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## Without You - Character Arcs

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### Paul Alison

- Act 1
  - Limited Awareness – Paul, traditionally a beat cop-cum-major crimes detective has been stagnating behind a desk for the last 5 years. Given a missing persons case that he is obviously disdainful about, but knows it is the only footwork he'll see anymore, he takes it as vacation time from the desk work he's been relegated to.
  - Increased Awareness – Finding out a little more in regards to Allan's psychosis as he struggled to cope with the loss of his daughter, Paul sympathizes with the plight, and becomes more involved in the case. He assumes a suicide, as the loss Allan suffered reflects his own loss of his wife in the accident 5 years prior, and his own depressive tendencies around that time.
  - Reluctance to Change – As Paul delves further into Allan's life (speaking to his wife, investigating Allan's "library"), he sees that Allan appears to have gone off the deep end – studying the occult, delving into pseudo-religious affairs, and altogether sinking into what appears to be confusion and false hopes. As 'natural police', Paul is also a fair skeptic, and he skirts this side of Allan as weakness, and feels more pity than sympathy.
  - Overcoming Reluctance – Throughout the investigation, Paul has grown closer to Allan, and reading Allan's journey in his notes and diary, Paul has been able to take in all the literature and study that Allan had consumed that eventually led to his disappearance. The memories of his own personal loss have come to the surface during this, and he begins to connect on a deeper level with this man he has never met. He puts aside his disdain for Allan's methods, and we begin to see Paul's own mindset mirror that of Allan's. His pity reverts to sympathy, and is growing closer to empathy while he internalizes Allan's psychosis, and the case consumes him with the blame he laid on himself for the death of his own wife.

- Committing – Paul is willing to believe that Allan may not be a suicide. At this point, he is now of the mind that maybe there is some stock in Allan's investigations, though still in the 'real world' – Allan may have joined a fringe cult, or secluded himself away in an attempt to perform 'the ritual' that so many of the notes have alluded to at this point, and the diary points in the direction of how to do it, just not where. Paul digs deeper into investigating Allan's whereabouts through his affiliations with local occult bookstores, and records regarding overseas phone calls, emails, and book orders.
  
- Act 2
  - Experiment with First Change – Paul's experiment is less a literal experiment, and more a metaphorical one. In his current state of sleeplessness, depression, and backsliding into laying guilt and blame on himself for the death of Mary, he begins to take mild stock in what some of Allan's contacts are telling him regarding Allan's disappearance. If the love of this man for his daughter was strong enough that he could follow her even past death, what else is a man capable of? Stepping outside of reason for a brief moment in time, Paul begins to question the truth behind some of Allan's 'ravings'.
  - Preparing for the Big Change – After investigating deep into Allan's life and subsequent disappearance, Paul's own psyche has been suffering under the strain of his own past. He is consumed with finding Allan and somehow assuaging his own regret. He is now willing to do anything to track him down, close the case, and put it all behind him.
  - Attempting Big Change – Paul pieces together the proper requisites for attempting the ritual that Allan used to make contact with his daughter. He enters into the ritual with a sense of lingering trepidation from his past mindset regarding the situation, but attempts it nonetheless. The spaces between reality and the other world are still extremely soft where the ritual was originally performed, and Paul intends to reproduce it. Entering into the basement of Allan's house, Paul executes the ritual, and it works.
  - Consequences of the Attempt – Allan is waiting for Paul beyond the spaces, and he reprimands Paul for following him this far. He explains to Paul that the place where he is at is meant for him and his daughter, and not for Paul at all. He also cautions Paul that he has to leave, but it is dangerous, because in visiting the spaces

beyond reality, he has marked himself, and when he returns to the real world, this experience will not go unnoticed by people who are sensitive to these things. In entering into what should be a one-way trip, Paul has endangered himself back in the real world. Upon his return to the mundane world, Paul is confronted by someone 'sensitive' to the mark he accrued through his travel, is forced to shoot the man in self-defense, and is placed under internal investigation – this is the first time he has drawn his sidearm in 13 years.

