

MIKAEL MATTSSON

**ALL  
THE  
LOVELY  
PEOPLE**

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**By  
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## **DISCLAIMER**

This novel contains material that may be distressing or triggering for some readers. Topics include, but are not limited to, abuse, self-harm, and suicide.

If you feel that you may not be in the right mental or emotional place to safely engage with these subjects, please prioritize your well-being and consider not reading this book.

Your health and happiness are more important than any story.

Please note, this book is a work of fiction.

Mikael

*For my siblings.*

*Yeah, I promised my siblings that I'd  
dedicate this book to them, so here we  
are.*



## Disconnected

The t-rex has some abnormally small arms, which makes me feel sad for some reason, almost as if it's my fault that it can't hug the stegosaur that I've placed next to it.

They can't really fight either; can't claw and rip and tear and...

The arms are too *small*, and the size between the two animals too starkly different.

I'm pretty sure the t-rex wouldn't be able to bite a chunk out of its prey before the prey managed to either slip away or tear at its belly since what could the t-rex do?

What could it do with those silly little arms of his?

I'm six years old.

I think.

In my hands, the two dinosaur toys seem both large and small at the same time, probably because I happen to love dinosaurs and therefore know that, in real life, these beasts were a lot bigger than the toys we humans created of them.

I'm sitting on a carpet that looks like a race car track, a long, winding gray road with strange-looking spectators on the sides. That catches my eye.

The people... So distorted, featureless, motionless... meaningless.

No story.

No past.

*No future.*

They are stationary and not even all that appealing to look at. I wonder what kind of life that must be before lifting my eyes to observe the two other boys in this same room. The pair of them are huddled together, playing with racecar toys while going "*brrmm brrmm*" way too loudly, almost as if they're making an unnecessary show out of it, like they want attention, like they're egging me on to make me watch the game they play even when I don't want to, but they make those obnoxious noises, and now I have to stare.

They glance at me, their faces lacking any understandable expressions.

One of them speaks, and I happen to know this because that one lady who tells me things always tells me to look at their eyes first, then the mouth.

If their eyes are on me, and then their mouth moves, it means that most likely they're trying to make conversation, even if, in my mind, the words coming out of their mouth rarely matter.

But this boy speaks to me, and as expected, the words matter so little that I hardly hear them.

I lift up the dinosaur toys, indicating that I'm busy.

His mouth moves, but at the same time, his eyes move, and now he stares at the other boy, and that bothers me to the verge of making me want to slap him, force him to look at me again and make it clear

if he was directing his words at *me* or at the boy because how can I tell since he changed the person, he was looking at mid-sentence.

The boys keep playing.

I stare at the carpet.

I stare at the *boys*.

On the carpet, the spectators of the race car event lack any real features, any real personality, or any real meaning.

I look back up at the boys.

It's all the *same*.

Those have no meaning either.

It feels as if they don't agree with my assessment though, and both of them are locked in what seems to be a very pleasing moment of harmony between them. It's almost as if they are strangely connected by invisible cords that unite their brains, maybe even their hearts, making it easy for them to comprehend all there is to understand about the person next to them.

I see no cord anywhere near me or in me on me.

Nothing visible or invisible that would tether me to anybody else.

I float even when sitting.

I float while others stay still; their invisible cords linked to both other people and the world around them, so they don't have to float.

"Matthew?" a woman calls out behind me. She places her hand on my shoulder. Her nails are painted red. I drop the toys and look down at my hands, wondering why her hands seem to be so firm and connected to her, under her control, when my hands seem to just be



two lumps of meat, unbothered by my desires for them.

I don't think they're even truly mine. They don't *feel* like they are.

"Matthew?" the woman speaks again, and I look up at her. It's hard to tell who she is; her face is a blur like with all the others, but her eyes are filled with all there ever will be and all there ever was. So much information, emotions, and thoughts that it makes me want to cry, realizing that my eyes look vacant whenever I look at myself in the mirror, and even on rare occasions like this where I can tell that she probably is an actual person with real thoughts, experiences, and purpose, I can't seem to force myself to comprehend it all.

She's here, but she *isn't*.

She's alive but living means *nothing*.

And I want to cry because how can I not when nothing I say will ever explain these thoughts, and no one will be able to understand what I want them to understand?

But I don't cry.

I smile because the lady who tells me things once told me that it makes people smile when I smile, and I think that smiling is good because it makes people look less like a blur, less like some strange puzzle that I have no pieces to.

Now she's smiling.

I wonder if my smile makes her feel like she can look at me and not want to cry, too.

## Thursday Evening

My stomach won't settle down; it hops and twists while trying to force me to get up and rush to the bathroom.

Would be quiet and calm too, wouldn't have to take one of those timid and gentle workplace shits either. Everyone else is gone at this hour, and now it's just me and this one student lingering in the dormitory staff's breakroom.

He's talking. Or complaining.

I can't focus on the exact context of his verbal diarrhea since I would love nothing more than to shoo him away, rush to the bathroom, and release some diarrhea of my own.

But that's not what people do, I remind myself while imagining the tired voice of Pam saying those exact words. She wouldn't want me to ignore this kid. She wouldn't like the way I want to push him off his chair so I can run off while he gathers himself, unable to process what just happened, dumbfounded while looking into my eyes, flabbergasted over how a counselor just pushed him. But that's not an option because Pam wouldn't want me to behave like that.

*Antisocial behavior* was what she used to call it.

