



TRAGEDY AT THE TERMINAL



HUMAN RESOURCES – 2018 – FINAL ROUND
JANUARY 2018



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It was noon on September 20th when Joel Williams, CEO of Supreme Transit sat at his desk sifting through stacks of papers. Folders, letters, reports and correspondences directed towards him had been accumulating faster than he was able to keep up with since the recent fatal shooting. The tragic incident involving countless Supreme Transit employees, including the killer Carter Smith, had occurred exactly six months ago, and the fallout had been immense.

Joel knew there was a report titled “Urgent Recommendations” in the stack somewhere, it was just a matter of finding it. Now that many of the short-term issues had been addressed and most employees were back to work, Joel felt it was time to look into these recommendations that an independent consultant had provided several months ago.

The recommendations were mainly aimed at improving the workplace environment at Supreme Transit. Joel had worked at Supreme Transit in various roles for the past five years so he was aware that implementing intense changes would not be an easy feat. It seemed that every time he got a handle on one issue, another would arise. Joel regretted not attempting to implement change earlier, before Carter’s rampage, but he thought it better late than never.

Carter Smith

Carter Smith was an introvert who preferred to keep to himself rather than socialize. He had been employed at the same organization for over a decade, but rarely went to work events and any conversations he had with coworkers were often brief and aloof. The only exception involved conversations about hunting, which he could discuss for hours on end.

Carter was an avid hunter who enjoyed the quiet of the outdoors. He was an advocate for safe hunting practices, and always ensured he kept his three guns unloaded and locked away in his gun safe, when not in use. He was familiar with a wide variety of guns, including hand guns, shotguns, and rifles.

Carter’s quietness was rooted in his upbringing where he had suffered from bullying as a child. He was tall and lanky, and had a speech impediment. His parents put him in intense speech therapy classes and he saw a pathologist regularly as a child and then again as a teenager. However, regardless of the measures taken, his stutter would not cease.

Other kids would regularly pick on Carter about the way he would talk. As he got older, the verbal abuse turned physical as kids would push and prod at him while calling him names. He would just stand there, taking the beating. Carter’s frail physique would get bruised and bleed, but he never cried or screamed. Once, his mother asked why he never fought back in

an effort to stop the beating. He explained, “Why would I? I don't want to hurt them. They'll get what's coming to them one day.”

At times, Carter would crave a romantic relationship. He was in his 30's and still had never experienced a first kiss or a first girlfriend. He created accounts on various dating websites, but his success was limited. Twice, he met women for coffee but the dates were awkward and never led to anything. Afterwards, he would think to himself maybe he was better off alone.

The years of bullying impacted Carter and as a result he suffered from depression, which was well known to his family, a few acquaintances and some of his co-workers. He would go in and out of doctor visits and often tried new medication, but nothing allowed him to escape the highs and lows. Carter was aware of how fortunate he was that his employer, Supreme Transit was very accommodating to his illness.

Carter's Employment History

Carter's first experience in the workforce was as an automobile apprentice. He enjoyed the position and set a goal to become a fully licensed mechanic. He loved working on automobiles; mostly because it involved very little interaction with others. He could work independently, and could focus solely on the task at hand, not having to worry about how others treated him.

Carter's co-workers all treated him with respect and would often come to him for his opinion on repairs. Carter enjoyed being a valued part of the team. Despite how well he got along with his co-workers, he still avoided the other mechanics at all costs and ensured his breaks were at times that he would be alone in the break room.

The owner of the repair shop was not around very much. However, whenever he would stop in, employees could feel their stress levels escalate dramatically. The owner would often doubt employee decisions on the repairs and would constantly look over their shoulders. The owner was also aware of Carter's stints with depression and would make snide comments behind his back.

One particular morning, the owner got in Carter's face for being too passive with customers when they did not opt for upgrading their services. The owner stated that basic oil changes were not going to pay the bills and that the customer sometimes needed a push to upgrade to the deluxe service. Carter, already having a bad day, turned around and punched him in the face. The owner fired him on the spot.

Carter accepted the firing knowing he had lost control, and decided to take some time to think about what he wanted to do in his career moving forward. He had also been feeling the depression recently, so he spent some time working on himself. His parents were there for him and he moved back home for several months.

A few months later when Carter had his medication sorted out, he decided on his next move. He was passionate about vehicles, so he decided to pursue his B driving license. Upon completion, Carter's mother, a prominent executive at Supreme Transit, managed to secure

him a position as a driver at her workplace. Carter was excited by this opportunity, since he would be left behind the wheel to silently drive, all day every day.

