

"The Mercy List" excerpt: "Damaged"

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(Set up: Though shamed to speak about it, Tanner has finally decided to open up to someone about his issues.)

INT. TANNER'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Tanner is sprawled out in his bed. Alone. Eyes wide open. He rolls over, shifts position. Shuts his eyes, but they soon pop back open. It's quiet and still.

He gives up on sleep, flings his covers off, and sits up.

INT. TANNER'S LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

A nicely-framed movie poster of "Helter Skelter" takes a prominent position. On his bookcase is a series of true crime encyclopedias, reference books on poisons and medications, biographies of Charles Manson and other oddities. A collection of antique glass poison bottles punctuate his tastefully appointed home.

Tanner comes out from the bedroom pulling on his jeans. He grabs his keys and wallet and heads for the door.

INT. TANNER'S CAR - MOVING -- NIGHT

Tanner glides his car through a leafy residential area. Cruising, carefully noticing every home. Choosing.

TANNER (V.O.)

Damaged. I'm damaged.

EXT. LEAFY SUBURBIA -- NIGHT

His car is parked by the curb. Tanner gets out, walks around the corner, and down a sleepy, darkened street.

TANNER (V.O.)

Yes. I think I do remember the first time. I guess I was about four or five. Me and my friend Adam were in his backyard. We were goofing around. He was up on the wall, and he suddenly jumped down. He shushed me and waved me over by the wall.

After scanning a few homes, his eyes rest on one. He looks back -- can't see his car from here. And not a soul around.

TANNER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
**I remember we had to push the doghouse
 against the cinder blocks to reach
 the trellis mounted on the wall.**

With a practiced stealth Tanner glides through the yard.
 Goes around the side of the house.

TANNER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
**We climbed up the trellis to look
 over into the neighbors' yard. There
 was a young couple out in their yard
 having sex.**

There is a window - a dim light is on. Curtains open.

TANNER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And we just watched.

CLOSE UP on Tanner's face - watching, entranced, concealed
 in the bushes near the window. His breath quickens as his
 hands get busy.

TANNER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
**At first I wasn't sure what they
 were doing, but they were naked, so
 that got my attention. I thought
 that was weird to be naked out in
 your yard. Especially for adults.**

INT. TASTEFUL SEATING AREA -- NIGHT

Tanner sits in a plush club chair, but he is a bit uneasy and
 tense. He is addressing an unseen person sitting directly
 across from him. He loosens his tie as he continues his story.

TANNER
 I remember they were doing it right
 next to a little child's inflatable
 swimming pool, pink with blue flowers.
 Adam was giggling. I'm not sure he
 understood what they were doing either.
 But I knew I was seeing something I
 shouldn't be seeing. Something secret.
 I remember feeling...empowered.

He barely looks the other person in the eye.

TANNER (CONT'D)
 They say that's a typical example of
 how it starts. Seeing someone
 accidentally as they are undressing
 or having sex. But...what I don't
 understand is...Adam saw the exact
 same thing as me at the exact same
 time and he turned out normal.

EXT. LEAFY SUBURBIA -- NIGHT

He never takes his eyes off the window as he brings himself to the brink of orgasm.

TANNER (V.O.)

But with me it turned into...this. Why me and not him? Maybe it just wasn't in his nature. But it was in mine.

He covers his mouth just in time to muffle his loud climax.

INT. TASTEFUL SEATING AREA -- NIGHT

Tanner takes a deep, bracing breath.

TANNER

Boy, you aren't afraid of the tough questions, are you?

He forces himself to keep direct eye contact, but squirms.

TANNER (CONT'D)

It depends. It's best when I can do it right there as I'm watching. If it's isolated enough, I can get away with it. Or I just hold it in my memory and wait 'til I get home. I have a good memory. Most voyeurs do.