening to music, thinking about whatever. I'm not a loner per se—far from it—but unlike some of my friends, I don't feel like I have to be socializing all the time. I feel a need to get away, to air out my thoughts, put things into perspective. But this isn't the same—this is anything but a good time. I would give anything to see another human right now. The prospect of being clueless is unsettling enough. But the thought of being clueless without anybody around to bounce things off of is terrifying.

I can actually *feel* the presence of the wall even when I can't see it out of the corner of my eye. It doesn't run equidistant from the highway and there are portions of road where it disappears completely from sight due to the proximity of the trees. One thing I know for a fact is that it couldn't have been built in a few days or weeks or months. It would have taken years. I'm trying not to dwell on this, though. Because it implies that I've lost my memory for much longer than what would be considered “short-term.”

Despite my fears, I'm able to take in the scenic beauty of the forest. The trees are just beginning to change colors, the wind is gusty and there's the distinctive smell of autumn in the air. It's fairly warm now, but sweater weather is just around the corner. I've always loved the fall and wonder if I'll be around long enough to enjoy it at its peak. It's no

stretch to consider that my days might be numbered, and there is nothing to be optimistic about.

I see the turnoff for Mackletree Road and merge onto it. Mackletree runs directly along the south bank of Roosevelt Lake. I drive a little further to the picnic area. Roosevelt Lake isn't particularly wide or deep but there's good fishing here and it's a great place to ice skate on those rare days it freezes solid. I decide to get out and stretch my legs before moving on.

As I stand along the bank, I'm aware of the deadly silence. All I hear is the faint sound of water flowing over the dam and an occasional breeze blowing through the trees. No birds chirping, no rustling of squirrels gathering nuts. I now realize I haven't seen a single animal since waking up this morning and pray that's sheer coincidence—the thought of being the only living *animal* is way too much to fathom.

I strain to see if I can spot the wall through the trees but the foliage is too thick here. I figure that if I continue on Mackletree Road I should eventually reach the wall. My hope is to get a bead on how far it runs through the forest before terminating.

I hop back into the bug and resume my journey. Lake Roosevelt quickly gives way to a creek that flows parallel to the road. I haven't gone more than a couple more miles when I spot the wall a little further ahead. I am appalled by its ugly presence in the midst of this natural setting. A couple more turns in the road and I am forced to come to a dead stop right at the base of the monstrosity.

I survey the area and notice that there is no viable clearing along the base of the wall as it slices through the vegetation on either side of the road. This makes me think that the road was built from the other side—the side I can't see. Is that where everybody is now? I wish I had a map because I'm no longer sure what direction the wall is running. I know that Route 125 runs northwest and that the wall was running the same direction. But now I can't tell if that still holds true. Whatever the case, my only option is to get back on Route 125 and proceed from there.

On the way back to the highway I realize that I've heard the entire *Bookends* album. I open the glove compartment and thumb through my eight track tapes. I spot *Abbey Road* and pop it in. As *Here Comes The Sun* flows out of the speakers I feel a wave of warmth throughout my body. This is the best album of all time. I've probably listened to it a hundred times since its release this past summer.

I only have to drive a short distance before I reach Turkey Creek Lake and opt to keep going. When I see a Texaco gas station I decide to pull over. The smell of oil and rubber tires greets me as I step inside. The place is vacant. I notice a stand of road maps behind the counter. I go around and grab a map of Ohio plus a trail map of Shawnee Forest. The maps are free but the Baby Ruth and bottle of Pepsi I pick up on my way out the door are not. Screw it.

I pull back onto the highway and take a huge bite of my candy bar, followed by a swig of ice cold pop. Soon I notice the wall looming in the not so far distance to my left. The wall is closer to the road than ever, which is puzzling. After driving another mile or so I realize that it's getting even closer. Am I nearing its end? Before I know it, my question is answered. I round a curve to find that the wall hasn't ended but has taken a sharp right hand turn directly across the highway.

This is not what I expected. I've been traveling northwest and so has the wall. But now it has changed course again. It must be running north to northeast now. Where is it

going? I grab one of the maps and frantically open it up. I locate the approximate point on Route 52 where I first ran into the wall and take out a pencil from the dash compartment. I mark that spot and look for the approximate point where the wall crossed Mackletree Road and mark that spot as well. I draw a line between the two points and extend the line past the Mackletree Road point in the approximate direction the wall was running. After locating the area where I'm now sitting, I use the other map as a straight edge and draw a line from this point toward the second point until it intersects with the first line. The line has formed an acute angle. I extend the line from my present location to the northeast while maintaining the same angle in order to estimate where it goes. I'm in shock. If the wall doesn't change course again it will eventually cross Route 23 somewhere north of Portsmouth. I don't like what that suggests at all. I try my best not to dwell on it.

