

## CHAPTER 2

You've probably figured it out by now. Well done, if you have. And if you haven't, well, as my former ad agency colleagues might say, "Here's the big reveal." My name is Earnest Hemmingway. Yes, it really is. I know, hard to believe, but true. I have absolutely no connection to the famous writer except we happen to have been born in the same city, Chicago. But that's just a freak coincidence. Beyond that fluke of geography, there is no link. None. No relation. In fact, as I tried to explain to my nemesis at Window 12, my name isn't even spelled the same way. I am Earnest Hemmingway. That other writer guy is just plain old Ernest Hemingway. I cling to my extra "a" and "m" to set me apart from the literary titan. Stripped of the extra "a" and "m," his name seems simple and spare to me, like his writing. His name seems almost incomplete, abbreviated, truncated. Conversely, my name is more complex and flowing, like my writing.

It's been hell living with a famous person's name, even one that's

## NO RELATION

spelled differently. It sounds the same, so to the world, it is the same. When I say it's been hell, don't misunderstand me. I fully understand that my plight pales when stacked against world hunger, global warming, geopolitical tensions, equality of the sexes, and doping at the Olympics. I like to think I have a sense of perspective, that I can put this into a broader context. Nevertheless, this very personal burden has profoundly affected my life.

My name intrudes daily, with every person I meet. Every one. A laugh. A smirk. A glance tinged with disbelief. A snide remark. Even a well-meaning attempt at humour, without the slightest whiff of malice. It all has weight when it leans on you, day in and day out. There does not exist a line I haven't heard. Some, very lame: "I loved your books, ha ha." Others, more sophisticated: "Sorry about your suitcase." I've heard them all. I cannot recall ever meeting someone when my name did not prompt at least some discernible reaction that would never have occurred had Bob been my handle. To make matters worse, and yes matters can be made worse, I want to be a writer, a novelist, in fact. What a cruel hand to be dealt. Sad, isn't it? Life would be so much easier if my dream were to open a restaurant, or be a dentist, or build my own home by the ocean. I could probably handle that. Instead, because I want to write, I get jokes about shotguns for breakfast.

I truly believe I could handle living with a different famous name that had nothing to do with writing. Basil Rathbone. Richard Nixon. Charles Lindbergh. George Foreman. Bring it on! I'm not saying life would be easy with a different famous

## TERRY FALLIS

name. Far from it. But I ask you, if you wanted to be a writer, is there a worse name to bear than mine? Come on, try.

F. Scott Fitzgerald? Not bad, but nowhere near Hemingway. Charles Dickens perhaps? Impressive, but still not quite there. These literary greats are inextricably linked to their works.

*Charles Dickens* = Oliver Twist / A Christmas Carol /  
A Tale of Two Cities / David Copperfield  
*F. Scott Fitzgerald* = Tender Is the Night / The Great  
Gatsby

But the name Ernest Hemingway conjures up something else, something greater. He transcends his books. Simply put . . .

Ernest Hemingway = Writer  
. . . end of story.

I know what you're thinking. Just change it! Change your name! People do it all the time for a host of different reasons.

But it's my name. I've had it all my life. It would be a stretch to say I like my name. In fact, I often loathe it. But it is *my* name.

Then why not use your middle name, you ask.

I don't have one. Nor did any of the other first-born sons in the Hemmingway clan since the early part of the last century. I always thought it showed a distinct lack of creativity on the part of my great-great-grandparents.

## NO RELATION

But wait, there's more. Here's the kicker. I can't stand Hemingway's writing. I really can't. I hate it. His spare, flat prose never fails to take something inherently interesting, or even exciting – think bull fighting or war – and make it sound, well, spare and flat. To me, the English language is something to celebrate, to explore, to splash around in. My writing, such as it is, is the polar opposite to Hemingway's, which seems to make bearing his name even more of a burden. He haunts me. I feel him looking over my shoulder criticizing my intricate sentences, my lofty vocabulary, my swirling prose. It feels like he's in the room with me, or at least in my head. Or perhaps I'm just obsessed, deluded, and deranged. That's also an option.

I haven't yet explained just how I came to carry my name. I'm no history buff, but you can't grow up in this family and not absorb its story, if only by osmosis. My younger sister is a dedicated student of the family's history. But I know enough to tell the tale.

