

Alice

Age 17/Grade 12

The Shoshoni Tribune

CW- mild gore, violence, mental illness, suicide, stalking

I lifted the short ax. The man was already dead. I didn't care. His head will look much better when it's separated from his body. He deserved this. This is what people who attack my girl deserve.

I kept swinging, blood spraying the side of the tack room.

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The glass shattering downstairs barely registered in my mind as I scribbled furiously on my math homework. Loud noises stopped phasing me when I was placed in my sixth foster home at thirteen. Four years and many foster homes later loud noises were as familiar as the buzzing of the lightbulbs in every house I've ever lived in.

"Ewa!!!!"

That was also something I have grown used to. There are two types of attention I receive in new placements, the foster parents either ignore me or blame me for every minor inconvenience.

I sent my pencil down on top of my book and made my way down to the kitchen. Kimana was not the best foster mom I've ever had but she was nowhere near the worst. I just hope she hasn't decided to stop giving me space to "settle in".

As I turn the corner into the kitchen I see why Kimana called me. She has managed to slice her hand open on the glass shattered around her.

"What happened?" I mutter reaching for the towel on the counter and handing it over to her, careful to mind the glass on the floor. The news report was playing dully in the background.

"I was putting away some dishes when I heard the news. Apparently, John Martin was murdered last night. I guess I must have dropped a plate or something." She replied, taking the towel and pressing down on her cut. Seeming to realize I had only lived in this town for two weeks, she added, "His daughter was the one who did your tour when you first got here."

"Oh, that's awful, she seems like such a sweet girl," I muttered, grabbing the broom and cleaning up the glass.

Kimana stood there inspecting the cut on her hand while I dumped the shards into the trash.

"I'll have to make them a casserole to give them on Sunday," She muttered, frowning down at the slice on her hand.

I glanced at it. She might need stitches, that bleeding was not going to stop anytime soon by the looks of it.

"You should probably go to the clinic to get that checked out." I nodded at her hand starting to head up to my room to finish my homework.

"I'll go later. Doc Jim is at church right now. I'll just go work in the garden." She hummed while walking out the door.

Sometimes I forget how interwoven small towns are. Shoshoni has a population of about 600 people and everyone knows everyone and everyone sits in a pew on Sunday morning.

Except for me apparently, Kimana was taking Sundays away from church to integrate me into



small town life. I have been trying to get better at learning my classmates' names since it looked like I would be graduating here and they've all known each other since birth and I was the newcomer. But even now, it's a slow-moving process.

I like to consider myself friendly and approachable considering I'm five foot two and look like a baby doll with my small frame, blue eyes, and straight jet black hair. I think what makes people hesitate to talk to me is the scars. Courtesy of either my birth mother or one of my first three foster homes, I have scars covering my arms, hands, legs, and a particularly nasty one from my lip to my eyebrow on the right side of my face that nearly had come from my mother nearly blinding me in a psychotic rage. Other than the scars there's not anything scary about me despite the rumors that circulated my first week at school that claimed I was a serial murderer in the witness protection program. I'm generally pretty nice and caring. At my old home, they called me Barbie because I tend to space out for hours and can never seem to remember anything that happened.

I reach my room and close the door, laying down on my bed I stare at the ceiling. The math homework at my desk is due tomorrow but I have an article due tomorrow as well. The best part of every new school is publishing my first article in the school newspaper. This one is supposed to be an informational segment on teen pregnancy, an unfortunate assignment by my advisor but, I decide to switch it to cover the events of the murder no doubt the most interesting thing to happen in this town in decades.

I grab my notebook and shove it in my backpack. Slinging it across my back, I make my way to the door.

"Kimana, I'm going out for a little." I yell towards the garden.

“Be safe and be home by supper time.” She yells, voice muffled by the thick rows of assorted vegetables and fruits between us.

I head into town on my bike not trusting the truck Kimana gave me to drive would actually make the two miles into town. I watch the fields pass by.

I hear the yelling before my eyes refocus. I shake my head. I’ve been zoning out more and more and I’m remembering less and less.

A deputy was in the street directing traffic around the intersection. The power must have gone out in the light again, another charm of small towns. The electricity never seems to work in town and is even faultier when you get more than a mile from the edge of town. I brake slightly and turn towards the police department. Pulling into the lot I hop off and walk around to the side sitting underneath the window. I had discovered this place by accident when I didn’t want to go straight to Kimanas after school and was trying to escape the heat. I had sat down and heard the sheriff inside complaining about animals going missing off of some farms.

I pulled out my notebook and waited. Sure enough, the Sheriff was rattling away with a deputy about the murder scene and what could have happened. I scribbled down everything he was writing until he finally stopped and said that it was closing time and the light switched off inside the office.

I picked up my bag, shoving my notebook inside and raced off on my bike. I’m not sure if what I’m doing was illegal but I still didn’t want to get caught in case they decide to close the window. I looked up realizing it wasn’t quite late enough for me to have to head back. I pulled into the school parking lot and started writing my article and dropped it in the anonymous submission box. I started on the way home hoping that Kimana wouldn’t be mad that I was a little late.

The article did incredibly well, people were coming up and talking to me all the time, teachers asked me questions in classes, people outside the school were reading it too. My words were spreading through the town and picking up attention. It had more details than the real newspaper and some people were questioning how I knew it but no one had any answers so I was in the clear.

There was another murder and I wrote another article. It was even more popular. I took up my post under the window everyday after school doing my homework until I heard the voices inside, then I would start writing.

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The man kept screaming, it was getting on my nerves. I just wanted him to stop. I swung the old yolk back above my shoulder and watched with delight as it connected with his ribs. The crunch reverberated through the space. The man shuddered with pain.

I swung the yolk again.

He stopped screaming.

I kept swinging.

Once he stopped moving I dropped the paper. Grabbing my bike, I took off towards home shedding the bloody clothes on the way.

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The knocking started at about four a.m. I ignored it and rolled over in bed. The knocking got louder and louder. Then it stopped. I heard Kimana talking to someone. Then she was hurrying down the hallway. She pushed the door open and light flooded in. She rushed to my bed and shook my shoulder.



"Ana, wake up, the police are here. They need to talk to you." She whispered. She pulled the blanket off me. "Come on. We have to go."

I stumbled out of bed grabbing my robe and wrapping it around myself as Kimana ushered me down the hall and into the living room. There were two officers waiting. Both were burly men who were nearly three times my size who looked to be about 30.

"Ms. Rhoades?" The one on the left asked.

"Please don't call me that." I winced not used to hearing my last name.

"Call her Ewa." Kimana snapped, clearly not a request.

"Ewa, my name is Deputy Raine and this is Deputy Blanche. Please understand that you do not have to talk to us but your cooperation could save lives." The one on the right was speaking now, worry etched deep in the lines of his face.

Deputy Blanche chimed, "Where were you after you left school today?"

"I was sitting outside the police station." I replied groggily, still not very awake.

"Why?"

"I wanted to learn more about the investigation."

"Where did you go after that?"

"She came home for dinner at six." Kimana edged cautiously, "Why?"

"There was another murder at about five thirty today, 3 miles from here."

"And? What does that have to do with her?"

"Please remain calm ma'am." Deputy Raine took a step towards Kimana.

"I think I have been very calm. Considering it is god awful early in the morning in my home harassing a child under my care for what seems to be no good reason. She has lived through things you two could only imagine. Maxwell Raine we have been friends since high

school but if you think that excuses your harassment of a CHILD. You are SORELY mistaken.”

The anger in Kimana’s voice was touching, I had no idea she cared that much.

“Kimana, we’re here because this was found at the scene.” Raine pulled a bag out of his pocket. Inside was a paper with what looked like smaller pieces of paper glued to make a letter.

The Letter read:

I’LL KILL YOU ALL.

LOOK DEEPER THAN THE SURFACE.

LEAVE MY GIRL ALONE.

SHE’S JUST LIKE HER MOTHER.

-The Shoshoni Tribune

I couldn’t breathe. The letter was made from the clipping’s of my newspaper articles. The killer was looking for me. They knew my mother, why would I be like her?

“What’s wrong with your mother Ewa?” Deputy Raine asked.

“She’s crazy, she nearly killed me when I was ten, she thought I was going to kill her when I grew up. They locked her up in a hospital when she tried to say that someone in her head made her do it. That she only wanted to protect me.” I couldn’t breathe. The walls were pulsing with my heartbeat. “This can’t be real. She nearly killed me, don’t tell me this is real.”

“Ewa?” Kimana approached my side. “Ewa honey you have to breathe.”

"This can't be happening. She can't be here. I need to leave. Get me out of here. Let me out!". Marelene was holding me trying to smooth my hair but her hands burned my skin. My body was on fire. Everything was blurry. Then everything went black.

Something wet was on my forehead. There were muffled voices in the background. My head hurt, and my breaths pulled along my spine. I slowly opened one eye and looked around.

"She should be fine, give her a few hours. She'll have a nasty headache and probably be a little paranoid but there's nothing physically wrong with her.", The man that was speaking sounded old, his voice matched his wispy white hair and wrinkled skin.

"Thanks Jim." Kimana was holding her head in her hands, worry written across her face. I felt bad. I was normally not a taxing placement, I did all my homework and chores and stayed generally out of everyone's way. I never wanted to cause any trouble especially not for Kimana, she's been so kind to me. I closed my eyes and decided to sleep until this nightmare was over.

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The woman was breathing gently in the chair. I gripped the scalpel tighter in my hand. It was such a shame. She had been so nice to the girl, but when she let those officers into her home and let them near my girl, she sealed her fate.

They had hurt her and nobody was allowed to hurt her. The glove was making my hand sweaty. I approached the back of the chair. I sent up a silent prayer as I sliced. The woman never even woke up. A kind death, for the kindness she had shown my girl.

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Something smells funny. The light peaking through the curtains told me it was just now reaching the afternoon. My head was still pounding but it was easier to breathe



now. I sat up and looked around. I saw Kimana in the chair next to me. She looked pale and there was a piece of paper bunched in her hand. I shook her shoulder. Her body collapsed on the ground.

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Screaming, so much screaming. Didn't she know I was protecting her? So many monsters in the world want to hurt her. I'm here to keep her safe. That's why I left the letters, so that they would back off.

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I couldn't stop. He was after me. He was getting closer. I didn't know this man but he wanted me dead. I was hoping Kimana would be my forever home and he stole that from me. I was running. The phone wasn't working so I had to get the police myself. Town was only a little further away. I just wanted all of it to stop. The letter had been one sentence this time:

**I hope you enjoy the consequences of your  
disobedience.**

**-The Shoshoni Tribune**

I just needed to get to the station and then everything would be okay. My lungs were burning and my vision was starting to blur. I kept running.

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She was running. Why was she running? Didn't she know the safest place was with me? I've been here keeping her safe ever since her mother first tried to kill her. I've been protecting

her. My job was to protect her. I had killed everyone just to keep her safe. I doubt I'll be able to hide much longer, but I can for a little while longer until she's safe.

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I must have taken a wrong turn. I should have made it to town by now. My feet were throbbing and it was hard to move my legs. The farms I was passing by didn't seem familiar but I couldn't stop. He might be out here watching me waiting for me to give up. I couldn't let him win. He couldn't. He had to pay for what he did. I refused to be afraid of him.

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She should stop running, no one was chasing her, she was so tired and I didn't want her to hurt herself. I needed to protect her from herself now. I pulled and she stopped moving. I turned us back towards town. She had missed the turn about a mile back. I walked us to the outskirts of town and stopped fighting as she pushed back to the front.

I sat back, ready to front again if she needed me.

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There it was, town was only a few feet away. I pushed through the stiffness in my legs and made a sprint for the station.

There were people outside. Most didn't even bother to look my way, the few that did seemed to back away in horror. I must have some of Kimana's blood on me then. I hadn't even bothered to check before I sprinted away from the house. I just wanted to get away from the man who wanted to kill me. I burst through the doors of the station.

"I need help! Someone killed Kimana! You need to find them!" I cried throwing myself at the nearest deputy.

“Ewa we’ve been looking for you. What happened?” It was deputy Raine. He was holding me up, supporting all of my weight.

“I woke up and she was dead next to me. Someone killed her, you have to help me!” I was shaking.

“Ewa you need to come with me okay?” Deputy Raine was pulling me towards a room. It didn’t look like an office. He pulled the door open and I saw the table and chairs. This isn’t right. Why is he taking me here? What’s happening?

Raine led me to a chair and guided me to sit down. My body dropped like dead weight, the metal was bitterly cold. He walked around the table and sat down opposite of me.

“Ewa what happened at the house?”

“I woke up because something smelled funny, I saw Kiwana and tried to wake her up but she fell over. A paper fell out of her hands and I saw it was another letter. I don’t remember what it said but it scared me so I started to run trying to get here as fast as I could.” I was crying as I spoke quietly.

“Ewa what really happened?”

“That is what happened!” I wailed “Why aren’t you looking for who did this?”

“Ewa you are **the only person** who had access to Kimana. You were writing the details of the murders before they happened in your articles, you are the only common thread.” Raine was getting angry. “GOD DAMMIT EWA WHAT HAPPENED?”

I was crying. Raine was scaring me. I just wanted to go home.

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I peeled myself off the chair. “You scared her.” I growled at the man across from me.

“Ewa what are you doing?” The man was confused.

"This isn't Ewa you made her cry. You scared her. You should be dead." I lunged at the man. I needed to protect her and he was a threat.

The man shoved me back, "Where's Ewa?"

"Safe, inside. She can't tell what's happening or that time is passing. It's better like that."

I snapped.

"Who are you then?" The man did not have nearly enough fear in his voice when addressing me.

"Evan" I was growing tired of his questions. He should be dead for the way he treated my girl.

"Did you hurt those people Evan?"

"They got what they deserved, they hurt my girl. I should have done it sooner."

"How long have you been with Ewa?"

"Since the man tried to hurt her. She was twelve and he wanted to do horrible things so I made sure she was safe. She switched homes after that but not before he tried to cut out her insides. I made sure to pay him back."

"You're not protecting her anymore, she loved Kimana and you killed her."

"She might not like me right now but it was the best way to protect her. Don't pretend you know my girl." I snapped. How dare he say I was hurting her.

"I have to do this I hope you know I'm sorry Ewa." He lunged at me.

I dodged and he hit the floor.

"I'm sorry sir, I hope you know I have to do this." I mocked as I swung my leg back and made connection with his ribs. He groaned and I made connection again and again.

I walked to the door pulling on the handle. It didn't move. It was locked from the outside.
I sat back in the chair and waited.

I felt a presence behind me but it was too late as the needle punctured my skin. I looked up and saw a man frowning down at me as my body went limp and my vision started to fade.

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"Ewa are you awake?" The lights were burning my eyes and the room was a sterile white.

"Did I die?"

"No honey." A gentle voice chuckled from the other side of the room. "You're in the Wind River service Unit. Do you know what happened?" The woman was kind looking like a mother should look.

"I went to the police and then..."

"Then what" she hummed writing on a clipboard.

"Then, I don't know."

"I'm going to ask you some questions, okay, answer with yes or no."

"Okay?"

"Do you ever feel as if someone else is in control of your body?"

"Yes."

"Do you often lose track of time or space out and return with no memory of what happened in that period of time?"

"Yes."

"Have you experienced an increase in mood swings?"

Yes.

"Have you been more impulsive as if you can't really control your actions?"

"No."

"Thank you." She took a few notes on her clipboard and looked up at me, she took a steadying breath and said, "Okay, I'm going to explain this to you. You might have some questions but wait until I'm done. Nod if you understand." She glanced up to see me nodding furiously. "You appear to have a condition called Multiple Personality Disorder. It often appears around age fourteen however it appears to have remained unnoticed until now. The other people in your head are called alters. You have a very active one that calls itself Evan. He takes the role of a "protector", he appears whenever he perceives danger. We believe he is responsible for the murders that have been taking place. He's fronted a few times since you've been admitted but he seems to have become less active as time passes. Do you have any questions?"

My head was spinning. I was killing people and didn't even know, how is that even possible. "How long have I been here?"

"Six days. This is the first time that we've talked to you. Evan has been very active and was hostile the first few days but seems to be relaxing." She looked up and smiled at me.

"I killed those people.... I killed Kimana?" I whispered.

She sighed, "Yes and no. Your body did but your mind did not. Evan killed them by taking over your body."

"So what happens now?"

"We assess you and determine if you are fit to be rehabilitated, if you should go to trial, or if you stay here."

"How long does that take?"

"I don't know honey."



"Oh."

"Don't worry, we'll do everything we can to keep you comfortable." She hummed heading to the exit.

I looked up at the ceiling, closing my eyes. This was my worst nightmare. I had turned out just like her and I wanted nothing more than to disappear.

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They hadn't sealed the door. I flipped the scissors in my hand. I had to do it. This was the only way to keep her safe forever. We were stuck here and I couldn't stop the people who made her cry and hurt her with their questions and needles.

They wanted to start electric therapy tomorrow and I couldn't let them. I opened the scissors and pushed them against my wrist. This was the only way to save her.

I sliced barely registering the pain as it radiated up my arm. I switched the scissors to my other hand and repeated the motion.

I sat against the wall and waited. It was getting cold and I started shivering. I ignored it.

This was the only way to save her.

I stopped feeling cold. It was warm now. I glanced down and smiled at the blood pooling on the floor. My vision was going fuzzy.

This was it. She was finally going to be safe forever. The monsters of the world couldn't get to her anymore. I closed my eyes and welcomed the darkness with a smile on my face.

Imaginary

By Jeremy _____ n S: _____

As I drove to the house, I listened to Halloween songs and watched the leaves dance through the air while they fell off the trees. It felt like a perfect fall night two days before Halloween. It was very dark in this wooded area, and an immense fog covered the whole road. As I neared the house I thought, "Watching Aaron should be easy. Just feed him, entertain him, and put him to sleep. Simple enough, right?"

Once I arrived at the decorated, welcoming home I parked my car. Then I knocked on the door and talked to Aaron's mom and dad. They told me what I needed to do and that they'd be back around 11 p.m. I thought to myself, "That's only three hours, it should be easy." They left and I asked Aaron, "What do you want to do?"

He responded, "Can we play hide and seek?"

"Sure," I replied. "Want to play it in the dark? I used to play it like that all the time."

"No, I'm good," he said hesitantly. "I'm afraid of the dark." I understood since I used to be afraid when I was around his age. "Ok then, I'll count first." I started counting to 60 and as I did, I heard him giggling as Aaron ran around trying to find a place to hide. Once I finished counting I shouted, "Ready or not here I come!" and began my search.

First, I checked upstairs. I looked in his room first. Aaron's room was very nice. Beside his racecar bed, he had a nightstand. On his nightstand was a lamp checkered like a checkered flag you would see in racing. He also had these very detailed pictures on his nightstand. They depicted him and a thing. Some of them showed him playing with the thing. Others showed them going to the park or eating. I assumed it was just him and an imaginary friend and kept searching. The next stop was his parents' bedroom. The bedroom door was locked and I knew that was probably for a reason so I let it be.

Then I checked the bathroom. I opened the door to the bathroom and instantly felt like someone or something was watching me. I turned on the light and flew open the shower curtain. Nothing was there. I then checked the cupboard under the sink. Again nothing. This led me to assume my mind was just playing tricks on me. After all, It was a couple of days before Halloween night. I proceeded down the stairs and entered the living room.

In the living room, there were many places he could hide. However, I found him rather quickly since he was lying down underneath the coffee table, which I could see under from the arch I was standing at. It reminded me of when I was young and played hide and seek with my mom. I grabbed him from under the table and realized he was crying profusely. I worriedly asked him, "What's wrong? Are you ok? Did you hit your head?"

He looked at me and shakily replied, "Have you been down here at all while we've been playing?"

Confused, I replied, "No, I went upstairs first thing. I haven't been down here since."

Aaron's face grew even more frightened. I felt the hair on the back of my neck stand up like soldiers in a line waiting for something to attack. I whipped my head around and nothing was there. I told him, "Don't worry, I'll keep you safe. Just stay with me and we can go see if anyone else is here." As we walked around his house he hid behind me and kept looking around me, as if he expected something to jump out at him. I looked in every nook and cranny of each room and made sure there was 100% nothing in there. We finally made a full circle back to the living room. The downstairs was clear. Not a single person or thing in sight. Then, we went upstairs.

The first place we checked was his room. How am I supposed to get him to sleep in there if he thinks something is hiding in there? As I entered he followed me until I got near his

nightstand. I wondered why this scared, little boy just decided to stop so I told him. "It's okay, you can come over here."

"I don't like those pictures though," He said, "they remind me of my imaginary friend." This stumped me. Shouldn't he like to be reminded about his friend?

"What does that have to do with you not liking those pictures?" I said confusedly.

Creepily, he replied, "Cause he stopped being imaginary."

Appalled, I staggered back and said, "What do you mean?"

"He stopped being imaginary...I think he's mad at me."

"Why would he be mad at you?" I asked with much concern in my voice.

"I didn't want to play with him. I didn't want to be his friend anymore." Aaron said with a great expression of worry strewn across his face.

"Why-why not?" I asked, my concern growing, turning into more of a feeling of fear.

"He started telling me things...things that were very, very bad." Once he said this I took his hand in mine and we left the room. Then, I saw the door. The door to his parent's room. Swung. Wide. Open. I slowly inched toward the room, the boy's hand held tightly in mine. The light also furthered my concern, considering when I saw the door locked earlier I could tell the light was off from the crack under the door. When I entered the room I saw nothing. Then, I checked under the bed and also saw nothing. Then, I checked the closet. Also nothing. As I got back up from checking around in the closet, I turned and asked Aaron, "Did you open the door to this room while you were looking for a place to hide?"

He responded with a very frightened tone, "No I haven't gone up here. My parents told me they didn't want me going in their room."

Then, as we left the room, we heard a loud thud, as if someone had just dropped a college textbook on the ground. It had come from downstairs. I bolted down the stairs with Aaron's hand in mine. I looked everywhere to see what room the noise came from. Then, I saw it. Standing in the living room, hunched over like Gollum. It looked like the thing I saw in the drawings. Except, it was real. But not really in the sense that it looked like the thing from the drawing. It was an actual person. Hunched over on the ground eating crumbs. It resembled the tall, lanky thing I saw in the drawings but it was an actual human. Then, it stood up and I saw this very deformed human-like thing look at me, its eyes bloodshot.

"Run!!" I shouted to Aaron and we both bolted upstairs into his room. I locked the door and made a call to the cops. As I made the call, I could hear the human, or what I assumed was a human thing repeatedly charging at the door, grunting in pain but also laughing. Hysterically laughing as if he knew something Aaron and I didn't. I told the operator where we were and what our situation was. They told me they'd be over soon. As we waited, we barricaded ourselves in Aaron's room. Then, the banging on the door stopped and everything went silent. It was too silent. Then, after a couple of minutes, I heard the door open downstairs and heard the cops. We removed the barricade and walked downstairs. The cops asked, "Are you alright?"

I responded tentatively, "Yeah, we're alright."

The cops then began to look around the house. All they found was a little hatch in the parents' room hidden under a box in their closet, stocked with food and other necessities, an open window with the wind blowing through the curtains, and a trail of footprints heading into the woods.

Short Story Submission
31 October, 2022

On a New Sunrise

"Dad?! What are- How?!" I leaned over the side of my roof taking in the sight. Not just Dad, but neighbor Dave, Mrs. Kars from School, and even grocer Nate were all moaning, reaching out with dull eyes and pale gray arms outstretched. Standing up, I looked out to the city scape. The sun was just beginning to creep out from behind the mountains, its morning rays dying the sky in an orange glow. This was it, the first dawn of the apocalypse.

Turning my attention back to the house, I crawled back in through my room window. As I sat crouched on the windowsill, I found mom and Sophie to my left, huddled in the corner. They had done a good job barricading the door; my dresser, book shelf, and even my bed all piled up, but they felt like a flimsy defense for the monsters outside. As I turned to face them, my lips slipped open. "Hey, Dad's been turned." Their faces flashed white and Sophie's eyes went pink. Guilt flooded me with how abruptly I had broken the news. "Well, uh, the sun is starting to come out?" I said, my voice lifting my words into a question as I searched for a way to comfort them. And- nothing came.

Gripping the frame, I leaned back out the window. Below, I could see that a good 20 zombies had made their way to the front of the house. I was glad my room was on the third floor, as it was high enough that they couldn't get to us. We made a habit of locking the door behind us, and thankfully no zombies seemed smart enough to unlock the doors. As I took note of just how busy the streets were, words started slipping out again.

"Hey mom, uh, when day breaks, should we, uhm, try moving? I can uh, try guiding you two across the rooftops?" I winced at my fumbled words, my face turning red in embarrassment.

"I'm not sure. Why do we need to move? Isn't this safe enough as it is?"

"Yeah, well - but in movies and stuff it's always best to try grouping up with other survivors."

"I-can't we wait a little longer? Shouldn't we wait for the dust to settle before we try anything?" Mom replied from deep within the room. Mom and Sophie remained in the corner farthest from the window, afraid of what they might see from outside.

"Ah, okay. We can do that." I said awkwardly before looking back out to the city.

Crawling out from the window I went right, scaling up the side of the roof. Reaching the peak, I took in the city scape before me. For a zombie apocalypse, I found it was rather quiet; no ER sirens, no flashing lights- even the zombies' moans were drowned out by the whispering of

the gentle wind. *I'm safe- for now.* Balancing myself on the top of my roof's peak, I squatted down before kicking my legs out in front of me and resting my shoulders on the tiles.

Tucking my hand behind my head, I turned my attention to the open sky. At that moment, I couldn't help but take notice of the vastness of it; how the gentle breeze guided the drifting clouds away from the mountains, the rising sun tinting them with an orange-pinkish hue. *Pretty. Wouldn't it be nice if sunlight were the cure? If all I had to do was sit here, and the world would fix itself? If only...* I let my eyes drift shut and tried to keep myself from shivering. It had been a long night and my body had wanted me to acknowledge that.

When I came too, the sun had risen up pretty high. Taking note of my current location, I flinched when I realized I had slid down the roof, my body now resting only a foot from the ledge. Gripping the tiles with the tips of my fingers, I slowly sat up and looked around myself. The zombies that had grouped around our house were no longer there and the city sounded as though it had all been some crazy dream.

I crawled over to my window, but found it latched shut, the curtains closed. *Well that was rude.* Making my way to the space above the front porch, I climbed down from the roof onto the picnic table. Pulling out the spare key that I always had hung around my neck, I turned to face the door, finding it left open slightly ajar. My nerves started to prickle and with clenched fists, I opened the door and walked in.

The family room looked the same as usual, the drab khaki couch against the wall under the window, red lampshades coated in dust, and the blue curtains closed. I walked around to the kitchen and it was the same, nothing out of place, the dishes left untouched from yesterday, my backpack in the corner, probably still containing my dirty lunch dishes and unfinished homework assignments. Turning my attention upstairs, I took each step quietly, cringing when I heard the third step creek.

I stopped, held my breath, and when I heard nothing, continued up the next four steps. When I got up to the hallway, I felt my breath catch. There was a trail of blood leading out of Mom and Dad's room leading right out to the stairs where I stood.