There are no major roads that run east through the forest so I'll have to backtrack to Route 52. I look on the map and realize that the closest road running north is Route 73. If the wall continues running northeast as I suspect, then Route 73 should eventually catch up to it.

I head back to Route 52, wondering why I'm so hung up on this wall. Yes, it's huge and has miraculously appeared out of nowhere in record time. But why am I so obsessed to find out where it goes? I could be doing something more productive, like going back into town to look for some living people. And Samson. Go door-to-door, if necessary. I haven't really made a concentrated effort to assess that situation. I should grab a phone book and call every number listed until I finally reach somebody. Surely it would eventually happen, wouldn't it? I could also try calling long distance—find out if there's anybody anywhere in this whole frigging world still alive.

But all of that will have to wait. I must find out where this wall goes, period. It makes me feel trapped and I need to be assured that's not the case. I'll make one stop before continuing, though. There's something I haven't checked yet: television. I wonder if I can pick something up on the tube. I'll stop at the first house I see.

Ten minutes later I spot a two-story house just off the highway. I pull into the drive and park behind a Chevy pickup. On my way to the front door I notice a tricycle in the front yard and several small toys scattered around. I'm cautiously optimistic as I knock on the door and wait for somebody to answer. I knock again but there's no response. I try the door and it's unlocked so I step inside.

"Hello, anybody home?"

I've entered a living room that is cluttered with toys and at least a half dozen empty beer bottles sitting on the coffee table. On a threadbare sofa are a couple of ashtrays filled to the brim with cigarette butts and a bunch of loose potato chips strewn here and there. I eye the TV set and go over to turn it on. After it warms up I'm greeted by white noise. I try all thirteen channels and the UHV band but receive nothing but snow and noise and another dead-end street.

I turn off the television and poke around the house. In the kitchen are dirty dishes piled up on the table, the countertops and in the sink. They don't seem to have been sitting here long—there's no mold growing and they don't smell particularly ripe. I peek into the fridge and everything looks fairly fresh. I grab a quart of milk and take a whiff. Not even sour yet. I close the door and notice a small calendar advertising a local funeral home scotch taped to it. Every day in October has been X'ed out through Sunday, the twelfth, which was yesterday.

I check out the dining room, bathroom and all three bedrooms. The house is a mess and definitely has a recently lived-in feel to it. Like every other place I've been in thus far, it seems as though the inhabitants suddenly disappeared and left everything as it was. And apparently this mass exodus happened yesterday.

What could have happened to make everybody all of a sudden drop what they were doing and abandon their homes and workplaces? There's only one thing I can think of. The threat of attack. The area has been evacuated as a result of some sort of imminent danger. What else could it be? Some communist country has finally decided to nuke us so everybody has been ordered to seek cover in bomb shelters.

But what about the wall? There's no explanation for the wall. And even if the bomb shelters are on the other side of it, nothing explains its existence. And what about the lack of radio or television reception? If we were truly on high alert for nuclear attack the government wouldn't forbid radio or TV transmission during a national emergency. Or would they?

I suddenly realize that I'm a sitting duck if there really is an attack. I have no idea where to go and I'm shit out of luck.

With a hopeless shrug I start to leave. I can't quit thinking that the wall will offer some answers. At least it's something tangible, something concrete to pursue, pardon the pun. I must keep moving. Standing around in this abandoned place is depressing and getting me nowhere.

I get back in the bug and start it up. I lean over to push in *Abbey Road* and realize that it's no longer sticking out of the tape player. Instead, there's a folded sheet of paper in its place. As I pull out the paper, one thing immediately becomes obvious.

I am not alone.

TWO

Columbus, Ohio - April, 2016

It's not easy being me. I'm ten pounds overweight, my nose is too big and my hair is a thick, brown mess. When people pass me on the street they always wear that same look of shock and disgust. Yes, I'm *that* ugly—I get *that* kind of reaction.

Oh, and there's one other thing: I have a thick, deep scar on my face that runs from the outside corner of my right eye down my cheek and all the way around to the lower left side of my chin. A sort of crescent moon shape actually. My guess is that this is my most remarkable feature and the one that draws the most attention.

I don't even know how I got this scar, really. My mother told me I got it as a toddler when I fell on a broken picture frame. When I asked her how the picture frame got broken in the first place the look on her face told me this was going to be a big lie, too. According to her, my father had accidentally knocked over the picture frame while dusting the fireplace mantle. I, being the clumsy little girl I was, *just so happened* to run into the family room right at that moment, lost my balance and fell smack dab into a pile of broken glass.

