

ity and compassion toward us over those next few days.

Initially, Tom and I didn't want a funeral of any kind for Dylan. It simply felt too disrespectful to his victims. I will be forever grateful to Martha and John, though, for convincing us to reconsider. They promised we would be able to keep the ceremony private both from the media and from enraged community members. Together, we planned a simple service, attended only by a few friends and family members. Byron would be there, of course, as would Ruth and Don, and the parents of Dylan's two best friends, Nate and Zack. The pastor of the church we'd belonged to when Dylan and Byron were small agreed to officiate for us.

life flourished in high school. He had three close friends with whom he spent most of his free time. On any given weekend, one of them was at our house, or Dylan was at one of theirs. The four of them — Dylan, **Zack**, Nate, and Eric — had other friends too, but these were the kids we considered Dylan's inner circle.

Dylan met Nate, the boy I always consid-

Dylan met his friend Zack freshman year. Zack's dad was a university professor turned administrator, and his mom ran the children's youth group at the church we'd attended when the boys were younger. Zack was friendly and outgoing, with a stocky build, a round face, and short brown hair. His house was ground zero for all kinds of zany activity — someone always seemed to be barbecuing or going boating or throwing a pool party — and Dylan spent a lot of time there. I was especially pleased by Dylan's friendship with Zack, because of how gregarious and outgoing Zack was. He didn't mind being the center of attention, which drew Dylan out a little.

Both Zack and Dylan were interested in technology. One summer, they hit rummage sales in Zack's neighborhood for old telephone equipment, determined to build a portable telephone system. (This was before cell phones.) The boys were proud of the contraption they came up with — an old telephone bolted to a sprung suitcase — and they got it working well enough to cause some static on the phone system in our

some static on the phone system in our house.

It was Zack who got Dylan interested in

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doing sound tech for theater productions at the end of their sophomore year. After watching a production of *Bye Bye Birdie*, I visited Dyl in the sound booth and was impressed by his command of the many switches and levers on the complicated board. Dylan loved it. He spent hours at rehearsals, and experimented with manipulating sounds on his computer to make an original soundtrack for a production of *Frankenstein* directed by his friend Brooks. People occasionally approached him to run the sound system for their talent shows, church events, and less formal after-school productions.

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church events, and less formal after-school productions.

Zack was the first of Dylan's friends to have a girlfriend. Dylan was jealous of his friend's good fortune, but nonetheless became friends with Zack's girlfriend, Devon. After Dylan's death, Devon made a book of photographs and stories about him for me. What struck me was how much she trusted in and confided in Dylan. When her feelings were hurt or when she had conflicts with others, it was Dylan she turned to for support: "I would call Dylan on the phone or talk to him on the computer. It was the best therapy I could hope for. Dylan was the best listener I had ever met."

Eric was the fourth member of the crew.

when he was around Tom and me. I don't remember him asking me any questions, or volunteering ridiculous stories about Dylan, the way Zack and Nate did, but he was clearly smart, friendly, and funny.

Perhaps it's significant I don't have the same kinds of memories of connecting with Eric that I do with Dylan's other friends. I wonder how much of that has to do with spending time with Zack and Nate after Dylan's death, and the fact that I had the privilege of seeing them as they grew into adulthood. I still talk to Nate; he checks in with me at holiday time, and comes to visit when he's in town. I do know that we did not perceive there to be anything unusual or unsettling about Eric, or about his friendship with Dylan prior to the trouble they had near the end of junior year, or Tom and I would not have permitted it to continue.

as baseball games and concerts. In high school, Eric remained small and relatively slight, while Dylan shot up in height. Eric was older, and got his license before Dylan.

Their friendship didn't seem any more intense than Dylan's relationships with other boys; if anything, I would have said that Dylan was closer to Nate. It did seem more private, somehow. I never felt as close to Eric as I did to Nate and Zack, although

When Dylan and his friends were old enough to work, his closest friends ended up working at Blackjack Pizza. Zack got a job there first; Dylan joined him a little while after, and Eric and Nate after that. Dylan bragged about his ability to make a great pizza quickly. When paychecks started rolling in, I helped him open checking and savings accounts at the bank, and after he

blindsided as we had been. A number of them had come over to our house, bearing photographs and videos of Dyl, and cards he'd given them. Zack's girlfriend, Devon, made a book for us of photographs and written memories, mounted on paper she'd made herself. There was Dylan — grinning while pushing Zack's dad into the pool; sporting a Hawaiian shirt and a bunch of leis at a costume party Devon had thrown; clowning around with Zack and making a hokey thumbs-up sign for the camera. I spent hours poring over these artifacts, desperate for confirmation that the sensitive, fun-loving kid Tom and I remembered had been real.

he kept both his hurt and his infatuation closely guarded. I pushed back for years against the public perception of Dylan as an outcast, because he had close friends (not only in Eric, but also in **Zack** and Nate),

ceived that reality.

