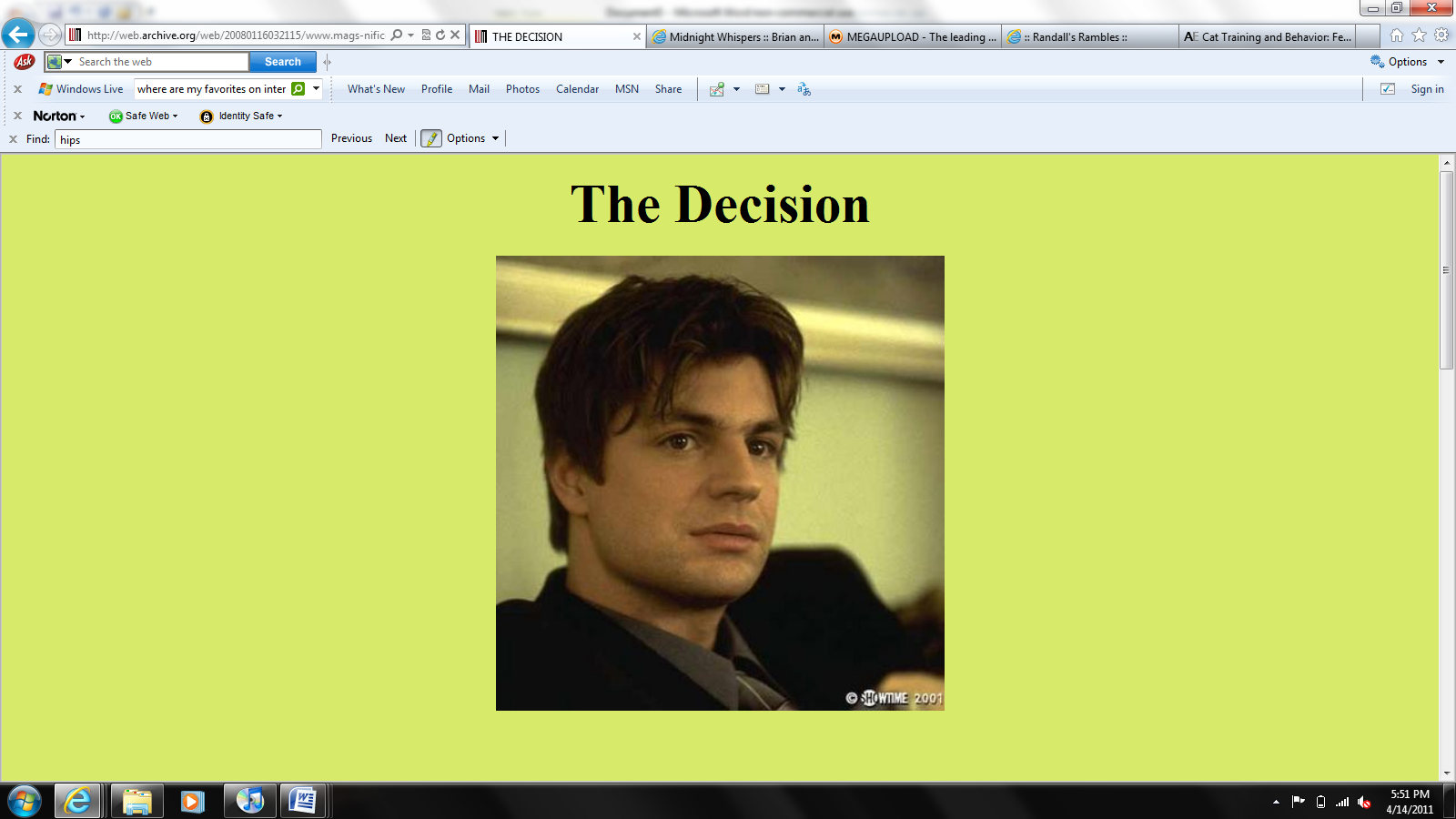
The Decision by Cindy



Brian is sitting at his desk in his office at work. He leans back in his large leather chair, the battle within him evident on his handsome face. His brows are drawn together and eyes narrowed in deep thought and contemplation. His gaze is fixed on the object held firmly in his hands as if staring at it will give him the answer. Maybe it will.

‘Can I really do this?’ Brian wonders to himself.

He is always worried about his ‘asshole’ image and the air of indifference that he works so hard at portraying. He knows that with all he has gone through in his life it has been one of his only security blankets. He can hide easily behind the façade, and to do what he is contemplating would be a sure sign of softening. He doesn’t know if he can handle the change of image it may bring about.

Brian has always given the impression to the outside world that he doesn’t care what they think or say about him, that it in no way affects him. But the truth is that he does care and feels things so deeply, always afraid to let anyone know that they can possibly cause harm to his tender heart. Despite what people think, he does possess a heart. A big one.

His eyes wander from the object he holds to stare blankly out the window. Only the people that are closest to him know the real Brian. The members of his ‘extended family’ have barred witness to his well-hidden soft side. Especially Justin and Gus. A large smile spreads across his face at just the thought of his boys. They are the ones that make it so easy for him to let the walls that he so carefully erected in his 29 years before them fall. They allow him to be exposed and vulnerable without fear of rejection or humiliation.

So he wonders again, still firmly grasping the item in his hands, eyes fixed back on it, ‘Can I?’

He is startled out of his thoughts by the sound of the phone buzzing on his desk.

“Brian, they’re ready for you in the boardroom,” Cynthia informs him.

Knowing the decision that he is making will affect his life on so many levels, he rises from his chair and places the item still grasped in his hand confidently on his desk. He grabs the client’s folder from his briefcase and proceeds to leave his office.

As he is about to exit the room, he turns to take a look at his desk, and an air of certainty comes over him at knowing that even though things many now change, he has made the right decision.

He walks out of his office with a satisfied smile on his face and in his eyes and heads for his meeting.

The framed picture of Justin, with a beautiful ‘Sunshine’ smile on his face, is placed squarely on the corner of his desk.