My hair rose on end, goose bumps covering my arms and neck as I stood stock still. My adrenaline spiked and my blood rushed in my ears, deafening me to everything but the beating in my chest. Before I knew it, I was moving closer to the doorway, morbid curiosity getting the better of me. As I looked inside, my face blanched in horror.

Lying peacefully on the bed, mom rested, her last breath long ago taken. Her dead skin was made paler by her sky blue night shirt, bloodstained by the gaping hole in her chest where her heart used to beat. Mom rested on top of the bed sheets, her head bashed open, her eyes left wide, and her hands carefully positioned on her stomach -as though she was precariously placed

after her death. I glanced around the room. It was a wreck; mom's glass carousel horses knocked off the dresser shattered and blood stained on the floor, the dresser lying on its side with its drawers half open and its contents spilled out on the floor.

Suddenly, I heard the sound of a door closing from beneath me. Startled, I flinched and ran to the next room down the hall. Closing and locking the door as quickly as I could. I finally felt tears streaming down my face, the hot salty water staining my cheeks.

Squatting down against the door, I could still hear my blood rushing, feel my heart pounding, and see Mom's motionless, pale figure positioned on the bed. My vision started to go black and the sound of my breathing soon became all I could hear. *Ah, hyperventilation.* Gradually, I started breathing slower, fighting against the urge to breathe. Sitting there, I waited, listening for any more movement in the house. An hour had to have gone by with me frozen in place against the door, barely noticing the passage of time by the shadows moving across the inside of Sophie's room, the pinks giving me anxiety and reminding me of the blood just out in the hall.

At some point, I finally regained control of my breathing, racing heart, and mind. Walking over to the window, I opened it and took in a breath of the cool air, taking in the scene of the city, this time from the back of the house. As I listened to the sounds once more, I realized that it was not the usual traffic sounds of a usual day, but rather altogether too quiet with only the sounds of a few desperate drivers making their way out of the city.

It was starting into the late afternoon, and I couldn't help but hope that the sun would never set. Walking back inside the room, I sat on the flowery rug in the middle of the floor, and I started thinking of what all had led to this. The origin of the zombies was still unknown, but I was beginning to think it was a disease of some kind. I had recognized over half of the zombies that surrounded our house that morning, and they all had similar appearances and behaviors. My thoughts circled back to Sophie curled up in the corner of my room pale-faced beside mom and I felt an overwhelming sense of anxiety for her. *What happened in the time that I was passed out? Is she still okay? Or is she like... Mom.* Shaking my head to clear my thoughts, I grabbed one of Sophie's smaller stuffed animals and headed to the window. *This sucks. I hate this.*

I, lost in thought, had zoned out and before I knew it, the sun was already making its way behind the mountains. Nightfall. I hadn't moved this time, and my body was stiff from how still it had been as I had aimlessly looked out the window. Getting up, I stretched before wandering closer to the window and found a familiar sight. Zombies crowded around the street's edge, looking for something more to feast on.

Looking down at the perimeter of my house, I found no zombies close to our yard. Their blank stares had looked past my house, perhaps turned away by the foul stench of old blood. Clenching my eyes shut, I let the bloody scene fade out of my mind and I steeled my resolve.

Climbing out of the window, I made my way back onto the roof and headed for my room window. As I checked to see if it was still locked, I heard the front door creak open.

Dad exited the house with a dull look in his faded eyes. Strangely, they looked pinker than I remember them being last night, almost as though he had been crying. The ends of his hands were black, and his shirt was stained with blood. It wasn't hard to guess what had happened. *He... he killed mom.*

As Dad made it to the street, I watched him join the other monsters before turning my attention back to my room window. When I went to unlatch it, I found that it was unlocked this time with the curtains parted enough that I could get a glance in at my room. Inside, I found the door still barricaded, though the items had been arranged differently than before, my bed slid up first, then my dresser and bookshelf. Carefully, I fully slid my window open and parted the curtains.

In the corner, I found Sophie, curled up and dozing. I came in quietly and walked over to her. When I came closer to her, I pulled her hair out of her face. I was struck with guilt as I revealed tear stained cheeks and red eyes. Placing the stuffed unicorn I had grabbed from her room in her arms, I sat beside Sophie. Gazing at her face, I felt that I had let her down by not being here, protecting her. Even if she didn't hear or see what had happened to Mom, it must've been hard being alone. Poking her in the cheek, I called out to her.

"Sophie, Sophie, I'm here now. It's time to wake up."

"Jake, stop it. I said stoooooop." She grouched and pushed my hand away, before stretching her arms and legs with a big yawn. As she wiped the sleep from her eyes, she suddenly stopped and screamed, running across the room to the other side, her face a ghastly white. *From her reaction, I can guess she knows about what happened to Mom.*

"Hey, I-it's alright. I-I'm normal, see?" I said, holding out my arms.

"So was Dad before- hic- before he-" Sophie was crying now, her shoulders shaking up and down.

"I'm different. I swear. I promise." Though tears continued to stream down her face, she loosened up a bit, her grip on the unicorn relaxing a bit.

"Uh- um. Are- are you hungry? I can go get us some snacks?" I said, gesturing to the window I came in from.

"Okay."

As I got up to leave, Sophie suddenly screamed "Don't go to Mom and Dad's room though. Don't!"

"Okay. I won't." I smiled gently, trying to reassure her. It must not have been convincing though, as the tears started coming faster, and I felt myself tense up. "I'll be alright! Promise. I'll be right back," I said, giving her my pinkie.

Stepping closer, Sophie locked hers with mine and I knew I had to be quick about this. Glancing around my room before heading to the window, I grabbed my steel baseball bat and crawled out. Stepping onto the roof, I made my way back to the roof above the patio. The front door was still open, but no zombies were anywhere close to the property. Even so, I was very hesitant about coming down from the roof. The image of Mom lying in a bloody mess carefully placed on the bed flashed past my vision making it all the more difficult to steel my resolve and step down to the porch. *I can't let that happen to Sophie, or me for that matter...* Letting out the breath I forgot I had taken, I dropped my leg down and quietly made my way to the pavement.

Making my way to the door, I took a quick peek in before stepping inside and locking the door. Though still thoroughly nervous, the bat I grabbed gave me enough courage to keep going. I held it up defensively as I checked the corners of first the living room, then the kitchen, keeping my eye on the upper hallway the entire time. The bat gave me courage, but not nearly enough for me to feel safe approaching...*Mom*. After checking the main floor a few times, I made my way back to the kitchen. My backpack that I brought home from school just two days ago was left untouched and I emptied it out before beginning my mission. Beginning with food, I quietly filled my bag, later grabbing some medical supplies for just in case.

The adrenaline pumping through my body made me paranoid about the smallest of noises or the slightest of movement. My own breath scared me, and my heightened nerves made it difficult to pack quickly. After about 3 minutes, I had packed as much as I was going to and swung the backpack over my shoulder. I made my way to a nearby window facing the backyard, and nervously opened it. The sound of the window pane sliding scared me even more and my nerves had a new kick of adrenaline. I quickly popped out the bug net and made my way out of the window. Looking up, I found Sophie poking her head out of my window.

"Hey, Sophie? Can you throw down something I can use to climb up there?" I whispered to her. Seeming to get the message, Sophie poked her head back in and came back with a rope I had used in my early days of parkour held tightly in her right hand.

"Yeah, that'll work. Tie it to the leg of my bed. Really good. When I start climbing, pull on it like we're playing tug-of-war, okay?"

"Okay." She called. She went into the room and I waited with trembling nerves until finally, the rope was flung over the side of the building. Grabbing hold of it, I gave it a light tug to signal her before I began my ascent. Less than a minute later, I was in my room.

Letting out a sigh of relief, I dropped the bag down to the ground and set the bat against the wall by the window. I looked down to find nothing at the end of the rope, thankfully, and I started rolling it up before closing and latching the window shut.

"I locked the front door, but I'm not sure about the garage or the back door... sorry Sophie," I said, closing the window.

"It's al-alright" she stuttered.

"For now, let's get some sleep."

"Can I sleep next to you? It's really scary..."

"Sure, I don't mind," I said as I grabbed a few blankets from the closet.

The sun had already set and the dark void filled the room with tense air. Sophie and I crawled under the thick comforter with her unicorn stuffy and drifted off to sleep, my body quick to accept an offer of real rest.

When I came to, I was still in my room, but it was as if the last few days had never happened. The furniture that had been part of the barricade was now in their original positions. Sophie nowhere to be seen, and neither was my backpack. *Has it all been a dream?* I wondered. The terror from the vivid nightmare remained in me, and I resisted the urge to get up, remaining stiff in my bed for a little while longer. When I finally did get up, I went to my door and locked it before stepping closer to my window. It looked the same, like nothing had happened. From the noise outside in the city, I could hear police sirens close by - getting closer. It sounded like they had stopped in front of my house, and I felt my fear and adrenaline resurface.

The rest of that day is like a blur, more dream-like than the horrible nightmare I had had the night before. The police came into the house and arrested Dad. They came after hearing a report from one of our neighbors. At the time it didn't make sense. But the one thing from that whole incident that left me unsettled was that mom sat in the same position, with the same bashed head and bloodied nightgown, surrounded by broken carousel horses. What's stranger than that, though, is that Sophie Rigger doesn't exist.

I asked the police when I noticed she wasn't home, but they insisted that I never had a sister. I even checked her room where I stayed most of my nightmare, but it was empty, as though she dissipated into thin air, along with all of her belongings. They say it was stress induced hallucinations that my mind used to cope with the sight I found of mom. And yet, the same unicorn she held as we drifted sleep remained on my night stand, its dull white fur and

colorful mane neatly resting in the morning rays. It was difficult to comprehend; that she suddenly ceased to exist, leaving only her stuffed unicorn behind.

The Robot

Isabel _____ z V_____
Age 14, Grade 9

Eli knew that the robot wasn't normal from the moment he saw it. He asked his mother why she brought it home. She said it'd help her clean. Eli wasn't satisfied with the response.

It was a robovac, designed to suck up dust and trash and crumbs: an automated vacuum cleaner. It did the job well.

When the robot was taken out of the box, it was already turned on. The mother remarked that it probably got turned on in the delivery truck. Other than this - and Eli's stare- not much was said on the subject. The robot *brrrzzzzed* and turned, Eli's mother nearly dropping it in surprise. The bright red light near the sensor blinked and Eli shuddered. It felt like the robot was winking at him.

The Roomba was immediately put to work sucking up all stray bits of dust all around the house. Eli watched it warily from the couch. He didn't trust the thing one bit.

The boy would even foolishly close his door every night to keep it out! He tried to confide his fears to his mother, but she explained to Eli that it was only a robot and could do no harm. She picked it up to show Eli, and again the evil red light- eye- winked up to him.

One night the boy woke to a bump on his bedroom door. At first he panicked.

"*Brrrzzzzzz*," went the thing lurking in the darkness behind the door. It was the robot. Eli thought that if he kept his door closed, it couldn't hurt him, so he smiled triumphantly from his perch on the bed. Then a frown appeared on his face when the thing behind the door went "*Brrrzzzz*" again. Then there was a spine-tingling tap on the door handle. Then another. And another.

Finally, the handle began to inch *downwards* in the shadows. Eli yelped, which woke up the cat previously asleep on his bed, and the sound stopped.

He didn't want to call his mother and be lectured on the non-autonomy of robots, so he hid underneath the covers and waited for the relief of daybreak. It was a long night indeed.

When morning came, Eli (sporting bags under his eyes) vowed to keep the Roomba from disturbing him anymore. He grabbed it and hid it in a closet, but his mother found it. He turned it off, but later found it peacefully zooming along the kitchen, sucking up breadcrumbs. He even disconnected the charging station, but the robot didn't seem to die.

He eventually settled on creating a barrier around his bedroom made of books and heavier toys. Satisfied, he went to bed.

That night, he woke again to banging on the bedroom door.

No way, he must have thought.

"Brrrrzzzzz," replied the robot.

Again, the ominous tapping on the door handle started up, the thing in the dark never showing itself. The doorknob inched tantalizingly downwards.... Then Eli yelped in fear. The robot feared that the mother would come for the child, so it was forced to retreat. It did so wisely, for Eli's mother came flying out of her room and into the boy's to comfort him. The Roomba didn't go near the room again that night. The boy never did figure out how the robot got past the barrier and back without disturbing it one bit.

The next day, Eli was ready for the robot. He grabbed it despite its *brrrrzzzzing* protests and took out its batteries. The robot kept right on *brrrrzzzzing* and blinking its red sensor eye. Eli, unsettled, considered ripping out its wiring, scrambling its hardware, but he remembered that his mother would not understand. He would get yelled at, for sure. He still could not understand the robot's mission.

Eventually, he put the Roomba outside the house, in the little backyard. Eli could always claim that the robot got out by itself. He locked his door and went to bed, certain that the robot could never get him there. Ah, the naiveness of children! Eli got a big surprise in those hours. But first, the mother asked her son if he'd seen the cat recently. He responded that he hadn't. It hadn't eaten its breakfast, and Eli's mother became slightly worried. She left out a bowl of kitty food and hoped it came back.

The next morning, the boy woke up screaming.

"The Roomba! The Roomba! It was inside my room!" He cried to his mother, but she didn't understand. They never do.

Because of this, the boy didn't elaborate. He was embarrassed.

After breakfast, Eli walked up to the Roomba - quietly attempting to vacuum a corner (the vacuum had become so clogged with cat hair that all it managed to do was spread dust and dirt around the ground). Eli harshly whispered to it, in a tentative show of daytime courage that always dissolves in the night.

"Forget it, robot. I'm not going to do whatever you want. I'll break you! You'll never hurt me!

The robot's malicious red eye gleamed up from the floor. It blinked and *brrrzzzzed* in response. The innocent boy didn't understand. If the robot had the mechanical capabilities to speak, it would chuckle right now. The boy raced back to his mother, who was typing out a missing pet poster.

Brrrzzzzz.

During the third night that the robot manifested its malevolent capabilities, the mother awoke, sweaty and panicked. She didn't know why she woke, and blinked in confusion. The mother rose slowly, a hand on her chest. She had the horrible, horrible, feeling that something bad would happen.

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She slowly shuffled to her son's bedroom in the dark, breathing hard. A feeling of dread settled over her, like the darkness that envelops a thing in the dark. She pushed the bedroom handle, not knowing what to expect. When she saw her son's room, a strangled cry crept up her throat, because the boy was gone, and the clogged-up robot wasn't.

I will give you just one clue as to where he went: I thought the boy tasted delicious.

Alex Hc

Mr. Acker

Creative Writing

October 14 2022

Not All Victims Are Innocent

(CW: gore, sensitive topics)

The man clicked the darkened window on his desktop; slowly toggling from a work email, addressed to Donny, to a black live streaming website. The video itself, casting only a red light into his home office, and onto his disgustingly expressionless face.

On the screen, a girl lay on a metal morgue table, although she was still alive. She looked as if she was in her early twenties, but it was difficult to tell because of the layer of black blood that caked her face and body like makeup. She had a gaping cavity in her chest, which was opened by very unique seeming, metallic tools. Donny watched her heart pulse violently. With her ribs out of the way, nothing shattered the sight he explicitly enjoyed so much.

The ambulance sirens speeding past his house reinstated his attention into his immediate world. Donny sat in a long, rectangular office, in a black leather chair with ripping seams. His desk was a dark brown wood. It had no drawers and was surrounded by black wires on the greyed carpet. His walls were navy blue, but appeared a midnight black in the evening. A small seating area existed to the right of the door behind him, consisting of a leather couch dark brown in color, with a matching ottoman on either side. There was a single window to his right, its wood frame painted white, with the blinds pulled fully open. Outside his window, Donny's car was parked on the narrow driveway in front of his blue townhome. His was situated on the end of the four connected.

Donny's building was one of many; his was across from another, next to two more on either side, and behind another section of the blocky buildings. He lived in a nice housing development, as he was able to make decent money from his online job, and he lived alone. Donny didn't have a wife; all women thought he was an old pervert.

He watched the ambulance speed by, and then brought his attention back to his red desktop screen. While he was turned away, a poll had appeared next to the video window.

"*What next?*" Donny read to himself, then examined the four options below that he was supposed to choose from.

"*Shave her hair.*" Donny wasn't interested.

"*Break her arms.*" No more interest than the last.

"*Remove her fingernails.*" He smirked, considering.

"*Remove her heart.*" Donny hastily pressed the last option as this one actually excited his empty shell of a 'man'.

A few seconds later, the poll results were cast on the screen. Donny's built up tension from the last few seconds was released as he read that the option he chose would be executed. He leaned back and watched it happen; the girl's body immediately flatlined. Without a heart, there was no beat.

The stream was cut. Donny, feeling especially pleased, toggled to another tab he had open. A murder blog; written by someone who called herself "*Jackie The Ripper*", documented all the kills Jackie committed in great detail. She was often referred to as a '*beautiful psychopath killer*' in the comments of every post, which were organized like journal entries. Most people seemed to like reading because they figured her entries were just fiction, some people just liked

her more than others because she is a female, but Donny reads her kills for his own entertainment and enjoyment because, to him, she is simply the best at what she does.

He began reading the most recent of Jackie's posts. She described how she brutally killed a man with a crowbar, and disassembled it, all in the man's home. She snuck into his place of residence while he was sleeping and hid outside his closed bedroom door. When the man got up at daybreak, he went downstairs for his morning cup of coffee, but never even made it to the first step of the staircase. Jackie was efficient and always made sure to never attract unfavorable attention. She explained how she disassembled the body, in such vivid detail, that it seems as though she describes what she did with every, now, congealed capillary in the man's body. She then ended the post by thanking the readers for their support, and signed her name. Jackie will always describe everything she does until she reaches the disposal stage. She claims that no soul will ever know how she disposes of the evidence of her victims.

Donny wanted to know what she did for disposal, more than anything. Donny wanted to know so incredibly badly; he decided to direct message Jackie, even though she was infamous for never responding to her fans. He wrote her a short message, kindly asking if she would even give him a single *hint* as to what she did. Then he turned his desktop off, and left his office. Donny slowly trudged down his carpeted hallway past the bathroom, and to his bedroom at the end of the hall. He slept, dreaming about receiving what he desired from Jackie The Ripper, herself.

The malnourished man gurgled as blood filled and oozed out of his mouth. His eyes rolled back, exposing his glowing sclera from the dark abyss of the room while he tried to defend

himself for the last time, but was too weak. He looked into his killer's eyes as he inhaled his last breath, they were beautiful. He held his breath in their presence as if trying to hold onto his life, but had to let the pressure out from his lungs. His frail body collapsed.

"This is for her, you monster." He was gone, like that young girl's innocence, all those years ago. The killer removed the diamond sharp blade from the man's chest and watched the blood drip from it onto the man's cold expressionless face. The blood pooled and dripped underneath his eyes like he was crying tears of blood.

"Don't cry, you deserved this." The cruel words broke the short silence. He wasn't sorry for what he did, and he never would be.

Lots of rustling began as the killer took care of the 'victim'. The limbless torso was triple-bagged into heavy-duty garbage bags; the limbs in the corner were picked up before the floor was mopped clean, leaving no trace of the murder that took place in this small warehouse. The bags were thrown into the backseat of an expensive silver car, and were taken to a landfill half an hour away from the scene. The killer pulled up to a small building and got out of the driver's seat to hand the bags off to the manager of the establishment. He said his thanks and dragged the two heavy bags into a backroom, never to be seen again. With a tired sigh, the killer retreated back to the car out front, and blearily drove home to a well manicured house in a nice neighborhood, hoping to get enough sleep before the following day of documentation, to finalize the kill and put an official end to that horrifically perverted man,

Donny awoke the next morning with a small jolt of excitement, immediately rushing to his computer to check his messages. Nothing. He didn't expect a response, but was disappointed

nonetheless. Donny shut off the desktop, still somewhat hopeful, and continued his morning by proceeding downstairs. He turned on the morning news and went to make breakfast in the kitchen, as he was able to see the television from the stove. He cracked an egg into the pan sizzling with butter, and popped a slice of white bread into the toaster. The breakfast was cooking while he watched, listening to the current big stories on the news.

'Daniel Hunt' had been missing for two weeks as of today, and an older man in his sixties was found to have been murdered, the disassembled body stashed in garbage bags at a local landfill. The man appeared to have been bludgeoned to death from a slim object to the head, possibly a golf club or crowbar. Donny looked up when he heard this. He was slightly taken aback, it sounded an awful lot like Jackie The Ripper's most recent kill. She had even disassembled the body as the news reporter was describing. Donny turned back to his breakfast as the story was closing. He clicked off the stove burner and retrieved his slice of slightly burnt toast, putting the fried egg on top of it with a thin layer of all the butter he had left in the house.

Donny sat at the small table he had situated between the kitchen and living room and slowly ate, thinking. Jackie had never had a victim's body discovered before, but if this victim was hers... Donny feared for Jackie. If she was arrested, found guilty for all the murders... What would he do? Jackie was all he had now.

"If this was Jackie The Ripper's most recent victim..." Donny thought.

"She must live around here..." This made Donny giddy. His idol, *Jackie The Ripper*, lived in his hometown!

Lots of people have gone missing during Donny's adult life, since he was found guilty, but they were always forgotten about because no one could find any trace of their existence. Eventually, people figured that the missing persons were dead, and stopped searching for them

while trying to move on from the pain that was eating away at their thoughts. Now it seems as though all of these people that had recently gone missing, were Jackie's victims. She was always so good at covering up and hiding all the evidence, but she must've slipped up this time.

Donny rushed to his computer to see if Jackie would mention anything about the current events, on her blog. Sure enough, she had. Donny intently read Jackie's explanation.

"Everything you've seen is true. I've been caught. I will only be able to upload one final time before the authorities find me." Donny was horrified, his expressionless face became angry, then disappointed. Donny hated this turn of events, but it was confirmed that Jackie The Ripper lived in his hometown. This, he was excited about. Another update loaded.

"My uploading style will be in real time, from now, until the end. Stay active, as I will be ridding the public of this website as soon as I am found." Donny was ecstatic and heartbroken. He didn't want to see her go, but it would be the most glorious way she could leave. Donny waited for hours at his desk, watching many random internet videos to pass the time.

"My final victim is very special. I will go to any means to eradicate him." Jackie eventually posted that evening. Comments immediately flooded the post. Donny sat in silence reading the single sentence over, and over. Who was Jackie The Ripper's final victim, and why was he so special to her...?

"Found his information, driving to his home now." She added, a minute later. Donny looked out his window, almost wanting to see the young, beautiful girl he imagined as Jackie, outside the glass panes. He looked back to the glowing screen.

"Parked around the corner for an easy getaway. Don't want to get caught right after a job." Donny kept reading every post over until the next one came. He was so invested in the live

story taking place. It could even be happening on the next street over, or in the housing complex next to his!

Donny waited for half an hour and decided to leave his office and step outside for a few minutes to clear his head and relax his tensed body.

Donny stepped out the front door; he looked up to the partially visible stars and wondered if it would rain that night. He wondered if Jackie would be arrested tonight or tomorrow? Maybe the following day, week, or even year? He had no clue. Donny trudged his slow steps back into his house after pondering for a while. A new update was posted as Donny slowly closed the door to the room in a polite manner, as if he didn't want to wake someone in the next room over.

"I'm currently catching my breath behind the house, no backyard, he lives in a townhome. I'm hidden at the corner where he wouldn't be able to see me by way of any windows, there aren't many. He came out the front door just as I was rounding the far side of the building, but I wasn't seen." Donny found this incredibly odd, as he was just outside, but the next post came in so quickly, he didn't have a moment to process.

"Entering the house. Open window in the back." Donny tensed with excitement and eagerly awaited Jackie's next post. Rain faded into Donny's hearing as it started to tap the window.

"Hidden in the closet under the stairs. I can hear rain starting through the open window. Perfect to deafen any of the noise he decides to make. The downstairs is empty; the lights are off, he must be upstairs. Got his driver's license revoked earlier this year, so he probably doesn't leave often." The comments were swarming with excitement while Donny realized in a jolt of terror; he was Jackie The Rippers final victim. Donny didn't know what to do. He sat at his desk

in a stunned silence. He was going to meet Jackie The Ripper, but she is planning on brutally killing him. His thoughts were interrupted by the next update.

"I'm upstairs, all the doors are closed. Listening through the walls to find this pervert."

Donny's breath hitched and his body froze. He didn't make a sound.

"Not in the bedroom." He listened, but couldn't hear anything. No creak of the door or footsteps in the hall.

"Or the bathroom." Donny knew this was it. The next door was to his office.

"I know where he is." The comments finally went silent with anticipation of what was going to happen. Donny stood up and slowly crept to the closed door. He just wanted to lock it...

"Now." The door burst open, slamming Donny in the face and chest. He stumbled and fell. Jackie The Ripper was standing over him; her long, wavy, red hair trailing all the way down to her small waist. She had amazingly bright green eyes and never wore a mask. She was dressed in all black with a baggy zipped up jacket and worn leather pants. Slick materials don't stain from the blood of your victims, she'd always said. Donny was stunned.

Jackie lunged at Donny with a knife and stabbed him through the lower thigh on his left leg. Donny screamed out and thought that nobody would be able to hear him because of the now pounding rain, but even if someone did, they wouldn't help a man like *him*. Jackie roughly pulled the knife out and stabbed again, right next to the previous wound.

"You deserve this. You know why... Donny." Jackie said lowly, kneeling over Donny's immobile leg, holding the other down. He was taken aback that she even knew his name. He didn't know what she was talking about. Does he really deserve this?

"That girl Donny. You know who I mean. All those years ago. What you pervertedly did to her. You deserve this." Jackie said angrily. She sounded like she was trying to keep a cold and collected visage, while inside, she was boiling. It was as if just her contact with Donny's pale skin, she would badly burn him. Donny flinched as she removed the blade once again, this time returning it to his other leg, giving him identical wounds on either leg. Donny was starting to feel lightheaded from the blood loss. Jackie must have nicked a vital artery in his legs.

"You remember, don't you Donny? She was an innocent child. This is for her." Jackie looked Donny in his horrified eyes and, without hesitation, stabbed him one more time. It was just in the right spot to make Donny immediately collapse from the pain, shock, and blood escaping the previous deep lesions in his skin. Jackie briefly studied her surroundings of the office and noticed the desktop turned on. It caught her eye, as she recognized her own blog on the screen. Jackie made her way over to inspect the computer screen and realized that she was right. Her blog was on the screen, with the current live story visible.

"He's out cold from blood loss. I found his computer open to this very blog post, what an interesting coincidence, he's a fan..."

Jackie put Donny's heavy, limp body into an old suitcase she found on the floor of his bedroom closet, and zipped it as far as she could. She left the house through the front door, opening the garage from the inside before leaving, then retrieved her car from around the corner. Jackie pulled into the garage and loaded the body into the trunk.

"This kill will be even more special than I originally proposed. I will now be hosting a live red room. This is my last post, as when the live video feed is cut, this blog will be forever gone." A live video immediately started underneath the final update.

Donny's unconscious body resided on a concrete floor in an infrared lighted room. His hands and feet were chained out of frame, presumably tacked to the walls of the small room. A woman in black leather came into frame. Only the lower half of her body was visible due to the camera's angle, centered on the now waking body. For all the viewers, a question appeared on the right side of their screen.