Supreme Transit

Supreme Transit was Chesterpeake's privatized transit system. It was a growing organization in Southern Ontario, focused on buying out other transit systems in its path. Many cities that once had government owned transit systems found it beneficial financially to privatize by selling to Supreme Transit.

Supreme Transit became Chesterpeake's transit system in the year 1995, around the time its population started growing substantially. Chesterpeake was one of the most Southernmost cities in Canada and had seen a boom in population in the past decade. Chesterpeake had become a popular alternative to living in the large city adjacent to it. The cost of living was manageable and it was a relatively safe suburb. Daily ridership continued to increase year over year.

By 2017, Supreme Transit was carrying millions of annual riders over its numerous locations. It was making 30,000 daily trips. The entire transit system had a total fleet of almost 100 buses. This particular location was headquarters and housed about 35 buses. Repairs of the buses were primarily completed in this facility.

Over the years, Supreme Transit had grown faster than its Human Resources department. This caused a failure in the creation of clear processes and policy development. This often left employees confused on how to report health and safety incidents in the workplace and how to report general comments and complaints.

There was a "comments" box left outside the Human Resources department which was emptied on a monthly basis. Employee comments were often centered around health and safety concerns. Most prevalent were concerns regarding the long hours employees were required to work, often late at night or early in the morning while it was still dark, issues with the ergonomics of the bus driver's seats, and perceived safety issues in dealing with rowdy bus patrons.

Supreme Transit was aware that their front line staff saw issues first hand, and the Human Resources department felt fortunate that employees often brought forward strong ideas on how to reduce risks (i.e. ideas on how previous employer's dealt with rowdy patrons and how shifts could be split up to avoid 14 hour days). However, turnover in the Human Resources department had been so high that it was hard to implement solutions.

High turnover was not just relegated to the Human Resources Department. In fact, turnover for the entire company was well above industry standards over the past five years. The original owner had a strong core management team he had spent years tweaking, but when he suddenly passed away of a heart attack almost a decade ago, his sons had taken over the business and began neglecting the business. The company went from receiving Employer of the Year awards, Entrepreneur of the Year awards, Best in the Biz awards and awards from the Chamber of Commerce to no awards in sight over the past seven years.

Recently, the Human Resources department had been focusing on updating a list of core values that represented the original owner's vision. They had found an old core values

document the original owner John had taped to his wall in the 1980s. They decided in an effort to rebrand Supreme Transit and improve its workplace conditions, they would update and release it accordingly. When they were finished, they had a textbook example of what the company should represent.

The core values proposed for Supreme Transit were as follows:

1. Safety – Ensuring that each trip and each day no one gets hurt
2. Accountability – Taking responsibility for yourself and doing what you say
3. Respect – Treating all others with dignity and listening to the opinions of others
4. Teamwork – We are stronger when we work together
5. Customer Service – Offer an excellent service to all stakeholders, both internally and externally

When these values were first emailed to Supreme Transit’s workforce, Human Resources were advised by management that there was some backlash from employees. They indicated that employees had been laughing at the values. Management agreed that while none of these values represented Supreme Transit’s current company culture, they should be working towards it. The CEO felt a great step to achieving these values was to first write them on paper, embedding them in corporate culture would come next.

Joel Williams

Joel Williams, the current CEO had worked his way up at Supreme Transit. He had started as an Assistant Scheduling Manager for the bus drivers. He had then taken three other positions before being promoted to CEO. Joel possessed excellent communication skills and an outgoing personality, which Supreme Transit believed they needed in a CEO to enact change.

Joel believed he had the right people to assist him with managing the organization, and was not planning on making any dramatic changes to personnel following his promotion. Supreme Transit’s core team consisted of a CEO, managers, assistant managers, supervisors, drivers, mechanics and administrative support (see Appendix A). They were diversified in their employees, and had a strong representation of men, women and minority groups.

When Joel looked into the core management team, he was able to see he had many managers but very few leaders. The top executives were able to direct employees to carry out plans if they were clearly advised on what needed to be done. However, they were not able to lead employees in the planning and achievement of strategic goals, which was also where Joel was lacking. Joel thought about implementing a company-wide reshuffling, but he had grown to be friends with the managers over the years, and was not able to stomach the idea of putting them out of work.