Yeah, and pigs fly.

What *really* happened to my face I may never know. The only thing I'm sure of is that it's been some sort of deep, dark secret my parents don't want to divulge. I've had no less than a half dozen surgeries over the years in attempts to make the scar less noticeable and obnoxious. None of them have been successful, suffice to say. So I have been resigned to spend virtually all my life looking like a pathetic freak.

As I said, it's not easy being Libby Fields. But I'm dealing with it.

My only saving grace is my body. Although I'm overweight, I'm fairly well proportioned, have longish legs and a pair of boobs that are usually the next thing men look at once they get past my ugly face. In fact, if I were to lose those extra pounds and wore a bag over my head I'd be a fricking knockout. But I'm not really interested in going to a lot of trouble to pass inspection with people. All I really want to do is make my own way in life and someday be recognized as a decent photographer.

The rest is for the birds.

I'm on my way to work at a job that is anything but solid or ambitious. I'm a server at Lounge Lizards on High Street, one of countless campus watering holes. I've been working there for over a year now, which has to be some kind of record for employment duration at a campus bar. It's not a horrible job, really. My shift goes by quickly and the tips are great, considering that most of the patrons are less than wealthy Ohio State University students. That's the one and only good thing about having a face this hideous—people feel sorry for me and are generous tippers. You might call it a pity party, I don't mind. At least it pays the bills and helps keep a smile on my face at work.

I moved to Columbus last year from a small town in Pennsylvania. I knew I wasn't going anywhere living in that one-horse town and I'd always heard that Columbus was one of the Midwest's most thriving cities. I also had a cousin that attended OSU who told me it would be easy to find a job and affordable housing there. He was right. I live in a tiny but comfortable apartment near campus that is pretty safe and close to work so I can't complain. I certainly don't plan on being a server the rest of my life but a girl has to crawl before she can walk, right?

I can still remember the first day I went job hunting here. I'd already told myself that potential employers are going to balk at hiring somebody who looks this horrendous so I had to make up for what I lacked in looks with my charming personality. It was a major hurdle for me coming to a new town like this. Brockdale's population is less than four thousand so most of the people I came in contact with were more or less used to my affliction. Now here I was catapulting myself into a heavily populated place where I didn't know a soul. I would have to endure the countless stares that inevitably occur at every venue. Was I strong enough to deal with that? There was really only one way to find out I figured.

Anyway, it hasn't been as bad as I thought it would be. The first thing I learned about this town is that people are basically friendly and open-minded. Sure, I was getting the wicked stares on the street as expected, but once I sat face-to-face with potential employers they tried their best to treat me as though I looked like a normal person. That helped a lot, I can't lie.

I had started my job search on campus because I figured that there should be plenty of jobs here plus I'm really not qualified to do much more than serve drinks, clean houses and babysit. And wouldn't you know, the third place I went to hired me right there on the spot. I saw this as a good omen.

I'd saved up enough money to pay the security deposit and first month's rent on my apartment so it didn't take me long to get settled in my new place. I pretty much live hand to mouth every month but that's okay—I refuse to break down and look for a roommate to help cover expenses. I'm much too independent for that. My parents have on several occasions offered to send money but I've refused them every time. I want to prove that I've done the right thing in moving away from home and that I can make it on my own. Yes, you can say I'm stubborn, but that's what having an ugly face can do to you. It's either that or flat give up and be miserable all the time. Or simply commit suicide to put an end to your suffering. I've chosen the high road, thank you.

It's almost eight PM and I'm a block away from the bar. I always walk to work unless the weather is horrible. Finding a place to park on campus is dicey at best and there's always a chance that your car can get stolen, hit or broken into. I'd like to shed a few pounds so walking is a good thing. Eating fast food isn't, though. I hate grocery shopping and a person has to eat, right? Maybe in time I'll break down and start cooking more and eating out less. It's not going to be easy though.

It's a lovely spring night and there are a lot of folks taking in the nice weather. I'm a self-confessed night owl for many reasons—the main one being that it's difficult to see facial details in the dark which means that unless I'm passing by a streetlight or caught in the headlights my repulsive appearance goes unnoticed. I can be just like everybody else.

The moment I enter the Lizard I see that we're busier than usual at this early hour. I spot Grace standing behind the bar pulling a draft. She smiles at me as I walk past on my way to the kitchen.

“Quite an early crowd,” I say.

“Hey, Libby. Yeah, it's already getting crazy,” she replies.