- Rededication to Change – Paul realizes now that his path has been set – he too, will reunite with his lost love. However, his actions have put him in danger from unknown forces in the real world, and he must live long enough to see through the ritual that will reconnect him with Mary once and for all. With the drive to be with Mary now within reach, Paul begins the search for her own 'memories', the very thing that Allan explained brought him to his daughter Olivia.
- Act 3
  - Final Attempt at Big Change – With everything that has happened, Paul is now familiar not only with how to perform the ritual to meet Mary, but exactly what he needs to perform it. Allan's explanation in mind, Paul sets out to collect memories of Mary's life. After closing Allan's case as a dead-end, Paul takes a month leave, and begins the search, traveling to all the places Mary loved in life that he was unable to share with her due to work commitments. Upon his return home from the travels, he unearths a box of curios and memorabilia from her many travels, and knows now – he has exactly what he needs to perform the ritual.
  - Final Mastery of the Problem – The ritual performed, Paul awaits his transition beyond again. However, in lieu of going to Mary, she appears to him. Frustrated, agitated and at the end of his rope, Paul begins to lose control of the ritual. However, Mary explains to Paul that the memories needed to bring him to her had to be shared, not just her personal, private loves. At a loss, tired, and finally realizing what he's been chasing has been for naught, Paul gives in to his stress, and his heart arrhythmia takes hold. Mary tells Paul that it's going to be alright, and that the accident that took her life wasn't his fault, and that no matter what happened in life, he always has and always will love him. As Paul hits the floor, his heart skips a beat, but does not restart again. Paul, however, finally found what he was searching for the entire time – not in a

ritual, and certainly not in death, but the forgiveness and peace that he could never offer himself in life.

Upon the discovery of his body, the detective on site fingers through his notes on the Allan Smith case, and the diary, then pockets them surreptitiously – is the detective one of the ‘sensitives’ who knew what really happened to Paul, or another person snared in the trap of forbidden knowledge?

## Allan Smith

- Act 1

- Limited Awareness – Allan Smith, husband of Elizabeth and father of Olivia Smith lays on a springy, hard cot in the maternity ward of St. James Hospital. After a 35 hour labour, his daughter entered the world quietly, and only 3 hours later, she lies sleeping in a small cradle next to Liz's maternity bed. Lying awake listening to Liz sleep after the exhaustive ordeal, Allan has no idea that in just a year, he will no longer be a part of this world.

- Increased Awareness – 3 months of blissful, sleepless nights later, and Allan is awoken by his alarm for the first time since Olivia's birth. Surprised by the first night that Olivia didn't wake up, Allan sneaks over to her bassinette to check in on her.

6 hours later, he and Elizabeth are filling out the paperwork declaring Olivia deceased from SIDS. Crushed, they return to a quiet home, and sit at the kitchen table, heads down, listening to one another breathe until the next morning.

- Reluctance to Change – A week later, and Allan is still unable to function socially, and barely aware physically. He has not slept since the morning he found Olivia, and his wife Elizabeth is dealing with it more rationally, yet feeling the strain of Allan's grief as well as her own. Her attempts to comfort him are rebuked – Allan doesn't seem to want to release his pain, even after the closure of Olivia's cremation and dedication to the air. He refuses food and comfort, and sits alone most of the day in the living room, staring out the sliding glass doors at the clouds, with a sleeper of Olivia's close to his face.
- Overcoming Reluctance – Two weeks pass since the death of their daughter, and Elizabeth is finally able to crack Allan's shell. After 12 days of hunger, sleepless nights, and mourning, Allan falls apart in Liz's lap, and they cry together for the first time. A broken Allan cries with Liz for the remainder of the day, and they both sleep soundly for the first time since Olivia's passing. The next morning, they begin the search for a local grief counselor, and begin the desperate road to healing their lives.
- Committing – After a few meetings with the grief counselor, Allan is still harder to communicate with than Elizabeth – Curtis, their counselor, suggests that he begin to maintain a diary of his daily thoughts, memories, and general things that he would like to record

to help him cope with the loss. Liz dedicates herself to helping him, and Allan agrees to try. Throughout the sessions, however, Allan mentions a couple times that he just wants to see her again, to be with her, and both Curtis and Liz take this as signs of suicidal urges. Curtis recommends to Allan a consultation with a physician to proffer him medical assistance with these thoughts, but Allan politely declines, promising both Curtis and Liz that he doesn't intend to take that route.

- Act 2
  - Experiment with First Change – After a few weeks of writing in the journal, Allan has started to obsess over it – he has begun to use it as a communication means between himself and Olivia. Writing her notes, promising that he will 'see her soon enough', and telling her about his progress in figuring out how. His 'progress' has come through his recent re-ignited interest in the occult, paranormal activities, and pseudo-scientific religious amalgams – topics in which Allan has always had a great interest, and some light study, but never executed on. He sees this as his chance to reconnect with Olivia, and he begins his studies into how to do it. Elizabeth takes his renewed interest in something he was once greatly involved in as a renewal of his old interests, and encourages him to study again, as it seems to have gotten him away from his constant grieving. She approves of his frequent diary use, but has not seen exactly what it is that he is writing.
  - Preparing for the Big Change – A month passes, and Allan seems certain that he will be able to at least communicate with Olivia. The diary has become a 'how-to' during his journey through the unknown, and an obvious obsession. One morning, while Allan sleeps, Elizabeth leafs through the diary, horrified to see that Allan's apparent coping has taken a turn for the absurd. When she confronts Allan about it, he becomes enraged, blaming her for not trying harder to help him, and telling her that he's had to 'walk on eggshells' around her, as she is 'unable to deal with the truth'. He takes the diary, and begins to pack a bag. Hurt and tearful, Elizabeth pleads with Allan to visit Curtis again, but he snaps at her and continues to pack. Within two days, he is renting a small rancher for himself, and Liz is left alone in the house where her family came apart. Without any strictures or feelings of secrecy weighing him down, Allan begins preparations for his first attempt at the ritual to bring him together with Olivia again.
  - Attempting Big Change – Allan begins the ritual that he has been told will allow him to communicate with Olivia. He slices the pages