Joel was confident in his technical knowledge from his experience working at Supreme Transit, but he had not realized the command and ultimate responsibility he would have taking on this new position. However, he was up for the challenge and no one at Supreme Transit could say he was not giving it his all. Joel was always the first to arrive in the morning and last to leave at night.

Joel had a college education in business, which he believed provided him with the technical knowledge he needed for his new position. However, Joel was unable to think strategically at times as he was constantly being pulled in different directions. Therefore, he relied heavily on consultants to provide the information he required when specific issues arose.

The general consensus Joel had received from the consultants was that the company had grown so fast that no one or nothing had time to develop, and employees simply fell into their roles. The problems were large and difficult to solve without strong leadership from the top, so Joel would need to continue developing his skills. And more importantly, the owners had become somewhat disengaged from the day-to-day operations, and did not provide the vision necessary to keep the positive momentum that had once existed for Supreme Transit.

Health and Safety

Health and safety had never been a priority for Supreme Transit, as they primarily operated in small towns with low crime rates. The company ensured all employees were trained in the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS), but on their to-do list was to set up a formal safety management system.

A main health and safety concern that kept coming up involved the bus driving position. Therefore, the company commissioned a health and safety review of the position. WSIB premiums had seen an increase due to long-term claims in recent years. The study indicated that bus drivers, by nature of their position, are more likely to experience heart disease, high blood pressure, chest pains and musculoskeletal problems primarily in the back, neck and shoulders. Bus drivers also reported higher cases of tension, fatigue and sleeping problems.

It was determined that the root cause of many drivers' issues involved ergonomics, the solitary nature of the position and the irregular work schedules. Therefore, in an effort to bring WSIB premiums back down, Joel ordered an increase of all bus driver's paid time off to include a minimum of three weeks vacation and 12 personal days per year, to be increased with tenure.

Joel was aware that increasing paid time off was not enough, and that he was responsible for reviewing the company's entire safety management system regularly. However, he was not sure where to start and he also did not have the personnel to assign to such a large project at this time. He added this to his to-do list and he was sure he would get to it eventually.

An issue that was close to Joel's heart was bullying. Joel's brother had a mental disability and had been bullied about it in the past, so he believed in a zero-tolerance policy. Supreme Transit was known for its atmosphere of bullying so on Joel's first day, he sent out a companywide memo indicating that bullying would not be tolerated. He explained that any complaints must come to him directly for investigation. Joel had not received any complaints yet, so he believed the problem was taken care of by the memo.

From his experience working on the floor with the drivers, Joel was aware that drivers and management had severely strained relationships. Drivers would often complain about the working conditions, but changes were rarely seen from those complaints. Management felt the employees were simply complaining for the sake of it so they did not take issues seriously.

Joel saw both sides of the arguments, but knew more could be done to improve the working conditions for drivers.

Joel had seen first-hand that management would often not investigate complaints thoroughly. Managers claimed they were not equipped to deal with many of the issues, and Human Resources was normally too short-staffed to assist. Joel informally polled the managers and found that employees believed there to be an “atmosphere of bullying”, a “negative ambiance,” a “poisoned environment” and “an overall lack of training”. Taking care of these issues were also added to Joel’s to-do list.

Carter’s Experience at Supreme Transit

At Supreme Transit, Carter drove a standard route, Monday to Friday from 6 a.m. until 2 p.m. He would also work the occasional Saturday when required. Carter had regular patrons whom he would smile at as they boarded the bus, and his shift allowed him to avoid the late night rowdy customers that other drivers would come into contact with.

A few years into his position, Carter began having issues with several young male riders. They would cause a ruckus on the bus, and often times distract other patrons. Carter found himself often having to look back at the boys. It made him uncomfortable to take his eyes off the road for this nonsense.

One afternoon, an elderly woman who regularly took the bus approached Carter and whispered into his ear that the boys were vandalizing the bus seats. Carter stopped the bus, walked to the back seat, raised his voice and screamed at the kids. His face was red and he was seething in anger. Carter had stuttered as he screamed, which made the boys laugh and joke. They yelled back that the only way they would exit was if they were dragged off. Carter looked around the bus, at the elderly patrons, women, children, and students, and immediately got uncomfortable with the attention. Carter returned to his seat defeated.

The boys continued to board Carter’s bus, day in and day out. They would regularly harass Carter about his stutter as they boarded. They would also pick on his physical appearance. Often times, when Carter returned to the bus station, he would verbally complain about the issues to his manager. However, no investigation was ever completed. When Carter would follow up about his complaints, management would indicate they were dealing with a backlog and would get to it “when they get to it.”