I can feel the stares from the non-regulars but I keep on moving without turning my head. In all of my twenty-two years of living I haven't once been able to enter a room without becoming insanely self-conscious. You'd think I'd be used to it by now but I'm not and probably never will be. Depending on my mood at the time I'll either do my best to simply ignore the gawkers or stare them down and stick out my tongue. It's so fun to watch their reaction because they don't know whether to turn away or grin at me awkwardly. Either way I come out the winner.

I enter the kitchen and hang up my jacket before heading to the employee bathroom. Andre is at the grill and winks at me as he always does—he's such a sweetheart. I look in the mirror and try to fix my hair. There are days when I wish I could get up the nerve to shave it all off. I know there are girls that would kill to have thick hair but they don't know what they're missing in my case. My coif is so gnarly and gross that it takes half an hour just to get it to look like this. Doesn't matter how much I wash it, brush it out, or how much conditioner I use, I have locks that look like Medusa's. If I had half a brain I'd at least get it cropped off really short, but I don't want to look like some ugly gay chick, either. It's tough enough just looking like fresh road kill.

I'm wearing a pretty tight fitting white tee shirt sporting the Lounge Lizard logo on the front because that's what the boss prefers we wear. I don't mind, really—at least it's comfortable and super casual. I'm anything but a fashion plate and pretty much wear jeans and tee shirts or sweatshirts all of the time. I know my jeans are too tight and show off my oversized ass but some men seem to like it. Hey, I'll take all the points I can get.

I try to avoid looking at the reflection of my face but it's impossible. I quit using concealer on my scar back in high school when it finally dawned on me that it made the thing even more noticeable. The problem is, it's about three shades darker than my fair skin plus it's so damned thick. All the makeup in the world could never flatten the thing out. I've tried tanning to help lower the contrast between skin and scar but that does little good. In a nutshell, I am pretty much resigned to leaving the thing alone and working on my charming skills instead.

I'm halfway through my shift when some guy hits on me. I've just served him his third or fourth Bud and he's already shit faced.

"When you get off, girl?" he slobbers.

"When my shift is over."

"And when would that be?"

"Long after you've left," I reply. This guy reminds me of Lurch—tall, thin with a really deep voice. *You rang, master?*

"I doubt that—what was your name again?"

"The girl with the great big scar."

"Seriously, man—that scar doesn't bother me none. Let's go party when you get off."

This guy is much too persistent. Time to turn him off. "I appreciate the offer but my boyfriend is picking me up. You can tag along with us if you'd like, though."

"I'm good," he says. "Can't blame a guy for tryin'"

I smile and return to the bar.

Mind you, I don't get hit upon very often. And when I do, the men are too drunk or too horny or both for my flawed face to matter. I'd be lying if I said it doesn't flatter me just a little, drunk or otherwise. Just knowing that for whatever reason someone actually gives me that sort of attention is somewhat inspiring, sick as that may seem. But don't get me wrong—I would never say yes to any of these losers. In spite of it all I still have some pride.

So now you're probably wondering, am I a virgin? Of course not—I never said I'm a nun. But the sum total of my sexual encounters was back in high school when the hormones rage so much that everybody ends up getting laid eventually. But I hated every second of it. I knew that it was all about getting off and had nothing to do with liking or respecting the other person. It in fact depressed me so much that I ended up taking a vow of celibacy for the rest of my life. And I'm perfectly fine with that.

When last call is announced at two AM I'm pretty tired but around a hundred and fifty dollars richer. Greg, the owner is busy closing out behind the bar while the rest of us start clearing the tables. By two-thirty the last of the patrons have left and I'm putting on my jacket. I stuff my tips in an inside pocket and double-check that I have my keys and pepper spray before leaving.

The moment I step outside the familiar anxiety of walking alone in the dark on campus carrying a large wad of cash comes over me. I recall Lurch's offer earlier and am grateful that he left the bar an hour ago. God only knows how he'd react if he saw me now leaving alone sans boyfriend at my side.

Campus is still fairly lively at this hour and seeing a small group of girls stumbling along High Street makes me feel a little less vulnerable. It's been a struggle getting used to the potential dangers that abound on a big city college campus but I've pretty much overcome my fears by now. Having a can of pepper spray on hand never hurts though.

The first thing I do when I get home is go straight to my bedroom and put on a pair of sweats. Mittens follows me in as usual, meowing her way through the tiny flat. I pick her up and carry her into the kitchen. She loves a bird's eye view of the cabinet as I take out a box of Meow Mix Irresistibles and pour some into her bowl. She's purring constantly as she scarfs down the treats like there's no tomorrow, which never fails to make me laugh. Mittens is my BFF.