from his diary, and lays them out before him. In this makeshift basement/library he has setup, he wants no margin of error. The plans laid, Allan performs the ritual. He is bombarded by images – different colours, smells, articles of clothing, his own and Olivia's. Realizing that what he is seeing is Olivia's thoughts and her loves, Allan receives the next piece of the puzzle that will bring him closer to being with Olivia again. Coming out of the trance state the ritual placed him in, he burns the notes on the ritual, and commits himself to collecting the articles from his vision.

- Consequences of the Attempt – Hours after the attempt, Allan is beginning to get blinding headaches, and cannot get imagery from his head – visions of breasts, his own and Elizabeth's faces, small hands. Realizing that the connection to Olivia's memories has not shut completely, he waits the headache and the visions out. However, that night, he is awoken by similar aches, and similar visions. These windows continue to appear throughout the next day, and further throughout the week. Though it seems that Allan is trapped within this space for good, he chooses to ignore it now, and begins to eat pain medication at an exorbitant rate – after all, he knows now that he is not long for this world, and he only has to live long enough to perform the final ritual.
- Rededication to Change – Though the first week after the initial ritual is a hurricane of pain and disorientation, Allan fights it down, and settles into his regimen of self-medication. He is now prepared to sacrifice everything he has left in this world – his appearance, the remains of his relationship with Liz, whatever material objects he has left – to make the final attempt at the ritual. He begins to collect the items that have become more prevalent in his visions, realizing that the initial rush of imagery was more like a scattershot of Olivia's memories, whereas what remain now are the memories that she and he shared in their time together, as she 'reads' them back to him in their new, shared mindspace. His course set, Allan continues to shore up against the storm of discomfort he now lives with, and knows that a better place is almost set for him, should he dedicate himself to its' needs.

- Act 3

Final Attempt at Big Change – The ritual itself is a simple one, relative to the initial communication ritual he performed. After months of study and attempts at collecting the proper reagents, Allan is finally prepared to cross over, for good or for ill. Having severed his ties with this world (keeping a once-a-week call schedule with Liz to help maintain a façade of reality to keep her

constant questions at bay), Allan comes home from one last walk through Hemingway Park – a place that he shared a great deal of time with both Liz and Olivia. Nostalgia welling up behind his eyes and into the back of his nose, he closes the front door behind him.

Sitting in the dusk-lit front room, Allan writes one final note to Olivia in the diary.

“Sweetheart, I know what to do, and how to do it. I’m going to see you again soon!

I know now, I’ll never have to live another day without you.

Love, Papa”

Allan enters the basement, and performs the ritual.

- Final Mastery of the Problem – Allan finds himself surrounded by nothing but white. Olivia is there, though he can’t see her. Allan begins to sense that he is being overcome with questions and doubts. Is he prepared to do this? An image of himself, back in the mundane world, frozen in time with the last syllable of the ritual cracking his lips. Liz asleep, alone. The front door unlocked. The diary. The baby clothes, the dust, the musky smells of a favourite t-shirt, wrapped around a teddybear handmade by Liz’ mother.

Knowing all these things are being left behind, Allan lays focus on the one thing that has consumed him for the last 10 months, and pushes any semblance of guilt or remorse at leaving what remained of his reality behind him. The white begins to fade.

In the basement, Allan disappears. There is no one left to hear the last whispered word he leaves the world with.

## Tertiary Characters

Curtis Schilling – grief counselor and couples therapist, Curtis introduces Allan to the concept of maintaining a diary of his thoughts and feelings regarding the loss of Olivia. It is this diary that becomes the catalyst to his obsession with togetherness and being with Olivia.

Father Nigel Galway – friend of the family from Allan’s youth, he is also one of the people Allan seeks out to speak with during the first month of his re-introduction to occult studies. Nigel feels strongly for Allan and his seeming obsession, and tries to change Allan’s outlook – he will be with Olivia again, just after this life. When Allan returns with a letter to give to his wife, Nigel promises to deliver the next time he sees her. Given the Catholic church’s views on suicide, Father Galway would probably be a little more than upset if he knew the contents of the letter, even if it was just a ruse to throw people off the trail of his true final intentions.