While it's rarer today, back toward the end of the nineteenth century, Hemmingway was not an uncommon name. My great-great grandparents, Theodore and Mary Hemmingway, were Christian missionaries in China in the 1890s. What a tough existence that must have been. Every few years they returned to the west to recover, visit family and friends, and report on their success, or lack of it, in converting the rural farming communities of China to Christianity. They often brought with them strange maladies, parasites, and fevers that would lay them low for a month or two before they felt up to heading east again,

## TERRY FALLIS

which they always did, eventually. To the extent that they had a home outside of China, it was in Boston.

In the spring of 1895, Theodore and Mary were in London on their way from China back to the United States. Miraculously, this time around, they were in remarkably good health and could really enjoy a few days in one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world, before boarding a ship for the harrowing Atlantic crossing to Boston. One night in March, the young couple was given tickets to a relatively new play that had opened the month before to rave reviews. The famous four-balcony St. James's Theatre was located near King Street and Duke Street, a short walk from where the couple was staying. They loved the play. They laughed until they cried. They had never seen such wonderful drama in such an extraordinary theatre. It is fair to say, they were entranced by the experience. Clearly the memorable night did not end when the curtain fell, for nine months later, almost to the day, my great-grandfather was born in Boston.

The proud parents were overjoyed. To commemorate that special night they spent in London, the baby was christened Earnest Hemmingway. No middle name.

Have you figured it out yet?

The play they had so enjoyed that night in London was, of course, one of the first performances of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*. If only Wilde had stuck to his original title for the play, *Lady Lancing*, my life, and that of my

## NO RELATION

father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, might have been entirely different. Damn Oscar Wilde.

Theodore and Mary did more than name a son that December morning in 1895. They unwittingly sowed the seeds of an idiotic family tradition that plagues me to this day. Every first-born son in the three generations that followed was also named Earnest Hemmingway. No middle name. Curse Oscar Wilde.

By the way, Ernest Hemingway – you know, the famous writer guy – well, he wasn't even born until 1899.

In our family, the original Earnest Hemmingway, born nine months after a night at the theatre, has always been known as EH1. It follows that my grandfather became known as EH2, my father, EH3, and I, yep, EH4. I know it sounds more like a designation on a laser printer cartridge, but there you have it. It's just so much easier to go with EH4 rather than Earnest Hemmingway the fourth. You understand.

I'm a little hazy on EH1's childhood. I doubt it's particularly relevant to this story anyway. But I do know that as a teenager, he worked in the garment trade in Chicago. He was an enterprising lad with an entrepreneur's creative mind, and steely nerves. He came up with an idea to improve a particular garment's strength and quality. Rather than share it with his employer, he kept it to himself and quit the company. Within days, on the outskirts of Chi-town in 1916, EH1 started his own fledgling operation, still known today, as it was then, as The Hemmingwear Company. The product? Underwear. Yes,

## TERRY FALLIS

underwear for men and boys was the only offering. So what was the idea that gave rise to a four-generation family underwear empire? Well, a bit of background first.

In those days, the “ripper,” sometimes called the “yanker,” was a standard schoolyard prank. The waistband of the unwitting victim’s underwear was grasped at the back and yanked upwards quickly and forcefully. Invariably, the waistband ripped apart from the rest of the underwear, hence the aptly coined term, ripper. Across the continent, for many years, the ripper was the tactic of choice for bullies terrorizing their prey. That is, until EHI changed the game forever.

In his spare time, EHI developed a new cross-stitching technique that when combined with a wider waistband added considerable strength to the underwear. Throw a stronger but softer fabric into the mix, and EHI had a winning product on his hands. Men and boys in and around Chicago loved the new product. When the new Hemmingwear underwear caught on, the ripper simply vanished, to be replaced by something arguably just as humiliating and painful, but certainly different. Instead of the waistband pulling apart from the rest of the underwear, EHI’s innovative cross-stitching held fast, wedging the garment upwards between the buttocks and dangerously compressing the genitals. This usually resulted in ephemeral sopranos and excruciating pain. In EHI’s honour, the prank was initially known as the “Hemming.” However, much to his relief, a new term eventually supplanted it. It was apparently coined on a military base

## NO RELATION

somewhere in the southern United States when a new recruit was found hanging by his underwear from a fence post demarcating the munitions range. In considerable pain and in a somewhat higher-pitched voice, he declared it a “wedgie.” The name stuck.