I take out a half bottle of Pinot from the fridge and pour myself a glass. I bring it into the living room and plop down on the sofa. I turn on the TV and scan the channels until I find an old Hitchcock movie. I'm a huge fan of Hitch.

Taking a sip of wine, I lean my head back and plan out what I'm going to do tomorrow. First on the list is go to Kroger and get kitty litter along with a few other things I'm running low on. Then I need to go to the photo store and buy some film and paper. I can't wait to get back into black and white film after all this time—the last time I shot film was for a photo class I took at the community college near Brockdale. I've long since grown tired of shooting digitally and miss the hands-on experience of developing and printing my own stuff. My conversion of the bathroom into a temporary darkroom is almost complete and all I need to do is get a couple more things and shoot a roll or two of film to break it in.

This event will be an almost religious experience. It's been months since my parents gave me an old Rolleiflex camera for Christmas and I'm finally going to put it to use. It's been difficult, but I have managed to stick with my vow to wait until I'm set up to do my own developing and printing before trying it out. At last the time has come.

I have half a notion to turn in early but quickly dismiss it. As I already said, I'm a night owl—my day is only half over. I will sit here and think and watch TV and drink a few glasses of wine before beginning to consider going to bed. Hopefully by then I'll be tired enough to fall asleep. I am an insomniac and proud of it. I love darkness and the quiet solitude of the night. I feel as close to being normal as possible right now sitting here in my apartment before the flickering TV screen, just me and Mittens. What more does a girl need, really?

Janet Leigh has just left town with all that money. Little does she know that soon her life will be over at the hands of some demented lunatic while taking a shower at the Bates Motel. This movie is awesome for a million reasons but I think its most poignant attribute is showing how quickly one's life can totally turn around. You can be having a perfectly normal day and then all of a sudden everything goes from bad to worse. And then from worse to the very worst thing imaginable.

Like it did to Janet Leigh.

THREE

Portsmouth, Ohio - October, 1969

I unfold the scrap of paper and read the neatly written message: *You forgot something back home.*

This bit of news is as unsettling as the existence of the note itself. Instinctively, I ratchet up the hand brake and hop out of my car. There isn't a soul in sight yet somebody has left this note and taken my *Abbey Road* tape in exchange.

Who could it have been?

I spend a few minutes surveying the surrounding area but find no sign of anybody lurking around. Whoever broke into my car was most likely on foot—otherwise I would surely have heard a car pull into the gravel driveway. I get back in my car, search the dash compartment and look under the seats for my missing eight-track tape but it's nowhere in sight. In spite of the ominous nature of this note, I'm royally pissed that my favorite album of all time has just been ripped off.

I'll just have to stop in the Record Shop and pick up another copy, I muse. Won't cost me a cent, either.

I take another look at the note before pulling away. My plan for the wall is definitely off the table now, replaced by a gnawing desire to return to my house. I try to stay collected but by the time I've crossed the bridge into town I'm a nervous wreck. On one hand, I'm relieved knowing that there's somebody else among the living in this place. But on the other I don't know if this person is friend or foe. Like, why couldn't he simply have confronted me, shaken my hand and said howdy instead of secretly planting a cryptic note in my car and splitting the scene? Not exactly the *modus operandi* of somebody thrilled to meet the only other goddamn *Homo sapiens* around. In fact—

A light bulb goes on and I realize something even more disturbing. How in the hell could this person know I've "forgotten something back home?" Something very wrong there. For one thing, it implies that this person has already been at my house, otherwise how could he know that I left something? And what could this forgotten thing be? Samson? That wouldn't make sense—I couldn't have forgotten Samson because he wasn't there in the first place. The guy obviously wants me to return home—but why? What's in it for him? Could this be some sort of trap? Has he booby-trapped my door or planted a bomb? Or is he planning to lie in wait and blow me away the moment I step inside?

With the threat of imminent danger weighing on my mind, I decide I need a weapon of some kind to defend myself. I'll stop at Montgomery Ward and pick up a gun along the way. I take a left onto Chillicothe Street, hardly giving the wall a second thought as it grows smaller in my rear-view mirror.

I park at the esplanade and head for Wards, aware that the place might not even be accessible. If it isn't, it will be the first place to deny me entrance all day. Sure enough, I push open the door and step inside. The place is fully lit and open for business—only thing is nobody's shopping today but me. I go directly over to the escalator and take it up to the second floor. I head for sporting goods, locate the firearms display and examine the pistols. I want something small and easy to handle but capable of doing the job. I decide on a Ruger .32 semi-automatic with a ten-round clip. After picking up a box of shells I remove the clip, load up and head back to the car.

