

## ENGLISH: *THE LOT- IN WORDS*

**Prompt: Our perceptions are shaped by the world we live in**  
**The Lot: In Words**

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Blood dripped from his mutilated body. He lay on the workshop bench, gasping for air and begging for mercy. Bound at the hands, bound at the feet. There would be no escape for this dreadful, pathetic creature. It would only be a few more minutes, and I sat there, watching, waiting. At that point, everything that I had managed to escape from for the past two days came rushing back.

I had just come home from a party. The front door was unlocked. My footsteps echoed through the eerily quiet house as I called for my parents and brother. "Dad!" "Mum!" "Joe!" Nothing. I ran through the house. The kitchen. The dining room. The lounge room. All empty. I thundered up the stairs, my pulse roaring in my ears. I shoved open my parents' bedroom door. It was then that I screamed, tears streaming down my face. Their mattress had turned a dull red, soaked through. I stepped inside, feeling sick as I saw their lifeless bodies. Ever so gently, I stroked their cold, blood-stained faces, a look of terror plastered on them. Suddenly remembering Joe, I flew to his nursery, dreading what I was to see. I fell to my knees next to his blood-spattered cot, sobbing. I was a sixteen-year-old boy who grew up in an instant.

For the next ten years, I tried to run away from those images, which were glued inside my head. Everywhere I looked, I saw them lying there. Innocent beings brutally murdered for no apparent reason. My world became haunted by them. Every night I would wake up screaming, seeing the silhouette of the killer as he committed the act. As time progressed, my mind was numbed. I saw the world differently.

I watched as the police caught the man who had murdered my family. I watched as he sneered through his trial. I watched as his attorney attempted to fake his innocence. I watched as he was led off to a prison sentence. A few years on, I watched as his sentence shortened to five years. I watched as he walked free from prison, his sins atoned for.

Meanwhile, I had been going to the gym, transforming myself from a small, skinny boy to a strong, muscular man. I had been taking martial arts lessons, and had earned myself a black belt. I had slowly, steadily, stocked up equipment in my garage. I had a purpose: to rid myself of those horrible images.

Two days ago, I went to the killer's house. I waited for him to emerge, then caught him unawares. By then, my size and skill easily overwhelmed him. I brought him back to my garage, and slowly, steadily, tortured him. Although there was nothing I could do to fully avenge what he had done to my family, for the first time in the ten years, the images of my family's bodies left me. My whole mind was occupied with doing what I had been waiting to do for so long. I found it enjoyable. I looked into his eyes as he screamed for mercy, I watched as tears of pain streamed down his face. Poetic justice.

It was funny, how easy I felt when I was doing what I had to do. At any other time, I would have felt sick and evil, but this time, it was the right thing. Any guilt was erased by the image of my family, and I continued, a man on a mission.

As the killer's screaming started to fade, as his eyes grew duller, I leaned into his bloodied face and whispered what I had planned for years, "Thank you for your precious and profound lesson in life. You helped greatly to open my eyes to the mysterious human darkness where I eventually learnt to see. Through these years, I've seen it again and again - even in intellectual and cultural life - the most innocent thing, the most weak, wretched and vulnerable situation was the thing most viciously targeted and abused. Nothing awakens fiendish and destructive anger like the presence of the powerless – and now, I have the power over you.

My friend, we are in a slaughterhouse. I have the job of slaughtering you, to feed you on a silver platter to the people who want you gone; otherwise known as the rest of the world. People will benefit from my slaying of you, but no one will admit it. Society denies its bloodlust and cruelty and imagines that these impulses appropriately belong to prehistoric barbarians. Yet your neighbour, the respected gentleman in the fine suit who has never dirtied his hands or killed a living creature, never meditated upon a rotting corpse such as you, will ultimately feel safer that you are gone. His children, his family, his neighbourhood is one step closer to safety. They will pretend to hate me to mask their relief that you're gone."

With that, I walked away, washed my hands, and sat back down, watching, waiting. Waiting for that glorious, atoning moment.

I jumped into my new patrol car and sped to the crime scene. Jones and I knocked on the door, to no avail, then barged in, sweeping the entire house. Nothing. We flew into the garage, guns drawn. I couldn't believe what I was seeing. A man in his twenties was sitting on a stool, blood over his face and body, staring at a mutilated man lying on his workbench. He whirled around as we ran in, immediately raising both hands. As Jones slammed him against the wall, I checked whether the other man was still alive. He wasn't. I yelled the information to Jones, and the killer started to laugh the most relieved, most alive laugh I have ever heard. I stared at the scene, trying my best not to throw up as I looked at the mutilated body.

When Jones told me the killer's name, I was shocked, shaken to the core. He had been a classmate of mine, a mate in high school. We had drifted apart before his family had been killed by the man he had just tortured. Yet it still didn't seem right. I had always hated the idea of revenge, and the image of the mutilated body remained in my mind. Did anyone deserve something like that to be inflicted on them? I looked into the interrogation room, where he was sitting contentedly. Taking a deep breath, I stepped inside.

"Paul Hewson." I dropped my file on the table. "Remember me? From high school? Jim Dawson."

He looked me in the eye and nodded silently.

"Why did you do that? Two wrongs don't make a right."

He opened his mouth.

"You don't understand. What do you know about the darkness of the world? You grew up with your family; no bastard came to snatch them away from you. Have you ever experienced something like that?" He waited for the shake of my head.

"See, your world is totally different to mine. You're living a dream; I'm living a nightmare. So there's really no reason to talk about this," he spat, turning his face away. "I did what I had to do. It may not have made everything right, but it was one step closer. I will never regret this."

I sighed. This was the first murder I had ever dealt with. I didn't know how to respond.

Months later, as I watched the killer being led to prison, I met him face-to-face. I hadn't had a good night's sleep since I had walked into his crime scene. I saw the world differently.

I leaned into him, holding his eyes. "Thank you for your precious and profound lesson in life. You have helped greatly to open my eyes to the mysterious human darkness."

The killer flinched at the words, staring at me with wide brown eyes. I looked into them, and, as he had said, I saw another, darker world.