Yes, it’s true. My cross-stitching great-grandfather put the “wedge” in wedgie.

I’m not sure whether the bullies or their victims were pleased with EHI’s innovation, but he called it the relentless march of progress.

To be fair, I’m selling old EHI short. The new and stronger waistband was only a small part of his business savvy. He determined that the other garment companies were struggling and failing by trying to manufacture far too many different products. The manufacturing efficiencies and economies of scale could never be achieved when so many different undergarments were being produced in relatively small quantities. EHI’s genius was in sticking to a simple yet powerful business strategy:

1. Focus on one set of customers: men and boys.
2. Make only one product line: underwear.
3. Make it in huge quantities to reduce the per unit price.

And it worked. It worked very well.

Two other factors helped to consolidate the fortunes of The Hemmingwear Company. The first was EHI’s version of the more modern business axiom “Location, location, location.” In early



## TERRY FALLIS

1916, at the age of twenty-five, EHI bought cheap industrial land just outside of Chicago. Over the decades, he and his successors, true to his vision of mass production, expanded the Chicago operation rather than building smaller factories in other parts of the country. One giant factory is more efficient than five smaller operations, provided you can economically deliver your product to those more distant markets. Well, EHI had thought it all through. Even in the early years of the twentieth century, Chicago was emerging as the largest and most important rail hub in North America. It was no coincidence that the land EHI bought in 1916, and on which The Hemmingwear Company's massive manufacturing operation still sits, was and remains immediately adjacent to the enormous Chicago rail yards. It was a good idea back then to locate close to the railroad. It's still a good idea today. By building and expanding his manufacturing right next to the Chicago rail hub, EHI maximized efficiency, minimized product costs, and secured continental distribution in one genius stroke. Smart.

The second and perhaps even more important factor, at least in the beginning, was winning the exclusive contract to supply the U.S. Army with underwear as they were mobilizing to enter the Great War in 1917. In business, as in most things in life, timing is everything. It was a massive contract that played right into EHI's vision of a narrow product line, mass-produced for a specific audience, in this case, some four million soldiers. EHI used the contract to lever investment in significantly expanding the Hemmingwear manufacturing operations to handle the

## NO RELATION

undertaking. Few companies in the history of business have benefited more from such a timely, lengthy, and sizable military contract. It carried EH1 right through the Depression when all around him factories were closing and workers were losing their jobs. Without the Army contract, who knows what might have happened to Hemmingwear. What I do know is that EH1 never squandered his opportunities. He dedicated his life to making the most of them.

Just after the Second World War, a cursed family tradition began when EH2 returned from Europe and joined EH1 in the family business. When he crossed the threshold at Hemmingwear, the die was cast. It was inevitable. Eventually, EH1 retired and EH2 took the reins. From that moment onward, it simply became accepted and expected that the first-born son, who carried the patriarch's name, would assume the mantle of CEO. Thanks a lot, EH2. This is on your head. Though it's hard to tell if my father, EH3, has ever really been happy, he is doing his duty to the family as CEO. In a very few years, I'll be expected to do mine. The pressure has been building for years. Shit.

There's a line my father likes to cite, too often, when he wants to remind me of the path in life I'm expected to follow. His father, EH2, introduced its overuse in our family but claimed it originally came from the patriarch himself, Earnest Hemmingway I. Quoting those who came before him, my father simply says, "This family tradition is paramount and sacrosanct." Over the years, it's been abbreviated to just "paramount and sacrosanct,"

## TERRY FALLIS

and eventually to just two initials. Whenever my father wrote to me when I was away at summer camp, or later at college, he would always add “ps” below his signature. It did not signal that he wanted to add a few more lines. No, his postscript just sat there on the page, a final reminder of my future. No words were needed. His code was well understood. *Paramount and sacrosanct*. Those two heavy adjectives still hang around my neck.

While still honouring EH1’s founding business strategy, Hemmingwear remains strong and profitable. It’s given me financial security, though I’ve never touched my so-called trust fund, and it promises a steady job at the helm when EH3 is ready to leave. I won’t have to send in my resumé. I won’t have to go through a competition or interviews. I won’t need references. I just have to move my stuff back to Chicago.