I'm so wired now that I have to force myself to stop and catch my breath. I was already nervous enough, but now that I'm packing a stolen gun I feel like some kind of desperate criminal. I am all but convinced there's trouble around the corner and not so sure I'm doing the right thing. Maybe I should just not go home and avoid taking any

chances—or at least wait a while before rushing into this head first. But I need some answers and putting it off isn't going to get me anywhere.

I'm scouring the streets along the way, just in case I spot Samson. I feel slightly more optimistic now that I know there's at least one other person roaming this Appalachian Twilight Zone. No matter what happens, I vow to take out the phone book and make some calls as previously planned.

I slow down as I near my house, keeping my eyes peeled for anything that looks suspicious. I park a couple of doors away, grab the pistol and sneak up to the front porch. I try my best to open the door quietly but it ends up sounding like a cannon going off. I step into my bedroom, gun drawn, and scan the room. Everything looks exactly as I left it. I do a cautious walkthrough of the first floor and check the attic. The coast is clear.

Assuming that whoever left the note is legit; I must determine what he was referring to. I feel silly looking around for something I supposedly "forgot" that some anonymous tipster informed me of. It's ridiculous, really, but I can't ignore it—not after everything else that's happened thus far. So I start in my bedroom closet and begin poking around for something that says "remember me?" I don't find anything important but decide to take out my faded jean jacket and a pair of binoculars that might come in handy later.

After looking under the bed and rifling through my dresser I decide to try the attic. There's quite a bit of my stuff still up there so the odds of finding something important are decent. I search through the drawers of my old nightstand and under the bed then move on to the closet and storage area adjacent to the bedroom. I find a few interesting items like a stack of Beatles bubble gum cards and an old Hohner harmonica but nothing that seems important.

What the hell could this guy be referring to?

I go back downstairs and know of only one other place to look: the basement. This is where the rec room and the laundry room are located. I'm not putting much stock into finding anything here but it's my last hope.

The moment I step into the rec room I spot it sitting there on the coffee table. *My walkie-talkie!* With a whoop I pick it up and switch it on. This has to be what I've been looking for! I've tried the television and the car radio but not a Citizens Band radio.

My transceiver has three channels including channel nine, which is the hailing channel. It's also the channel used for emergencies. I fully extend the antenna and switch to channel nine. The signal is weak so I turn up the volume to the max. I realize that since I'm in a basement, reception is considerably weakened. I run upstairs and out to the backyard. I listen for a minute or so before trying the other channels. Although I hear nothing but static, I'm thrilled nonetheless. Having this radio will at least allow me some control since I can transmit as well as copy. If there's anybody out there, they will get back to me.

I switch back to channel nine, hold the radio close to my mouth and press the transmit button.

"Emergency! Does anybody copy?"

I release the button and listen for a comeback. There's no reply, so I try again. Then I switch to the other two channels and attempt to make contact but have no luck. Although I'm disappointed, I feel good having a CB radio at my disposal. I can keep it turned on and monitor channel nine while going about my business. I make a mental note to pick up

some extra batteries while I'm out. After slinging the leather carrying strap over my shoulder I go back inside.

Thank you, dear mystery person. Whoever you are.

I take the phone book out of the kitchen drawer and step over to the wall phone. I turn to the yellow pages and dial the number for the AAA. As expected, there's no reply. Going down the list, I call no less than twenty businesses including a few that are out of state before starting on the white pages. No matter who or what I call, there's nobody on the other end of the line.

It suddenly occurs to me to try the operator and I'm astounded I haven't thought of it sooner. I dial O and wait for the familiar greeting. The line just keeps ringing and ringing. In a final ditch effort, I dial information. There's no answer there either.

For a moment, I just stare at the receiver in my hand. Since it appears that there truly isn't another soul anywhere—not just in Portsmouth, but *everywhere*—reality has totally sunk in. I try to imagine myself, day in and day out, living all alone. But wait a moment—there's also the anonymous tipster who left the note and stole my tape. Friend or foe, at least there's some solace knowing he's out there somewhere.

My stomach is growling. I hang up the phone and go over to the fridge. I see a package of bologna, take it out and sniff it then look for the mustard. I make myself a sandwich and pour myself a glass of milk. After lunch, I decide to leave again. It will be fruitless trying to find the mysterious note writer so I'll continue my investigation of the wall. But instead of returning to the west side I'm going to drive north up Route 23 to see if my calculations are correct. If the wall truly continues running northeast from the forest, I should eventually run into it. As for finding Samson, I need to accept the obvious: my dog has disappeared just like everybody else.

I pick up my jacket and binoculars on my way out the door. I get into the bug, turn the key and suddenly notice something out of the corner of my eye. Sticking out of the tape player is *Abbey Road*. I pull the tape out and examine it.

