

Nicholas Kerensky

“I have seen the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked.”
-Allen Ginsburg

It's not like it's your fault that you're big. I mean, nobody ever gave you the choice of being average height and average build. You're tall, and working at your father's garage, lifting car parts and tools, meant that you ended up being pretty strong.

And sure, you're not real good with numbers. It's hard to keep numbers straight in your head, and when you write things out in math, you forget where things are supposed to go and end up with the wrong answer. You did so badly in math in the fourth grade that the teacher suggested you stay back a year. Your father wasn't real thrilled about that, but what could he do? He couldn't afford a tutor, and keeping you with the rest of the class would mean that you'd never really understand the basics of math and would never really do well in high school. Not that you've done real well anyways, but you can only imagine how bad things would have been.

It's words that have always inspired you. Math has no metaphors, no similies. A five is a five is a five. But being able to write your feelings in a way that transcends the shape of the letters, being able to construct a portrait of emotions in a single sentence—that's what moves you. You've felt that way ever since you found that copy of *The Naked Lunch* on the street when you were thirteen; the way that Burroughs managed to evoke images and feelings using words in ways you had never thought possible. To be able to write like he or Ginsberg or Kerouac can; that is what inspires you.

Unfortunately, you know the inherent absurdity of that. You're the big dope in class. The kid who doesn't pick up on the concepts quite as quickly, but looks strong enough to tear anyone apart who might joke about it. And you do have a temper. But who wouldn't, being subjected to the taunts about your size, about your smarts, about the fact that your father can't afford to put expensive clothes in your closet? Sometimes the needling, the incessant buzz of laughter at you would finally push you beyond the breaking point, and you would erupt in a fury of flying fists until you could fight no longer, by which time the bullies and taunters would be fleeing with their bloodied noses and black eyes.

That's why you became friends with J.D. Koln. He's smarter than you, and kind of small. But he makes up for it in speed and menace. He's really not that bad of a guy. But he never did well in school, either, and his father is even poorer than yours, so he was the butt end of the class jokes even more than you ever were. And the two of you forged a friendship out of your common enemies, bolstered by the fact that you were the only two who looked beyond grades and clothes and saw what kind of person each other was. And

with the two of you working together, J.D. could have the courage to taunt people back, knowing that if it came down to a fight, you could take on anybody.

So you two started a club. It started out when you were young as the sort of club every kid makes up; but as the two of you got older and saw more and more Brando and Dean movies, it became more of a gang. You remember how cool you felt when J.D. gave you a leather jacket with the gang name on it. The Killers. A third guy joined your exploits, then; Robert Sherman is a bright kid who never had the money problem you or J.D. did, but he has a lust for danger that outpaces you and almost approaches J.D.'s. Things worked out perfectly. J.D. would come up with some sort of prank to pull, Robert would sit down and think about how to do it, and you were the muscle that could get it done. Together, the three of you used to keep the town up late in fear.

But things aren't going as well as they used to. First of all, there's a new gang in town. The Good Guys. Three guys who decided that someone has to put an end to The Killers' havoc. It's amazing how upset everyone gets when the odds change. When everybody picked on you and J.D., nobody really cared. Now that you, J.D. and Robert are big enough to pick on everybody else, they're all full of indignation about the things you three do. Hypocrites. In any case, The Good Guys have three members: Tony Turrelli, the class clown who tends to make you and J.D. the butt of his jokes; Timmy Carroll, the science geek who wets his pants every time you pass by him; and James Daniels. James is the guy who organized The Good Guys. He's the only reason The Killers haven't really directly taken on The Good Guys, yet; James is about your size, and he's a military kid, which means he probably knows more about fighting than you and J.D. put together. You worry that if The Killers and The Good Guys ever got into a fight, J.D. and Robert would leave you to handle James, which you're pretty sure you couldn't do. So all that's really happened so far is that The Killers have pulled pranks, and The Good Guys have tried to stop you, or at least show everyone that you're responsible.

The second problem with the Killers is J.D. I mean, it's not that *he's* a problem; it's that... well, it's sort of... aw, shit. The truth is that J.D.'s been acting strange lately. He's been a lot more intense and violent than he ever was before. Hell, you've even seen him hit Mary, the love of his life. And that's not a good sign. You worry about J.D. these days. You worry that something's going on that he's not telling you about. You worry that one day he's going to explode into a rage that leaves you in the dust, a rage that won't stop until he hurts everyone around him. Including Mary, you, and Robert. But how do you deal with something like that? How do you tell your best friend, the only guy who ever stood by you constantly, who ever helped you fight for your honor, that he's been getting a bit wacko lately? You could never do anything to hurt him. He's the only friend you really have. What's a guy to do?

You usually go up to your room above the garage and write poetry. It's not really good stuff, but you're getting better. You don't think you'll ever be a superstar, but you don't care about fame or success. Just knowing that you could use words with the best of them, that you could evoke a thousand images from a single sentence, knowing that you

could convey everything you've ever felt from a simple paragraph. You want to be a great poet, not a famous one.