"Should I wake him?" The response was overwhelmingly 'yes'. Donny was kicked hard in the ribs, he slightly flinched, but didn't appear conscious. He received another blow to the side of the skull. Donny flinched hard, opening his eyes. He was forced to squint from the bright lights shining directly into his pupils, which grew indefinitely smaller and blacker.

"You finally woke up." A woman's voice violently teased him. Donny immediately recognized it as Jackie; even though he couldn't see her through his foggy sight. Another question.

"What next?" Following the question were three options.

"Stomp his skull."

"Break his legs."

"Remove his teeth."

The viewers once again overwhelmingly chose one answer, and Jackie followed. Donny groaned as Jackie left and came back into frame with a crowbar. She raised it and slashed it down onto his large kneecaps. Donny screamed as loud as he could muster. Jackie walked around his head to his other leg, as to not block the camera's lens. Donny clumsily reached for her feet

as she carefully stepped around him. He managed to grab her left ankle by pushing off of his one, still operational, leg. In doing this, Donny's leg nudged the camera which caused it to fall in the corner, now recording the full room. Jackie fell and landed elbow first into Donny's head. Jackie, crowbar still in hand, bashed Donny's arm off of her thin ankle and into the cold concrete floor. It was a bloody mess. She stood back up, and exasperatedly bludgeoned Donny over the top of his skull with the bloodied crowbar. His hand stopped moving, but Jackie swung again, again, and again.

Jackie, now red in the face and harshly crying, slumped against the wall, dropping the weapon. Sitting next to the unrecognizable corpse, she looked up across the room, and noticed the camera facing her. It had captured everything, with her face in frame. At that moment a loud knock sounded on her front door.

"Police, open up!"

Gabriella K.

11th Grade

Content Warning: Animal Murder, Graphic Scenes, Murder of Children, Hanging

Mother May I

It was a cold, windy, autumn day in downtown Colorado Springs, on November 19th, 1949. The colorful leaves covered the ground in a thin crunchy blanket. Colleen Bernard, the housewife of Joel Bernard, was going into labor. She had been starting the crust on an apple pie, her husband's favorite, when her water broke. She had one hand on her stomach, and her other hand was rotating the dial to reach her husband's work. She reached the secretary, and she got Mr. Bernard on the phone. He was told she was going into labor, yet he did not care and hung up on his wife. She was in a lot of pain, but luckily her neighbor Beatrice Marcus answered. Beatrice had driven Colleen to the St. Francis Health Center, though her husband was against her driving. When they reached the hospital Beatrice helped Colleen out of the car into the hospital. Colleen was given a room where she went through a rough 9-hour delivery of her beautiful baby girl. She looked at her once and knew her name would be Rosemary Ann Bernard, born on November 19th, 1949, at 10:48 p.m. She had bright green eyes, was very small, and had a small amount of brown hair. Her skin was porcelain milky white. She was a traditionally beautiful girl.

Rosemary Ann Bernard, daughter of Colleen and Joel Bernard. By the time she turned one, her father was completely absent. He was having an affair with his secretary and didn't hide it from his wife. His wife took to drinking. When Rosemary was just 16 months old, her father

packed his things, leaving Colleen as a single mother with no job. He had taken everything of value, including Colleen's wedding ring. Colleen didn't look after her daughter much. She found a job as a bank teller, she was working every hour she could. Trying to keep being able to pay for the house bills, essentials, and clothes for her baby. Rosemary was always small and weak, she never had much to eat, so she was very weak all the time. When Rosemary was 4 years old, she started to go outside and play with the neighborhood kids. She soon made best friends with Beatrice Marcus's daughter, Carol Marcus. Carol was the same age as Rosemary. Carol had bright blonde hair and grayish-blue eyes. She had freckles along her pale face and was not as small as Rosemary. These two girls quickly became inseparable. The next year they both went into Kindergarten. By this time her mother was never around. Colleen had work, then she would go out with her friends every day. Leaving her 5-year-old child alone for days. Rosemary had learned how to get herself food if Beatrice didn't feed her. One time Beatrice tried to talk to Colleen about how she was neglecting her daughter. Carol and Beatrice didn't see Rosemary for three days after that. Her mother had beaten her as punishment for making her look bad. She also took everything out of her room and gave her barely any food. Rosemary was miserable because she wanted her mother's attention, yet her mother only gave her punishments, mainly because she was always drunk. When she went to school Rosemary was quite a terror to other children. One day she cut a girl's hair because the girl took a Barbie from her. Her mother was called, but all that did was get Rosemary covered in a new set of bruises on top of the old ones that hadn't healed. Another day a boy pushed her over, and she took his favorite teddy bear and cut the bear up in front of him. The teachers set up a meeting with her mother. Rosemary wasn't seen for a week after that meeting. She came back with short hair that was choppy and uneven and old tattered clothes. Her small arms and legs, or at least what was visible were covered in bruises.

The teacher noticed, yet didn't do anything because she thought as if the girl deserved it. Around this time is when Rosemary had begun biting her nails, pulling her hair and eyelashes out, and picking at her calluses.

The summer was the worst for Rosemary. Her only escape was going to Carol's house. Where she would stay for days on end. Beatrice had started taking care of her as if she was her daughter, yet she hid that from Colleen. Without Beatrice Rosemary was dirty, messy, unfed, and always sick or bruised. In Rosemary's eyes, Beatrice was her mom. Sadly one day in second grade the Marcuses had to move away. Mr. Marcus had gotten a new job in Kentucky, and they had to be there right away. Rosemary's world fell apart as her fill-in mother and best friend left. She cried as the van pulled away with all her things including the small family. She would sit in the house's empty living room, a small part of her wanting the family to come back.

Rosemary was now going into second grade, not taken care of by her mother, and without her best friend. She was completely lost. To get out of her house she would go on walks. One day she went on a walk and found a rat. She thought the rat was ugly and gross. She decided to bring it home. She made a box house for the rat and named him Brady. She felt like he was her only friend in this terrible world. She fed him a part of her food, secretly. She knew her mother would never allow her to keep a pet rat. She went to school one day, and when she came home, Brady was gone. She looked everywhere for him. Her mother walked into the house and looked as if she was waiting for Rosemary to say something. She looked at her mother and asked her, "Momma have you seen my pet..." Tears formed in her little eyes as she looked at her mother. Her mother smirked, "Oh sweetie the rat in your room in that ugly box. I took him outside and

smashed him with a hammer. A disgusting thing you had there. I could never let a rat, a disgusting low-life creature, live in this house with us.” She trailed off into her bedroom, her heels clicking under her, as she left her 6-year-old daughter crying. She hadn’t understood why her mother had done that to her. She laid on the floor crying so hard she couldn’t breathe. Her little body curled into a ball. She was heartbroken, she felt as if she lost everything.

It was class picture day. Rosemary went to school dirty, with matted messed up hair, and an old battered-up dress. Her teacher noticed and knew she had to do something. She took her to the side, “Rosemary, honey can I help you do your hair, and give you a new dress.” Rosemary looked up at her with tears in her eyes and only could nod. She begged her mother to help her look pretty for picture day, but she was late for work. Her teacher, Mrs. Dillard’s, was an angel in her eyes. Mrs. Dillard had gotten a washcloth and wiped up Rosemary’s face and arms. Her arms weren’t as bruised as normal, so that wasn’t an issue. She had gotten a dress out of a closet that had a couple of old clothes. The dress was a little big, but it looked better. Mrs. Dillard did not know what to do with her hair. She cut it not too short and brushed out what she could. Rosemary looked in the mirror and was overjoyed. She thought she looked beautiful. She cried and ran to Mrs. Dillard to hug her. She cried in her arms, and Mrs. Dillard played with her hair to calm her down. She calmed down just in time for pictures. The class took the picture and there was no picture where she was smiling as big. From that point forward she liked going to school. She was starting to excel in her studies and was an “A” student. She was nice and sweet again. She loved making her teacher happy. When she walked into class on March 19th, 1945, Mrs. Dillard was not there. The principal and a police officer were standing in front of the class. When

the class was supposed to start the principal called for the children's attention to the police officer.

"I have some sad news about your teacher, Lin.... I mean Mrs. Dillard has passed away.."

The children looked at him confused and sad but no one knew what he was saying. He sensed they didn't understand, "She um is dead... She cannot be your teacher anymore. If you have any questions please refer to your parents or Mr. Hills." He looked at the principal, he nodded, and the officer left the room. The children were understanding, and most of them started crying loudly. Rosemary was different though. She was angry, not sad. A single tear went down her face, yet it felt warm, not cold. If lasers could be coming out of the little girl's eyes they would be. Someone cared for her and they were taken from her again. Even just at 6 years old she understood the meaning of loss. When she went home, her mom wasn't there, so she went for a walk. While she was walking she saw a bird's nest in a tree. She picked up a large rock and launched the rock as hard as her little arms could. The stone knocked down the nest, and there on the concrete, laid the five baby birds she just killed. She glared down and smiled at what she had done. Killing the birds had given her a rush, and she loved it. Rosemary heard a car in the distance coming towards her, so she kicked up dirt to cover what she did. Suddenly the wind was behind her, as she raced home. She ran home, she knew what she did was wrong, yet she enjoyed it so much. A gear had shifted in her mind, and the voices in her head whispered into her brain that she must do this again. Though, she cried herself to sleep, every night, remembering the losses she went through. She was so devastated and distraught from everything that had been ripped out of her tiny arms. She had a grudge against the world.

Colleen had gotten home late. She heard the news about her daughter's teacher and didn't understand what to do about it. This was a time she had come home sober, without a man. She

peeked in on her sleeping daughter. A tear rolled down Colleen's worn wrinkled face. The view of her daughter, the very girl she had given birth to, worn out, bruised, broken, at only six years old made the sober Colleen cry. She knew that when she wasn't sober, she blamed Rosemary for everything wrong in her life, it wasn't little Rosemary's fault. Yet Colleen had to blame someone, and it was her daughter. She closed the bedroom door and went to the kitchen to open a bottle of wine.

A week after Mrs. Dillard passed away, Rosemary was back in her usual state. Fighting other kids, hurting others, and failing her schoolwork. Rosemary didn't feel like being happy. She lost her best friend, her second mother, and now her favorite teacher. She found an injured possum on her walk home and beat the poor animal with a rock until it died. She cried looking at the blood, not because she just killed the poor possum, but because she was so angry it died. She had so much more frustration to let out and the possum gave up on her. Like everyone else. She kept beating the possum's dead body. Watching as the insides of the creature were now splattered everywhere. She got up and wiped her hands on a tree and walked with her head hanging down. She walked into the house, where her mother was. In her hand was her usual glass of wine. She gulped, as her mother took a long sip and finally spoke. "What are you covered in?" Her voice was stern and intimidating. Rosemary just stared blankly at her, not knowing how to answer. Colleen placed her glass down and went up to her daughter, close enough to smell the iron smell of blood. She looked at her daughter disgusted, "Why are you covered in blood, so much of it, did you punch someone else in the face?!" Colleen started yelling, her fists balling up ready to strike her daughter. "N-no, I fell into a dead possum on my walk from school" Rosemary looked at the ground knowing what she said was a lie. But she imagined what her mother would do to her if she told the truth. Colleen pointed to the bathroom,

gesturing that Rosemary go take a bath. She did as her mother wished. She looked at herself in the mirror, seeing herself with blood covering one of her old dresses. She was engulfed in what she looked like. Rosemary thought she looked like a monster, she desired to see this more. She smirked at herself knowing she must get more blood on her hands.

November 19th, 1957, Rosemary's 8th birthday. She just started third grade. She met a girl who she became great friends with. Sydney Walters, a short chubby girl with long brown hair and brown eyes. Sydney came over to Rosemary's house, something that never happened. The girls were outside when a bird landed on the fence. The girls gave each other a chilling evil look and picked up two of the greatest rocks in the yard and Sydney was the one who hit the bird. They picked the injured bird up and went by the shed. They had set up an area where they took animals they killed or injured, and would torture them. They did unforgivable things to these animals, and absolutely no one knew about what they would do when they were with each other. They were what the teachers called, a living nightmare. They swapped classes because they would torture other kids together. One day after the bird incident, the girl's mothers met up to discuss their girl's behavior. They decided it was best if the girls were separated for a while. Neither mother was involved, and when the school was nonstop calling because the girls did something evil together. The mothers talked to their teachers and asked to keep the girls separated from each other. She again was taken from someone who she loved, yet she wouldn't allow this to happen. She loved Sydney and wouldn't let her go that easily.

They had to sneak their friendship around. They were able to keep it a secret until Rosemary turned 13. Her mother had found out by reading her journal. Colleen decided it was best for her daughter if they moved. She had started packing all their belongings getting ready to

up and move. Rosemary came home and screamed at her mother. Colleen and Rosemary had a yelling fight, and Rosemary ended up leaving the house. She didn't take anything with her, as she stormed out of her home. She just had the clothes on her back against a cruel winter night. She made it a couple of streets down before she knew she had to find somewhere to go. She didn't know where because Sydney's family didn't want her around. She couldn't even manage a thought of where she could go. She laid in front of a store that was blasting their heater, so at least she'd be warm. She was woken up by a police siren pulling up to the store. The policeman had been the very man who had told her when her favorite person had died. He got her home, to an empty house. Colleen spent the whole night packing so the house was ready to move. There was a pile of boxes in Rosemary's room. She had to pack her room, which she was glad to do. She didn't want her mom touching any of her things.

They found a house in the small town of West Yellowstone Montana. For a while, Rosemary's strange behaviors stopped. She was focused on school. Colleen had ignored her child altogether. At this point, Rosemary was on her own, yet still under her mother's authority.

When Rosemary turned 15, she started her cruel actions against animals again. She did it a couple of times, but then small animals weren't enough. She needed something better, bigger. She craved to feel the same feeling as when she beat the possum to death. She didn't know what to do though, so she fought her dark cravings.

Rosemary's favorite class of her school days was chemistry. Not because she genuinely enjoyed the course, but because Rodger Hymns was in that class. Rodger was about the most

handsome man she's ever seen. He was tall and fit, his hair was black, and he had beautiful green eyes. There was never a moment where she didn't want to be around him. Though they have never actually talked, she thought she loved him. One day she bumped into him by accident and he smiled at her, her heart melted into what felt like a puddle in her chest. "Hey, sorry beautiful" He winked at her as he passed by. She wanted to scream. She had become determined to win his heart the way he had hers. She dressed in her nicest outfit, and fixed her hair up, which she never had done before. When she was sure she looked perfect, she went to school. Rosemary was about to go talk to him, but Nancy Williams was all curled up against him. His arm was around her and she kissed his cheek before prancing off with her friends. Rosemary felt her heart shatter. She ran out of the school as fast as she could. She ran into the woods behind the school and fell on the ground crying as hard as she could. She had never felt as humiliated as she did at that moment. No one else knew why she looked the way she did, yet she felt like the whole school knew she was rejected by the love of her life. She looked around and found a sharp rock. She picked it up and examined it and cut herself with it to check the sharpness. It was perfect. She went back to school. At the end of the day, she approached Nancy. "Hey Nancy, your hair looks gorgeous!" She fake complimented her resisting the urge to grit her teeth. "Oh thank you, um Mary was it?" She looked at Rosemary with a smirk. Rosemary nodded "Hey I think I saw your name on a piece of paper out back, something about how much necking around you do... Do you know anything about this?" Nancy's face dropped and went white, "What! Show me that right now!" Rosemary led the way to the woods. She went to where she left the sharp rock, and picked it up, turning towards the fuming Nancy. She tackled the girl and hit her in the head with the rock as hard as she could. Nancy was knocked out. Rosemary hit her in the head repeatedly, until blood was spilling out the pretty girl's head. She got up, not touching the body, and threw the rock into

a nearby river. Rosemary looked around and ran home. She got home and started a fire with the dress that was covered in blood. She showered and got clean. When she sat on her bed she started laughing maniacally. She was so happy with what she had just done. She killed someone, a girl, a poor innocent girl. That gave her the biggest rush she had ever experienced. She grabbed her journal and wrote every little detail down about what she had just done.

Nine months had gone by. She was long over Rodger. By this time Nancy had had her funeral, and the police had shut down her case. Rosemary had been itching to get another body under her belt but knew she couldn't just kill anyone. No one had messed with her. She was living her normal life, even though she was a cold-blooded killer. Colleen came home one day with a new set of kitchen knives. Rosemary knew she had to have one. She stole one, right after they were put away, so her mother wouldn't notice. She sat with the blade next to her. She never felt so ready to do something so terrible.

Four months later, Rosemary was talking to one of her teachers. When this girl, Donna Richards, pushed her. She tripped over the desk leg and fell into the trash can. The whole class was laughing at Rosemary. She got up and went to the bathroom. Knowing what she was about to do, she was fuming about the situation. She just needed to get a plan. Then she remembered, Donna had a big crush on Richie Montez. She went to class and wrote a note,

Dear Donna, I know this came out of nuhwhere and I apologise for not saying anything soonar. You're just so georgaus, Please meet me for a date tomorrow afturnoon behind the school. -Richie

After class, Rosemary snuck the note into Donna's locker, as she made sure no one saw. She went to her class and was smiling proudly. She hoped she did well enough on the bad spelling, how Richie was so horrid at spelling. She waited for Donna to open her locker. She squealed in joy. Showing the note to her small friend group. They ushered her out of the building probably to get a new dress or something. Rosemary was very satisfied with how the letter was received. She went home, giddier than ever. She knew she had to be more careful this time. Nancy William's case was messy and they barely had given up. She put gloves, her weapon, and a change of clothes in her bag.

The next morning when she woke up, as excited for the day as a child on Christmas day. She was skipping and smiling all morning as she got ready for school. She felt overjoyed after school. She just imagined it and again was skipping and smiling. The day had gone by a lot slower than she wanted it to. She would sit watching the seconds tick into minutes on the clock. When the clock finally reached 2:00 and the final bell rang, she could hardly contain herself. She jumped up out of her seat and walked outside. She went to a place where she would be able to see Donna, but she was unseen herself. Rosemary had put the gloves on, as Donna Richards and her best friend Diane Kenneth walked to the spot. Rosemary sighed, she didn't think this one through. She wished she had said to come alone in the note, yet she didn't. She realized her mistakes when the beautiful blonde hair of Diane's shined in the sun. They picked up the second note. They started towards the woods, where the note had promised a secret spot Richard would meet Donna. Donna was ahead of Diane by a step or two. Rosemary confirmed she would just have to kill them both. She went the shortcut way to "the spot". Their footsteps were coming closer and she placed a note in a tree to where only Diane would be able to tell. Donna stepped

into the clearing, whilst Rosemary threw a rock towards the note so Diane would notice, and she did. Rosemary leaped out with the blade in hand and stabbed Donna 18 times in the heart. Donna couldn't even scream. When she fell she hit her head on a rock making her dizzy. Diane walked towards the clearing and looked with horror at Rosemary. Rosemary flashed Diane a smile and jumped up to get her. Diane was much faster than Rosemary, as she ran away from her as fast as she could. She didn't know what to do, so she flung the blade toward the running girl and missed. The girl ran out of the woods, and Rosemary didn't know what to do. She went to look for the blade, but it wasn't there. She lost the weapon she used to murder a girl and let one of them get away. She was so mad at herself for the slip-ups she wanted so desperately to avoid. She changed her clothes. She lost something else as she changed. Her favorite bracelet, one her childhood best friend Carol Marcus had given her. It was impossible to miss, bright pink and yellow with flower charms. She stuffed the clothes in her bag and ran home. She grabbed as much food, clothes, supplies, and money as she could find. She dumped her dress and gloves in the fire and ran to the train station. She got on the very next train. She got on the train to Kentucky. She had Carol's address from letters they had been sending to each other, so she headed there.

Back in Montana, Diane had gone to the police about the gruesome thing Rosemary had done. They went with Diane to the body and started a search. They found the knife, which was to be confirmed it belonged to the Bernard home right away. They also found the bracelet. The policemen decided to have an account of other children in the school, to see who the bracelet belonged to. They scanned the scene for anything else, and yet there was nothing. They knew that if they couldn't find her soon this could end up bad. They confirmed the knife belonged to

the family. Colleen was so distraught, she didn't know her daughter was capable of something so horrid. The police wanted to search her room, and of course, Colleen let them. They searched through everything and found her journal, the very journal she wrote all the details of her first murder in. They hadn't realized she was as dangerous as she was. They had to track down this girl before she killed someone else.

The train arrived in Pineville, Kentucky. She looked at the address on the letters, then went to find a map... Rosemary found a map and found her way to Carol's house. The house was gorgeous. A white house with light gray features. The garden was flourishing with flowers and their lawn was so very nice. She went up to the door and knocked. Beatrice opened the door and smiled so wide, they hugged for a long moment "Oh sweet Rosemary you came for a visit. Carol hadn't said anything about you coming." Beatrice's eyebrows furrowed and her wrinkles stuck out to Rosemary. "This was not a planned visit, kind of a spur-of-the-moment kind of thing." She laughed knowing she couldn't tell her second mother she killed two girls and failed at killing one. The poor sweet woman saw so much potential in her. "Carol is just in her room studying, she'll be delighted to see you."

Rosemary followed the smell of roses, Carol's favorite, and there she was, the beautiful Carol. All grown up working on her studies. "Carol oh Carol you look absolutely stunning!" Carol swung her head around and jumped up, and embraced Rosemary. "Oh my sweet Rosemary look at you, you look so grown up." They released one another and sat down. They talked and talked. Carol was studying to be a nurse. She wanted to help people. Rosemary looked into Carol's eyes and looked sad. "Sweet Rosemary what's the matter, why have you come all this way?" She took Rosemary's hands in hers. "I did something terribly wrong and I could be sent to

the lord, too soon.” Rosemary had looked down and a tear rolled down her face. “Rosemary, what could you have possibly done, you’re a sweet girl Rosemary. You couldn’t have done anything that bad, that’s not you.” Her gaze shifted up to Carol’s eyes “Carol dear, I-I.... I killed two girls in the past year.” Carol dropped Rosemary’s hands and stood up. Her eyes shone with horror at her best friend. “How could you... how...” Rosemary joined her standing up, and looked at her in her eyes, “My lovely Carol, they hurt me, I had no other choice. I’ve only been hurt and beaten by everyone. I finally stood up for myself. It was all I could do.” She reached for Carol’s hand again, and she didn’t jolt away. She nodded, “We can never tell my mother... She would kick you out, or worse turn you in herself.” Rosemary smiled sincerely, “I just need to be loved for a few days, I will figure it out in a week or two.” Carol hugged Rosemary tightly and they stayed like that for a long time.

Colleen had been interrogated at the police station. She honestly couldn’t think of any place her daughter could be. She was distraught by the fact that she raised a monster. She couldn’t think of where it went wrong. Maybe she drank too much, maybe she didn’t pay enough attention, maybe she could have been a better mother. She couldn’t even hold her head up anymore knowing her daughter was a murderer.

Beatrice had been loving Rosemary very much. She bought her clothes. Rosemary wanted to get adopted by the family. She thought if she took their last name she wouldn’t be as findable. She was right. Her name was changed to Rosemary Marcus. The police lost any scent of her trail for years.

One day, a few years later, she was walking down the street, on her way to her relatively new workplace. . Her job was particularly close to the Marcus's house. She was walking by an alleyway and heard a girl yelling for help. She quietly, yet quickly walked towards the screams. She saw a big bulky man trying to take this small helpless girl. Rosemary picked up a pole on the ground and swiftly whacked the man on the head. He fell to the ground and she dropped the pole. Rosemary scooped the girl in her arms and walked out of the alleyway. The girl was sobbing, as Rosemary was trying to calm her down, so she could find where she was supposed to be. When the tears finally seized, the girl helped Rosemary find the store her mother worked at. Rosemary told her mother what had happened, and the mother thanked Rosemary for a long time. Rosemary hugged the little girl one last time and walked out of the store. She was walking back to where she needed to be when there was a police car sitting at the alleyway entrance. Her eyes went wide as one of them looked her dead in the eyes. She kept walking as if she didn't notice. She went to her job as normal. She was walking home, when the alleyway was closed off, for a crime scene. Rosemary made her way home, and Carol met her at the door. "Rosemary, did you kill that man they found today." Rosemary gulped hard, not even knowing the creep had died "I had no choice, I didn't even mean to, and it wasn't planned. I swear." Carol huffed and went to the kitchen and started chopping something up, "Rosemary you know I love you, but this is not okay, how can you take a life? That is just, unethical. I help save lives, it's such a bummer to me. My best friend, a girl I love, is so far out, she can't stop killing people." Rosemary looked at her in disbelief, "Carol, that man was doing a horrid thing you know. He was trying to take a little girl from her mother. Only heaven knows what he would've done. Carol, I would never have just killed someone." Carol didn't react, "Rosemary my sweet, that man was a doctor I work with. He

has a wife and children. You are disgracing a dead man who was quite accomplished, you should be ashamed.” Carol turned to her room and Rosemary knew she wasn’t going to be believed.

The crime scene was being investigated, and they found the weapon pretty quickly. They sent it off to see if they could find anything on it. When the metal bar was inspected they found Rosemary Bernard’s fingerprints. A wanted murderer. They did a lot of work and digging to find Rosemary Bernard had become Rosemary Marcus. They went to the Marus estate and talked to the parents. They were in disbelief, Beatrice didn’t know what to do, a girl she knew as a child, a girl she took into her home, the very girl who was her daughter’s best friend. They waited for Rosemary to get home, and when she did they arrested her. Beatrice couldn’t even look at her, They took her away rather hastily. The Montana police had been informed that the Kentucky police now had Rosemary Bernard under their surveillance. They questioned her in Kentucky, and she admitted to the murder of the man. She tried to justify her actions, but the mother of the girl didn’t want to say anything, so Rosemary was charged with one count of murder.

They transferred her to Montana. There she faced her mother. “Why the hell would you do this Rosemary!” She didn’t answer, she just looked down. “Rosemary Ann Bernard! I am speaking to you!” Her gaze slowly looked into her mother’s eyes, “Mother, I stood up for myself, for a little girl. How can you stand here? Shout at me for doing the right-” “That doesn’t make it right Rosemary!” Colleen was crying at this point. Rosemary looked at her with no emotions. She admitted to both murders she committed in Montana and the one attempt. By the end, she was given three counts of murder and one attempt. She was given the death penalty. She was hung, thus Rosemary Ann Bernard died June 21st at 10:42 A.M. The only person who cared

she was gone was Carol, she was the one who paid for her gravestone, and visited it every day for the rest of her life. Her best friend, a girl of a horrid upbringing, was left to death.

