Sasha, “Leo (Leonardo)”, Karson, Cody, “Ethan”, Luke (Lucas), Keith, “Julian”, Rafi (Rafael), Seth.

Zinny, Rhea, Charlie (Charlotte), Andy (Andrea), Saira, Raina, Mya, Dani (Danielle), Audrey.

Sky, Madison, Dahlia.

My life had equated to winning.

Win at those games, Leo. Win at sports. Win on tests. Win your friends and your lovers by winning. It’s the only way Leo, the only way is to win. Win at everything, win at life. There were only two options: success or failure, survival or extinction. That’s what it had come down to. The world (and humanity itself) had become simply two-dimensional; we went from primitive to complex and back to primitive. There were only two things you could be: a winner or a loser. And anyone who disagreed with this concept was automatically a loser.

Charlie and I made the list during fifth period English two weeks after I met her. This was not like the fucking Bucket List... this was a challenge... it did not matter...

When we got into college Charlie and I nearly crossed getting married off the list. Existentialism and late-teen depression set in and we just could not see the point in getting married. Why such extravagance over something so trivial? If you are committed to someone why do you need to get married to prove it? Marriage is just making love a legal matter (which it should not be), we said.

Smoke weed, save a life, write a book, get married, be a parent, go to jail, fly, run a marathon, climb Everest, scuba dive, read the Qur’an, visit all seven continents…

How was I going to get in jail?

Charlie got pregnant in college, it was one of those fucked up things that we just laughed at.

If it’s love, it’s patience.

Why does someone have to die for things to be sad?

A lot of people questioned the morality behind our game. Some things we could say we did for the chase, but there were a few things on the list that we were definitely not part of a game. The first one of those things came to me…

“I lost everything.” “Move in with me.” “No, I can’t— “I’m being serious. You and Callie can live with me. I’m her father…

They fall in love, but never get married. They have children

I know these things may have seemed trivial to you, but to me they were something else.

We first questioned the list when \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ asked \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to marry him. When she told me I immediately congratulated her but she barely accepted it. Instead she went right into the problem.

 “What if I’m doing this just because it’s next on the list?”

 “Well, are you?”

 “I don’t know. I don’t think so. I mean, I hope not, but I can’t help but think that subconsciously the list is on my mind.” I didn’t really know what to say. “And just the fact that I’m worrying about it worries me. It’s like the list controls our lives or that’s what it seems like. I don’t know.”

 “I don’t think that’s what’s happening.”

“Why should we have to get married to prove that we love each other? Marriage is just a legal matter, and love has nothing to do with that.”

So I got married, and I did it for love. I was in love with Audrey, I really was. It wasn’t about the list and it wasn’t about hurting Charlie. I legitimately loved Audrey. She was perfect. She loved Charlie. She wasn’t jealous of Charlie, like all my previous girlfriends. She knew about the list and thought it was a “great idea”. Of course, she didn’t know the details of the list, but she still respected it. She adores “Charlie’s daughter”. We have mostly similar interests and we are very similar people, unlike Charlie and me. AND I can tell her almost anything…

Two years later I was divorced. I had convinced myself that I was in love with a woman that I was not in love with. The truth is Charlie was who I loved. We both knew it. We both could not stand to be away from each other, but we would never be together.

Charlie was in love with someone else. She loved someone far better than anyone I could ever be.

When Charlie met…

And like every other day I went to meet her, the woman I loved, in the park.