Duncan “Oil Can” Mark – Paul’s old partner in the Major Crimes Unit. Paul also grew up in the same neighbourhood as Oil Can, and knows how he got his nickname. Duncan is a good-spirited detective who isn’t averse to sticking his nose where it doesn’t belong, more often than not. He doesn’t like the fact that Paul has been riding a desk since his accident, but he understands, and sympathizes with Paul, who he’s always viewed as ‘real police’ in a unit full of ‘fuckups and chain smokers’

Dougy Hirsch – Dougy is the Squad Sergeant in Paul’s division, and came up through the ranks the old-fashioned way to get where he is. Most of his day is spent staring at the clearance board, reminding people that there are red names that need to be wiped off, but he really is proud of his unit. However, knowing what it is to be a beat cop and a detective in a unit like this, he won’t ever let them know this, as he doesn’t want them to get big heads.

Orange Tommy – Paul’s Irish family connection. Never a rat, Tommy won’t talk about anything the Orangemen or the Black Catholics are up to in the streets, but he’s always helpful when it comes to finding things. As a ‘solver’ for the family, Orange Tommy has a lot of connections, and coming up with Paul in St. Gertie’s makes him family of sorts. Though different men, they were very similar boys, and neither forgets these ties. They hold to them tightly for the innocence they represent, rubbed away by their respective lifestyle and career decisions long, long ago.

## **Why these storylines? Why these characters?**

“Without You” is a story of personal horror, and redemption. Without sounding trite, I would like the opportunity to explain what these things mean.

When you start writing, you’re told to write what you know. As a new father, and husband of 10 years, I know what it is to have a family that you see as the most important thing in the world to you. The situations that both Allan and Paul enter into are situations that I see as places I would never want to be; places that would only reveal the worst, self-destructive tendencies in a person.

In the instance of ‘horror’, I see the situations like this –

In Allan’s situation, he has just lost the one person he sees as the most important person in his entire life – his 3 month old daughter. At 3 months, you are still within the euphoric state of being a new parent where lack of sleep supplemented by your child’s emerging character make you almost an analogue for their own self. You do everything you can for them, and it still doesn’t seem like enough. You always think you’re a bad parent, and you find yourself on the verge of tears more than you ever have before in your life. However, the reward of hearing them sleep, smelling them when they burying their face in your chest, or just knowing that you are their world is worth every second. The horror of losing that is something that, on a personal level, I never want to have to cope with. Looking into the worst places that I could go in that situation was a difficult challenge, but to be able to see the worst of what I could become, and visualize it back into a piece like this was its’ own reward. Facing these things down may be horror, but after they’ve played out as they have in “Without You”, I am able to see the forest for the trees in this situation.

In Paul’s situation, he is living with self-imposed guilt of the death of the only person in the world he feels a depth of emotion for – his wife, Mary. Though the initial feelings may have subsided, Paul lives with the reminder of her death daily, though this is mainly predicated on the fact that he hasn’t altered her office in any way since her death 5 years prior, and he still lives with the heart arrhythmia that developed after the accident that caused her death. The horror in this lies within the fact that Paul has been unable to deal with the self-inflicted guilt and remorse for a situation that fate pushed into his life. The fact that he doesn’t have his one reliance in life (Mary) there to help him cope has only compounded the feelings that he has brought this on himself, and her. The inability to cope with these feelings, and their eventual culmination and repercussions by the end of the story is another thing that I would never want to deal with, and their exploration, as well, was a touchy subject when I was creating the meat of this story.

In both instances, the realization that a person could sink so far into their own psyche due to personal blame and guilt is a frightening thing, and one that, I never want to deal with.

Now, after exploring the horror, the redemption almost seems more like a self-serving touch added afterwards to reassure myself that no matter where the horror took me, there would be a 'way out'. Granted, by the end of the story, the redemptive scenarios both end in death, of sorts. Not to say that death is the only release from these feelings and emotions, but for the sake of the story, the 'death' of the protagonist character Paul and the archetype of Allan signifies more release and catharsis than actual 'death'. The redemption for Paul is the realization that he wasn't running towards Mary all this time inasmuch as he was escaping from his own self-scrutiny and blame. Allan's redemption lies in a strange place though, as he sacrifices everything he has for the one thing he doesn't – his redemption is more subjective and personal, where Paul's is a more universally understood and accepted type.

In both cases, the story revolves around losing yourself within the life of another person to the point where you are unable to live singly without that person anymore. "Without You" explores not only the giving of self that is implicit in such relationships, but also the grief and suffering that remain when a relationship of that severity is removed.