Kailyn R

Creative Writing

12 October 2022

The Murder of Chantell Handel

The feeling of a string tied to my chest being pulled startled me. With a strong tug I felt like my soul was being pulled out of my physical body. Suddenly the pulling stopped and I had the feeling in my body that I was free and light, a little too free. There was nothing weighing me down, I had the feeling of the gravity of Earth not affecting me in the same way it had for my 26 years of life. It was like I woke up and I could suddenly float away. Like a flash of a camera before my eyes I remembered little snippets of what had happened to me before I woke up. There was not much that I remembered but I did recall somebody coming into my home, I don't know who they were, their face was blurry in my mind and I couldn't put anything together but I did remember... I turned around. There in the basement of my own house, in the room that I knew was always freezing cold, even if I couldn't feel anything now, hanging from one of the exposed ceiling beams was an old rope me and Julie, my best friend, had found in my closet and had used to get a baby bunny that was stuck in the window well out just last week. On the bottom of that rope was my own face. My bright blue eyes were dulled and staring at the wall, my arms and legs hanging limply at my sides and my fire engine red hair hanging down to my shoulders framing my face. Whoever it was that had come into my home had hung me in the basement of my own home... killing me. Behind me I heard a small gasp and turned around to find my father and step-mom Jenifer standing in the doorway, with a look of utter shock on their faces staring at my dead body hanging there in my basement.

"You need to go find help. Someone killed me, whoever it was, came into my house last night!" I started to say trying to get them to go get someone to figure out what had happened to me.

"We need to go call the cops." Jenifer finally said, like she had come up with the idea herself.

With a jolt, my dad pulled out his phone and called 911 "Hello, I just walked into my daughters home, we were going to have breakfast this morning when she didn't show up we got worried so we came over to her house, we got here and she-she's dead in her basement. We-we don't know what happened." He told the operator his voice breaking on a cry. He said he didn't know what had happened, like he couldn't hear what I had said... like he didn't know I was there. I came to the sudden realization that they couldn't hear or see me, I couldn't help them figure out who had done this to me.

The next half hour passed in a blur, waiting for the detectives to arrive and hopefully figure out what happened while I could do nothing. A car pulled up in my driveway and two men stepped out, one was a tall middle aged man who had short cut brown hair and sparkling green eyes, his glasses sat on the edge of his nose and he wore a pressed black suit. He reached out and shook the hands of my father and Jenifer introducing himself as Detective Howard Dawson. He then pointed to his partner next to him, my eyes slid over to him and I saw a face I recognized. With his short stature, dark brown eyes and short black hair I knew it was Lance Graves, we had gone to High School together. It was odd to see him standing there going to investigate my murder we had just had a seemingly normal conversation just a few weeks ago. He had been telling me how he was going through a rough divorce with his wife. He had called me to see if we could meet up and talk, I told him that I couldn't, I knew what he really wanted, he didn't just want comfort and someone to talk through his problems with, I wasn't going to do that. My dad

led them into the house and showed them where my body still hung, with a quick glance around the room Detective Dawson walked up to where my body hung from the ceiling beam. Looking over to his right he saw the stool sitting there against the wall. From the look on his face I knew he had figured something out. With a deep inhale he spoke up "The stool against that wall is what was used to keep her held up, but the way it is sitting there, it was deliberately moved out of the way, it wasn't kicked out of the way like it would have been if this was a suicide, your daughter was murdered." looking up he saw the slightly open window on the other side of the room. "That must be where the killer left from. Is there anybody you know that would have anything against your daughter that would do this to her?" he asked, addressing my dad.

"I don't know, we haven't had the best relationship in the past few years. We were going to breakfast to talk. But her mother would know they have always had a close relationship with each other." Dad responded, biting his lip.

"Okay then we will start there, come on Graves we have to go talk to mom."

"I can't. I just got a text from Alice, I have to go pick up Ellen from school, she threw up and I have to pick her up and drop her off at Alice's." Graves responded, I didn't know what it was about the way he said that but it didn't seem like he was telling the truth about that. I didn't know why he would lie about it but something seemed off.

"Okay you do that, I'll go talk to mom and call you and tell you what I learn." Dawson responded. With that said he looked up at the rope and noticed a small piece of hair on the rope. He took out an evidence bag and pulled the hair off with tweezers putting it in the bag. "This could be Chantell's hair but we are going to send it to the lab just in case the killer left this behind and we can get the DNA evidence." With that everybody walked out of the car and went to walk to their cars. Before they left, Graves and Dawson walked to the side of the house and

saw the open window that led to my basement window. They had said they wanted to see if they could find any more clues. As Detective Dawson inspected the window Graves looked around the outside. Out of the corner of my eye I saw something in the dirt, turning my head I saw that it was a footprint. As I looked at that track another flash of memory came back to me from last night, the person who had killed me in cold blood had been a man. Graves turned back around the face back to the front and backed out of the way for Dawson to go in front of him, he stood back standing in front of that incriminating footprint and said

"I don't think there is anything here Dawson." He moved his foot backwards, swiping it through the dirt. As he did so he kicked loose dirt over the waiting footprint in the dirt. As that piece of evidence that could have helped reveal who had unjustly killed me in my own home, whether it was on purpose or on accident because he didn't know it was there I didn't care. I felt such deep and immediate rage toward Graves that I wanted to push him, I wanted to get back at him for destroying that tiny piece of hope I had felt when I saw that footprint in the dirt. I didn't care if it would do nothing if my hand would just go right through his body, seeing as I couldn't touch anything else, but I was seeing red and I went to push him away, maybe I could salvage a little bit of that track imprinted in the soil. To my utter shock my fingers made contact with Lance Graves' back and as I made a hard push he stumbled forward. My anger had been so consuming that I was able to make contact with him and I was able to push him out of the way. With a small shred of hope still in my heart I looked down to where the footprint had been and what I saw shredded that small bit of hope into a million pieces, it was gone.

"What was that?" Dawson asked Graves referring to his stumble forward

"I don't know, it was like I tripped over thin air," Graves answered with a confused look on his face.

“Okay you go get your daughter, I’ll talk to mom, I’ll call you with what I find.” Dawson said moving on. After Detective Dawson walked away to his car, Graves turned around and looked where I still stood with a scared look on his face. With a shake of his head he turned away and walked to his car.

...

At my mothers home Detective Dawson interviewed her asking if there was anything off about my behavior lately, asking if there was anybody she could think of that would want to do this to me. As he walked out of the house he called Graves and told him what my mother had told him, that I had been spending an abnormal amount of time with Josh, my best friend Julie’s boyfriend. He told him that he was going over to Josh’s house and to meet him there. When we finally got to Josh’s house Graves was waiting outside for Dawson, they knocked on the door and asked if they could talk to him. In the short interview Josh told them that we were spending time together lately because Julie’s birthday was coming up and we were planning a party for her. I felt immediate shock with that statement, he was lying to them, as much as I hated to admit it we hadn’t been spending time together to plan a party for Julie. We were spending so much time with each other because we were sleeping together behind Julie’s back. I hate that I did that to my best friend but I just couldn’t resist. Josh didn’t want to admit to our affair. Josh also told Dawson and Graves that he was still at work at my time of death, which was also a lie he had texted me, just minutes before the time I knew whoever killed me arrived at my house, that Julie was coming over to his house to confront him about his cheating on her that she had somehow found out. Even with all the lies coming out of his mouth Dawson and Graves seemed to believe him. At this point in time it was late at night and the detectives decided to go to bed and pick this back up in the morning, but I wasn’t tired, I didn’t know if I could get tired anymore if I needed

sleep. With nothing else to do I went back home in hopes of triggering more memories so my own mind wouldn't fail me and I could figure out who it was that did this to me. Even if I couldn't help them, maybe I could have my own peace of mind. Back at my house I tried for hours to trigger any memories but nothing happened. Looking up at the time I realized it was the next morning and Graves and Dawson were going to interview Julie in a few minutes. As I went to her house I hoped she could shed some light on anything. At Julie's house I heard her talking to the detectives, she was telling them that during my murder she was at diner with her parents then she went to Josh's house to confront him about our affair. As Dawson and Graves walked out Dawson was the first to speak up "Okay, we have two conflicting stories, Josh says he was at work and Julie says she was at his home talking to him at the same time, we need to go to his work and check the security cameras see which one of them is telling the truth.

...

At the office building where Josh worked the detectives asked to see the security footage of two nights ago, the night I was murdered. Looking at the footage I watched as I saw obvious tampering with the footage, as time went on the building got darker with the setting of the sun then at 8:32 pm just two hours before my time of death the lighting on the cameras suddenly changed to what it had been in the middle of the day and there was Josh walking out of the building. It was supposed to look like he was leaving for the day but the lighting in the room gave it away, this time when he was leaving was when he had left for lunch not when he had left for the day. What puzzled me was who had tampered with this security footage and why? "I know what happened, Julie must have tampered with the cameras to make it look like this is when he left so her alibi would check out but this isn't actually left for the day. Josh was still at work but Julie could have made it to Chantell's house in enough time to kill her after her dinner

with her parents. I think Julie killed Chantell for her supposed affair with Josh.” Graves spoke up.

“Yeah that makes sense, we should talk to the neighbors, see if they saw anything while we wait the last few hours for the DNA to come back from the lab.” Dawson responded. With that being said the detectives went back to my house to talk to my neighbors.

The first person they talked to when we got back was my 80 year old next door neighbor Charlie. He told them that he saw Julie’s car parked out front of my house at around 9:45 when he went to bed. With his small comment about a car a sudden flash of memories came to me.

At around 9:30 that night my doorbell rang, because of the late hour I checked out the window before opening the door. Sitting in front of my house was my best friend’s car so I thought nothing of it when I opened the door. That had been a big mistake, apparently my killer had that same car. I opened the door to my best friend but it wasn’t Julie, before I could open my mouth and say anything, ask what he was doing at my house at 9:30 at night, I was hit on the head with something that was hard and heavy and I was immediately knocked out. When I woke up again I was tied up in my basement, the rope from my closet tied to the ceiling beam in my basement and a stool under my feet. Blinking away the blurriness in my vision I looked up and saw him standing there in front of me, again before I could say anything he spoke up “You shouldn’t have turned me down, I was just trying to talk to you and you had to act like I was trying to get with you, like you were going to be a rebound after my divorce, yeah right! For such insolence I had to get revenge.” With that he reached across the space between us and as Lance Graves grabbed the stool out from under my feet I knew that I was about to die.

With a gasp for breath I broke out of the memory. I knew who had killed me and he stood right in front of me now. He stood there under the pretense of trying to figure out who had killed me

when he knew full well that it had been him, he was trying to find clues in this investigation that would lead away from him. I also had the sudden realization that he must have gone to Josh's work and tampered with the security cameras in an attempt to pin the blame of the murder on someone. I was snapped out of my fuming thoughts by the ringing of a phone.

"Dawson speaking," he said when he picked up, after a moment of silence he said "Okay, thank you." and hung up the phone.

"The lab results just came back, the DNA was Julie's hair. We have enough evidence to make the arrest, let's go get her." Dawson said to Graves. As they drove back to my best friend's house I knew the wrong person was about to be put in jail for murdering me, there was nothing I could do about it, there was nothing I could do to change this outcome. Dawson and Graves barged into Julie's house and Dawson said to her "Julie Ambers you are under arrest for the murder of Chantell Handel, you have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to an attorney." saying the speech the police say when they make an arrest. As my best friend walked out of the room in handcuffs and a scared look in her blue eyes the real guilty party stood right there, with a small smile on his face, and said nothing.

Alexandria Sa

Grade: 12th

Missing

(CW: Bit of blood and dead animals)

The small room was cold and almost empty, with blank, light gray walls, scratched hardwood floor, and a broken door. A mattress laid in a corner, slightly out of place. A foldable table and chair sat in front of a small window, papers piled high on both. Sunlight poured in. Specks of dust moved and shined, flowing with the air currents.

It looked peaceful.

If you didn't include the badly traced chalk outline of a body and red paint on the floor.

Three people stood around it.

Studying it.

Glaring at it.

The trio were college students, all of them majoring in criminal justice, in hopes of one day being professional detectives. It was their senior year and their dreams were closer than ever.

But for now, they had to get through their homework assignment: Recreating a crime scene and figuring out if it was a murder.

Lillian Woolf, a fair skinned brunette with light brown eyes, was staring at the floor in contempt. "Do we really have to do this?"

“Of course we have to do it! We’re almost done,” Finnley Soot said excitedly. The tall blonde boy with his perpetual smile and bright green eyes, was starting to get on her nerves.

“What do you think?” Lillian turned to the other person in the room.

Short with hair dyed black and orange roots, almost black eyes and a serious face, Morgan Nettle kept staring, lost in thought. He didn’t seem to hear Lillian and Finnley’s conversation, but they were used to this. He would answer eventually.

“It’s obvious he wasn’t murdered. Look, around his head. The pool of blood and the chair, the way the mattress is moved out of place. He fell.”

The other two looked at him and quickly scribbled down what he said.

“Great! Now that that’s over with, let’s find our next job,” Lillian went out of the room and grabbed an old laptop, Morgan and Finnley in tow. Sitting down on a beaten up couch, the trio searched for a new case. They couldn’t be real detectives until they got their degree, but being a private investigator was fair game. It helped them practice, even if most of their cases were finding out if people were cheating or looking for lost items. Plus, they got paid, not a lot but it was still something, and most jobs only took a few hours.

“Shouldn’t we clean up the crime scene?” Finnley asked.

“Not ‘we’. It’s Morgan’s room. He should clean it up.” Lillian kept scrolling.

“Hey, you were the one who drew the outline!” Morgan argued.

While the two continued to bicker back and forth, Finnley stole the laptop.

It looked like crime had been at an all time low, good for the city, but horrible for them. They wanted something exciting, something that paid actual money, and Finnley stumbled upon the perfect job. He stood, proudly presenting it to Lillian and Morgan.

It was a missing dog, the reward for which was *two thousand dollars*.

Morgan already knew where this was heading. "No."

Finnley handed the laptop to Lillian and was already dialing the number for more information. "Come on! We have to take it! It pays a bunch and we'd be doing something good."

"It's a missing dog. We, *professional detectives*, are going to go look for a *missing dog*? It's stupid. Someone else can do it." Morgan replied, looking to Lillian for her reaction.

"Okay, it's not some groundbreaking crime, but it pays well," She pointed out. "And we aren't detectives yet."

"I don't like it. No one would pay that much for a dog. Something has to be wrong." Morgan stubbornly stayed where he was as Lillian and Finnley got ready to go.

"You'd be surprised by how much people are willing to pay for a pet," Lillian threw a trench coat and some shoes at him. "And nothing's wrong. You've been watching too many of those old detective movies."

Outvoted, Morgan reluctantly got up and got ready quickly, still feeling that this was a bad idea, hoping he wasn't right. "What's the dog look like?"

"Australian Shepard mix, medium, green collar and answers to the name Penn," Finnley read off a flyer he printed out. "Last seen in Vermillion Woods."

"Alright, let's get going! I wanna be back here before lunch," Morgan yelled, already out the door. The other two grabbed a few water bottles and some rope to use as a leash.

They set out, sure that this was going to be the easiest job ever, but as they walked through the city, they noticed something strange: every street pole was covered with paper.

Morgan stopped for a closer look, moving onto the next pole, then the next, and the next, and the next...

It was the tenth flyer he had seen in under an hour and there were more up ahead. Just like all the others, 'LOST' was in big, bold text right at the top of the page. Most offered rewards and some just had desperate pleas. All had pictures and other details: name, age, phone number and where they were last seen: Vermillion Woods.

Morgan knew they shouldn't have taken the job. It was odd enough that there were so many missing dogs, but all the dogs going missing in the exact same place? He shook his head, waving Finnley and Lillian over.

As he told them what he had seen, an autumn breeze blew through the street, making the trio shiver, but it wasn't just the cold that unsettled them. Something wasn't right. Something bigger was going on and they were going to get to the bottom of it.

They kept walking, through the outskirts of town, hesitating at the edge of a large, dying forest. Finnley was the first to move, picking up a torn map laying on the ground, and heading off into the woods. Lillian followed, but Morgan waited for a few more seconds, something on the ground caught his attention.

"Morgan!" Lillian had turned around, "Finnley found pawprints! Hurry!"

"Those could be any dog's paw prints."

"So we find a dog that isn't ours. We'll still be able to get it back to its family!"

"This still doesn't feel right!"

"Hurry up you guys!" Finnley called from a distance.

"Look, if you want to stay out here and brood, go ahead. But I'm going in."

With that, Lillian ran to catch up with Finnley, who was already far ahead. Morgan stayed where he was, studying something strange.

A footprint and some fur.

When he thought about it, the map did seem too coincidental, like someone had-

"Morgan! You coming or not?"

"I don't think we should-"

He was cut off by a flock of birds further in the forest, squawking and screeching, rushing to take to the air. A little spooked, he quickly ran in.

Finnley, way ahead of the other two, was busy following the pawprints. He could have sworn he saw the dog once or twice, but everytime he looked nothing was there. And one time, just out of the corner of his eye, he did see something, but it certainly wasn't a dog.

Just shadows, he tried to convince himself, *just shadows*.

A twig would snap, something would move, something would growl.

Just the others, just a squirrel, just me, he thought, *just me, alone, in the woods*.

Swallowing hard, he looked back. "Guys? Where are you?"

"Right here! Stop walking so fast!"

Lillian appeared just behind a bush, out of breath, Morgan just behind her. Finnley sighed in relief, looking around a bit nervously.

"Are you okay?" Morgan asked, a little concerned.

“Yeah, I just thought I saw something.”

“Was it a dog?” Lillian asked.

“No. It didn’t look like one. It’s- It’s probably just my imagination. Let’s keep going.

According to the map we’re close to a clearing.”

Finnley continued walking, slower than before, allowing Morgan to take the lead for the rest of the walk. Lillian trailed just a few feet behind, taking pictures of the pawprints and woods.

Half paranoid, Morgan kept looking around for whatever creature Finnley talked about before stopping suddenly, causing the others to almost crash into him.

“Hey! At least give us some warning before you just-” Lillian gasped.

Red was everywhere. Clinging to the trees and covering the forest floor. The weak afternoon sun illuminated the large clearing, making it bright and surreal. The leaves, dead yet brilliant in color, made it look like the forest was ablaze.

“Vermillion Woods,” Morgan said in amazement, almost smiling.

“A fitting name,” Lillian responded, taking a picture.

“And look! More paw prints! We have to be clo-” Finnley had walked to the middle and fell to his knees. Morgan and Lillian rushed over to look at a much darker scene.

As it turned out the leaves weren’t the only red in the clearing.

Among a mess of fur and flesh, laid a blue collar, engraved with the name ‘Lucy’. It had been a small dog with a light brown coat. The head was nowhere to be seen and the legs were missing, the tail strangely left behind. The spine as well as the rest of the bones were gone. It

looked like the poor thing had been torn apart and skinned. Each one of them knew that no animal could have done such a thing and that's what scared them the most.

They stared in disbelief for a minute, finally looking away from the gruesome scene, only to discover more and more bodies, mutilated the same way as the first. Morgan stood up, a grim look on his face. He held his hand out for Lillian's camera and took pictures of every body, searching each one for a green collar, luckily to no avail.

Lillian couldn't move, comforting a sobbing Finnley while still staring in disbelief.

"How... How could anyone do this?" She managed to choke out.

"I don't know. But we'll find out later. We should leave. *Now*."

Morgan was staring at the ground and she followed his gaze.

More footprints. And they looked fresh.

Morgan lifted Finnley up, practically shoving him towards the way they came. The trio had only made a few steps when they saw *it*.

A monster, as big as a bear, with claws as long as their arms and teeth as big as a hand protruding from its long misshapen muzzle. Spikes made of bone protruding from the spine and forearms, black slime streaming from its eyes, nose and mouth. Its ears were too long, body too large and lumpy, its eyes too small for a creature that size.

The more they looked, the more everything about it seemed off.

There was a weird patch of scales in the middle of its chest and tufts of brown fur growing in random places while the rest was just pale skin. The noises it made were unlike any animal they had ever heard. The way it limped, dragging one of its front paws, made their blood run cold.

But most disturbing of all was when it *stood*.

Towering over the group on its back two legs, it let out a loud and horrible cry.

The group could do nothing, frozen in horror, scared out of their wits.

Morgan finally snapped out of it, searching his pockets for anything he could use. He knew they didn't stand a chance of outrunning it. The only option they had was to fight.

It cried again, opening its mouth and showing every single one of its teeth.

The monster came closer and Morgan had nothing. Desperate, he looked one last time at Lily and Finn as the monster approached.

He rushed at the beast, hoping to stall it long enough for the other two to get away.

Click!

A sharp sting at the back of his neck stopped him. He reached up and pulled out a brightly colored dart, already struggling to stay on his feet. Looking back, he saw them both on the ground before falling himself.

His vision faded to black.

The last thing he saw was the monster, standing over his friends.

And a blurry figure kneeling down beside them.

Morgan woke with a start, sitting up and leaning against a wall, his eyes struggling to adjust to the harsh fluorescent light. It had been late afternoon when he passed out, but he couldn't tell how much time had passed since then. There was no sign of Finnley or Lillian. Head pounding and vision still blurry, trying to stand only to realize his arms were handcuffed to a metal bar drilled into the floor.

He didn't have a chance of escaping, or so he thought. Pulling on the handcuffs again, he noticed two of the screws were loose. If he could just unscrew them completely, he'd be free. Finger working quickly, he studied his surroundings, searching for clues and a way out.

It was a large room with no windows and one solid metal door. The walls were white tile and the floor smooth, gray concrete with drains every few feet. A long black countertop covered with papers, test tubes, syringes, microscopes and other scientific instruments that Morgan couldn't possibly name, as well as a few weapons.

On the wall opposite of him were large kennels, filled with five terrified dogs, too scared to even bark. Just next to that were even larger cages, with huge gashes in the floor and sides, almost like they were-

"Claw marks," Morgan said to himself, his head clearing as he started to put two and two together. His fingers stopped, the screws momentarily forgotten.

"That monster. It came from here!"

"Yes! You figured it out! Now, please stop yelling. You're scaring my subjects."

The deep sarcastic voice, close and unexpected, made him flinch. Carefully moving back, covering his escape plan, he looked up.

A tall, skinny man with black buzz cut hair and gold rimmed glasses smiled at him. He looked almost normal, if you ignored the lab coat smeared with red, embroidered with the name 'Dr. Reed' just above one of the front pockets. Morgan couldn't help but think that if they had met in any other situation, he might've even looked friendly.

"Who are you? Where am I? Where are my-"

"Silence!"

“No! Not until you answer-”

“QUIET!” Dr. Reed practically roared the word, but Morgan spoke louder, straining against the handcuffs, trying to get the bar out of the floor.

“WHERE ARE MY FRIENDS?!”

Dr. Reed had stopped smiling, a sneer forming on his face, his eyes cold and malicious. He hit Morgan in the face with the back of his hand, knocking him against the wall. Still recovering from whatever the dart drugged him with, his head started spinning again, the sharp pain radiating from his cheek made it worse. He felt something running down the side of his face, not tears, but blood. The man’s nails had left shallow, stinging scratches.

Filled with fear and rage, he tried to stand again, the bar finally lifting up.

Morgan relished the look of surprise on Reed’s face just before he punched him, knocking him out cold. His fist throbbed but adrenaline soon took care of the pain.

He had to find Finnley and Lillian.

Hopefully alive.

Morgan searched Dr. Reed for a key and got the cuffs off. He quickly took pictures of the room with the camera he had gotten from Lillian and rushed to the door. He ran up a lushly carpeted staircase and into a long, lavishly decorated hallway. Going door to door, he found nothing but more labs, all exactly the same as the one he had been in.

The last room led to another staircase, almost the exact same as the first. The adrenaline was beginning to wear off, the pain in his fist and cheek coming back. He didn’t feel like he had any energy left but he had to keep going.

The stairs led to another hallway, very similar to the previous one, except there was only one door at the very end. He regretted not grabbing something from any of the rooms to defend himself with. Running down the hall, he hoped they were there and opened the door. Lillian was sitting in the middle of the room, handcuffed the same way he was.

“What do you want you crazy- Oh my god, Morgan! Morgan! You’re alive!”

“Lillian! I’m so glad to see you! Where’s-”

“Right here!”

Standing behind the door, holding a microscope, was Finnley.

“How did you get out?” Morgan asked.

“He dropped the keys when Lillian bit his leg.”

“You bit his leg?!”

She smiled and unlocked her cuffs.

“Why didn’t you just run? You had the keys.”

“We couldn’t just leave you behind! So we came up with a plan. Once he came back, I would distract him and Finnley would knock him out with the microscope. Then we’d look for you and get the hell out of here.”

“How did you escape? And what happened there?” Finnley’s eyes widened at the sight of the scratches on his cheek.

“There’s no time to explain. We need to find a way out. We’ve already wasted too much time. I knocked him out but I don’t know how long he’ll stay down.”

“Okay. Grab something in case we run into him,” Lillian picked up a small scalpel.

“I don’t think that’ll do much, especially if we run into any of his monsters.”

"His monsters?" Finnley and Lillian almost said it at the same time.

"His monsters. He created the one we saw in the forest and there's a good chance he's got more. Grab that instead," Morgan pointed to the tranquilizer gun, taking it for himself and handing Finnley what looked like a cattle prod.

All armed and ready, they ran out a door opposite of the one Morgan had come through.

But it wasn't a hallway they ran into. It was a large, empty room with nothing but cages against the wall. They tried to turn back but the door was locked.

"Well, well, well. The trio's all back together again."

Dr. Reed stepped out of a hidden passage in the wall and was smiling at them, a bruise starting to form where Morgan punched him.

"And you've brought weapons. How sweet."

With a snap of his fingers, several cage doors opened. Hideous monsters walked out, all variants of the one they had seen in the forest. On closer inspection, it was there too. These beasts didn't attack, instead they were rallying behind Dr. Reed, waiting for his command.

As Morgan counted how many there were, a dark thought formed in his mind and even though he knew it was true, he hoped that for just this once he wasn't right.

"The dogs. Those things are the dogs."

"No. They... They can't be. Right?" Lillian tightened her grip on the gun.

"Ten bodies in the clearing and ten monsters here. There were five dogs back in the room I was in. The fourteen posters on our way to the woods, plus the one we printed out, equals..."

"Fifteen," Finnley said quietly.

“Well, looks like you’ve done it again! You really would’ve made a great detective,” Dr. Reed laughed cruelly. “Such a shame that you’ll never get your degree. Criminal justice, was it?”

“How- How did you know that?” Morgan demanded.

“I always do research on my subjects before getting them here.”

“Subjects? You don’t mean-” Finnley looked like he was on the verge of tears.

“We’re your next monsters,” Lillian said, horrified.

“Experiments! Not monsters. And yes, I’m beginning human trials today.”

“Then why didn’t you just do it while we were knocked out!” Morgan took a step forward, the monsters growling deeply.

“I have to make sure my new subjects are strong. It was a hassle getting you here. The map, the missing dog post. The last thing I need is one of you dying and skewing my data..”

Morgan instinctively backed up, the trio bunching close together.

“And what better way to do that than by having you fight?”

Dr. Reed pointed and left the room. The monsters moved in, forming a semi circle around them. They howled and screeched, darting in and out, almost like they were taking turns.

Lillian shot as many as she could but it took two, three, four darts for the tranquilizer to have any effect. Morgan swung at any creature that got too close and Finnley stabbed at random, making contact once or twice. Morgan started to bark out orders.

“Finn, as soon as Lily shoots one, attack it! I’ll use the ax to finish it off!”