What the hell? Did this guy actually return this while I was inside? Impossible!

I stick my hand in my pocket to retrieve the note. It's not there, so I try the other pocket. It's gone! I search all over the car, knowing full well that I'd stuffed the note into my right pants pocket. When I finally give up looking, I sit and stare out the windshield, trying to recall the moment I found the note. My memory now seems fuzzy. Did I really find a note sticking out of the tape player? I'm not so sure now. Did I *imagine* that happening? Have I been under so much stress that I'm seeing things that aren't there?

Have I become delusional? That seems the most logical explanation. After all, I didn't hear anybody drive up that gravel driveway or see any sign of anyone being near that house. Is it possible that somewhere in the back of my mind I knew that my walkie-talkie was worth checking out and that I should go back home to retrieve it? Everything is so confusing now I don't know what to believe. All I'm certain of now is that the tape is here in my hand, which I guess is good. Never look a gift horse in the mouth, they say. I release the brake and back out of my driveway.

I can't quit thinking about this and eventually come to the conclusion that I must have had some sort of episode at the house on the west side. I concocted the whole note thing because I'm scared to death of being all alone in this place. I really want to believe that there's somebody else here so I invent this note-writing specter to allay my fears and give me some hope.

I've turned on to Route 23 north and decide that psychoanalyzing myself is getting me nowhere and just making me feel even more hopeless. I drive past Vince's Carry Out and think of the many times we've hung around outside conning people into buying beer for us. The thought of a beer sounds like heaven so I make a mental note to pick up a cold six pack on my way back into town. It's going to be a long night and making a beer score will be as easy as going in and picking it up.

I pull out the map and unfold it on the passenger seat. I find the lines I'd drawn and locate the approximate point where the wall will intersect the highway. It looks to be somewhere between Rosemount and Lucasville, which is ten miles away. I lean over and am about to turn up the volume on my tape player when the walkie-talkie suddenly comes to life.

"Can you hear me?"

At the sound of this faint female voice, I nearly lose control of the car. I grab the radio, bring it up to my mouth and press the transmit button.

"Yes, I hear you! Who is this?"

No reply. I pull out the antenna some more, turn up the volume and press the button again. "Hello, are you still there?"

All I hear is the crackle of static.

"Please, what's your 10-20—are you in Portsmouth?" I shout desperately.

I slow down to a stop and step out onto the highway. I extend the antenna its full 48 inches and press the tiny speaker against my ear. All I want now is to hear that sweet tinny voice again. I need assurance that I really heard it the first time and not imagining it. The mysterious note ordeal has left me seriously doubting myself. *Please let me hear you again!*

I listen for a moment and quickly flip to the other channels just in case she changed frequencies. But there's nobody there.

I'm beside myself. I *know* I heard a voice—but why couldn't she hear me? Maybe she was transmitting from a base station, which has more transmitting range than this handheld. My transmitting range is only a few miles on a clear day on flat terrain. Whatever the case, she can't be more than ten miles away since all CB radios have a measly five-watt power limit.

I can only hope I hear back from her again, wherever she is. I get back in the car and set the radio on the passenger seat facing me with the antenna sticking out the window.

Soon I'm driving past Rosemount and continuing north on Route 23. If my calculations are correct and the wall hasn't changed course, I should be able to see it within a few miles. The drive is surreal. I'm so accustomed to seeing all kinds of traffic on this busy highway yet I'm the only one on the road. I'm pretty sure I'll never get used to this.

Suddenly I see it in the distance: the wall. I should be thrilled that my guess was correct but I'm not. Far from it. The fact that the wall crosses this highway from east to west suggests that it is surrounding the entire western section of Scioto County in the form of an impenetrable barrier. Half of my hometown is literally cut off from the entire western United States. And if the wall cuts back toward the south at any point east of this highway, it will be forming a seamless barrier in which I am totally trapped. My own personal prison wall.

This possibility is unsettling to say the least.

I'm only a couple of miles from Lucasville and the wall is looming larger every second. It is sprawling from the west as far as I can see. In another minute its dead ahead, just south of the Lucasville city limits. It crosses Route 23 just beyond the Scioto Breeze Drive In, only fifty yards or so past the movie screen. I take a look at the marquee as I pass by and note that *Easy Rider* and *Support Your Local Sheriff* are this week's movies.

I slow to a stop at the base of the wall. It seems as though whoever built this monstrosity purposely spared our most popular drive-in movie theatre. From where I'm sitting I can see the concession stand and pole mounted speakers. To the east, the wall crosses the railroad tracks and continues as far as the eye can see.

