

STANDARD DEVIATION

SYNOPSIS - 300 WORD

Standard Deviation is the story of the troubled but brilliant young physicist Billy Cottrell and the events leading to his incarceration as an Eco-terrorist.

A tall, athletic, and good-looking young man Billy was in the prime of his life in 2003. While doing research at the California Institute of Technology he was one of the most promising PhD candidates of theoretical physics in the world before the FBI arrested him for involvement in the fire bombings and vandalism of over 130 SUVs.

From an early age Billy found his math and science books to be better friends than other children. His mother, Heidi, remembers that at age ten Billy said, "There's only room in the world for nine great physicists," and that Billy was determined to be one of those nine.

Billy felt confined by the limits of the school system and began acting out. After a turbulent adolescence filled with expulsion after expulsion Billy was accepted to the University of Chicago physics program based upon an essay explaining his poor academic performance but off the chart test scores.

"If there's one thing that trouble does, it allows one the freedom to question the standards and purposes of the institution by which one's status is defined.."

Billy's life would begin to unravel on September 11th, 2003 when the FBI arrested a young environmental activist, Josh Connole. After Connole's arrest the LA Times begins receiving anonymous e-mails from the "true culprits" that proclaim Connole had no connection to the arsons.

In early 2004, the police arrest Billy and indict him on arson charges carrying a minimum of 35 years in prison.

By examining Billy's past his family and colleagues try to understand how someone with as much intelligence and promise as Billy could end up behind bars for something so foolish.