They took down four of the beasts this way, dodging and fighting as best as they could. They killed another, Morgan delivering the final blow, covered black slime and blood. Each of

them were wounded in some way or another. They believed just for a moment that they would make it out.

But the monsters got closer and started to attack all at once, the trio couldn't keep up.

Lillian ran out of darts and Morgan was getting tired, swinging the ax around and missing more and more. They were going to fail and the lab and Dr. Reed would continue.

Unless one of them made it out with the camera.

Morgan and Lillian whispered quietly, backing up towards the door.

"Finnley, hand Lillian your weapon."

"What? Why?"

"You are going to run out of here and take those photos to the police. Me and Morgan will hold off the monsters."

"No! I'm not leaving you behind!"

"It's the only way! Now stand back!"

With that, Morgan turned around and swung at the door, breaking the knob. Finnley still hesitated and was pushed through by one of them. He fell to the ground and looked back.

Morgan and Lillian smiled, tears streaming down their faces. Morgan tossed the camera to him.

"No!"

Too late. The door was shut.

It was just him.

Finnley stood up and grabbed the camera. He wanted to stay and bang on the door, to fall on the floor and cry and scream till his voice was gone. But maybe if he made it out in time, if he got to the police station, if he got help, maybe they would still be alive when he got back. He ran

as fast as he could, going up staircase after staircase, hall after hall until he made it to the final door.

It led outside and he was surprised to see that they were still in the forest. It was dark but the moon full and bright provided all the light he needed to see. Taking out his map, he ran and ran and ran. Through the forest, to the clearing and back into the city.

When he entered the police station, the officers started asking questions and listened to his answers, gearing up immediately to help. Some were still a bit skeptical of his story, but most believed him. After all, he had the photos and the blood to prove it.

They drove to the forest, but rest was a blur until they were outside the monster room.

Finnley had done everything as fast as he could.

He prayed and cried but it wasn't enough.

As they opened the door, on the floor, just beyond the bodies of the beasts, were Morgan and Lillian.

They had spent their last moments holding each other.

Finnley fell to the floor.

Months later, the lab had been closed and the dogs were returned to their families.

An investigation had opened and Dr. Reed had been charged with the death penalty on multiple things, including murder.

Mr. Finnley Soot, a college graduate and professional detective, smiled as Dr. Reed took his final breaths. He wasn't able to kill him himself but at least he could watch.

For Morgan and Lillian. For Morgan and Lillian.

3 Bodys but Only 1

It was a normal evening at my house, my parents still on their business trip. It seemed like they were always on a business trip, always away, never able to spend time with me. Now that I'm older I can stay home alone no need for a babysitter for 2 weeks now. Somehow I have learned to cope without my parents and my babysitter that I would have never really cared if she only wanted the money.

That always made me so lonely, nobody to play with nor nobody to be with. Due to that I always made up new imaginary friends, one almost every week. We always loved each other and well we had each other.

Now it's different, imaginary friends are just imaginary now to me, they don't exist now. Sometimes I still wish I could just make an imaginary friend and believe they are real.

The movie I was watching finished, nothing special about it. It was the same movie I always seem to watch. I got up from the couch and went to the kitchen to make a snake and get ready for bed. The clock ticked showing that time is always moving.

With a sad face and in a quiet and sad voice I said "Why, just why do I always have to be alone. It's just not fair why can't they be home for once."

I got to the kitchen and made the snack. The snack wasn't anything special, it was just a carrot on a piece of bread. Turning around to head to my room the room seemed different but the only problem was the room wasn't different. The couch was still there with its brown leather, the table was still oak and round and so on and so on. The only thing that seemed different was the clock, it had stopped moving.

I didn't think much of it so I went upstairs to my room. Once my head hit my pillow I was fast asleep, it was one of the best sleeps I have ever had in a long time. It felt like somebody was there with me, to confront me and to love me. Suddenly there was a bang and a crash. My eyes opened up but I couldn't move.

Panicking I thought to myself this must be sleep paralysis that's all it is im sure of it. There was another noise, it was the voice of a small child. The child was laughing and seemed like having a good time with the sound of the voice.

Morning soon came, the sun shone right in my face but I didn't move. I just layed there in my bed. My phone rang and it was my friend Arlene calling, so of course I answered it.

"Hey Nellie! How are you doing? I just wanted to check up on you since you are home alone again."

"Hey Arlene im doing fine but the weirdest thing happened last night."

"What happened last night please tell me."

"Well, I ended up waking up in the middle of the night and couldn't move at all and then I heard this child's voice."

"That sounds like sleep paralysis so don't really think about it."

"No the thing is-"

All of a sudden my phone died and the power went out in the house. Luckily it was morning otherwise it would have been pitch black in the house. I looked out my window and saw that my neighbors house lights were on. So I made my way downstairs and into the garage to look at the power breaker.

In a puzzling voice I said when I got to the power breaker "Strang none of the switches turned off. Also none of the other neighbors' houses are off."

Again I heard the voice of a small child. I had no idea what it was saying though. I made my way back to the living room to make a plan on how to get power back. The living room had an eerie feeling to it but aging anything had changed about it besides the clock that somehow now is going backwards.

"Okay i'm definitely losing my mind at this point the clock is going backwards now."

The clock continued ticking, ticking, ticking in the wrong direction. The child's voice could be heard again right behind me. When I turned around there was nothing besides the emptiness of the hallway I just walked through.

There were shadows all over. Shadows that belonged to items, shadows that a person couldn't make out what they are and shadows that belong to nothingness. Strange noises were coming from all over. The laughter of the child, the clock ticking, the wind blowing, but still the room seemed silent.

I ran to the front door hoping to escape the horror I was feeling. When I got to the door it was locked. I screamed for help hoping someone would hear me, something grabbed me but then my eyes opened.

I was laying in my bed with my eyes wide open, trying to figure out what had just happened. My mind couldn't wrap around anything. I was so confused, frightened and lonely. My phone was still dead and the power was still out so I figured what had happened must have been real. Heading downstairs once again I saw a woman. A woman just standing in the kitchen making something.

I ran towards the woman. My plan was to scare her away and then call the police but to my horror when I ran and screamed at her it seemed like she didn't hear or see me at all. It was like she stared right through me. The woman had a scared expression on her face and there was a small child in her arms. The child was lifeless, not moving or doing anything at all.

Turning to face the other direction there is the ghost child I had been seeing. The ghost had very brown long hair with beautiful light blue eyes. She stared right at me like she was staring at my soul. Turning around once again I see the woman standing with the police handing them the child that was in her arms.

There was something odd with the child like I had seen her before. Before I could think of something I woke up once again laying down face up in my bed. Again with the power still out and my phone still dead.

Frightened and annoyed I say "I'm living in a time loop with a ghost child, a random woman who can't see me, and a small child who seems to be dead, I can't imagine what will be next."

A blood curdling scream comes from downstairs. As I rush down the stairs to see what happened now, I see the small child lying lifeless on the floor instead of the woman's arms. The woman came running to the kitchen where all the captions were and now seeing her, she looked vaguely familiar. She was tall with dark dark black hair and a little mole on her left cheek.

Once she saw the child she picked up her phone and rang someone in a hurry.

Speedley she started talking to whoever was on the phone with her "Please hurry and come home your daughter, she fell off the count and most lille hit her head. She is not moving at all. I will call 911 as soon as possible."

There was a muffled voice on the other end then the woman called 911. A crying came from beside me. I turn to see who it was as it was the small ghost girl. Looking at her closer I notice that she is a spitting image of the girl who is most likely dead.

"You- you are that girl who are you, where am I and what are you doin?!" I say.

The crying girl soon trunks her head to face and with an angry crying voice she says "You still don't get it, you still haven't figured it out! Just why haven't you figured it out? I gave you everything to figure it out!"

"What the hack are you talking about? I was minding my own business and you can come out of nowhere!"

"Well I guess I should just tell you sense you aren't smart enough to figure it out yourself."

At the snap of her fingers time stopped, the air itself was soft like it had stopped too. Coldness filled the air and anger did too. The girl became very enraged.

"You are me and the dead girl." She finally said. "I was that girl, I fell off the counter, hit my head and ended up dying. Soon I became this form I died in, but unfortunately my soul left so I couldn't leave this world. Hmm I wonder if you would know where my soul is?"

I was frozen, unable to do anything. My mind shifted to every direction it could. I couldn't comprehend what I was being told. How could I be the soul, how could I be dead? I was loving a normal life and now I'm told I'm dead by my so-called ghost girl self.

"No comment I see, well you are my soul! My soul that left me that prevented me from leaving this wretched world! Once you left you twisted your mind, created a new mind, You told yourself that you were still alive. This world you live in, well it's all fake! You made it up, your so-called friend is fake, your parents being away all the time fake, you being able to grow is all fake!"

"Everything... was everything I knew fake, did I do this to forget everything that happened that night? I- I just wanted to live a normal life..."

My eyes started tearing up realizing that I hurt myself without even realizing it. I never realized that I was hurting myself everyday. Everything around me started changing, blood came from the walls, the room started collapsing.

"Now you will pay for hurting me for all these years, for leaving my ghost body, for never realizing anything, for everything!"

The room started shaking more than it had been. Then the room went dark, my eyes opened and saw light then I saw death. I saw both those things over and over again.

"Is this my fate for hurting myself over and over again, is this how I hurt myself over the years?"

"Yes this is how you hurt me! I can never forgive you!"

"But what if I can, only in a different way by giving myself over to you so we will be connected again, only thing is I feel like that would harm us both."

My mid beagin racing some more. I couldn't handle it anymore. My arm stretched out and a bright light came from me. It was an orb only the orb was red. Peering into, I saw my life that I had forgotten about, the life I forced myself to forget for my own good. It got to the point where I died, the point where I promised myself I wanted to live a normal life. A life that I lied to myself about only for it to happen.

I look up and see my ghost child form to where I died. She was in pain screaming, her body was beginning to be pulled into darkness.

Reaching out my hand once again I said to her "You can always come with me, you could we can connect that way, you won't be angry anymore I'm sure you would be happy. Relive life somewhere new."

Her body was being torn apart, her eyes turned hollow with a red glow.

"I will never combine with you! I don't know what I was thinking! You are worthless, my physical body is worthless too!" as in a matter of seconds after she said that she was completely gone by being pulled under.

"I guess hatred and jelly caused that... The greed to get what she wanted... In reality that was me, one less part of me is gone now I am only a soul. My physical body is gone and now my ghost form is gone too."

The orb that I had been holding disappeared and I was in a new place, this place was not in my mind it was reality. I was trapped in my version of reality, not the true one. Now I could be in the true reality. Knowing that I was dead I didn't know what to do. But something in me knew and it told me, it told me to go relive my life.

To go relive a life without any horrors. A life where I didn't manipulate myself with or anything that I would hate myself with. I walked into true reality with other people, made it true and a place where I know I wouldn't destroy like I did with my physical self, my ghost self, and now my true self as a walking soul. I became my young self and walked into a reality that was true starting from where I died.

Bridgewater

By: William H. '1

2525 T. BOX 5000

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14 years old

9th grade

In the wilds of Massachusetts, a small family settles into their new house, oblivious to the many mysterious sightings in the area. Fog covers the land as ominous lights glow from deep in the forest. Howling from caves echo through the night sky. A light mist covers the land as the sun sets behind the Appalachians.

Jane, a little girl belonging to the new family, plays in the evening mist; her family beacons her for dinner. The family sits down and hot and fresh pizza from the local pizzeria is presented to the family. Jane's father Kyle, is a lumber worker who had the family moved for his job. Jane's mother Abby, a stay at home mom who creates podcasts for up and coming mothers.

As Jane munches on her pizza she couldn't help but notice the small shimmering light beyond their property. The light grew bigger and brighter coming closer to the window, but it vanished leaving only a faint shadow behind. Jane pointed it out to her parents but they ignored her.

"Follow the lights" whispered a voice into Jane's ear.

Jane got up from the table and left through the back door as her parents kept focus on their food. She saw lights that lead through the forest and the voice called out to Jane once more, "Follow the lights."

Jane began through the forest as the mist turned into a sprinkle and that sprinkle into rain. The lights trailed the way through the downpour all the

way to a small clearing where a rock lay atop a hill. A sign to the right read Profile Rock.

The voice once more present whispered to Jane, "Climb to the top."

Jane began to climb the hill of rocks carefully trying to maneuver her way to the top. Some rocks fell beneath Jane, almost sending her to eternal rest. Once Jane reached the biggest rock atop the hill something was etched into the side but it was too dark to read. Jane stood atop the biggest rock and the full moon shone down on her.

Jane stood as the moon seemed to put her in a trance as from the dim light grew a winged shadow. Jane stood stunned at the horrid site of the winged beast hurling towards her. As Jane stepped back preparing for her untimely demise she slipped and fell back down the rocky hill.

When Jane stood back up the winged creature was nowhere to be found, so she decided to return home. After what seemed like miles of walking she returned home, but something was off.

The lights were dim and the air was stagnant, a cold breeze wafted from the inside as the smell of warm cheese and cooked bread floated through the air drawing in the hopeless child.

Jane walked into her home and cried out, "Mommy. Daddy. I'm scared, please help me."

There was no response but the static of the T.V. from the living room. Jane walked into the living room unprepared for the inhumane sights she would witness. Jane turned the corner and saw her parents' cold dead bodies laying still on the couch faceless. As Jane began to weep she saw her parents' faces stuck to the static of the T.V. holding their final expression of terror.

The cops arrived on scene that morning and delivered Jane off to some relatives in Maine, but their parents' cause of death was still unknown. Many rumors started to spread across the Bridgewater area, some suggested a cult of satanic worship, pukwudgies, spirits from the brutal war between Americans and Native Americans, some even thought it could have been bigfoot. The cops began their search around the house but only found the now cold hardened pizza that the family never finished. The cops then

traveled to Profile Rock the place where Jane had gone and reported seeing glowing lights and a bird man. Same as the house the cops had found nothing, this would be a job for an expert.

Micheal Venison was a big time conspiser and the detective who busted many myths like the Loch Ness Monster and even the illusive Yeti. Micheal was called in that night to the Bridgewater area with the reports stating that a family was murdered and strange things had occured. While Micheal was on his way to Bridgewater a brittle man in a plaid button up shirt, jeans, and generic baseball hat sat alongside the road. The man held out his thumb as his bright red hair glistened in the dark light.

Micheal stopped by and asked, "Excuse me sir do you need a ride anywhere. I am glad to help."

The Hitchhiker stood up and walked to Micheals car and got in.

"Just take me to the nearest town please and thank you." The hitchhiker responded.

A few minutes passed and Micheal tried to start some conversation but when Micheal looked back the hitchhiker was gone. Micheal slammed on the breaks and looked in the back seat yet no one was there. Micheal got out of the car and checked the trunk and the backseat but to no avail. Micheal got back into his car confused and continued on the road.

In the morning Micheal met up with his colleagues, Billy Gray otherwise known as Bif, he was the cameraman of the operation, Hella Heath who was the director of show, and Jacey Vincent the makeup artist and special effects who normally revealed the secrets to how some people make it look real and scary. The small crew was joined by the chief of police James Fernandez who was requested for safety reasons.

Once night fell everyone traveled to Profile Rock and began their search there. Not but three minutes into the investigation they had seen a campfire through the shade of the trees. The crew rushed to the fire but as they got closer the campfire got dimmer and dimmer. When they reached the light nothing was left except the view to a small ledge overlooking a lake. From the ledge James spotted a house in the distance glowing an eerie

yellowish red. A howl echoed from across the lake and the light of the cabin died immediately. The trees shook and birds flew into the sky all leading towards the cabin.

Micheal suggested that they all head towards the cabin in case anything happened, so they all began to walk down to the cabin all except Bif.

"Jump it'll be fun." said a ghostly voice ringing in Bif's head, "Jump, trust me it will be worth it."

Bif stepped towards the ledge inching closer and closer to the lake down below.

The voice rang once more, "You have nothing to waste, you're just a measly cameraman."

Bif sure of his decision stepped off the ridge and plummeted towards the cold dark lake below. The crew stopped and noticed as Bif took his final plunge. Bif's body hit the water with a loud SMACK and he sank into the murky depths. Everyone looked on in shock as the remaining pieces of Bif floated up in a cloud of red. James radioed in some backup to retrieve Bif but only static was heard and they continued on.

When the crew reached the cabin the front door was cracked open slightly and a nearby window was shattered. James drew his gun and took front and cracked open the door a little more. Hella and Jacey walked over to the window and peered inside but it was pitch black. James entered, letting his flashlight illuminate the room. From the window Jacey held back a scream as the room was revealed to be full of bodies and a pentagram drawn in the middle of it all. All the satanic cult members had been torn to shreds with dismembered limbs thrown across the room in various places and intestines draped across the walls and ceiling frame. Claw marks had grown across the walls with the wafting smell of death everywhere.

James wretched in disgust and slammed the door shut and tried to radio for backup. Micheal asked what happened but was answered with a stare able to pierce diamonds. Micheal had not asked any further questions and suggested they head home for the night with everything going on. Once they were back on the road the weird things did not stop dead animals lay draped

across trees and bones still dampened with red piled up near bushes. The smell of wet fur lingered in the air. The pitch black forest with the occasional glowing light caused an eerie ambience.

After a while of traveling the group reached an enclosed bunker and Micheal couldn't help himself; he had to get a look inside the bunker. James helped Micheal tear the vines off the bunker door and when it opened piles of skeletons fell inches from James and Micheals feet. On a table in the middle of the bunker a lone radio sat waiting. James carefully maneuvered his way around the bones and picked up the radio and turned its knob. The radio made a loud screeching noise and shut off abruptly.

James quickly set it back onto the table and bolted for the door but it slammed shut in his face. A glow began to illuminate the room from the ceiling as James screamed for help. The rest of the group yanked on the door and tried to break it open only creating more noise. The noise from the rest of the group stopped when the clanking of metal was heard above James. James' body went numb when he realized he had been abandoned. He quickly drew his pistol and aimed it through the small hole in the top of the bunker. He saw only a shadow of some gigantic creature that loomed in the darkness. Scraping against the metal is what sounded like claws causing James to cry in pain as his ears bled. Then banging on the door was the sound of growling; James aimed his gun and prepared for whatever came through that door.

The door to the bunker flew off its hinges and smashed into James who heard the crunch of his now broken ribs. Blinded and suppressed by the weight of the door the full weight of an animal's jaw came crashing down on his arm. It began to tug on his arm and James felt his arm detaching from its joint and flesh like a lego block. First came the arms and then the legs James was but a body with his arms and legs sprawled across the room. The blood pooled around James head and he slowly started to pass out. The door's weight was relieved from James' body when the crude animal blood and saliva dripping from its maw came face to face with James. It sneered as the smell of flesh and bones wafted from its mouth. James took one good look

into the animal's piercing yellow eyes as the animal's teeth dug into James neck tearing his esophagus from its warm fleshy home.

Micheal heard the crash of the bunker door as he and the rest of his crew sprinted aimlessly through the woods. Hella stopped to catch her breath on a sign that read King Phillip's Cave. Micheal took charge and told them that the cave should be close to the interstate where they should be able to get a ride. With everything happening they decide that this would be their only option to get away from whatever happened at the bunker. The crew cautiously stepped down the steep edges of the cave entrances as the cool relaxing breeze provided some comfort from the crazy night. As they traveled further the cave shook occasionally from the steps heard above.

The group then came to a fork in their road and Hella decided for the group that they should go right because right is always right. Nobody argued and they traveled down the right side of the cave but it was short lived. The cave had been flooded but in the middle of all this a cross hung above the ceiling with a goat nailed to it like it was some workshop project. Jacey slipped and with a loud crack her hand smashed through the ribcage of another goat. Jacey screamed and it echoed throughout the cave and everything went silent.

A crash came from the front of the cave and the crew went into overtime. They sprinted from the right side of the cave and into the left side and did not stop. The cave came to a sudden incline and Micheal and Jacey climbed it with ease, but Hella could not make it up with her shoes. In her rush of adrenaline she threw off her shoes But it did not help. Micheal tried to help Hella. From Micheals peripheral vision he saw some dog and something surged through Micheal whether it was fear or cowardice he did not know, but what he did was that he ran away from that cave. Hella knew why he ran so she did the same but as quietly as she could. Hella crept along some stalagmites that lined the cave walls and hid behind the biggest ones. The coolness of the cave seemed to vanish as a vortex of warmth grew around her. Saliva dripped from above as this ravenous beast loomed above Hella. Hella held her breath and refrained from making any movement or any sound. The

beast lingered above Hella as if he never wanted to leave as if it knew she was there. Hella began holding back tears as warm stagnant breath billowed over her. Hella shook in fear as prepared for her final breaths of air, but the breathing stopped and the footsteps of the beast grew quieter.

Hella peered above the stalagmites and was face to face with the beast. It lunged at Hella smashing through the stalagmites with her between its jaws. It threw Hella back on the ground and tore through her clothes and dug its nails into her back. The huge gash in Hella's back sprayed red and the beast picked her up and threw her into the air smashing her against the ceiling breaking her back in two like a glow stick. Hella then lay flat on her back pain surging through her body as the beast on its hind legs stood above her. It howled as if mocking her and it reached into her chest ripping out parts of her rib cage. With the remaining parts it jammed the bones into her shoulder blades giving her wings; wings of red. Hella screamed in pain and tried to move but her body was in too much shock and when she looked down she saw the gaping hole in her chest revealing her heart and other internal organs. The wolf howled, mocking her once more as it finished the job by ripping her lungs from its own chest cavity. Blood gushes from Hella's mouth as she choked for air, her last site being the beast devouring her own lungs.

Micheal, still feeling that same feeling, finally caught up with Jacey who was sobbing by the door of some little white shed. Micheal came over to comfort Jacey but when he sat down the door to the shed flew open revealing large men in red and purple robes handling sacrificial knives. The men dragged them into the school house as Jacey screamed and kicked, the men silenced her by promptly kicking her in the gut. Still dazed, Micheal looked around and saw that they were preparing another man on a giant stake and were hauling him out the back door. Jacey and Micheal were both handcuffed and were told by the men in robes to cooperate or the same thing would happen to them. Jacey and Micheal were dragged all the way over to Hockomock swamp, the heart of Bridgewater. Micheal was tied to a tree and Jacey was tied to a barrel full of some dark liquid. One of the men in robes came over with a giant flask and dipped it into the liquid, and walked over to

the man tied to the stake. He climbed up a short ladder and poured the liquid over the man; the man screamed as squirmed as if the liquid seemed to be burning him alive. The man on the ladder drew his knife and carved a big smile across the man's face and left the knife in the man's chest. The rest of the men in robes began to pack up quickly and the man on the ladder untied Jacey and tied her up with Micheal. Some more men in robes held their knives up to Micheal and Jacey and told them that if they did not watch something far worse would happen.

Howling from the tree line erupted like an active volcano. Quills from the nearby bushes flew out and penetrated the man's skin as he howled in pain. The cultist jumped as a shadow flew through the air past the man on the stake into a barrel of that weird liquid. One of the quills from the now rabid shadow launched into the air and landed next to Jacey. Jacey took action, grabbed the quill and cut herself free. The cultist had not noticed until Jacey had thrown him into the barrel of liquid. As the cultist struggled to get out Jacey freed Micheal and they took off into the forest.

When Micheal looked back he saw the weird shadow grow wings and launch into the sky dive bombing into the incapacitated cultist. It tore into his chest and ripped out every organ making sure the cultist stayed alive while he did it. Micheal refrained from throwing up and kept running forward. After some more running Jacey and Micheal made it to a clearing in the forest. Leaping out of the tree line a weird porcupine looking creature landed on Micheal. Its sharp teeth bared as it dripped with blood and saliva. Its yellow eyes stared straight through Micheal. Jacey smacked the weird creature with a stick and it spiraled through the air landing on its spiky back.

The weird creature growled in a deep raspy voice "MMM fresh food, Fresh food, FOOOD!"

It bounded towards Micheal and Jacey countered with the stick once more, sending it back into the forest. Jacey helped Micheal up and they ran into the forest once more trying to find their way out. After more running they found themselves back at profile rock where it had all begun. Micheal picked up a rock and turned to face the weird creature. Jacey gasped in horror

as it stepped into the dim moonlight and out of the dark forest. She explained that it was a Pukwudgie a horrible native american legend told to terrorize humans when they cross into their territory. It growled as a trail of blood dripped from its gaping maw. In its hands it clutched the same stick that Jacey had hit it with.

It sprouted wings from its back and proceeded to stand on its hind legs. Micheal retreated up to the largest rock but the Puckwudgie remained focused on Jacey. As Micheal was halfway up the rock another Puckwudgie leaped onto his back digging into his spine. As this happened the other Pukwudgie jumped onto Javey's face screaming for blood. Jacey fell into the rock pile unconscious, maybe dead Micheal could not tell. Micheal threw the Pukwudgie off of his back and threw the rock into his hand at it. The two collided mid air but the Puckwudgie was unphased by it. It landed back on all fours and its spines grew twice its size. The one that had attacked Jacey was nowhere to be found and Micheal scrambled to find a weapon. As Micheal picked up another rock the largest rock began to roll. Micheal looked up to see Profile rock barreling towards him. Micheal stepped to the side and realized the rock wasn't meant for him. He turned to see the rock rolling right over Jacey. The sounds of bones being polarized echoed through the tops of the trees. Blood squirted all over Micheal drenching him in red. The blood singed his eyes and tasted like iron. All that was left of Jacey was a few fingers that had not met the same fate as the rest of Jacey.

Micheal looked back to where the Puckwudgies were but they were nowhere to be seen. When the morning dawn broke through the trees and the songs of birds rose above other animals Micheal was sitting in the back of a police cruiser. The police arrived at Profile Rock because they had gotten a call of a domestic disturbance, but all they found was a destroyed monument and Micheal covered in blood. A few weeks later Micheal would make the claim that he is innocent telling the court that it was the Puckwudgies. The court did not find Micheal's story very amusing and sentenced Micheal to death row. Micheal at this point had gone mad, he screamed and tried to break out whenever the guards took him. All of the bodies of the unfortunate

accidents and there was further evidence to prove Micheal guilty. Eighteen months after the Bridgewater events Micheal was strapped to an electrical chair and shocked to death ending any evidence we may have had to the true story behind Bridgewater.

The End

Lily P

Mr. Baker

Creative Writing

14 October 2022

Meowdurs

Meowchelle checked her phone one more time before leaving it in the car. It was out of service, so there was no point in bringing it. Besides, her group was just a few miles deeper into the wilderness. She took her fursuit out of the new package and examined it once more before excitedly putting it on. Checking herself out in the side-view mirror, she studied the vibrant cream torso which had a nice transition into a dark ginger, almost a red-brown. She loved the detailing as well as the light stripes that coated the cream so it wasn't too plain. It was a shame that through the week, it would get stained with grass, dirt, and maybe even the blood of prey.

Meowchelle arrived with a few of her friends that she met along the way. The camp had already been worked on by other people in the group, and soon the sun would set. The newcomers were introduced and everyone was going around complimenting each other, but especially Meowchelle, since she had a new and nice fursuit. A \$2,750 dollar fursuit was certainly nice, but not when it's going to be worn for a solid week in the wilderness. Everyone reviewed their character roles and names. Once they finished greetings, their 'clan' met below a boulder, which the leader sat atop.