In the next few months Carter’s depression deepened. He would often imagine being teased, he would imagine bus riders speaking about him as he drove, and he was not able to sleep. He had a substantial amount of time off work, and went on and off his medication.

Carter nearly got into several accidents while driving, as reported by patrons. After the third complaint, Supreme Transit concluded he was a liability driving the bus. Management transferred him into the bus terminal where he was offered a position as a mechanic. The mechanical team was a tight knit group who relied on each other to finish jobs, so Carter’s spotty attendance from the beginning did not bode well with the team and he was considered an outlier.

Supreme Transit moved Carter from one position to another over the subsequent years. Each position involved less and less contact with other people. Over his complete tenure with

Supreme Transit, Carter had held the positions of driver, mechanic, administrative support and now audit clerk.

Supreme Transit was fully aware of Carter's issues with depression, and they truly felt for him. The company spent a lot of time and money attempting to help him. The issues were further complicated because of his mother's constant interference, as she would call the CEO every time there was a problem. Management gave him every possible break at work. They had been flexible with sick leave, medical help, counselling and transfers.

At the time Carter was transferred to an audit clerk, management was content with his performance. He had not had any outbreaks in several months and Carter regularly assured management he was on the mend. Audit Clerk was a simple position working alone, with minimal contact with others, in a very non-stressful job.

Altercation in Auditing

One morning, the Human Resources department was notified there had been a small altercation in the auditing department. Fortunately, a new Human Resources Manager was in training and was assigned to investigate. Sara went to the second floor to start her report.

Upon investigation, Sara found that Carter had slapped a co-worker in the face for mimicking his speech impediment on the job. Sara was surprised, as a quick look in his company file indicated that while Carter had a complicated employment history, he had no history of physical violence at work. She pulled out an investigation form and filled it out accordingly.

Sara interviewed a variety of Carter's coworkers over the next few workdays. She discovered that Carter was known to make controversial comments in the lunchroom; often sparking heated conversations. He would argue with coworkers about gun control and politics. He once got into a heated debate with a bus driver on break, stating, "guns do not ever kill people, people kill people." After the disagreements, he would go back to his introverted nature.

On the other hand, Carter often played himself as a victim. He would complain about his coworkers under his breath. He often indicated he was the victim of bullying and harassment, as coworkers would make fun of his stutter. Management had investigated these complaints and spoken with his colleagues, but the results indicated Carter often hallucinated these conversations.

A statement was taken from Carter's manager who stated that he had seen Carter pestered by coworkers on very few occasions. He continued that the joking was not surprising on a floor with all males. He stated Carter was on the sensitive side and indicated the physical altercation was likely the result of a comment at a bad time. He knew Carter had a lot going on right now like moving apartments and the recent shift in position.

Sara made the decision to give Carter one last chance. He appeared remorseful about his actions, and the employee whom he slapped was not pressing charges. However, Carter was referred to a doctor and advised to stay home until he was cleared for work. He was also instructed to take an anger management course. Carter was soon cleared for work and allowed back. He signed an agreement stating he was on his last chance, and no other physical behaviour would be tolerated.

In the next few months, Carter had no issues. He reported to work on time, took his breaks and lunch off premises, and spoke to management and his coworkers with respect. He appeared to be in a good state.

Resignation

On Carter's 13th work anniversary with Supreme Transit, he walked into his manager's office with a letter of resignation in hand. He was calm and collected, and advised he was looking to move onto other opportunities outside of Supreme Transit. His manager was surprised, but nonetheless accepted the letter, secretly relieved by Carter's decision.

His manager handed Carter an envelope with his name in small block letters on the front. As was company policy on anniversaries surpassing 10 years, he told Carter how much the company valued his dedication to serving the community they operated. He advised Carter that he would be missed, but that, as per company policy, he would not be required to work his two-week notice period. He laughed and said, "Alright, I am headed to Las Vegas. Going to take one last chance at success on the slots."

Shots Fired

It was early on Monday morning, a week after he had resigned, when Carter approached his former workplace. He had driven back from Vegas virtually non-stop. Carter had lost his anniversary bonus, in addition to the mounds of cash he had brought with him.

Carter had spent the past half an hour pacing back and forth outside his car. He had parked in a busy parking lot in front of Supreme Transit. Many former colleagues passed by him, unknowing who it was under his black baseball cap and hoodie. Carter had been smoking marijuana and working up the nerve to commit the ultimate crime.