God, Pam was nice. Pam wouldn't mind it if I just told her to fuck off so I could be alone and not bothered by struggling to put on a mask of a human being while trying to pretend to listen and care and-

“So, yeah... what do you think?” The student looks defeated. His clothes are very ill-fitting, and I'm pretty sure it's on purpose to hide his ‘bigger than appropriate for a nineteen-year-old’ body.

“I think you have a problem.” I force a smile and make my words come out playful to hide the fact that I wasn't listening, and if he has a problem (which I'm sure he does), I would have zero idea of what it is.

Inability to stop devouring everything that contains more grease and fat than should be legally allowed?

Having an oddly proportioned body where he kinda has the build of a middle schooler who got stuck in a machine that tried to age him up but half-assed it?

“I mean, yeah...” The student scratches his chin which is covered by a thin beard that is probably meant to hide his double chin but only manages to look like a few strands of pubic hair glued to his face.

“But like how do I make him stop it? I just... I don't think it's nice that he keeps on messing with me even when he's not even living in the dorms anymore. Dude doesn't even go to the same college as me.”

A surge of joy rushes through me when I realize what we're talking about.

It's nine p.m. on a Thursday night, and my weekend starts in an hour, so it's not like I'm being that bad of a person for not paying attention to what the hell this week's drama at work is.

“Yes,” I say, nodding maybe a bit too eagerly, but you have to make these students feel heard and seen. “It really isn't cool that he keeps

bugging you like that. Have you tried telling the teachers?"

He looks almost insulted.

"I'm telling you?"

"I'm aware of that," I sigh. "I mean that maybe you should tell the teachers at the school so they can make Peter stop fucking with you because we can't really do anything about it here in the dorms since Peter doesn't live here anymore."

Peter was kicked out a week ago for throwing a party in his room on a Monday while also somehow figuring it was a great idea to try and assault one of us counselors with a knife when he came to shut the party down. Never say that these kids aren't innovative in the ways they seek to self-destruct.

"Well..." The student fiddles with his sad excuse for a beard again, and I really wish he wouldn't, because now I can't focus on anything else than those sad strands of thin, blonde hair. "I don't think the teachers care. Or like they don't want to get involved."

"And why do you think that is?" I close my eyes and try very hard not to show my complete disinterest in this conversation. If there is a God, he will light a fire in one of the rooms just so I'll have an excuse to run off and do something other than listen to this student whine since, as far as I know, his only ascertainable function at the dorms is to eat, sleep, and occasionally stop a counselor so he can complain about things that really don't matter.

I would also love to take a shit too, so there's that.

The train ride back home will take an hour or so, and that has me nearly in tears since I won't make it in time to the Corner Stop to

drink myself stupid because the new owner closes the place at eleven on weekdays.

This means that I'll have to wait until tomorrow to get drunk and happy, which, quite literally, places every single person that crosses my path tonight in danger.

“Sorry.” I give an apologetic smile when I realize that the student has been talking for a minute while probably wondering why I'm staring blankly at him. “I'm pretty tired. I missed that last part.”

“I was just... like thinking if you, or some other counselor, could like call the school and tell them to tell Peter not to mess with me. I'm like actually trying to focus on my studies and trying to get all of it done, and this whole thing is really messing with me...”

“Sounds pretty awful,” I say. I wonder if I sound like Pam whenever I say it because she had a very distinct way of saying it. “I'll write down what you said, and we'll figure something out tomorrow, okay?”

“Are you here tomorrow?” He sounds so hopeful; it makes me grimace.

“No. But other counselors will be, and they can handle it.”

“Who is working tomorrow, do you know?”

“I don't remember off the top of my head.”

By ten p.m. I'm almost running up the walls in the breakroom.

The night manager should arrive any minute now, and that means I get to go home, so these last moments of anticipation are turning into a fight for survival. I sit on the couch, scroll through my feed on

Instagram, open incognito mode on my browser, and check Emily's profile for updates (none, which feels like an insult for some reason), hesitate a moment, and check Mandy's profile for updates (some old photos posted by her friends that all seem to be locked in a never-ending competition on who can say the nicest thing about the dead girl), and finally, I travel into the mystical land of Pornhub where I check the page of my favorite star (if you can call porn actresses that) and find that she hasn't posted any new material, either, which flattens my spirit even further.

Sometimes it really helps to jack off in the counselor's bathroom when it's a quiet night and you're literally just trying to stay sane while waiting to get the green light to fuck off and go home.

But that won't be happening tonight, it seems.

Next, I imagine what it would be like to call Sarah, but that idea feels less and less appealing the more I think about it, so I just put the phone away and feel the rush of complete and absolute emptiness that follows now that I'm left alone with my thoughts. Sarah's at home because she's never anywhere but home. She'll be way too happy to see me because she never sees anyone else but me, and even when she accidentally bumps into someone in the stairwell of the apartment building, she just coldly ignores them, probably out of fear of being rejected if she lets anyone get close to her. And when I get home, Sarah will want to cuddle and talk and have sex and watch a fucking movie and maybe more sex and if she's feeling like pretending to be a normal human, she'll want to talk some more and...

When Matthew was a child, he was taught to hide his violent urges.

Those close to him ensured he lived a good, normal life. But Matthew finds this life dull, meaningless, and empty. Despite having a job where he helps people, Matthew feels no compassion.

His partner adores him, but Matthew is incapable of love and suffocates under the weight of affection.

Everything changes when two young women are murdered.

Matthew knows that as the hunt for the killer intensifies, it won't be long before his own dark secrets are uncovered.

The skeletons in his closet are about to be exposed, and the facade of his normal life is on the brink of collapse.

**BoD**



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