It seems churlish to complain about my lot in life. I know, the world should have my problems, right? But I don’t want it, any of it. Yes, I am EH4, but running Hemmingwear will not be my fate. I will not fulfil my birthright. I do not ever want to occupy the corner office at Hemmingwear. I just want to write. Like Ernest Hemingway, no relation, spelled differently. I just want to write. Let someone else make the nation’s underwear.

---

It took me fifteen minutes to slide myself out of bed and assume an upright position. I hadn’t slept well at all. My tailbone was still killing me. Imagine a colonoscopy with a red-hot sickle, conducted

## NO RELATION

by a doctor with a severe tremor. Yeah, that's about right. I popped more Advil, but not enough. I stood at the kitchen counter to eat a bowl of multigrain Cheerios. Then I fired up my laptop, carried it to the bookcase in the living room, and placed it on one of the higher shelves. In this way, I could work on it while standing, in the hopes that the red-hot sickle might not be quite so painful. I checked my email with one hand and held a glass of orange juice with the other. My Macdonald-Clark email address had already been disabled, which was fine with me, so I opened my personal Gmail account. I scrolled through the spam until I came upon an email from my younger sister, Sarah, that had arrived moments earlier. All it said in the subject line was "WTF!"

I opened the email. The only content was a YouTube link. Without even hesitating to consider the implications, I clicked on it. Next time, I'll hesitate a bit to consider the implications. There was something vaguely familiar about the scene that played out in the little rectangle on my laptop screen. It showed some crazed dude hollering at some kind of customer service rep and banging the glass behind which she was safely ensconced. It looked like the DMV. It *was* the DMV. It slowly came back to me. I'm kidding, I knew immediately what I was looking at. Shit.

Is nothing sacred? Can't a guy have a public meltdown these days without the unholstering of half a dozen video-equipped smartphones? I remained completely calm. I didn't even notice when the glass of orange juice slipped from my hands and headed for the hardwood. Luckily, it didn't shatter when it hit.

## TERRY FALLIS

The glass wasn't broken, but my big toe might have been. I forgot about my tailbone for the ensuing ten minutes or so and gave thanks for my nearly deaf neighbour.

The YouTube clip had been uploaded the previous evening under the title:

### *“Famous Writer Flips Out at the DMV”*

Very funny. It had been posted just about twelve hours ago so there were only about 309,000 hits so far. I clicked over to the YouTube home page and confirmed my worst fears. The clip was one of YouTube's featured videos. I'd gone viral.

I clicked back and played the four-minute video in its entirety. I was impressed with the cinematography of the shooter. He'd done a very nice job. And the audio was outstanding. You could hear every word I uttered perfectly clearly. As luck would have it, the guy's smartphone was also equipped with a digital zoom and he knew how to use it. So not only was the sound great, but on the tight shots toward the end, at the height of my tirade, you could actually see the spittle flying off my mouth and hitting the glass. Powerful stuff.

Then the scene shifted as I exited, stage left. The shooter stayed abreast of the three security guards who were carrying me out. There was none of the grainy, hand-held, home-movie feel of the Zapruder film in Dealey Plaza. It was as if this guy just happened to be holding a Hollywood high-def Steadicam. Then he

## NO RELATION

perfectly framed my brief flight, my tailbone touchdown, and my final breathless exchange with the security guard. The video then faded to black as I lay on the sidewalk. Very nice.

My mind drifted to what soundtrack music might underlie the sequence – perhaps something from *Les Misérables*, or even *Camelot*. Then I felt sick. So to help ease my pain, I scrolled down to see if any comments had been left. Yes, there were a few. Well, relative to the 309,000 views, 234 comments constitute “a few.” The first twenty comments could all be categorized as negative, with subheadings like insulting, hostile, ridiculing, and unstable. But the twenty-first read as follows:

*Leave him alone! Do you have any idea what's like to live with a famous name? Do you? Trust me, it ain't great. So cut the guy some slack.*

*J. Stalin*

J. Stalin? You're kidding. I kept scrolling through another twenty-six negative comments before reaching this one:

*Get the fuck off the poor sap's back! Try walking a mile in his shoes, you assholes!*

*Anne Boleyn*

I know a pattern when I see one. I tracked through all of the comments. Of the 234, there were only nine positive ones.

