

Things Have Gotten Worse Since We Last Spoke PDF (Limited Copy)

Eric Larocca



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Things Have Gotten Worse Since We Last Spoke

Summary

A tale of obsession and the darkness within.

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About the book

In Eric Larocca's haunting novella "Things Have Gotten Worse Since We Last Spoke," the boundaries of human connection blur with the sinister undertones of obsession and isolation as two women, bound by fate and technology, embark on a disturbing journey that challenges the nature of love and sacrifice. Larocca masterfully weaves a tale steeped in psychological horror, where the seemingly mundane exchange of online messages spirals into an exploration of the darkest corners of the human psyche. As secrets unravel and the boundaries of sanity are pushed, readers will find themselves captivated by a narrative that serves as a chilling reminder of how thin the veil is between desire and dread. Prepare yourself for a gripping experience that lingers long after the last page is turned, inviting you to question the true cost of connection in an increasingly detached world.

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About the author

Eric Larocca is an acclaimed author known for his unique blend of horror and literary fiction, captivating readers with his unsettling narratives and vivid prose. Hailing from Massachusetts, Larocca draws inspiration from both personal experiences and the darker aspects of human nature, skillfully weaving tales that resonate with emotional complexity and psychological depth. His work often explores themes of isolation, trauma, and the macabre, establishing him as a distinctive voice in contemporary horror literature. With a growing body of work that includes short stories and novels, Larocca continues to engage audiences by pushing the boundaries of genre, making him a significant figure in the modern literary landscape.

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Chapter 1 Summary: THINGS HAVE GOTTEN WORSE SINCE WE LAST SPOKE

"Things Have Gotten Worse Since We Last Spoke" begins with a unique premise: the author, Eric Larocca, shares the correspondence between two women, Agnes Petrella and Zoe Cross, leading up to Agnes's tragic death. The initial focus is on Agnes's post about selling an antique apple peeler on an LGBTQ+ community board, paired with a deeply personal story about the heritage and significance of this object in her family, particularly linked to her grandmother.

Agnes's narrative provides a glimpse into her struggles with identity and family relationships, particularly her coming out as gay, which resulted in estrangement from her mother. Her psychological state unfolds as she grapples with loneliness and the painful memories tied to her family history.

Zoe, intrigued by Agnes's post, reaches out to express interest in the apple peeler as a sentimental gift for her grandfather, who admires the composer Charles Ives. Their email exchanges quickly become more intimate and reveal a bond that transcends their initial transaction. Zoe's kindness towards Agnes, especially in offering financial assistance during a rough patch in her life, creates a strong emotional connection between them. This assistance transforms into a deep dependency, highlighting themes of vulnerability and the complexities of human relationships.



As their emails progress, the relationship shifts from simple friendship to something more intense and transactional, as Agnes finds herself drawn into a submissive role under Zoe's influence. Zoe's darker nature begins to emerge, suggesting an inclination towards dominance and control, and Agnes's willingness to comply deepens the exploration of dependency and desire.

The dynamic escalates as Zoe presents explicit and disturbing tasks for Agnes to complete, introducing layers of psychological manipulation. The correspondence becomes increasingly sinister, leading Agnes to perform dehumanizing acts, including injurious tasks surrounding a tapeworm, which Zoe suggests would fulfill Agnes's desire for motherhood in a grotesque way.

The interplay between their motivations offers insight into the emotional voids both characters experience. As Agnes becomes fated to a life intertwined with her parasitic "child," her mental state deteriorates alongside her relationship with Zoe, revealing the destructive nature of their bond.

The culmination of the narrative leads to a horrific conclusion, emphasizing the exploration of trauma, identity, and the dire consequences of a relationship founded on control and co-dependency. Agnes's final communication hints at a tragic end, sparking a sense of dread and leaving



the reader to contemplate the consequences of their actions and the bleakness of their situations.

Ultimately, Larocca's tale is a haunting examination of modern relationships, mental illness, and the lengths to which people will go to seek connection, all while portraying the unsettling nature of intimacy when it veers into obsession and possession.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: The search for connection can lead us into vulnerable and unexpected places.

Critical Interpretation: In your own life, you might find yourself yearning for connection, especially in moments of loneliness. This chapter teaches you to tread carefully as you seek closeness; the desire for intimacy can cloud your judgment, leading you to become entangled in relationships that may not be healthy or reciprocal. Embrace the importance of emotional boundaries and self-awareness, recognizing that while vulnerability can foster connection, it can also expose you to manipulation and harm. By respecting your own needs and the dynamics of your relationships, you can navigate the complexities of human interaction while safeguarding your mental well-being.



Chapter 2 Summary: THE ENCHANTMENT

In Chapter 2 of "Things Have Gotten Worse Since We Last Spoke" by Eric Larocca, the story unfolds with Olive and her estranged husband, James, as they attempt to celebrate their son Milo's 17th birthday. The atmosphere is tense, filled with unspoken questions and underlying disappointment. Upon Milo's arrival, the couple surprises him with a celebration that feels more perfunctory than heartfelt, revealing the emotional distance that has formed in their family. Olive's affection seems to clash with Milo's reluctance to connect, marked by an awkward hug and a concerning mark on his hand that hints at deeper issues.