The summer Zack met and fell for Devon, Dylan and Eric started spending more time together. Eric's name appears more frequently. Dylan writes about suicide many times that summer, as he did many times previously, but there are no homicidal comments in his journal until that fall. Even after the boys have begun making plans, Dylan reveals a secret in these most private pages: he believes he will be dead by his own hand before they have a chance to carry them out. After talking about the

Eric's feelings.

After I saw the dynamic between Eric and Dylan on the Basement Tapes, I found myself revisiting this episode in a new light. If Dylan didn't want to go out with [Zack](#) or

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Nate or Robyn or any of his other friends, he simply told them so: "Nah, I can't this weekend. I need to write this paper." Only with Eric did he need me to bail him out. I never wondered about that or thought to ask Dylan: "Why can't you just say no?" Asking for my help seemed like a sign of his good judgment, but afterward I realized that

prone to a killer, but he had vulnerability to become enmeshed with one." FBI investigators found that Eric had tried to interest other boys in a plan of mass destruction, including Zack and Mark Manes.

They didn't bite. Dylan did.

Page 345 — network administration had led one of the teachers to ask if he and his friend **Zack** would help maintain the Columbine High School computer system. Digging around in the system, the boys discovered a list of locker combinations. Dylan opened and closed one or two locker doors to see if the list was current, then transferred the data to a disk and shared it with Eric. **Zack** took it a little further and left a note in the locker of his girlfriend's ex-boyfriend. The boys were caught, and an administrator at the school informed us that Dylan was to be suspended for five days.

Page 349 — He and Nate and Eric and **Zack** went bowling, played pool, or went to the movies. Occasionally there were supervised parties. Raising teenagers was not new to us, and Dylan faced the usual barrage of questions when leaving the house: “Where are you going? Who’s going to be there? Who’s driving? Will there be drinking? Will the parents be home? Leave us a phone number.” We checked often, and Dylan was always exactly where he said he’d be. The only time he ever came home late for curfew, he’d gone to the rescue of a friend stranded after a fender bender.

Page 366 — Dylan had agreed to go with **Zack** to an activity at his church that night, and the two of them planned to come back to our house for a sleepover afterward. Tom and I were listening to music together in the living room when the phone rang around 8:30 p.m. It was Zack's dad, audibly upset. **Zack**

Page 367 — had quarreled with his girlfriend and left the event with her. He'd gotten hurt, possibly after stepping out of a moving car, and wasn't making much sense. It was all very confusing, but Zack's parents wanted us to know the plan had changed. Dylan wasn't with **Zack**; he'd left the church with Eric.

Page 369 — He told me the story of his bizarre evening. After **Zack** left the church, he and Eric decided to go light some fireworks, so they drove to a parking area not far from our house where recreational cyclists stowed

Page 307 — As the fall approached, incoming

Page 397 — As the fall approached, incoming seniors at Columbine High School were asked to submit pictures for the yearbook. A local photographer shrewdly suggested Dylan ask a friend to the session to help him loosen up, so **Zack** tagged along, and I loved the shots the photographer took of Dylan looking relaxed and happy among the pink rocks in the valley not far from our home. One of those photos would later be featured on the cover of Time magazine, under the headline “The Monsters Next Door.”

Page 402 — Dylan was proud of Frankenstein; he used a wide variety of unusual audio sources to develop the eerie soundtrack. The cast and crew recorded a surprise video to thank the drama teacher. In the video, Brooks, **Zack**, and Dylan clown around — saying they hope she’ll buy them beer, or pay them to pass down their senior year production know-how to the next crop of students. Judy Brown threw the wrap party, and took a picture of Dylan laughing at the video along with everyone else.

Page 412 — Some weeks earlier, I had asked Dylan about his friends' plans. He said Nate, Zack, and some of the others were off to college; Eric was hoping to join the Marines. Before our dinner with the Harrises, I asked Dylan for an update on Eric's plans. Joining the Marines had fallen through, he told me. Eric would be living at home, working, and attending community college instead.

Page 493 — Dylan's vulnerabilities were probably the same ones that had made him so susceptible to Eric, another toxic influence. I was blind to it because I never perceived Dylan to be a follower. He was agreeable by nature; a typical younger sibling, he'd go along with Byron's games when the boys were young, and Tom and I could generally get him to do what we needed him to do without pushback. But I had plenty of opportunity to observe Dylan with his friends, and those relationships were equally negotiated. I never felt Zack or Nate had the upper hand with him. If Nate had a hankering for pizza while Dylan was craving McDonald's, they worked it out.