## TERRY FALLIS

Beyond our friends J. Stalin, and good old Anne, supportive messages were also left by an F. Sinatra, Gerald Ford, S. Holmes, D. Beckham, Margaret Thatcher, and two other names that I didn't recognize as famous at all, but I suppose could have been. Interesting.

The ringing phone brought me back.

"Hello."

"Holy shit! What the hell was that? Were you on something?"

"Sarah?"

"No, it's Beyoncé," my sister Sarah replied. "Who did you think it was?"

"Sorry, but I'm more accustomed to the standard telephone opening. You know, the one that goes 'Hi Hem, it's Sarah.' Something like th – "

"Yeah, yeah, whatever," she cut me off. "Anyway, Hem, you were amazing! It was quite strange and disturbing, but you were still amazing. Oh, and I'm really sorry about your job and about Jenn."

"How did you find out about that? Did she call you?"

"Hello! Is this thing on?" she mocked tapping her phone. "I found out about your job and Jenn the same way 312,000 other people around the world just did. You've gone viral."

"Shit. Right."

"Hem, are you all right? What happened, I mean before the DMV?"

"Yeah, I'm fine. I have a bruised ass and ego, and I may never sit down again, but I'm fine. I just had the day to end all days.

## NO RELATION

The video sums it up quite nicely. I got laid off and escorted out of the agency I've been with for fifteen years. Then I came home and found Jenn and her suitcases in the hallway, with her brother driving the getaway car. And, oh yeah, I lost my wallet the day before. So to comfort myself, I thought, 'Well, there's always the DMV.' So I went uptown. It was kind of a bad news/good news scenario. I did not get my new driver's licence, but I'm now on the YouTube home page. Other than that, things are great."

"Shit, that is one bad day," she said. "Look, I want to hear everything but have to bail now. I'm coming to New York tomorrow to see you. I should be at your place by eleven."

"Whoa, um, I'm kind of tied up tomorrow, um, like all day. Rain check?"

"Hem, tomorrow is Saturday. You just lost your job. Your girlfriend just bolted. You have no driver's licence. And you can't drive anyway because you broke your ass." Sarah was now using her most patient voice. "You've got all the time in the world. I'm sure you could use the company. And we need to talk. See you tomorrow, and I'm sorry about your day from hell."

Sarah hung up. Shit. At least I didn't need to clean the apartment.

My sister and I don't really get along that well, except Sarah doesn't seem to know that. Thirteen years my junior, she arrived long after my parents decided one son was sufficient. Sarah dubbed herself "the afterthought." I left home for college when she was just turning five, and just turning interesting. Since



## TERRY FALLIS

then, we'd never lived under the same roof, except for a day at Thanksgiving and a couple more over Christmas. To strip it right down to the wood, I really didn't know my sister very well. But she scared me a little bit.

If my father had noticed, Sarah was actually the first-born son he never really had. She took to business like a morning DJ to coffee. She sailed through a business degree at the University of Chicago before finishing at the top of her MBA class at Northwestern. I was so proud of her. Mom was so proud of her. My father didn't really seem to notice. He went to her convocation a couple years ago but spent most of the time haranguing me about doing an MBA and "taking my place" in the company. If this upset Sarah, she just channelled any frustration into her career.

Even before graduation, she was courted by all the investment houses and management consulting firms in New York. They offered her more to start than I'd ever make in the ad agency world. But she said no. Turned her back on them all to work at, yes, The Hemmingwear Company. The most single-minded, driven, aggressive, diligent, and pugnacious woman I've ever known was trying to climb up the corporate ladder in a men's underwear company. My father did nothing to help her up. In fact, he sometimes seemed to be greasing the rungs. Our mother lived long enough to see Sarah join the family business, before the cancer finally took her. It was a slow and pain-ridden decline that was hard on everyone. Afterwards, our father, or using the

## NO RELATION

more appropriate appellation, EH3, threw himself into the company to the exclusion of all else. But that wasn't really much of a change.