In fact, it's probably best that you never get found out as a poet. J.D. would stand by you, but Robert would probably laugh his ass off. And it would be just one more reason for all of the kids in school to make fun of you. "The Beat-Nick" you can just hear them say. And it would just kill your father. He's positive that Ginsberg and Burroughs are Communists, which is the worst thing anyone could ever be in your father's eyes. He'd tan your hide up on end and down the other if he thought you were reading stuff like that, let alone trying to write it. And, of course, Teresa would taunt you mercilessly.

Teresa is your younger sister by two years. She's a good kid, pretty and witty and smart. So smart that she skipped fifth grade. Needless to say, it's kind of ironic being in the same grade as your little sister. It's kind of frustrating, too. I mean, hanging out in the locker room after football practice and talking with the guys and hearing the latest details of who's been up to Lover's Lane with whom and what happened used to be kind of fun. Then your sister started dating guys who, unthinkingly, would tell you what they had gotten from her. Perhaps you are a bit overprotective of her, but nothing gets you madder than hearing some guy talk about what base he got to with your little sister. Even worse is the fact that she seems to have a taste for the kind of creeps who don't want any kind of relationship other than what you can get in the back seat of a Chevy. You seem to have acquired quite a reputation for kicking the shit out of anyone who dares to go out with Teresa. And given the kind of guys she's interested in, you're pretty sure you'll keep building up that reputation. I mean, she's your little sister. You can't look at her without seeing her in overalls and pigtails on her seventh birthday, looking like the perfect tomboy. And the thought of some guy using her, *her* of all people, promising her love and then abandoning her because they got far enough with her to brag to all the other guys about another conquest, it just makes you angry. Very angry. You're pretty sure that she doesn't like you making it hard for her to get a date, but until she starts finding guys who like her rather than who lust for her, you're going to keep an eye on her and everyone who wants to go up to Lover's Lane with her.

Stock Quote: "You're making me angry. You don't want to see me angry."

Mannerisms: Nick has the soul of a poet, but he hides it because he's afraid people will make fun of him. He pretends to be the dumb jock everyone thinks he is just so they'll leave him alone.

People You Know:

J.D. Koln: Your best friend. He's been acting real wierd lately, and you're getting worried about him. Still, he has stood by you through thick and thin, and you'll never abandon him.

Robert Sherman: A good friend, and the third member of The Killers. You worry sometimes that he's not as into it as you or J.D., and that he might skip out because of J.D.'s recent violence. If he ends up betraying J.D., he'll have to go through you. You've

seen him looking longingly at Mary Jenkins. That is not a good sign. Not good for him, not good for Mary, and not good for J.D.

James Daniels: Leader of The Good Guys. Quarterback, captain of the football team, class president, and valedictorian. You really wish you were him, sometimes. If he ever decided to write his feelings out, you're sure everyone in class would ooh and aah over it rather than laugh about it.

Timmy Carroll: The class geek. He tends to be the butt of J.D.'s jokes simply because it's so easy to do. You used to stuff him into his locker so regularly you could set you watch by it. Now he's part of The Good Guys, and J.D. doesn't mess with him for fear of aggravating James.

Tony Turrelli: The class clown. You and J.D. are usually the butt of his jokes, and he used to be at the top of your hit list. Unfortunately, since he joined The Good Guys, he's been untouchable. Which means he's redoubled efforts to make jokes about you and J.D.

Mark Sturvin: Stuck-up little rich kid. Doesn't really talk to many people; he probably thinks they're not as good as he is.

Mary Jenkins: J.D.'s girl. She's nice, and she's really good for J.D. J.D. has hit her occasionally; that really worries you. Still, Mary stands by him. You'll help her be with him no matter what it takes.

Teresa Kerensky: Your younger sister. She's still a bit of a tomboy and a daredevil, but she's dating guys now. You worry about this a lot.

Catherine Thomas: One of the more quiet girls at school. You think she's quite cute.

Margaret Smith: The class airhead. A lot of people give her guff for that; they say that if she and you ever got together, you might be able to come up with a single thought between you. You'd like to get to know her better and commiserate with her, but since she's really attractive you think she'd assume you were trying to get her up to Lover's Lane. Not that you'd mind that, but it's not the only reason you'd like to talk to her.

Laura Fetner: Class cheerleader and all-around Miss Popular. She's going out with James, of course. You really envy James.

Wendy Mitchell: You've talked with her occasionally about football stuff. She's the reporter for the school paper, so she comes down and interviews you and James after games. She's pretty fun to hang around, but she's going out with Tony now, and meeting her means meeting Tony, and you don't want to have to hang around Tony.

Ivan Kerensky: Your father. He runs the garage in town. He's harsh but fair, and has really done his best to raise you and your sister right ever since your mother passed away. He's really conservative, though, and sometimes you worry about what he'd think if you told him about your poetry.

Goals:

1. Help out The Killers. Try to show up The Good Guys. Cause trouble without getting caught. Have fun wreaking havoc. There's a drag race at two o'clock; do what you can to soup up Robert's car so that you can beat the pants off James.

2. Keep an eye on Teresa. You've helped Dad raise her ever since Mom passed on, and you're not about to let some jerk break her heart just so he can get into her pants. Keep an eye on her, examine her boyfriends carefully, and use selective violence to get your message across.

3. Help out Dad with the garage. That shouldn't mean much with today being Saturday, but check in every once in a while to make sure things are running okay.