"Welcome to Rainclan, of course we need to establish patrols for the evening, which my deputy will assign after the meeting. We need three cats on hunting, and four

on patrols. That being said, warriors please stick around. And of course I need to assign an apprentice to the medicine cat; Beeleaf, can you step forward?" A girl wearing a yellowish-orange fursuit crawled to the front on all fours, and the leader continued. "Would you accept Asterkit as your apprentice?" A younger boy sat up straight in his black and white mottled fur suit and let out a meow as if he was a kitten in agreement. The person roleplaying as Beeleaf nodded her head respectfully. "Then it is settled, from now on, Asterkit will be known as Asterpaw." He beamed with joy, and the leader dismissed the meeting. The cats split off while the warriors stayed.

The deputy nodded at the leader, Ravenstar, and set up the groups. They immediately went crawling out into the forest. All the people spent time sprucing up their camp, or setting up their beds. At night everyone gathered and traveled to the tree in the corner that joined the four clans they had created. They introduced new members and newly appointed apprentices or warriors, and reported on anything in the forest. There, a person from Cloudclan admitted to seeing two-legs in the forest; humans. Everyone was uneasy, but dealt with it as if they really were forest cats. They treated it as a threat and spoke down on humans, but realistically, they ignored it as some curious hiker. As for the Rainclan, they had known one of their patrols was out somewhere, but they couldn't be sure where. No worries were raised, as they all just figured that they had just forgotten they planned to meet. After all this was the first night in the forest roleplaying, it was easy to lose track of the schedules.

When they all went back to their camps, Rainclan had found one of the roleplayers from the patrol, their brown fursuit was covered in blood. "Mudpelt what happened?" Ravenstar asked quickly and concerned. She knew that they were in the

forest, and they were meant to kill actual animals, but the patrol Mudpelt was assigned to was just checking the borders. Nonetheless, the other two that accompanied him were nowhere to be seen.

"They were attacked! Like actually really attacked. I'm not playing. A human took them out. Well, they took out Ashcoat," he stammered. "B-but then Tawnyclaw ran after them!"

Ravenstar looked at them concerned and worried. "Tonight we will mourn their passing, I hope Tawnyclaw returns safely," She hung her head low.

"No, no no no, you don't understand!" The man who played as Mudpelt stood up on his two legs. He was killed! I heard a firearm go off, turned around, and he was laying there while the ground around him turned red. I tried to help, but I heard more hitting the ground near me, that's when I lost Tawnyclaw- I mean Skylar. She ran off and so did I."

Everyone stared, and began standing up, all coming to the agreement that they needed to get out and call the cops, but Ravenstar stood on all fours on the big boulder, growing furious.

"Everyone sit down!" It's fine, it was just some prank and it's fine. I mean have any of us even seen the body? I'll send a patrol out to recover it, but I bet they just covered themselves in pig's blood or something to give a good scare, you know how those trollers are." She spoke confidently, but you could tell even she was on edge. However, that was enough to calm everyone down. They knelt back down, crawling and sitting on their hands and knees. Three people volunteered to go with Mudpelt to

recover Ashfur's body, but they didn't find it, so they returned and came to the conclusion that it was just some sick joke.

The next morning, they had members of StormClan and Cloudclan running up to their camp, ignoring the rules of crossing the border, let alone into the camp. Everyone was shocked, but also mad. They let out hisses to the best of their ability, and all stood tall on their hands and knees, ready to pounce on the intruders.

"You took our cats! Where are they?" Hawkclaw shouted.

"What are you talking about? We didn't take any of your cats, in fact, two of ours had gone missing as well," Mudpelt argued back. It seemed all of the clans were missing cats; all except Sunclan.

"Well then where did they go? They didn't just run away, and we already searched Sunclan and-"

"Enough!" Ravenstar interrupted. "We were presumably under attack from two-legs last night. They took out our warrior, Ashcoat, and Tawnyclaw went missing. The only survivor was Mudpelt."

Mudpelt bowed his head. To everyone else, he was just roleplaying like the rest of them, and the worry was just a face for the game-sake, but on the inside he was troubled and disturbed. The people argued back and forth on the fate of their members until, out of the blue, Mudpelt stood up on his two legs. Everyone looked at him shocked and concerned.

"Get down!" Ravenstar whispered.

"Listen! I don't think we are safe here, I know we have been playing off the death of Ashcoat as some prank, but I know what I saw, and it was too real. I could hear the

pain in his voice, and I know he was just excited as I was for this week. I'm going home and calling for help. Something isn't right and I refuse to stand down!" Mudpelt stood, aggravated and clearly fear-stricken. The other roleplayers looked around at each other. The players from the other clans looked at each other confused. They had no idea this was even happening. As Mudpelt turned to head to his car, he stopped in his tracks, and everyone could hear a faint, and muffled sound. They all could sense something was wrong. His body fell face first into the ground as blood spread through the fibers of the back of his fursuit. Everyone gasped, a few screamed, and one by one they began to run; all except Ravenstar. She groaned and stood up. Aiming at the other people running, she began to open fire. The sound of the silencer certainly made the shots quieter, but you could still hear it go off. One by one they went down, but few managed to get away. They cried for help and ran to the nearest clan camp; StormClan.

"Brackenstar!" Beeleaf shouted at him and he turned around, confused as to why they were all standing upright. "Ravenstar, she's a murderer! I don't know who she's working with but they killed Rachel, and Aaron, as well as Jes! We all ran when Aaron got hit, but she picked off a majority of people! Please, we have to get everyone out of here and call the cops!" She tried to catch her breath but her panic attack was getting bad. She sat there heaving, awaiting his help. His eyes only widened and he slowly stood up. The people all sat there in silence, a look of horror and confusion. While the crowd processed this information, a sound cut through the silence; the sound of walkie talkie static. Beeleaf paused her hyperventilating and slowly looked over at Brackenstar, where the sound was coming from.

"Omega, Beta, Delta, this is Alpha. My prey uncovered the plan, we have to act fast; over." The raspy sound of Ravenstar's voice cut out. Beeleaf pieced together what was happening and screamed.

"Th-they're all in on it! They know! He knows! They're killing us all!" Beeleaf's breathing sped up as she backed away.

Brackenstar glared at Beeleaf before reaching into his pocket and pulling out a weapon of his own. Like he had trained for it, he took aim, successfully hitting 5 of the furries. As he aimed for the 6th, a man in a white fursuit arose behind Brackenstar with a huge rock in his mitts. He cracked him over the back of the head and he fell to the ground unconscious. Beeleaf let out a scream, muffled by Asterpaw's arms, which quickly wrapped around her to comfort her.

"We need to tell the other clans!" Asterpaw urged. She continued to hug and rock Beeleaf in an effort to calm her down. Toby, who had hit Brackenstar over the head, arose after examining him.

"Yeah, but what if the other murderers are the clan leaders? Or one within the clan? She mentioned 3 other code names. One for Brackenstar, meaning 2 are left unknown. Our best hope is getting help in a nearby town, or just drive until we can get a signal." He turned back at the man laying on the ground before leading the people through the forest. Finding a dense area, they waited until the forest quieted down from the screams and bullets of the other clans. It was awful, but it was a good thing they didn't try to warn the other clans.

Ducking between branches, they made it into the clearing, where they all stopped dead in their tracks. The bodies of their friends lay on the cars and in the road, and not

just the ones from Rainclan that they ran from. The other two clans were collected as well, meaning that they were the last alive. They had to give it to these murderers, they worked hard to drag them through the forest there, and they worked fast too. Their cars were all broken into, and all their phones were smashed and in a pile. The tires were all deflated, with rough slices and holes in the sides. Everyone panicked, but once again Toby brought them all back in and returned their focus to the plan ahead.

"This road isn't too hidden, people still drove down it, just slowly. I say we hoof it on the road until we come across a driver." Toby pointed to the road, the direction they would be walking in.

They began walking and continued for 8 minutes before Kayla, Crystal, Jordan, and Ethan fell down on the ground in unison. They could barely hear it from the silencer, but the four killers had definitely united and hit them from somewhere behind. Toby took one last look at them as they took their final breaths before running the opposite direction, Meowchelle and Olivia slowly falling in line behind him. They ran with tears in their eyes, stumbling and slowing down, but no matter how weak and shaky they were, they knew it would be them next if they didn't get away from the killers.

Shots ricocheted off the ground to the sides of them as they all ran. Olivia got hit and called out as she fell. Meowchelle started to turn back and help her, but another one finished her off. She stared in horror at Olivia's bloodstained fursuit and it hit her; they were being hunted like actual animals; prey, while the hunters closed in.

Then, like a miracle, a car rose over the hill. The driver saw Meowchelle and Toby, covered in blood and running frantically away from figures not far behind. He stomped on the brakes, sending rocks and dust flying through the air. He hesitated

trusting Meowchelle and Toby, who were both covered in drying blood, but unlocked the doors anyway, allowing the two to get in the car. He didn't waste much time and began to step on the gas while Meowchelle tried to help Toby up and in the truck. The driver stepped on the pedal, his eyes wide with fear and confusion. He turned the wheel rapidly, sending more dust into the air as the tires moved with it. Completing the U-turn, he floored it, racing away as the 4 leaders of the "clans" rejoined at the edge of the treeline. The sound of their anger and annoyance was drowned out by the engine and the silverado on the rough terrain, but it was definitely visible through the clouds of dust.

Meowchelle and Toby turned back around in their seats to face forward, glancing at each other. They explained to the horrified driver what they had been through and tried to figure out where to go. It was their impression that the four killers were actually just hateful of furries. After all, furries get a lot of hate, but to go as far as slaughtering a whole group of around 40 was too far. They weren't sure what to make of it, but one thing was for certain. That night, Meowchelle and Toby were the prey that got away.

Isaiah C

Sierra High School – Junior – 11th grade

5 TIMES

The camera man as he set up the camera looks at me “alright ready?”

I smile back nervously “yeah...yeah I am”

He started recording “So how did this all start, what happened?”

“Hi, my name is Sirena Manwell.... uh...well... when I was a little girl I would I loved my dolls, my mom couldn’t afford great expensive toys for me. But she would save up to get me these intriguing and beautiful Korean dolls. I loved them like my own child, these dolls were called Prinny Princesses. I would come home from school and play tea party time with them; pretend they were real. They were practically my friends...” chuckles softly

She was gripping her shirt looking around nervous about talking about her story “Well one day uh...years later being 16 at this point, I came home, and my dolls were all moved around into my room...which was odd because I never took them out of the attic...” Sighs to herself quietly “I would ask my mom because at that time I only lived with her and no siblings...she said no and confused me for a moment and just put my Prinny princess doll back into her box. I would just go about my day and went as planned till I turned on my television while I was enjoying my snacks and news came on talking about weather and crap...but then I heard the word *murders* from the television, and it caught my eye...so I started listening in on what they had to say. It was talking about the actress who would play as Prinny Princess from the game was being looked for...for tons of killings...” She fixed the mask covering her mouth “Well...I was extremely shocked took a huge turn for me...” Laughed nervously to herself.

"I grabbed my phone because my mom was calling me, answered she was telling me to lock all the doors, windows, all of it, and have our curtains cover the windows so no one looks in and to turn all the lights off." Grabbing a bottle to have a small drink "I was freaking out by a crap ton; my mother was texting me that Prinny's actress was in town and doesn't want it to risk it with me. I started to go onto a website that kept our news updated and get info on this killer...and nothing all they know is...she was in town and on a search soon..." she shook her head "Soon, really this was a major emergency, and they say stay calm and stay safe till we were on their way! I found that such shit- ", shaking her head in disbelief.

Camera man noticing her emotion and pauses the recording "want to take a break?"

Sirena heard and resting her hand in her lap to relax "I'm okay thank you"

The camera man started up the recording again and she sat up straight "Well so after a long wait for my mom to get home so I feel less scared, and hours went by and no sign of her...so I start panicking...I uh...well fell asleep eventually to pass time which was idiotic of me..." She took a deep breath to relax "I ended up waking around twelve thirty-two am to a loud crashing from the attic...I thought it was my mom, so I started heading up there ecstatic to see her finally...ask her why she took so long you know" giggled softly, her smile softly faded. "The light wouldn't work because I found out the painful way that the lightbulb is what fell down and created that noise...I ended up stepping on it by accident and got glass from the light bulb in my left foot" sighs softly "I felt...someone from behind me nudge me forward causing me to fall down from the attic onto the floor...I ended up breaking my arm and looked up at the ceiling door leading to the attic to see just black from the inside and I swear I saw top of a head move across the room quickly and in pain and scared out of my wits, I limp to find my phone to call the police because that was not my mother at all, she wouldn't push me down the attic and hurt me..." rubs her arm still felt that feeling of hitting the floor "I found my phone alright, it was shattered in my bedroom...now in so much pain I used my shirt to keep my broken arm still...I was a wreck I started to just freak out...I know someone dangerous was in my house so I didn't make any noise and locked my room door shaking out of my mind grabbing my stupider ironer plugging it in

so it was a lot more useful in ways for my defense..." Yawns drinking some water again and sat up again "Well I sat there for a good ten minutes till I heard faint walking around causing me to put my defense up extremely quick.." rubs her arm nervously again "It grew closer and closer to my room, they were opening and closing doors trying to find me...each door that opened and closed made shivers go up my spine and I'd jump...so covered my mouth to stop my loud breathing..." she groans softly "Silence was deafening for me...after a while my moms phone started ringing broke the silence and confused...I stood up seeing her phone under my bed and dark under I only saw the glow of her phone that an unknown number..." Starts looking down for a minute then looking up softly "I grab the phone...and all I heard was a female's voice as I answer the phone...saying...*oh Sirena you keep putting your Prinny princess doll hidden away in your old and cold attic...I only came to give her too you, she is way to beautiful to be hidden away like that...hey why don't we finish this hide and seek game...*and she would start raising her voice yelling at me like I am the criminal here just saying...*Sirena! I will give you thirty minutes to find the doll! Even one minute past the time...I'll have you choose what happens too you and how you want the police to find you!!!...*" she looks to her left spacing out and heard her name being yelled but didn't flinch or turn her head to respond to her name and after a good five minutes of her spacing out just ear ringing, she turns her head at the man softly holding her shoulder and calling her name concerned. She looked at him with face of distress "I am so sorry, I spaced out I am really sorry..."

He sighs in relief sat back behind his camera "it is okay ma'am I understand this is hard to talk about." let out a soft smile to bring up the mood. That smile help remind her she is safe and no need to worry and tense up. "I immediately started rushing around my room to find the light switch...I found it but now I regretted of it all over again at what my light showed me in my room..." she took a breath before speaking "I saw the doll alright...my mother was holding it...in her now cold hands...I just grab the doll making sense of it all ever since this morning when I found my doll in my room..." she gulps softly "I just sat there and I know why they gave me thirty minutes...they just wanted me to look at my mom to make me feel weak..." she tears softly wiping her eyes "losing track of time, I heard banging on my door and made me jump and heart rate going way too fast...and just left the

doll and grabbed my ironer and broke my window and heard the banging stop and the woman running downstairs to see if I ran out my window..." she giggles softly as she sniffled "I didn't get out I tricked them and hearing them opening the front door I ran as fast I could with a broken arm and cut up foot...my heart dropped when they came back inside running up the stairs and It hurt like hell but I ran faster making sure I don't fall, can NOT be one of those chase scenes from a movie.." giggles and sighs "I ran into the attic closing the door softly so they don't hear and searched around for a flashlight, eventually in relief I found one and turned it on and sat down and it all went quiet...like an idiot I fell asleep to the silence.." she rubs her neck "this is what shook me so much...I woke to a horrid stench and flies buzzing everywhere...I open my eyes to seeing myself in my basement, a singular light on, and body bags underneath the light, five in counting...I counted all of them...over and over I counted and felt heavy breathing down the nape of my neck of an old woman crouched behind me holding something sharp and in sweet relief I heard police outside..." she held her head "I still space out counting five in my head..." The cameraman stops the recording "Thank you...ma'am".

I'm running, running as fast as I can, away from the house, from the man, from the pain that he brought upon me. I'm in the woods. That's all I can tell of where I am. A forest. I was brought out to a house, a dark, dingy house that smelled of mold. I was brought down to a basement where I laid in pain. Pain from having possibly being hit in the head with something blunt. Pressure against my brain, hurting more than any headache I've ever had.

Once I was able to sit up, I saw a window. I didn't know where I was, all I knew is that I need to get out and find someone to help. I needed to get away from the man who took me on my way from school. I clearly remember someone coming up behind me and then dark. I woke up in a van, in too much pain to move. The man has a mask. That's all I could see about him. A big man, tall.

Once we stopped, he brought me to a basement in the house we arrived at. He left me there in the dark for who knows how long, I didn't wait to see how long he'd be gone. As soon as I could move, I went for the window. It was above a shelf, a shelf I could climb to get out.

I shimmied my way out the window, as soon as I was almost out, he came back. He yelled and hollered at me to get back inside. I didn't listen, as soon as I climbed all the way out, I ran. Ran as fast as I could, sprinting around trees, rocks, bushes, trying to get as far away as possible, but he was faster, much faster. He tackled me and we both toppled over hitting the ground hard, my head and back making such hard impact with the ground that the wind was knocked out me.

As I struggled to breath, I was also trying to fight back against him. But he was too strong. Much too strong, I searched desperately to find something to aid me.

Rock. A rock. I spotted a good-sized rock, I grabbed it with my free hand and swung, making impact with what I hoped was his head. He didn't back off, just yelped in pain, so I swung again, again making impact, but this time, he stopped. He landed on top of me. Pushing him off, I took a breath, trying to calm myself so I don't pass out from hyperventilation. I was able to get a better look at him, though he was still masked, I could almost recognize him. He seemed too familiar to be a stranger.

I slowly leaned closer to his head, looking for blood, there being none, luckily. I just wanted him to be hurt enough to pass out, not be seriously injured. I decided to take off his mask, to know the identity of my captor.

I slowly removed the mask....

"DAD?!" I screamed. I had not expected to find my own father under the mask, let alone at all. My parents had divorced a few years ago, after lots of fighting between each other. My mother was given full custody of me, and we moved to a new state right after, leaving him behind. I had not seen him since.

I was more than shocked to find my father under the mask. To find out that he had kidnapped me. I ran, ran as fast as I could away from him, as he started to stir and wake. I kept running until I found the house again, and the van with the keys still in the ignition.

I started driving and drove until I had found a small gas station and asked where we were and how to get back to my town. With the information, I drove back. I didn't look back at all. Too scared to even check the rearview. All I knew now was I had to get home. And that was where I was headed.

Hayden A. - 16 y/o

Hayden A. - 16 y/o

Michelle M.

11th grade

16 years old

What Happened?

Trying to get away from school and family; Mia decides to go to a weekend party on a yacht in California. She is a college student who has a bad photographic memory. She has long brunette hair which is always in a messy bun, and brown eyes. Her family is so hard on her and is making everything more difficult. She packs her things and takes her meds, and heads out the door. She has her friend; Letty. She has short curly brown hair, and beautiful blue eyes. She is someone who can keep a secret no matter what happens. They knew some people, and a group of people invited them while they were talking in the study hall. Mia and Letty both head out and drive to the beach where the yacht is located.

There they are welcomed by their study hall group and they get onto the boat. Mia and Letty decide to share a room, and they drop their bags off. The room was like a hotel room; a queen sized bed in the middle, a small bathroom to the side, and a mini fridge pushed up against a wall next to the door. A couple of days earlier; there has been some emergency news that there was a prisoner loose. A girl; long blonde hair with dark green eyes. She killed her father when she was only sixteen years old and was sentenced to life in prison. A news alert pops up on Letty's phone. "Look," says Letty as she points to her phone. Mia glances and sees that the killer is in the 20-25 age-range group and was imprisoned far from where they go to their college. One of the party-goers jokingly says; "What if she was on this boat with us?" "Wouldn't that be funny?" Then another girl responded with; "Oh my gosh!" "Dont say that!" everyone calms down and the boat finally moves and is headed out of the bay, headed into the ocean.

The sun begins to set and everything seems great; the music is on, there is food, drinks, and people are swimming; everyone seems to be having fun.

Except Mia: in her room, overthinking. She is on edge, worried her mind is racing; that gut feeling saying that something is wrong: What if the killer is on the boat with us? What if the boat crashes? What if we get lost? What if we get stranded? What if- Letty walks in the room. "There you are, I was wondering where you were." Mia sighed with relief and replied; "Just chilling in here." Letty asked; "Is everything ok?" Mia says; "Yeah, I'm just worried." "What if the killer is on this boat?" Letty stops her. "It could be a one in a million chance that the killer could be on *this* very boat." "Besides, you shouldn't worry; we are here to take our minds off things like that." Mia took a deep breath; "You're right." Letty smiled; "Let's go back to the party." they both head out and walk towards the music. While they are walking out of the room into the hall, Mia hears a muffled scream. "Did you hear something?" Mia says with a quiver in her voice. Letty replies; "yeah." The girls head toward the sound, in the dark hallway. They turn on their flashlights and find a small trickling blood trail. "Oh god... is that-?" Mia says shakily. "Yeah, I think it is." said Letty. "What should we do?" asked Mia. "kind of... I'm tempted to find out." Letty said. The trail led them outside, to the back of the boat; opposite of where the party is at. They hear a loud splash, but was somewhat masked by the loud music. They run to the noise, but it is too late. They find the body sinking to the ocean floor. Only bubbles to occupy its presence. The suspect is gone as well, they might be hiding in plain sight. The girls head back to the party; distressed and anxious. "Should we tell someone?" Mia said to Letty. "No, we don't have enough evidence, and we don't even have a suspect." "Let's gain some more evidence before we get everyone to panic." "Plus people would think that we are trying to pull some prank."

As they are walking back, they hear the boat turn on. Suddenly, the lights flood the whole boat and the engine starts to roar. The music stops and everyone is dead silent. "Someone's in the pilothouse!" The captain shouts. People start to murmur. The boat starts to accelerate, and everyone gets knocked to the boat's deck. Everybody is yelling or screaming and some are helping each other get inside the boat for safety. A while later, the boat's engine sputters, like its out of gas. While Mia and Letty go inside the yacht and help people settle down in their rooms. As they are walking back to their own room, the girls hear a blood-curling scream. Mia, Letty, and some of the worried crowd rush down the stairs and into the hallway where they found the blood trail. A blonde haired girl picks up a bloody, shark tooth necklace. "This was my boyfriend's necklace," she murmured. "We had gotten into an argument and he stormed off into the cabin." Her friends came over and tried to comfort her. Letty encouraged everyone to go into the dining room to sit down and talk, and everybody showed up. A total of 20 people; and one is already dead.

"I had come down here because I was feeling on edge, and my friend Letty came looking for me. As we were walking back to the party, we hear a scream." Letty continued; "we went towards the noise and we noticed a trail of blood, got worried and so we followed it out on to the back of the deck... and then we heard a splash. We ran toward the noise but there was no one there. We looked at the water and there were bubbles, like something or someone had been dropped into the water." Everyone was murmuring to the ones next to them and one finally asked; "If everyone is here, then couldn't the murderer be in this room with us?" People started to argue. "How could we know that the girls explaining this are telling the truth?" "What if the guy who mentioned the murderer is the killer?" "The killer a a female, stupid!" "EVERYONE QUIET DOWN!!!" Mia screamed. "We need to work together and try to make it off this boat if we dont want anymore people to die!" The lights go out, and people start to scream and run to

their friends.. Mia hears footsteps but can't see anyone. "Letty? Where are you?!" Mia shouts. "I'm over here!" "Follow my voice!" Everyone is turning on their flashlights on their phones and start to calm down. "Guys, we need to figure out who the killer is so we can stop them." Mia says. "We could all focus better if we got some sleep." Lets try and stay in one room with one exit, while some people stay up and keep watch." Five guys volunteer to keep watch; two outside the door of the dining room, and three outside; patrolling the deck. "We should try to stay in groups of two or more, to prevent anymore casualties. We need blankets and flare guns for the night." Letty says. People start to split up and most of the group stays in the dinning room, where they are baracading the rest of the doors and windows.

A few hours later, no one returns. One person who was keeping watch shows up to the dinning room covered in blood. He falls to the ground, dead. Behind him was Letty, covered in blood, smiling.

No one ever made it back home. The case went cold, and no one ever knew what happened at that party.

Kavan S.

10/14/22

Mr. Acker

Dove and Peace

A long and hot summer had just passed, and the fall of a leaf soon signified the coming of the decently cold autumn season. The fall seemed to pass by quickly as it was already November 1st, the day after most children's favorite holiday. Houses were covered in Halloween decorations, ranging from toilet paper to deflated blow-up Jack Skellingtons and light-up pumpkins. This was the time of year to party and have fun before the winter chill moved in uninvited.

A knock on the door awoke me from my daydreaming, the door was flung open and a package lay soundly on my front porch. I read the address, Theodore Azrail, 4923 Drywall Court, Denver Colorado, 80033. *Scrape, scrape, claw, scratch, tear.* The package in my hands tore open, packing tape flew across the entryway onto the teal and white tiled floor. The adrenaline rushed through my blood. I usually never received mail, let alone a package. My excited face and rush through my head died in disappointment. I dumped the contents of the package onto the floor, only to find a smaller box containing a plastic contact case, a pair of all-black contacts, and a small bottle of contact solution. I dropped the package on the floor and held the smaller box, A voice inside of my head started to say, 'How boring. What the hell am I gonna do with these?' My head came back down, looking at the packaging. Who would be blind enough to order these? I know my grandfather used contacts but they were never this color. I looked at the prescription, my lip curled and my eyebrow raised.

The prescription had no numbers except for a singular word that stood out to me, Голубь. My head turned as I pulled out my phone, swiping across the screen and pulling up google translate. I attempted to type it into the translator, but it took me a few minutes to find the letters. It automatically went to Russian and my face scrunched. Dove? What does that mean? This translator must be wrong, it can't be. Prescriptions are numbers, not letters. My fingers opened the aluminum in which the contacts were held, reaching into the contact solution and pulling a black-colored contact. It stuck to my finger and I glared at it. Nothing of interest. I grabbed the plastic contact case and filled it with solution, my finger slid it back off the edge and into the clear liquid.

I didn't order this, must've been mailed by mistake. I looked at the packaging for a return address. My eyes scanned all over the box only to find that there was none. I started to walk up the flight consisting of six stairs and onto the carpet floor and into the master bathroom. I curiously looked at the case again, opening it and sticking the contact into my eye. As it cheered my eye, my eyesight seemed to change before it was even on. I blinked and my eyes seemed to water and I looked around. I looked at the mirror and took a deep breath.

My eyes gazed at the man in the mirror. He was tall with black hair and his face was clear as the sun. His cheeks were almost aerodynamic and his scar ran from his neck to the collar. I tried to look at his eyes but it was covered by a single black rectangle covering both eyes. I tried to rub my eyes and move around the rectangle but it followed the man in the mirror. Above his head was a box and in that box was a single phrase, 'Losing their sanity.' I backed up and hit the door behind me, I rushed out of the bathroom and out of the house. My deathly fear, why was it above my head? Must be hysteria, can't be anything else, right?