---

I've been seeing Dr. Madelaine Scott for ten years now. Apparently, I have some issues. I like her. She's thoughtful but blunt, and doesn't speak much, even for a psychiatrist. She seems to keep a certain distance from me that I'm always trying to close. I know. She's not supposed to open up. That's my job. I'm the one on the couch. Her office is in a nice brownstone on a leafy crescent on the Upper West Side. She was in her early sixties, but didn't look it. Her short auburn hair made her seem younger. She always dressed casually. I'd never ever seen her in a dress or skirt. Her office was formal but comfortable. Plush beige broadloom cushioned the feet. Lamp light replaced the traditional overhead fluorescent tubes. The art on the walls was nice but not interesting enough to distract you from the task at hand. You know, exposing your innermost thoughts and sifting through your memories, usually just for clues, but sometimes for real answers.

I used to lie on the couch in the sitting area while we spoke. But after I fell asleep for the third time in our first five appointments, we decided I should sit across from her in the same kind of leather armchair that she uses. I don't think she ever fell asleep during our appointments.

"Dr. Scott."

## TERRY FALLIS

“Hello, Hem. Come in.”

“Thanks for squeezing me in.”

“No problem. That’s what I do,” she replied. “The next thirty minutes are yours. How have you been?”

“Well, funny you should ask. But a lot seems to have happened in the last day.”

“Yes, I know. Wallet, job, and Jennifer, all gone in twenty-four hours. I’m sorry.”

“Wait. I’ve never mentioned that in my voice mail. How did you know?”

I saw her eyes move to the laptop on her desk.

“You’ve seen it, haven’t you?” I said.

She just nodded.

“You just happened to be trolling through YouTube and stumbled across it?”

“Hem, I, like most psychiatrists, have Google Alerts set up for the names of all my patients. I viewed it shortly after it was posted.”

“Were you going to say anything about it to me?”

“I assumed we would come to it, and it seems I was right,” she replied.

Mindful of the time, I spent the next ten minutes giving her an abridged version of my big adventure the day before. Throughout, she said nothing, but nodded a few times, brushed some fluff from her pants, and took a couple of notes.

“That must not have been easy for you. Let’s start with your job. How are you feeling about being let go?”

## NO RELATION

“Oh, it’s been fantastic! A validation of my contribution to the firm. Recognition of my abilities and achievements as a leading copywriter. And the culmination of a successful and fulfilling career.”

“So we’re back to your standard ‘sarcasm as shield’ avoidance stratagem,” she observed. “Were you good at your job?”

Easy question. I know this one.

“Yes, Dr. Scott. I truly believe I was good at that job. I helped win new business. I wrote some award-winning campaigns. And at least for those early years, I was busy all the time. I was in demand. But the landscape has changed. Long-form isn’t hot now.”

“Okay. You were good at your job,” she summarized. “Now, tell me honestly, Hem, did you love your job?”

My tender tailbone was throbbing. I shifted very gingerly in my chair. I looked at the ceiling. I gazed out the window. I examined my fingernails. I cleared my throat. And when I could avoid it no longer, I actually thought about her very simple question.

I liked some of my colleagues. I liked some of my clients. I even liked wrestling with some of the creative challenges that were dumped on me over fifteen years. I turned it all over in my mind and really thought about it, perhaps for the first time. In my head and in polite conversation, I’ve always made a point of ducking that question. I guess I’ve gotten close to the answer before. But I’ve always managed to shut down before drawing the harsh conclusion.

## TERRY FALLIS

“No. I’ve never really loved my job,” I replied. “I’ve never leapt out of bed on Monday morning so I could get to the office sooner to immerse myself in what I was truly meant to do on this Earth . . . write long-form ad copy. No, I guess I didn’t love my job. I’m not even sure I liked it much. The fact of the matter is, I think I can only go as far as ‘I didn’t mind my job.’”

“Were you aware of this before just now?”

I fidgeted. And look around the office a bit more.

“Maybe. Probably.” Silence. More silence. “Okay, yes.”

“Hem, just because we’re good at something doesn’t mean we’re meant to spend our lives doing it.”

I thought about that for a bit and nodded, not looking at her.

“You told me in our very first session a decade ago that your dream was to become a writer,” she continued. “Is that still true? Is that still your dream?”

“Yes.”

“Do you need to work right now to earn money to live?”