Finally, Carter put his joint out and grabbed his black duffle bag out of the car. He began walking towards the bus garage in a haze. Carter entered the large front doors of the terminal, and saw the supervisor's office door was open.

Reaching into his duffle bag, Carter grabbed a loaded shotgun, aimed it at the supervisor, and took his first shot. He did not recognize the older gentleman in the office, but shot anyways causing him to collapse and die instantly. Carter saw two others and shot in their direction. He was yelling as he walked quickly down the hallways, although no one could make out the words.

The next bullet hit a metal car part and bullet fragments hit two women who were standing in the near vicinity. The fragments injured both women. However, one woman was able to run and hide in a nearby bus. The other woman was able to crawl into the supervisor's office where she yelled into the PA system for everyone to run, as there was a man with a gun. She also sounded the fire alarm.

Carter passed many people. He felt in control, choosing who would live and who would die. However, these seemed to be random decisions. Carter had plenty of ammunition, enough to shoot almost everyone that crossed his path, but he only shot the unlucky few. Carter was not thinking clearly, and it would never be known why he chose to shoot some people but not others.

Within seconds, Carter made his way to the break room where a dozen employees appeared to be making a run for the exit. Employees were unsure of where to go and what action to take. Carter, again in a seemingly randomized selection, shot multiple employees. Carter was mumbling to himself and then yelled out that he told everyone they would pay for what they had done.

Employees were doing all they could to save their lives. They were hiding under desks, in closets, in buses, behind lockers, or making a run for it. Employees also worked together to haul the injured out of harm's way while Carter was not looking. There was screaming and crying in all directions.

Carter entered the main office and shot two more employees, one of which was trying to hide behind a filing cabinet. He looked at the remaining employees in the eyes and stated he'd go somewhere else.

Carter took the elevator to a main lobby, which overlooked the entire garage. He walked to the middle of the room, which provided him with a clear view of the premises. From this angle, he could see everything. He saw countless employees, running for their lives. About 30 seconds later, the final bullet was fired. He ended his own rampage. Suddenly, it became silent.

The Aftermath

Emergency services responded about two minutes after the last shot had been fired. Fire trucks arrived first, followed by police and then the ambulances started arriving on the scene. Police quickly entered the scene of the crime. Officers dispersed throughout the premises and looked room by room for additional victims.

The police concluded, Carter had killed six people in just over seven minutes, including himself. Police were surprised to find there were over 50 rounds of ammunition remaining in both his shirt pocket and duffle bag. Carter could have kept going, but he fortunately stopped the attack when he did.

The main question on everyone's mind: was Carter sick and delusional or an angry and enraged killer? Was he in a state of psychosis or was this intentional activity? It was unknown if they would ever find an answer.

Police photographed the bodies and gathered evidence inside the garage. They analyzed Carter's employee file and spoke with his former co-workers. Police also interviewed over 25 witnesses and planned to continue interviews going into the night. One employee had been able to dial 911 during the rampage resulting in a disheveled 911 recording. Police were eager to look at anything to identify additional information related to Carter's state of mind during the shooting.

The investigation identified that the victims (see Appendix C) had no direct contact history with Carter. Coworkers were interviewed and could not identify a possible motive. It seemed Carter had murdered extremely well-liked employees at Supreme Transit.

Three days after the shooting Police received a frantic call from Carter's parents. They were distraught by a suicide note that had arrived in the mail from Carter (see Appendix B). Apparently Carter had mailed the letter from Las Vegas. The tirade indicated that Carter was much more emotionally troubled than Supreme Transit, or even his parents, had previously thought. The note detailed Carter's favourite and least favourite co-workers. However, the situation was made even more confusing by the fact that Carter had not shot a single person mentioned in his letter.

Community Impact

The community pulled together following the incident. Residents were both in disbelief and stunned. Bus patrons offered drivers their condolences, and left flowers outside headquarters and at bus terminals. Daily ridership dipped dramatically for several months, across all communities, as a feeling of safety was no longer present.

There had never been an event of this magnitude in the history of Chesterpeake or any surrounding city. When word of the shootings got out, many buses across the country pulled over to observe a moment of silence for all those affected by the tragedy. The community ensured their thoughts and prayers were known to all of those affected.

The bus garage in Chesterpeake was immediately shut down for police investigations. This caused severe bus delays, although Supreme Transit continued operations in high traffic routes. It took several days to get the system fully up and running again.