I get out and stare straight up at it. The thing seems to be even higher than it did on the west side, but I could be imagining this. *Who in the holy hell built this thing?*

I try to imagine what exists on the other side of the wall from where I'm standing. I know that within a few hundred feet north the speed limit slows to thirty-five as you enter the tiny downtown area of Lucasville. There's little more than a grocery store, a gas station and a few other small businesses dotting the road before you reach the end of town in the blink of an eye and the fifty-five mph speed limit resumes. My question now is does Lucasville still exist or is there something else in its place? Has it been leveled by the same forces that built this wall or is everything still as it was before? What I wouldn't give to know.

I decide to go check out the drive-in. I grab my radio and walk across the median strip to the southbound lanes. After hopping the guardrail I head toward the entrance and pass by the box office. I try to recall the last time I saw a movie here but can't. All I can remember are the numerous Saturday evenings the whole family had piled into the car and headed for the Breeze with a cooler full of Pepsi and a bag of Snyders Potato Chips to avoid having to pay the high prices at the concession stand. I know for a fact I saw *Gorgo*, *Frankenstein* and *The Brides of Dracula* here, but any other titles escape me now.

I enter the main area and walk over to the concession stand. Despite the fact that it's afternoon with several more hours of daylight remaining, the door is unlocked. I step inside and look around the place. The lights are turned on but the grill is cold and the popcorn is cold and stale. A few moments later I leave the place.

Back at my car, I decide to walk along the wall and up a steep bank to where it crosses the railroad tracks. I expect the tracks to be either deteriorated or missing altogether but they're in good shape and simply stop dead at the wall. Gazing at the tracks as they stretch south parallel to the highway I wonder how long it's been since a train has travelled over them. I can't even venture a guess. Like everything else I've observed since waking up this morning it defies all logic.

What to do now? I'm not wearing a watch and have no idea what time it is. It's been at least three or four hours since I began this adventure at ten-thirty this morning. That would make it around two or three now. The fact that I'm not wearing a wristwatch bothers me—I've always worn a watch for as long as I can remember. I didn't see it in the bathroom with my other stuff. Where the hell could it be?

I'm now obsessed with my missing wristwatch and not knowing exactly what time it is. I decide to run back to the concession stand to find out. I've just passed the box office when I hear her voice again.

"Can you hear me?"

I grab the radio. "I hear you!" I shout in reply.

There's a moment of static after I release the transmit button. Then I hear, "*Where are you now?*"

"I'm at the Scioto Breeze! Where are you?"

"*I'm not sure, exactly. Can you be more specific? Where is the Scioto Breeze?*"

I suddenly realize that she has an English accent. "It's a drive-in theatre in Portsmouth, Ohio! Haven't you ever heard of it?"

"I . . ." Her voice falls off.

"What was that? I didn't hear you—you're fading out!"

I hear a bunch of static along with a sort of whining sound fading in and out—the sort of sound you get when you're picking up distant skip. But I don't hear anything else.

"Please repeat—I didn't copy your last transmission!"

The whining sound continues and then fades out altogether. All I hear now is static.

"Hello, are you still there?"

I stand by for several moments but the band remains silent.

"Please, if you can hear me, I've lost you. I will continue monitoring channel nine so please keep trying to contact me. I really need to hear back from you!"

As I release the button, I realize how desperate I must sound to this person. And no wonder—hers is the only human voice I've heard and the only bright spot of this entire crazy day. And having lost something this precious twice now and not knowing if I'll ever hear her again is tough to handle. The fact that she sounded British makes me wonder if I was misinterpreting that. There's no way she was transmitting from across the Atlantic so if she is indeed British, she could simply be somebody living here who was born in the U.K. No reason to think otherwise.

Clutching my radio now as if it were a priceless heirloom I proceed to the concession stand to check out the time. I'm inside just long enough to find a clock and discover that it's three-fifteen. I have now been running around like a chicken with its head cut off for nearly five hours. I feel like I've just run a triathlon.

I return to my VW, turn it around and head back down the highway. I really need to clear my head. So much has happened I'm unable to concentrate or come up with any sort of game plan. Yes, I could continue my quest to see how far the wall runs to the east and if I really am trapped inside the damn thing but my heart's just not in it now. Maybe later. Right now, I have a vision of an ice-cold beer and some R and R. I'll stop at Vince's Carry Out and pick up that six-pack on the way home. Then I'm going to sit back and proceed to medicate my poor head before it explodes.

END OF SAMPLE.

The Wall is now available on paperback and ebook at the iBook Store, Barnes and Noble, and Amazon. Go to ScottWittenburg.com for links/details.

Thanks for reading!