“No. As my former employer told me, ‘I have a huge package.’”

Dr. Scott smiled. I smiled.

“Hem, let’s shift to Jennifer,” she continued. “Did you love living with her?”

I looked at the clock. We were running out of time so I shed the pretense of deep inner angst and turmoil. I think I knew the answer to this one, finally.

“I loved living with her for the first eight months or so but then I started missing the freedom of my old life. But doing

## NO RELATION

something about it would have been a huge deal. So I did nothing about it. I was paralyzed. Or more accurately, I guess I chose to be paralyzed.”

That earned a nod from Dr. Scott.

“Living together just kind of became more of a routine, a habit, and less a real relationship,” I admitted.

“Good. It feels like you’ve thought this through. Okay, Hem, here’s a big one. Did you love Jennifer? Did you really love her?”

“No.”

“Okay, we’re nearly out of time. So let me skip to the end. Hem, on the YouTube video, you seemed like you were very upset and acting out in ways that are not consistent with your personality and beliefs.”

I just nodded.

“In light of your candid responses in the last half-hour, is it possible that your little episode at the DMV yesterday was not because you couldn’t cope with losing your job and your girlfriend, but rather because you just don’t know how to handle the unexpected freedom you suddenly now have?”

---

Five minutes later we both rose from our chairs and I headed for the door.

“Did you notice the comments on the video?” I asked her.

“Well, I scanned a few but didn’t really like what I was reading so I stopped. Why?”

## TERRY FALLIS

“I know there were tons of vitriolic comments, but sprinkled in among them were a handful of supportive ones, most from other people with famous or nearly famous names.”

“And . . . ?” she prompted.

“Well, I’ve never really considered that there are other people out there living with what I’m living with. But of course there would be. I’ve never in my life encountered anyone who might really understand what it’s like. It would be interesting to meet a few, have a beer, and compare notes.”

She paused for a moment in thought before responding.

“Well, you never know, New York is a big city. By the way, are you still working on your little famous names classification system? What do you call it again?” she asked.

“I think of it as a taxonomy. Yep, I’m still fiddling with it.”

“Good for you. Sounds like an interesting project.”

“Thanks for the time, Dr. Scott. Good session.”

I always said “Good session” when we finished. It was my standard parting line. But it really had been a good session. A very good session.

---

I was up from the subway on the final stretch along Bank Street to my apartment when my cellphone chirped.

“Hello.”

“Hi, Mr. Hemmingway, it’s Susan from the U of C library and archives.”

## NO RELATION

“Hi, Susan. You can call me Hem. Everybody else does. The ‘Mr.’ always makes me feel a little nervous.”

“Sure, Hem. Thank you. I just wanted to follow up on my letter asking about any papers or personal effects you’d like to add to the Hemmingway Archive. It’s been a while since we’ve received any new material from the family. Don’t forget, it’s a tax-deductible donation.”

“Right. I’m sorry, I meant to call you back,” I skated. “I’ve been, um, very busy the last few days. I’ve got nothing to contribute right now but I’ll certainly keep you posted. My sister is really into the family history. I’d give her a call.”

“Yes, Sarah is in here quite often looking through the archive. I’ll ask her when she’s in next,” she said. “Oh, and I’m sorry about what you’re going through right now. Bye.”

Great.

When I got back home, I felt good. I wasn’t trying to, I just did. It was strange having your live-in girlfriend bolt and not be broken up about it. But I wasn’t. I ordered Chinese and tried for a while to work on the novel. Chapter 12. Nothing. No words. White screen, blinking cursor mocking me, Hemingway’s ghost somewhere nearby. Yes, I was quite sure.

On the bright side, the apartment still looked great. Clean apartment = clean slate. In my mind’s ear, I could almost hear the cast of *Annie* belting out “Tomorrow.” While I brushed my teeth, I had a moment to wonder what it would be like to have pain-free hindquarters again, to be able to sit in a hard chair





## TERRY FALLIS

again, to sidestep a Broadway matinee lineup, accidentally bump my ass on a parking meter and not yelp and tear up and bite a hole through my tongue. More Advil, then I went to bed, still on my stomach.

It happened about six and a half hours later. I don't know *how* it arrived. I just know *that* it arrived.