As the evening progresses, Milo's behavior becomes increasingly concerning. He spends time regarding a crucifix in the dining room, seemingly lost in contemplation of suffering and existence while the news plays in the background, discussing a worldwide spike in suicides linked to a newfound scientific dismissal of any afterlife. This theme of existential dread permeates the chapter, emphasizing the family's struggle against despair.

The dynamic between Olive, James, and Milo is fraught, characterized by misunderstanding and failed communication. Olive expresses her desire to take Milo to counseling, raising tension with James, who remains skeptical about the need for constant supervision and professional help. When Milo



unexpectedly asks to spend the night with James, Olive believes it to be a small victory; however, James flatly refuses, showcasing his reluctance to engage fully with his son. When Milo eventually leaves to "pray," readers sense his profound internal struggle, potentially indicative of his declining mental health.

The chapter crescendos into a horrific climax when, later that evening, a terrifying discovery is made—Milo has taken drastic and fatal action, illuminating the tragic consequences of their family's disconnection. Olive's screams echo as she witnesses the aftermath, marking a catastrophic turning point in the story.

Moving forward, several months later, the narrative introduces a shift in tone: hope and transformation intertwined with the supernatural. The couple finds themselves on a remote island at The Enchantment Hotel, grappling with memories, loss, and escalating tensions. As a young man who appears out of nowhere complicates their lives, Olive becomes convinced that this figure represents something dark and sinister, believing he may be a demon rather than a harmless visitor.

The themes of grief, parental responsibility, and existential contemplation intertwine throughout the narrative, illustrating Olive's desperate search for meaning and connection in the wake of tragedy. This chapter intricately deepens the reader's understanding of the characters' internal landscapes,



encapsulating the fragility of family and the haunting reverberations of loss. As secrets unfold, readers are left with lingering questions about the true nature of reality, connection, and rebirth.

Amid despair, Olive longs for a miracle—a longing that sets the stage for the haunting and psychological unraveling that follows. The chapter ends with her contemplating the choices that have led to their current state, hinting at the darkness that looms as her relationship with both James and the mysterious young man grows increasingly complex. The emotional weight is palpable, serving as a powerful commentary on love, loss, and the unending search for salvation.

Section	Summary
Characters	Olive, James, and their son Milo
Setting	Celebration for Milo's 17th birthday at home; later transitions to The Enchantment Hotel on a remote island
Theme	Existential dread, family disconnection, grief, and the search for meaning
Plot Points	Olive and James attempt a birthday celebration, revealing emotional distance. Milo's concerning behavior and signs of mental health struggles. Conflict arises over Milo's need for counseling. Milo's tragic action leads to a catastrophic turning point. Further exploration of despair and the supernatural on the island. Olive's contemplation of their situation and the complexity of her relationships.

Section	Summary
Climax	Milo's fatal action marks a turning point for the family.
Aftermath	Olive's struggle with grief and desire for connection amid unfolding secrets.
Emotional Impact	Explores themes of parental responsibility, love, loss, and existential uncertainty.

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Critical Thinking

Key Point: The fragility of family and the necessity of communication

Critical Interpretation: Reflect on the story of Olive and her family, and let it be a powerful reminder that the connections we hold dear are often more delicate than we realize. This chapter reveals how unaddressed issues and unspoken feelings can create rifts that lead to devastating consequences. Embrace open dialogues with your loved ones; share your thoughts, fears, and joys without hesitation. Understand that real connection requires vulnerability and a willingness to confront uncomfortable truths. By fostering deeper conversations and being present with each other, you can build a stronger, more resilient bond that withstands the trials of life. This lesson asks you to not wait for a moment of crisis to reach out—let love guide you to bridge the gaps before they widen.



Chapter 3: YOU'LL FIND IT'S LIKE THAT ALL OVER

In Chapter 3 of "Things Have Gotten Worse Since We Last Spoke," we follow Gerald Fowler, a meticulous and anxious man who finds a mysterious piece of bone in the snow of his backyard. The discovery sends him into a panic, exacerbated by a deep-seated discomfort about his racist husband, who has a history of disparaging their immigrant neighbor, Rafe Perlzig. Gerald can't shake the thought that the bone is somehow linked to Rafe, especially since the initials "R" and "P" are carved into it.

Rather than share his concerns with his husband, Gerald decides to confront Rafe directly and seek answers. As he approaches Rafe's home, the silence of their neighborhood strikes him—no one is outside, not even the children. When he finds Rafe shoveling snow and tries to strike up a conversation, Rafe's abruptness seems to stifle their small talk. However, when Gerald reveals the bone, Rafe's reaction takes an unexpected turn. His demeanor is oddly playful as he insinuates that the bone was a sort of invitation for Gerald to visit him, igniting a game of gambling between them.

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