I walked down the street, the sight of my old, historic street taking away my breath. I saw people out, slowly walking in the direction of the wind. Their eyes were censored out by that black rectangle too, words appeared above their head as well. Spiders...heights...dogs...there were all things people could be afraid of. Speaking of being afraid, I should probably get back home, I'd rather not be stuck alone out in this city. I ran back, my heart thumped rapidly and I took the contacts back out. After hiding them in my backpack I fell onto my bed, my mind was filled with questions. Eventually, my heavy eyelids surpassed these questions and took me into slumber.

I hate waking up in the mornings, it's so draining and it feels like it's the hardest part of the day. I had to drag myself out of bed this morning, my grandparents were still asleep so I had to make myself breakfast, cereal will satisfy me. I put on my usual outfit, sweatpants, and a hoodie, it's not like anyone will judge me for trying to be warm in this god-forsaken weather. I left the old home which was built in the mid-1900s, it looked like it would fall apart any minute. The school I'm attending is 2 blocks away from where I live, it seemed like a mile.

The contacts were back in my eyes after my morning routine, I seemed to be getting used to it. People glared at me in the hallway for some oddly specific reason. Maybe it was because my eyes were completely black now...I should probably take these out so I don't get messed with. Yeah, that'd be a good idea. I took them out of my eyes and into the case, my head picked up after looking down at it and my eyes landed on a girl. She must be my age, at least a junior, beautiful red hair, gorgeous blue eyes, and can't be younger than 16. She seemed strong and

independent, but she was surrounded by so many guys...Specifically, one which I despised greatly.

She turned her head, obviously getting the feeling she was being stared at. Our eyes locked. You could see the sadness and my heart dropped and I couldn't pull away. My head had to be jerked to look down at the ground, my eyes shut tight and my hands curled together. I stood for a minute, turning and starting to walk as a hand landed on my shoulder. I jumped, turning and staring at the one who touched me, surprisingly, it was her. My words jumbled in my head, I tried to speak but I couldn't. She spoke for me.

"Hey, I noticed you staring at me from across the hall. What was that about?" She said, her voice almost like an angel's.

"I just thought... you know- you were somewhat pretty and I couldn't help but stare. I'm sorry about that. I'm Teddy by the way." I chuckled, and my brain started to crumble on itself.

"Don't be sorry, you're a good-looking man yourself but I have a guy I'm talking to. I'd love to be friends though! I'm Mallorie." She replied a smile on her face followed. It seemed like one of those movies, almost a childlike way to become friends. I smiled back and we exchanged numbers, and we walked away from each other, she immediately went to Ronnie Garcia, a popular kid in our class, and hugged him. The man I so disliked, wrapped his arms around her. Jace McLain. It was all the popular kids I disliked, maybe because I wasn't one of them. I put the contacts back in, a rage started to take over me. A wave of anger flushed into my blood as I looked at his greatest fear...Being maimed.

The day at school was wicked, I felt insanely powerful with this new power. Something I never could've imagined in a lifetime. Going home, my eyes were starting to adjust to their

normal state of being out of the unlimited power I could feel with the contacts. Walking into the house, my grandparents impatiently waited for me. My grandmother tapped her foot, raising her eyebrow. They were upset.

"Why didn't you wake us up? We could've taken you to school. This is a terrible neighborhood" She complained, her face showing a sense of worry.

"I didn't want to wake you up. You seemed exhausted" I replied, my hands raised palms upwards. She sighed and shook her head, flicking her wrists as to send me upstairs to do my homework like always. This was the usual case, even when I had no homework.

I ran upstairs and shut my door, my hands shuffled through my backpack to find the contacts. In the bag were folders filled with paper, all the work I have had to do for the past month was piling up. These honors and AP classes were killing me, I wish I could be normal and be in basic classes. My real parents never would've forced me into these classes.

My fingers eventually grasped the case, ripping them out of the clutches of my backpack. My fingers hastily slid them in, and my eyes gazed at the mirror. What did this mean? Why would this still come to me with my name on it? Was this a gift from the above? For me to finally get what I want? Maybe so...maybe not...I stared deep into the mirror, the black rectangle irritating me.

Hours went by and my eyes started to sag, a notebook was filled with ideas and theories as well as studies for this new power. I felt like I was on a cloud, my mind started to slow down and my feet gave out from under me. I felt as if I was being drained...Drained from my soul...Maybe I should take these out an-

*Bloody murder. Horror! Don't hurt me! Save me! Please don't! I love her! Why are you doing this? No! No! No! I beg of you! You sick little-! **Slice, slash, swoosh, shank, stab...***

I awoke in a blur, my face was empty. My body moved electronically, almost as if it had a destiny. I felt my body move through a routine, although adding one additional step. A butcher knife went into the farthest back pocket in my backpack. I don't understand why I did this. It just felt like a necessity. My ribs felt like nothing but an empty cage, a hole in my chest was present, but what was once in that hole?

School became a blur, my face didn't change expression the entire day. Only when I walked up to Jace McClain, did a very large smirk become eminent. I didn't know what I was about to do. I spoke to him, even though I didn't want to, "Jace, I'm having a party at the old motel off of 23rd Street. You wanna come? There will be a lot of fun things. I'm inviting the football team as well, as well as the cheerleaders." I winked, the smirk on my face covering up my true intentions.

"Uh- yeah. I'd love to go. What time is it? And what room? Nice colored contacts, by the way, you look sick with those." He replied, his eyebrows raised. He was interested.

"It's at 11, look for the room with a flower by the door. And thank you, they make me feel different. Also, don't bring your car so we don't seem suspicious and get charged for trespassing." I answered his questions. He nodded and I walked away, the smirk on my face went away. Started to walk away, waving 3 fingers as a quick goodbye and taking my steps. My brain circled, what am I saying?

The day became long and tiresome, it seemed as if hours went by as days. My eyes seemed to weep inside. My contacts were out, but it was as if I was being controlled. I felt as if

my rage had started to exercise more than it needed it. My attitude has started to rise despite how happy I was at times. I am starting to lose control, my mind cannot handle itself.

As time passed, I felt drained. The knife in my bag started to weigh me down, although not physically. The final bell rang and I bolted. I ran home and emptied the school supplies out of my backpack, replacing them with an industrial-size trash bag, rope and zip ties, a fake flower, flex tape, a small crowbar, and Febreze. A sigh escaped under my breath and the backpack slung around my shoulders and I pushed open my grandparent's door. They were asleep again and my eyes proceeded to roll. Out of my backpack, I pulled a notepad and pencil and began to write against the door frame. 'I will be back by one in the morning, I'm heading to my friend's house. Don't worry about me. :)'

By the time I closed the door I checked my phone, it was already 5:30 in the afternoon. I start to walk down the old and forgotten street and my ear buzzed with the sound of traffic, sirens, and dogs barking. My eyes were now fully adjusted to the feeling of the contacts and how they changed my vision. My mentality was still a work in progress, however, I have felt more powerful than ever. I finally knew what I was about to do to this poor and deceived kid, the one that stole her from me and showed him the world of pain he was about to see. I knew he was going to die tonight, now or never I suppose.

By the time I reached the old and recently abandoned motel I stopped and checked my phone again. It was 6:24 in the evening, I knew I had to prepare and think about it but there was not much time left. I started to walk up the stairs toward the second floor of the motel and looked for the least run-down room. The motel had been abandoned for at least a year now and the

graffiti showed that. On the walls and doors were pentagrams, art, and random words. It's amazing how many people use this motel as a canvas for their art. I continued to walk around the open-spaced corridor and stopped at a door. This door was untouched, the graffiti didn't reach this part of the motel. I read the number on the door and pulled out my phone and took a photo of the number and sent it to Jace's Snapchat. He soon replied, 'Room 42, got it.'

I took the small crowbar out of my bag and jammed it in the door where the door knob would turn and began to work the door. I cranked the crowbar back and forth, and eventually, the door gave in and busted open. I flicked on the light switch and to my surprise, the lights still worked. I peered inside the room and viewed the objects inside. It was almost untouched, only a few items being stolen from most likely the last people to reside there. It was obvious the TV was gone as the remote was still on the nightstand, someone must have been in a rush. The pillows and covers were gone from the bed. Everything looked as if it was still where it should be.

I set my bag down by the bed and pulled out the fake flower and set it down on the red carpet floor. I then pulled out the knife and set that on the bed, and I kept the cleaning supplies in my bag. I opened the door and set the flower in front of it. I looked down at my phone after setting it down, it was 6:35. I shuffled my body back inside and shut the door, and fell to my knees. I stayed there for a while, thinking about what I was going to do. I thought about going home and not going with my plan, but it was worth it. I knew that I could win her over with comfort and be with her forever.

I set my alarm for 10:50 and laid on the bed. While on my back I looked up at the ceiling, staring off into space. Eventually, I dozed off. I slept with small visions and tiny dreams, I

continued to hear screaming in those dreams. It wouldn't stop and it was all I could hear until the alarm went off. I awoke in a blaze, flame almost seemed to come out of my nostrils. I accepted it. I let it take control over me. It knows how to lead my life. It can make her mine.

Time passed quickly as 11 PM struck and I grabbed the crowbar and waited behind the door. A few minutes later a knock was heard and I gave the word, "Come in! The party is about to start!" The door began to open and my heart thumped rapidly, a man came through the door and I bashed his head with the crowbar and then shoved him into the wall. He fell and fell limp, the man's face soon came into view. It was Jace McClain.

"Mmgh...Hmph?" Jace's muffled voice wept out and he looked around. He tried to move but he was tied down, both hands and feet were wrapped with rope. A zip tie was around his neck, but not fully pulled tight. His mouth was wrapped in flex tape and sealed shut. I slowly peered from the shadow and stared at him, knife in my left and crowbar in my right hand.

"You know Jace, not everyone likes you. Especially not me. Not to mention being with the girl of my dreams." I said, my face feeling numb. I glared at him with my black eyes, rage filled my mind and the crowbar in my right hand swung to his left knee. A loud but swathed scream was all that could be mustered from him. I then took the knife which was in my left hand and drove it into his left shoulder, rendering it completely useless to him. More muffled screams came out of him, but only to be heard by his, now, angel of death.

I continued to maim Jace, disabling his limbs with my crowbar and knife. Blood swept over the bed and stained it a dark red. I stared at his eyes, the black rectangle stopped me from seeing the pain in his eyes. I finally understood why the contacts forced me to stop seeing others'

eyes. The box with his greatest fear above his head was gone. I finally understood why it showed me his fear, it was to please my every need. Eheheheh! I'm going to love this part...

I started to believe he had enough. It was time to finish the deed. I reached towards his neck, his throat was pulsating, and I pulled the zip tie as tight as I could. I could hear him start to struggle to breathe. I took the knife, that was now in his right hip, and unsheathed it from the skin. I put the knife and pointed the end down at his throat and started to slowly drive into his skin. He tried to scream but was stopped by his struggle to breathe. I finally got the nerve to push it all the way through, a slight jolt in his body was seen but he eventually stopped making noise.

I stared at the body and the rectangle that covered his eyes disappeared. His eyes were wide open and I looked at them intensely, a deep breath coming out of me as I untied him and attempted to shove his body into the trash bag. I eventually got him in there with a bit of force and dragged it towards the bathroom, shoved it inside, locked the door behind me as I left the bathroom, and broke the door knob with the crowbar. I then hastily left the motel room and began to run. I didn't look back. There were no regrets.

By the time I got home, it was already 1 AM when I checked my phone. I quietly entered the house and took out my contacts in the bathroom, hiding the case in my backpack again and immediately going to bed. The smile on my face still stood, I did well.

The next morning, my grandparents didn't even question me. They've never cared about me, especially when my parents died in that plane crash. I left my home rapidly and walked to

school, the smile on my face still kept its place. I did well. My brain was filled with thoughts, my mind continued to replay the death of him and his wide-open eyes. It was very pleasing to me.

I opened my backpack before entering the school, pulling out the contact case and wrapping it in my right fist. Entering the school I immediately headed for Mallorie, she was in tears. The smile on my face faded and I wrapped an arm around her, "Hey, I heard what happened. It'll be okay, just know that it was probably for the better." I looked deep into her eyes, I think she knew.

"No...No! You didn't! You sick, sick...murder!" She yelled and stared back into my eyes. I put the contact case into her hoodie pocket and she ran, I knew exactly what she was about to do.

I stood in the middle of the hallway as people passed by me, I put my hands above my head as the school resource officer came and began to bark commands at me. I complied with a smile and Mallorie looked at me with a feeling of hate and sadness. As I was being pushed out I saw her take the contact case out of her pocket and look at it, she opened it and immediately shut it, putting it back in her pocket and running towards the nearest bathroom.

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I ran into the bathroom, looking into the mirror at my tear-filled eyes. I sobbed for minutes as I pounded my fist at the air in anger, hatred, and sadness. 'Why did he have to do this? I should've never talked to him! This would've never happened if I just kept my mouth shut!' I sobbed and looked at the case he gave me and opened it. The contacts were all black...Why would he use these? I stared at them intensely and looked them over. Why?

My curiosity got the best of me and I stick them in my eyes and exited the bathroom, tears dried up on my face and my cheeks were burning red. I looked around at the people and

their eyes were exiled out. A box appeared above their head...it almost looked like it would be
their greatest fear...

The Goblin who fell in love with a human

Once there was a demon goblin. He had no friends or anyone in his life that cared about him.

His parents abandoned him at birth. His relatives said no to taking care of him. One day he decided to go to a coffee shop.

"Hi," said someone to him that he didn't know. He turned around to see a pretty young girl. She had blonde hair, green eyes, and was wearing a hoodie and jeans with

tennis shoes. "What's your name?" asked the handsome goblin. "My name is Cali," replied the young girl. "My name is phantom," the goblin said. They started dating a month later. They fell in love and got married and had six kids. Their names are: Star, Ari, Molly, Kim, Ethan and Mike. They lived happily ever after.

Lily P

junior // 16 y/o

The woods

There was a friend group of six people all in college. "There were secrets and some secret love in the group." No one knew about a lot of those. There were three couples. There was Ethan and Maddie, Jacob and Anna and the last one was Ryder and Becca. Ethan and Maddie had been together since they were 15 so Jacob and Anna. Anna and Maddie were in fact best friends dating two other best friends. Ironical isn't it so they thought little did those know there were love secrets happening within those 4 and after being with someone for so long and the same thing all the time you need to be with someone new but can separate from that one person.

That is what was happening within these young adults. Finally there was Ryder and Becca. They were the cutest power couple but their love was real and they were with each other because they really loved each other. They have been together since they were 17 when she was a waitress and he went to her restaurant in her area just to see her and talk to her. It was like love at first sight. The guys have all been bestfriends since middle school so have the girls which made them seem so cute and iconic. But there was only one person old enough to buy liquor for them when they let loose and partied. You see they were all top of the class students and had the best attendance and they were the perfect students. Although on the weekends and breaks they loved to go to parties even if

it was just the six of them and they sat there and drank just them and danced in the living room they made the best out of it. But without that one person to buy the drinks they couldn't party like they do. That one person is Ethan. They had to make sure they never got caught because everyone else was 20 and not the legal age. For halloween they always went to parties but ethan came up with the idea of going camping and drinking by the campfire this year. Everyone Agreed to go but maddie, she had experienced paranormal while camping in the past with her family the only person that knew about it was ethan. She did not wanna go, but the rest of the group voted her out. So that day they all got up and started to pack for the big trip maddie was dreading.

Door slams "AHAHA" "Calm down babe it is ok stop being so scared."

Eathan says to Maddie ``Well i'm sorry that i've been seeing things and am scared maybe you should be comforting your girlfriend instead making fun of her!" Maddie says obviously mad. Ethan took a deep breath "Youre right im sorry I shouldn't be making you feel bad im sorry" "Its ok let's keep packing" They sit in silence for about 5 minutes Maddie says quietly mumbling something "What did you say" "Nothing it was nothing" "Please tell me I wanna help you." "I don't wanna do this it gives flashbacks can i just stay home?" "I know it does but we can't let you stay home all weekend and be sad and scared. Come one it won't be bad you will be ok you got me and your best friends." She looks down and mumbles "You're right let's go I got this." "That's right, let's do this and have an awesome weekend." "Ok" They finish packing and start going out to the car as

Ethan starts to drive away and they hear a phone ringing "I will get it babe"

Maddie says "Oh its Anna hey friend whats up?" Maddie says "Not much just wondering how many cars were we bringing and are you guys picking me and Jacob up or are we

taking our own car?" "uh idk let me ask ethan." you hear a muffled conversation "babe are they taking their own care or are we getting them?" "Uh, we will get them there at 10 but tell them to bring the money for the drinks so we can stop and get them." "Ok hey so we are getting you in about 10 minutes then when we get drinks then we will head out and Becca and Ryder will meet us at the store" "Ok friend bye!" "Bye friend!"

The phone hangs up They pull up to Annas and Jacobs apartment *HONK HONK* "BABE why would you honk?" Maddie says laughing "To tell them to hurry up." *HONK HONK* They come out carrying their bags "Oh shut up ethan!" Anna yells at ethan. They get in the car and they are having a normal conversation and messing around with each other. "The group's favorite song "Sweet Caroline" played and everyone started singing and dancing". Ethan takes his eyes off the road for 2 seconds as he goes in kissing maddie he looks back and he's about to go head on with another car. He swerves to avoid crashing with the other car. Everyone in the car is holding onto something and screaming. They swerve off the road and he slams on his brakes. They all stop yelling and are sitting there scared waiting for someone to say something. No one did till they started driving again and about 5 minutes down the road Maddie said gently "Is everyone ok?" Everyone said yes as they pulled into the store's parking lot. Eathna stops the car "Jay let me see that money so I can go in you guys wait for Becca and Ryder." "Ok everyone says" He leaned over to kiss Maddie "Would you stop, that's what almost just killed us god eahan!!" Anna says aggravated "would you calm down dude it's not that big of a deal." As Ethan shuts his door and walks off. "I'm sorry about him guys, he's been weird and I have been seeing things and do not wanna go tonight. I have a bad feeling about his whole trip." "It's ok maddie we get it." Anna says holding Jay's hand

“yeah mads we get it you're ok let's just try to have some fun and make it a good halloween.” “Ok i agree”

They sit there for about a 2 min span till Becca and Ryder pull up next to them. They start honking at each other as Athena walks out as this is happening everyone's mood changes they act like nothing ever happened which was good . “Hey E” Ryder says as he dabs Eathna up “Sup bro you ready for this weekend?” “Of course I am, how much did you get?” “A 24 packs of beer and a bottle” “Nice let's get going” Ryder sudjusted. They all get in the cars and start driving. They were following Ethan until he didn't know where he was going. They were just driving up a nearby mountain till they found a spot they could camp at. Maddie was clinging to the handle of the door. She didn't like the fact they didn't know where they were and they already almost crashed and she knew the further they went up the mountain the less signal they had. In that moment as all these thoughts are running through her mind she goes and says questionable “Babe do you even know where we are going?” “Why would I doubt my sense of direction?” As he says that he takes a sharp fast turn out the path that was out of nowhere. They all grab onto the handles of the doors. “They all start laughing “See i know where i'm going i knew i was looking for this path.” “Sure you did bud” Jacob says sarcastically “Hey shut up Jay do you remember how you drove when we were 16 and you just got your license?” The girls start laughing and jays sitting there trying not to laugh “Shut up E but yeah you right.” “See!” They start walking down this little trail a couple of feet away “Ethan where are we going this looks scratchy.” Maddie says the deeper in the trail they got the more gloomy it got and the leaves started to look more dead the more they went in. It was like one part of the woods was alive and after a certain part was dead. “Our camping spot...see it's

coming up right now.” They walk up to this flat ground with leaves fallen on the ground dead.

They all set their things down and start looking at the spot. “E where are we? This is really kinda creepy.” Jay says worried “Dude calm down its ok you guys are wusses come on let's start looking for sticks to light for fire.” “Babe you didn't even bring things for a fire really?” Maddie says aggravated “Nowhere camping we gotta find the materials and use them and build the fire come on lets go lets split up.” All the guys ended up splitting up and the girls went together and the guys went together. The guys were messing around and then out of nowhere the girl screamed from the boys to come help and look at something. “Oh my god there screaming what is so bad they need us that bad to scream?” Jay says aggravated “What do you guys need?What is so bad-... oh my god..” The rest of the guys catch up to the rest of the group and they all are looking down at the ground at a circle of odd objects. There was a bloody cow skull sitting there with a makeshift shive with a jar of powder, a star drawn with the blood,there was a set of jewelry, a beautiful necklace,bracelet, and ring. The set of jewelry had specs of blood on them had a turquoise jewel with blood. It wasn't old, it was fresh blood. At this point maddie is pissed she loses it “ ARE YOU KIDDING ME I DIDNT EVEN WANNA GO TO THIS DUMB TRIP AN DNOW WE SEE THESE IM NOT STAYING LET'S GO!! NOW ETHAN HERNANDEZ!!” “Ethan if you're with us really tell us if not we need to know.” Anna says as becca agrees with Anna and Maddie “You guys need o calm the hell down you guys are frackng out over nothing it was brobly some dumb kids see i will touch it.” As soon as Ethan says that he leans down to pick up the cow skull. He picks it up and stands up. “Eathan get that thing away from you you don't know where it's been

and what it was used for.” Maddie says as she is saying this Ethan turns around and jumps scares everyone with the mask being held up to his face while he screams. Jay and Ryder are laughing at the girls for screaming. “Ha good one E” “yea good one” The 2 other boys exclaim. “That's it. We're leaving. You guys can stay here and play with the weird wooden toys but we are leaving. The girls start to walk off “You guys come back you guys are being dramatic.” They fully ignore the boys and keep walking. They walk to the cars and all 3 sit there in silence. The boys walk up and they are carrying the things there that were a small stack of things that looked like photos. Their faces looked completely changed and they didn't seem so happy anymore. Maddie gets worried “what's that in your hand babe that wasn't there when we all were over there?” “Guys come on, let's look.” “here..” He says quite they look at the pictures and they are incomplete shock when they look at it to see a ritual happening to a pregnant woman. Written on the back of the photos it says “When the gods demand new pure fresh blood we give the gods what they want” Then and very disturbing pictures on the back of the second one it is the girl that died she is sleeping on the back it says “I stock my prey..the fresh pure pray.” They drop the pictures and Maddie says in a shaky voice “You guys..we are on ground where a ritual was..what are we going to do?” they all sit there in disbelief. “WE LEAVE UNLESS YOU GUYS WANNA DIE LET'S GET MOVING!!!” Jay yells at everyone. The guys start getting the big things and throwing the bags in the back of the car. The girls are in the car freaking out “ ETHAN THE CAR WONT START!” “WHAT DO YOU MEAN IT'S NOT STARTING?!” He rushes over and tries to start the car but it will not start “RYDER! START YOUR CAR!” “OK E!” They try it for a moment. Then it slowly dies. They keep trying it and it won't start. “OH MY GOD WHAT DO WE DO?!” Maddie exclaims.

They all sit there in shock and frustration and trying to think of what they are going to do. Ethan sits down and sighs. By him sighting down everyone else took that as a sign they were not leaving. They all sat down or kneeled down as they all did that Ethan mumbles "Call someone" "What E?" "That's it call someone and tell them our issue and we are stuck or try to call the cops or a tow truck they gotta be able to help us." Ethan says like a lightbulb went ding above his head "On it" Rhyder says rhyder starts to dial a tow truck company it doesn't even know it cuts off and hangs up. "What the hell!" "What babe?" "It didn't even ring, it went straight to hanging up. I'm going to call back." And once again it does the same thing it doesn't ring. "IT WONT RING WERE SCREWED!" "Rhyder shut up dude there is no point in yelling we all know we are screwed!" Jay says frustrated. Maddie gets up and goes and sits in the car mad. Anna yells "Mad, where are you going?" no replies "Bro you better go check on her she looks pissed." "you will go do that." Ethan gets up to go walk to the car he tries to open the driver side door but it's locked. "Oh my god you have to be kidding me..Mads open up the door, let's talk about this it's not that big of a deal come on." He starts to say in frustration *CLICK* The car door unlocks and he opens it while he lets out a sigh. "Mads, what's going on with you? You have been so uptight about coming with the group. Is there something you're not telling me? I'm worried about you." She starts tearing up and looks out her window to Jay and looks down in disappointment to herself. "Maddie why did you look at him..is there something I don't know you have to talk to me about?" She mumbles "there's something I'm hiding from you Ethan and you're not going to like it but I can't tell you around everyone... ok we will talk when we get home." "No now i wanna know now if it's going to ruin the whole trip." She starts shaking and she burst out into tears " I didnt even want

to come on this dumb trip i never wanted to come i had a bad feeling about this whole thing and then there is the guilt i have on my chest that yo hav eno idea about and its killing me inside..I dont wanna be here god dammit and i dont you to see youa nd jay so happy becuase then i see what kinda friendship im ruining..” She looks down and keeps sobbing. You can see on ethans face that he was connecting the dots. He looked puzzled then his face went blank when he found out what she had meant. He starts laughing “No you didnt you wouldn't do that to me neither would he... you're kidding with me right?” She looks at him and tries to grab his hand “I'm so sorry babe it just happened I didn't mean for this to happen I never meant to hurt you but the feelings keep growing and growing and I couldn't ignore them anymore so we sleep together and we have been together for about months...” He snatches his hand away and looks at Jay with a pit of rage. “I can't believe you after all I've done for you. I picked you over my family.im not even sad because I knew you were like this since we were in highschool and you slept with him the first time at junior prom.” “Babe I didn't mean to!” “DIDN'T MEAN TO DO WHAT? HUH SLEEP WITH MY BEST FRIEND!? ARE YOU KIDDING ME DUDE WERE DONE THAT'S IT!” “Babe wai-” **CAR DOOR SLAMS** Jay knew exactly why he was mad as Ethan walks over to Jay with a strait anger look “Dude i'm sorry i never meant to hurt you she threw herself at me and- Before Jay can even finish his sentence Ethan walks up to him and right hooks him “HOW COULD YOU JAY YOU ARE MY BEST FRIEND THATS MESSED UP DUDE!” “I can't even look at you guys.” Ethan storms off to the woods into the forest of trees. Anna is sitting there in silence. She looks at Jay and slaps him “You're such a dog I knew you were cheating on me!” She walks off to the other car and she fully ignores Maddie. They all sat there in complete disbelief of what just happened. After a good 5 minutes of silence Ryder gets

up and says "Ok we need to put all of this aside because as of right now it's getting darker and we need lights and we need to figure out what we are going to do." They all nod and agree with him. The two girls get out of the cars and start helping unpack all of the other things. As Maddie is going to unpack hers and Ethans tent and goes to set it up she asks in "Where has Ethan come back yet?" "Nope he hasn't come back" Rhyder says "Ok we gotta look for him." "Nomads were not looking for him. That forest is huge and we will get lost." "So what are we just supposed to let him stay out there in the dark?!" "Yes maddie we are he walked off that was his choice not ous." Jay jumps in and sits there in complete silence. They hear branches crunching into little pieces and here someone walking "Guys i think that's Ethan but just in case be quiet" Jay says they sit there all silent Then there is Ethan walking out of the bushes ``There you are!" Maddie yells she tries to go hug him but he has a terrified look as if there was something behind everyone "What is it E? Jay asks. "Get in the cars you guys now!" What are you talking abo-." As Jay says that he turns around and he sees a group of people who all have black clothes on as he turns around he gets shot right in the abdominal area with an arrow. The guys try to run over the people and the girls help Jay to the cars. By the time the guys ran towards the people they disappeared into thin air. "WHAT THE HELL WHAT THAT!" Jay ylls out while they all drag him into the car "We gotta get help right now guys!" Ryder says "Ok let's go and see if we can walk and find help" Maddie says in distraught. "Ok Jay do you want someone to stay here with you?" No I'm ok mads you all go get me help." They all leave and lock the doors for Jay. The whole time they are in silence they are walking down the mountain hill and Becca stops. "Babe we don't have time to stop , we gotta go.. BABE!" She won't respond if there was a cliff across the road she starts walking towards it. "BABE STOP! WHAT IN THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?!" She look back hers eyes

are black she is on the edge of the ledge "This is only the start of the flock dieing the purest will be the one sacrificed." As she says this she takes the last step off the cliff. They all run for her "NOOOO!!" They all scratch out in fear. They catch Ryder before he falls off the cliff with her. They all look away, they look back and she is face up with a tree limb sticking through her torso as when she fell she was punctured in her rib cage. They sit there in silence and sobbing "Lets go we gotta still find help." They all start walking again by now it is pitch black they can't really see each other they all were holding hands to know where everyone was. "There is no point in walking anymore there is no one around here and we left Jay. Let's just go back, there is no point." Maddie says "No, if we go back he will die without help" Anna replies back with "Both of you stop, let's keep moving." Ethna says frustrated As they keep walking Rhyder feels Anna's hand slipping out of his "Anna stop play around keep your hand with mine we can get lost then *SWOSH* Her hand is ripped out of his hand "ANNA WHERE DID YOU GO?" "DUDE WHERE DID SHE GO RHYDER?" "I DONT KNOW E" "YOU GUYS SHE WILL BE OK LET'S GO GET SOME HELP, ADN LETS DO IT FAST!" They keep walking *THUD* There went the rider's hand but it felt different. It wasn't going right, left, to the front, or the back it went down "RHYDER!!" "WHAT MADDIE WHAT HAPPENED." HIS HAND IT FELT LIKE HE WENT DOWN LIKE HE FELL OR GOT DRUG DOWN!" "We have to keep going, let's go, Mads , let's go back to the cars. There is no point, you were right, let's go." They start walking back, they start joking with each other and it seemed like they were ok and like they were not mad no more "Maddie can i ask you something?" "Sure what's up?" "When did we stop loving me?" "I never stopped, I just loved 2 people at once" "Oh ok" They walk in silence the rest of the way till they see the lights from the car's headlights and the camping lights are packed.