Impact on Coworkers

Supreme Transit immediately brought in counsellors to meet with grieving employees. Joel indicated that employees would be provided with paid time off for recovery. Some employees accepted counselling sessions, while others went on disability leave, finding it hard to keep on since the tragedy.

Three months after the shooting, Supreme Transit was faced with another obstacle when a co-worker of Carter's named Laney committed suicide. Counsellors were brought in again for all employees. Laney felt guilty about keeping quiet about an interaction she had with Carter months earlier. After the incident, Laney felt she might have been able to stop the tragedy if only she had spoken up. Laney and Carter had been in the lunchroom together, when Carter began bashing Supreme Transit and its management. Carter explained that his hunting experiences allowed him to identify the perfect place for a shot to take out Joel. Laney remembered having laughed at the time, but stated it was from feeling awkward. Carter continued detailing crazy what-ifs about each boss he wished dead. Laney had started to become uncomfortable; a joke gone too far, and swiftly ended the conversation. She exited the break room and went back to work. She was a passive and soft employee who never wanted to cause trouble, so she didn't mention the encounter to anyone. Since the shooting, Laney had been replaying the events in her head over and over, and eventually could not take it anymore. She hadn't slept in days.

Questions at Large

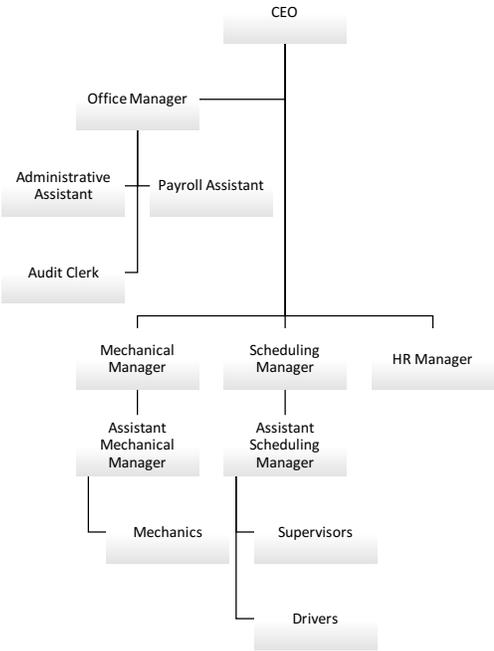
Joel finally found the envelope he had been searching for. Before opening it, he wondered to himself, what might these recommendations entail? The aftermath of the shooting had been intense and heartbreaking, and he was keen on trying to make all changes necessary to provide a safe environment for all of Supreme Transit's stakeholders, especially its employees.

Joel still felt guilty but was at a loss for what he could have done to prevent Carter's killing spree and the events that followed. There were so many questions and no easy answer. Nonetheless, he would see to it that no similar health and safety issue happened at Supreme Transit again. Therefore, Joel started reflecting on the following:

- How may he have handled the situation differently?
- What recommendations are appropriate?
- How could management have mitigated risks / prevented the situation?
- What losses occurred from the rejection of health and safety policies?

Appendix A

Organizational Chart



Appendix B

Suicide Note, Carter

Mom and dad,

I regret that I am having to write you this letter. I am about to perform an unforgiveable act, and it will likely reflect poorly on you both and make you both very sad but I have absolutely no other choice. I am being forced into performing these actions. I am scared daily because there are people from the company following me and hounding me. People from countries all over the world will not leave me alone. They are destroying my being. I will destroy them back. They will regret what they have done to me. The people who have caused me the most damage are Emmanuel Blout, Dustin Wanhorn, Walter Trealout, Amanda Natesh, Laura Reisman, and Daniel Ross. Others tried to help me like Michael Martin, Max Lajeunesse and Kyle Hamelin. Please tell everyone you can about what was done to me. I want everyone to know. All I asked for was to be left alone but it was never followed. They lied about me and said I was a liar. I just want them to stop laughing at me. I never wanted this to happen, but it was meant to be.

Your only son,

Carter

Appendix C

Employees Who Lost Their Lives

Name	Date of Birth	Tenure with Supreme Transit	Department
Jordan Kewayosh	June 11, 1976	1 year	Bus Driver
Joe Casey	July 18, 1982	4 years	Support Services
Ravi Patel	January 9, 1967	5 years	Mechanic
Samantha Thomson	May 6, 1990	6 months	Bus Driver
Brooke Miller	August 16, 1988	12 weeks	Support Services