

In the captain's quarters of an old wooden ship, sits a withered old man by the name of George, with a painful expression under his seemingly unemotional face. Sea spray from the pounding waves mists through the nearby open window, foreshadowing the approaching storm. The old man clenches his fists with anxiety as he sits in silence at the big, wooden desk in the middle of the room. Crow's feet branch out of the corners of his faded blue eyes, which stare intently at a little, black notebook with several pages torn out. He lets a mournful sigh escape from his cracked lips and crooked, yellow teeth that haven't been brushed in years. The dead look in his eyes tells of a troubled past that still plagues him today. He has given up trying to escape that past and has let it consume the entirety of his mind.

He knows the ship will sink, and there is nothing he can do about it, so to distract himself from his impending death, he pulls a chess pawn with a small chip out of the bottom out of his left pocket. Thoughts swirl and memories flood his mind, replaying the life he wasted, trying desperately to win at that stupid game at least one time. Unfortunately, success was never his forte. He remembers playing chess as a little kid with his older brother.

"Alright, get ready to lose! I've been practicing so much lately, that there's no way you'll win! I'm so sure, I'll even bet my allowance," twelve year old George shouted with excitement.

"Alright it's a deal. And if you're so sure of yourself, then why don't you go ahead and make the first move, big shot," Anthony, George's 16 year old brother, retorted.

"No problem," George said as he picked up a piece and moved it one spot forward.

The game lasted about an hour, until George's last two pieces were surrounded. All he had left were his king and a pawn.

"Any last words, Georgie?" Anthony sneered.

"I told you I hate it when you call me Georgie," George pouted.

"Whatever. Do you want to just surrender or should I finish this thing?"

George bit his bottom lip out of anger, and simply waved his arm across the board as a gesture to continue playing. A sly smirk formed on Anthony's face as he swiftly moved his piece and captured George's king.

"Checkmate!" Anthony shouted.

"Congrats *Tony*," George hissed through his teeth as he gave Anthony all of his eight dollar allowance.

"Hmm, that one piece of yours always seems to last the longest out of any of them. I don't think I've ever captured that one from you," Anthony proclaimed as he gestured towards a pawn with a small chip out of the bottom.

"That's because this is my lucky piece," George proudly stated as he shoved the chess piece into his pocket and walked out of the room.

He sets the pawn down on top of the desk, picks up a pencil, and begins to write in the little, black notebook. He writes down his memories of that chess game, adding to the story of his life. He knows the ship is sinking, so he tries to make good use of his time. He came to the idea of writing down his life's story, by remembering what his father always used to tell him, "Make a record of yourself before it's too late to tell your story." While George was never quite able to make an *official* record of himself, he figured his own little record could be just as significant.

When he finishes writing, he sets down the notebook and pencil, and reaches into his right, pants pocket. He pulls out a black domino with white dots, and sets it up next to the pawn on the desk. Ever since he was about seventeen, he started carrying that domino with him. That domino represented one second of life. He realized that life is like the world's longest chain of dominos; each domino represents one second of life, and the chain continues until the last domino falls, and your life is over. So, George has carried that domino with him almost all of his life so he would always have one second left.

He stares at the domino, thinking about how soon it will fall. He feels a deep sorrow inside, but is beyond the point of crying. His eyes are as dry as the life he has lived. He remembers another game of chess, he played with his father.

George is twenty now, and he sits across the table from his father, who is carefully eyeing the chess board, looking for his next move. George fidgets with hands to avoid looking at his dad. His nervousness shows through his eyes, which dart around the room, looking for a distraction. He doesn't want to disappoint his father like he always has. George was never good at sports or academics or anything at all really that required skill. He even flunked out of college, and he knew those were the reasons his father always thought of him as a failure that will never accomplish anything. He just wanted to at least win this one game to prove to his dad that he could do something worth bragging about.

"I've been practicing," George tells his dad, "I've really been working on my defending and exchanging."

"I can tell. You've improved much since the last time we played. It's just still not good enough," His father replied, as he made his move and captured George's Queen.

George sighed and his face dropped. All he ever wanted to do was please his dad, which, unfortunately, was an impossible task. The game continued, until, finally, George's king was captured, yet again, and George had failed his father for the umpteenth time that day.

George picked up the pencil and notebook, and began writing again. He knew his father would be very disappointed to find out that this was how George was documenting his life, and that he never amounted to anything. He promised himself that one day, he would make his father say he was proud, but that day never came. His dad died in a car accident when George was thirty-six, and from that point on, his life began to pick up. After his father passed away, George gave up trying to live for anyone else. He figured he had no one to impress anymore, so he did something he thought would at least make him happy; he bought a boat. He used that boat to launch his fisherman career, and he spent almost his whole life on it.

Now he is seventy-eight, and he is caught in a horrific storm in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. His boat is tilting more and more by the second, and George is beginning to feel nervous. He had already accepted his inevitable death, but now as it begins to seem

more real, the instinct of survival starts to kick in. He looks over at the domino and pawn, and decides to leave them on the desk; it amazes him how they haven't fallen over yet, with the angle the ship is at. Panic begins to set in, and he grabs his notebook, and frantically rips out every page of his life. If the story is going to sink, he wants it to at least sink with him.

The boat is tipping greatly to the right now, and George struggles to move towards the window. He grips anything he can, to move from one foot to the other, in the direction of his escape. Finally, he reaches the window, and turns around to take one more look at the place he called home for forty-two years of his life. He turns back around to face the churning sea, and pulls the latch on the window open. Without allowing time to think, he jumps out of the window and is immediately consumed by a towering wave. His lungs fill with water, and he sinks to the bottom of the ocean, just as the pawn on the desk finally falls, knocking over his last domino.