“Finally, where is her?” Maddie says in relief.” As they are walking up holding hands they see the car door was open. There was a trail of blood next to an imprint on the ground of 4 bodies like they were dragged. “Oh my god that the hell is that!” “I don’t know if Mads just stays close to me.” As they follow the blood trails and boddie imprints they come up to the front of the cars with 4 trees around them that weren’t there before. They look up there they all are pinned to the trees with the branches stabbing through their hands and feet that is the only thing holding them up with a carving on their body everywhere it is a sorta star symbol with horns on it “OMG THEY’RE ALL DEAD!! ETHAN WHAT DO WE DO!?” “I DON’T KNOW MADS!! JUST KNOW I LOVE YOU WITH EVERYTHING I HAVE!” As Ethan proceeds to say this she looks at him he sees 2 hands being placed on her shoulders and she looks terrified with tears in her eyes as she whispers “Help me” Then shantch she gets snatched into the darkness. “Why are you doing this, take me instead, let me have her back, let her go take me instead of her!” There is a whisper in his ear with hand being placed on his shoulder. “When the gods demand new pure fresh blood we please the gods.” As he hears this Maddie gets thrown onto a tree and pinned up. All their necks snap and all their limbs snap in odd ways they shouldn’t go. “Run boy run!” A woman’s voice whispers into his ear. He tries to start the car once more and this time it works. He reverses as fast as he can; he whips out and dives as fast as he can down the mountain. As he is speeding he is seeing eyes and faces in the trees. He thinks to himself “Am i hallucinating what’s happening to me?!” He races to the nearest police station. He doesn’t even mind parking the car, then drives into the parking lot and stops mid parking lot. He rushes in the station like his life depended on it which it did. “HELP HELP I NEED HELP!!” A police officer punches him “Son calm down, explain to me what’s happening.” “No I can’t explain, I need you and 3 other car

cops to follow me with an ambulance NOW LET'S GO!!" They listen to Ethan and they start following him as he speeds up. They arrive at the crime scene "SEE OFFICER I TOLD YOU LOOK WHAT HAPPENED-" He get cut off right away "Son backup i need you to get on your knees and put your hands in the air and keep them where i can see them." "WHAT DO YOU MEAN I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING THERE WERE THESE PEOPLE THEY DID ALL OF THIS AND-" "SON I SAID ON YOUR KNEES NOW OR I WILL TAZE YOU!!" "BUT-" That is when he was tased at that point he couldn't remember what happened he woke up in a cell "Where am i?" "Well kid youre awaiting trial for the murder of youre friends." "But I didn't do it, you saw the evidence!" "No kid you did it, we know you did till then you will await trial." From that day it took about a week for him to get a trial and he got convicted with all the charges. He was sentenced to 236 years in prison. Until he was found dead in a cell sacrificed the same way his friends were.



Spooky Story Contest

4 messages

From: Aide
To: Security Public Library <spl@wsd3.org>

Mon, Oct 24, 2022 at 2:36 PM

Spooky short story

By Aiden Barr

It was day 175 and still no sign of an end. For the last almost year I have been trying to survive. No one knows how it started and no one knows if it will end. It was just then that I heard the hiss of a vampire but I didn't know how close it was all I knew was that if I didn't get out of this warehouse quickly then I would be this vampire's next meal. So I tried to sneak out of the warehouse through the roof and I was about to climb down into the street but there were vampires EVERYWHERE. So I just ran into the woods, I ran as fast as my legs could take me but I could hear them all close behind me so I ducked down behind a tree and covered myself in mud to try and mask my scent. I squeezed myself into a small cave-like structure and hoped they wouldn't find me. I waited there for a while and finally, they all left but my relief didn't last long because soon after I left the place where I was hiding I heard a bone-chilling scream that echoed throughout the sky. The scream sounded far away I just didn't know how far so I just kept walking and I walked for a while trying to find any other survivors. As I was walking I thought I heard someone else walking close to where I was so I started walking in the direction of where I heard someone else but they started running so I started chasing them but I realized it wasn't a "them" at all, it wasn't even human. I stopped running after I encountered a wolf carcass and flies all over it, the stench was rancid and I almost didn't see the VAMPIRE sitting in the tree. I ran and ran and ran and I didn't stop running until I knew the vampire was

gone but little did I know that the vampire was hopping from tree to tree and that's why I couldn't hear it so I stopped running but that was my mistake because they vampire jumped on top of me... and now I'm a vampire too.

This is a student email account monitored by Widefield School District. The contents of this email are governed by state laws and the board policies of the school district.

Library, Security Public <spl@wsd3.org>
To: "Barr, Aiden" <BarrAiden-100@wsd3.org>

Mon, Oct 24, 2022 at 3:34 PM

Hi Aiden!

Please provide your age/grade as well as a phone number to reach you at

[Quoted text hidden]

Barr, Aiden <BarrAiden-100@wsd3.org>
To: "Library, Security Public" <spl@wsd3.org>

Fri, Oct 28, 2022 at 5:56 PM

might be too late but its Aiden Barr 9th grade and I don't have a phone so its my moms 540-538-0822

[Quoted text hidden]

Library, Security Public <spl@wsd3.org>
To: "Barr, Aiden" <BarrAiden-100@wsd3.org>

Sat, Oct 29, 2022 at 9:09 AM

Not too late!! Thank you for the information! We look forward to reading your story :)

[Quoted text hidden]

Name: Shannon e-W:

Age: 17

Grade: 12

Date: Tuesday, September 27, 2022

Address: , security, 111111

The Ghost Boy

It was a warm morning in Albany, New York. Here is a mother and her only son at home. As every morning goes by, she wakes him up, tries to get him dressed, and out the door to go to daycare before she has to head downtown for work.

"Oh, Alex!" His mother said warmly. When hearing no response she walked into his room and turned on the light, "It's time to get up darling." Alex turned and put his head on the pillow and gave a grumpy Goran.

"Noo...it's bright..." Alex said, wrapping up in his warm bed coverings.

"But Alex, you get to go to daycare today and play with all of your friends today!" pulling down his covers she picked up her small boy.

"Mommy I don't wanna go!" It's Wednesday morning, and this meant he had to go to daycare. As a single mother, she was forced to work two jobs leaving him at the daycare all day,

"Common Hunny..you went yesterday and loved it remember?"

"No! I don't wanna go!!" Alex protested, kicking and fighting the entire morning. He would not eat, talk or even walk without fighting.

Somehow his mother dressed him in his jeans and t-shirt with a warm jacket. She put him in the car and buckled him into his car seat. put his shoes on, all despite his fighting. The whole way Alex cried and protested yelling things like;

"I wanna stay with you."

"I don't like it there"

"I wanna stay with you, mommy..."

"please I'll be good!"

Despite his cries, his mother continued driving. When they arrived, she let him out of the car and signed him in. He continued to throw a tantrum begging her not to leave him there.

"You'll have so much fun the ladies will take care of you as always Hunny," she said sweetly. "I'll pick you up at four like always, I promise," she walked out of the door not looking back.

Alex cried more and more. The ladies took him to the other kids. His friends sat by the dollhouse and called him over with joyful expressions. Before Alex knew it he was happy-go-lucky and forgot all about his separation anxiety. An hour passed, and the ladies summoned the children over.

"Children! Let's go," she called out to the kids. "Put on your coats, we're going outside to play!" One by one the kids lined up, grabbed their coats and headed outside.

"Don't go out without one of us" The ladies opened the door allowing the kids onto the playground. Alex ran over to the slide and waited his turn, but when he got to the top he suddenly felt a pain in his chest. It was like nothing he had ever felt before. He yelped in pain, grabbed onto the bar and held his chest tight. He tried to call out but only small gasps came out. The last thing Alex heard before passing out was the children yelling and calling for the daycare ladies.

When Alex woke he was still in the playground on the slide, He climbed down and looked around, there was no one there. He called out for one of the ladies but got no response. Then he called for his friends, but it was no use. There was no one. Just then he remembered what the ladies always said;

"Don't go outside unless there's an adult with you." Quickly Alex got up and went inside, but yet again there was no one there. He looked around and looked at the clock.

"Mommy said she would pick me up at four...but...I can't read the clock" He went to sit by the dollhouse where his mother had left him that morning and waited. An hour passed, and Alex started to cry. He didn't understand why his mother was not there for him, so he got up and went outside hesitantly. After all, kids were not to go outside without an adult. Once he went outside, he began to walk home. He remembered the way he went every day going home. Down the big street, turn to the right, take another turn to the right, and he was home.

When he got to his house there was a police car at the house and a black one too.

"Cop cars! cool!" not understanding what was truly going on Alex went inside the house. When he entered the kitchen he saw his mother at the table with an officer. One of the ladies was from the daycare. His mother was crying. Confused Alex went over to her trying to get his mother's attention.

"At 10:34 am Alex went into cardiac arrest due to Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy," said the officer. However, this only made the mother cry more.

"Mommy..?" He tried to grab her. "Mommy I'm right here!" but she didn't respond or even show a sign he was there.

"Mommy... Mommy, please!" Alex started to cry along with her however she did not respond.

"Alex Gray was pronounced dead at 11:01 am by paramedics...they were unable to get there in time to save him... I'm sorry for your loss" said the officer. Soon after, they left, and his mother sat on the kitchen floor crying. Alex had given up.

"Mommy.. don't you see me? I'm right here...Mommy, please! Mommy..."

Fin

This isn't an ordinary story... This is a story about how a group of friends got lost in a corn maze.

It's a cloudy day with light precipitation, 3 friends were all going out to eat dinner for someone's birthday. One friend is going to the bathroom until they decide they want to stop and look at the advertisements listed on the wall by the bar. She walked back over to her friends and said "Hey, let's do one of these things tonight. We have mini golf, corn maze (extra spooky), and drive in movies." All the friends stood there in silence looking at each other until they decided they wanted to reply with corn maze. "Corn maze" they all said at the same time.

"Oh! Okay" she said while walking back to the bathroom. The rest of the friends got up and left 60 dollars left on the table. The girl walks back and they're all gone, she walks outside to see them putting stuff in the car. She looks at them confused then hops in the driver seat and takes the rest of the friends to the maze. The car ride was quiet the rest of the time. No music, not a sound in play.

As they are driving over she says "do we wanna stop and get some drinks". One friend blurts out "YES" and the rest of them stay quiet. They pull up to a trashy convenient store. The car was still very quiet.

"Okay guys stop freaking me out. Why are y'all so quiet? Y'all planning my death or something." All the friends chuckled and said "no? haha ur funny"

Soon they get all their drinks and continue for the next 15 minute drive to the maze. They get out and the girl goes up, buys all the tickets for the group. The rest of the friends stay behind. They all take about ten minutes to get back up and enter the maze with her.

They start going through the maze, having fun, giggling. Until they hear a chainsaw and dont think much of it because its a spooky corn maze. More and more noises start to show up.

"Hey guys? Dont you think thats a bit too much screaming?"

No response. She turns to her side and sees a guy in a mask. "Hello little girl"

She runs out of fear, hearing what she thought were her friends behind her. She slowly starts to walk fast and faster. She sees one of her friends around her and no one else. "Where did they go?!?!" she said. "Oh they're just a little behind, it's okay." says the friend. Soon the girl gets to the end of the maze and realizes none of her friends are around her. She starts to freak out then sees people in the distance. She runs towards them to notice it was her friends. They all look at her and smirk. "Its your turn" all the friends say. From that day on we have no idea what happen to that girl.

I'm Not Dead

(By: Gabe Ni...)

"I'M NOT DEAD!!!" I screamed with fear, I could not see, temporarily anyway, and I was in shock from my nightmare the previous night. I forced myself up, and my legs were shaking as if there was an earthquake. Remembering I had to attend a funeral later that day, I began getting ready for my day and made some coffee for the road. As I get into my car, I wonder why I am even going to this funeral and get a sick feeling in my stomach. I had rarely even talked to my Great-Uncle Jim and only at family reunions I ever saw him. "Ugh" I thought to myself, I had forgotten my wallet, I planned to buy more coffee on my way to the funeral. "I'm so addicted" I thought as I drove back home, I had barely even left my neighborhood, but my first coffee was already gone, I felt like I needed coffee to stay alert and alive. Once I returned home, grabbed my wallet and left my house for the second time I pulled up to the local coffee shop which was booming with business lately.

There was a huge crowd there and I just decided to leave without a coffee, I didn't have time to wait that long. I saw the funeral had almost started and I parked and went to my closest cousin who was hanging out alone, drinking beer. "At least I'm not addicted to that", I thought to myself. "Hey Ben", he said to me and offered me a beer. Feeling tired and drained of will power to make the smarter choice, even knowing I had to drive back home I took it and we chatted until the funeral had officially started. Before the burial began, while my great-uncle's closest friends and relatives were giving their speeches, I went to my car to leave. I didn't have the energy to stay awake during the whole thing. As soon as I left the parking lot, I knew it was a bad idea for me to drive myself home, but I decided to go against my common sense anyway and began driving. Once I pulled onto the freeway of what was supposed to be a peaceful drive home, all I saw was another car about to make a head on collision with me. I realized I

ran the red light and felt like an idiot right before I heard the glass break, and my eyes felt an immediate stinging.

I could not open my eyes, my heart started beating very fast as I felt tons of weight on me, like I was being crushed between 2 walls colliding slowly. I could not get up, and I lost consciousness hearing the sirens of an ambulance or police car. I woke up realizing I was alive, I yelled out in joy, "I'm not dead!!!". I saw nothing but darkness. "That was odd", I thought, "I should be in a hospital or something". "I'M NOT DEADDD" I yelled, starting to get very scared and wanting to know what was going on. I heard voices above me, "He will be missed", said someone, so faint the voice was unrecognizable. My eyes opened widely as I realized I was at another funeral, except this time I was the one being buried. "I'MMM NOOOTTTT DEAADDD", I screamed with all the power in my lungs, to no avail.

The Clown costume

A family with a young boy just moved into a new home. The new house was old, creepy, and run down. The 10-year-old boy named Jack went inside first. Jack had gone into the basement at the bottom of the stairs, and at the corner of his eye, he saw a clown costume. The clown costume looked like it had holes in it and smelled bad. Jack stared at it until his dad called him so Jack ran upstairs to see what his dad called him for. Jack's dad told him that the clown was a person who was a murderer who would go to birthday parties and kill the family when they are sleeping but some kids had killed him with a drill that had razor-sharp drill bits. Jack was running upstairs to see what was going on when he got there his dad told him to go help his mom. Later that night when Jack was falling asleep he saw a clown standing there at the corner of the room.

He quickly got up as fast as he could and turned on his lamp to see there was nothing there.

Jack turned off his light and went back to sleep. It was 1:10 Am when Jack felt something breathing behind him. Jack screamed and his parents rushed in to see what Jack was screaming about. When they got there they saw Jack with holes around his bed. Jack's parents freaked out and called the cops. The cops had come and searched the building but the only thing they can find is a clown nose. Jack's parents took him out of the house and decided to sleep in a hotel until the police found out how and what happened. Later that night Jack had woken up to go to the restroom when he saw washing his hands he saw the clown right behind him. Jack got out of the restroom as quickly as he could to wake up his parents when he got outside he found his parents with holes in them and bleeding. The clown grabbed Jack and dragged him back into his layer Police arrived to tell Jack and his parents that it was okay to go back to the house.

The police opened the door to see Jack's parents dead on the bed. The police had gathered a search party to find Jack in the morning. when everybody arrived to help find Jack someone had found a cave with signs saying "STAY OUT DO NOT GO IN" The person called everybody to come to the cave. The police went inside and found skeletons of people, as well as kids' bones. The police went further and further up that's when they saw the clown over Jack's body. Jack lying there then the clown disappeared. The cops ran over to Jack to see if he was alive but it was a trap. The clown trapped and killed everyone.

Murderville Masquerade Night

Hi, You must be the reader of my story; You might wanna know some stuff about me since you are going to hear a lot about me and my life well how my life ended and I got revenge. My name is Kaiya Presas and I'm a 17-year-old senior girl who gets invited to Prom by my best friend or so I thought. .. Moral of the story I woke up in the middle of the woods with no idea how I got there. Well enough, chit chat let's get into it .

journal Entry - 12-28-2006

Hey it's me Nick Huges. I have a date to prom. Her name is Kaiya. She is really pretty and I want her to be mine .I want to do things that people in relationships do. I'm gonna get my way even if she doesn't want to , but that's beside the point. I'm getting ready for Prom; I'm surprised that she said yes but I'm happy to see her . Her eyes sparkle in the light . Her smile is perfect. Her hair smells amazing. I wish I could have some to hug every night .

Kaiya's Diary Entry 12-28-2006

Dear Diary , Nick asked me to prom in front of my entire marching band team . It was super cute . He is known as an outcast but not a bad person at all. He is just a little different .I have had a crush on him since 7th grade but I just don't want to ruin our friendship . I'm wearing a lilac dress. He is wearing a lilac shirt under his suit . My hair is gonna be curled . He said that my hair smells perfect.. weird but I think he is just complimenting me .

He arrives at her house and knocks on the door, "Hey beautiful, are you ready ?" Nick says . " I'm so excited to be coming with you to prom. Do you have your mask?" Kaiya states . What a mask ." He says nervously . Your masquerade mask that's the prom theme . She is confused . " Oh um .. Yea I have one in my trunk . He states.

The pair arrives. H opens the door for her to get out of the car . "did you get your mask ? " she says . " Oh no, let me grab it . " he says . He opens the trunk and grabs a mask . She glances over to the trunk and sees some weird things like gloves , tarps , an ax, a machete , acid , cleaner professionals use to clean up blood, and many clothes. She thought nothing of it, maybe he uses it for work little does she know it's not.They walk in and take pictures, They sit at their seats and talk . " How are you tonight?" she says . I'm good... great with you . princess . " he says . Do you wanna dance ?" she asks him hoping he will say yes . " Um sure, " he says .They make their way to the dance floor . " What do you want to do after this ? " He asks . " Um i dln't know what you would like to do ." she says . Before he can answer her phone rings ... the message , **Are you staying the night at his house tonight ?** " Oh my mom texted .. she asked if i'm staying at your house tonight . " she asked him . " He replied with , " If you want to, I would love it if you stayed over. You can stay over the weekend and I can drive us to school on Tuesday since there is no school monday . . " Oh okay I will then let me just text her back. " She sends the message , **Yea mom im gonna stay at his house over the weekend can you drop clothes off to his mom .** " I just texted her and asked if she could drop clothes off to your mom . " she said . " Okay that's cool there friends anyway . " he said . They danced for a while until he said , " Can we go? It's kinda boring. " not knowing that she is having a great time . " Oh um yeah sure . I just need to go to the bathroom . " As she began to walk away he grabbed her wrist tightly . " NO WHERE ARE YOU GOING . " he said rudely to her . " I'm going to the bathroom . " she said . She thought nothing of him grabbing her arm . After she gets out of the bathroom they get in the car and begin to drive to his house. At least that's what Kiyah thinks .

They drive and he takes a turn . " Where are we going? This isn't the way to your house.?" said Kaiya . " Oh um, I wanna show you something . Maybe we can even drink a little . " Nick replied . " Oh I'm down .. do you have anything to drink tho . " she said in a slightly confused voice . " Yea its all in my trunk i have had it ready for you for a while . " He said weirdly . " What do you mean it's all in your trunk and you have had it ready . Kaiya said, confused . " Oh um i bought the stuff for drinks the day after you said yes to prom. " he said . " OMG that's so cute Um i mean nice" kaiya said trying to act cool and not like a complete idiot .. trying not to show her feelings for him . Even though she has been calling him LOVE all night . They arrive at the park in front of the woods and get out . " You can just go sit down and I'll bring the drinks . " okay love . " Kaiya says . As she walks to one of the swings he goes in the trunk . He grabs two solo cups and pours sprite and alcohol in one and just sprite in the other . He poured a white powder in the cup with alcohol . He walks towards Kaiya . " Hey beautiful, how are you doing? " Nick says . " Hi love, I'm good, what about you? " said Kaiya . He handed her the cup. They drank their drinks and talked and flirted for a while , " Nick, I really like you but I don't want to mess up our relationship as friends . " said Kaiya . Nick answered " I really like you too so what do you want to do about it? " " I wanna take things slow okay . " she said . He told her that he was okay with that . "Hey let me show you something . " Nick said " Okay let's go, " said Kaiya . They walk to the top of the play gym and they look at each other and then he says , " Look at the moon " he says . " It's beautiful . " she says " Not as beautiful as you . " he says. She laughed . " I have a surprise for you . Close your eyes and don't speak, " he said . " Okay " she says . He stands behind her and takes off all most of his clothes leaving his underwear and his muscle shirt . He presses his body against her and she moves forward showing that she doesn't want him behind her like that . " Um .. i don't know what you're trying to do but i - uh i am not ready for anything like that . " she says nervously . " I thought you liked me. " he says angrily " I - I do , I do like you Nick " she says frantically . " Then prove it kaiya . " he said " We agreed to take it slow i need time Nick . " she said scared . " Times up Kaiya " said Nick . He grabs her and throws her to the ground . He rips her cloths off and rapes her . During the process she passed out . He carries her to the car and once he gets in the car he says , " Oh baby you should have just slept with me . " He drives the road between the woods . He grabs her and throws her on the ground and goes back to his car . He grabs scissors and Ophthalmology Forceps . He goes over to her and cuts her hair and pulls out her eyes ; he proceeds to put the hair in a bag and puts her eyes in a jar with formalin solution. He goes to his car and drives home acting like nothing happened .

A few days have passed and it's now Monday . No one knows what happened because she was supposed to be with Nick at his house until Tuesday .

Journal entry - 12-29-2006

It's cool ... I killed Kaiya two days ago . I wish she would have just slept with me . No going back now . I sleep with her hair every night, a quick sniff and I pass right out . I have her eyes on my side table . It's so beautiful just sitting there . .

" Where am I ? , OUCH, why does everything hurt? Um When did I get in the woods? Why can't I remember anything? " Kaiya says . She stands up and everything goes back . She gets a flashback of him roofing her , raping , and killing her . Her whole body was fueled with anger . The rage overturned her whole way of thinking . Anger overtook her reason . She finds her phone and looks at herself and it looks like nothing happens. She sees that he had left her in the woods for dead two days ago . She is confused because she saw what he did to her .She

didn't think that he would ever harm her . It truly showed her to not judge a book by its cover because on the inside it could be really dark . She orders an uber and gets home .She walks up to her house contemplating telling her mom whether or not she decides that she will take matters into her own hands, no police needed. There was no point if they wouldn't believe her with no proof " Hey Mom I'm home. " says Kaiya . "Hi honey, why are you back so early? I thought you were staying until tomorrow ."

Kaiya's mom replied . " Oh we just were bored ."

she said . Kaiya went up to her room and started planning . " I really liked him and the fact that he tried to kill me because i wouldnt sleep with him pissies me off ." Kaiya said to herself . " If you're gonna kill someone at least make sure they're dead, I'm gonna get my revenge on him . "

Kaiya said . She started thinking of a plan . She was beyond upset that she allowed herself to trust someone like that . She made a promise to herself that she would get revenge and that she would never EVER let something like that happen again . She decides that she is going to end his life by taking advantage of her like that . What he did to her will happen to him but 20 times worse . She heads downstairs with her purse and keys . She had a spare change of clothes in her bag . She grabs a pair of scissors , a butcher's knife , a hammer , and a trash bag . She gets in her car and texts her mom , *I'm going to Amaya's. I'll be back later. I love you* . She drives to Nick's house in 1739 Misery name . She thinks to herself , " Oh he is gonna feel misery ."

She arrives at his house two houses away so he wouldn't see her bright blue honda civic . She goes and knocks on the door .. Ms . Hughes (Nicks's Mom) opens the door , " hey sweetie Nick is in his room . I didn't know you left ."

Ms. Hughes says . In Kaiyas head she said " I never arrived ."

Kaiya goes up to his room and opens the door . His face drops in shock . " Uh i - i - UM how - what - how are you here ."

Nick says terrified . " What Nick your plan to just rape and kill me didn't work . If you're gonna kill someone .. MAKE SURE THE DEAD "

Kaiya said angrily . " I'm so sorry kaiya. I love you. I'm so sorry . Nick says . " Enough with your apologies I don't care ."

Kaiya states . The anger and rage was flowing through her body . She had a feeling she has never had before a feeling that she could do the most horrible things to him and have no remorse . " Are we okay can we just be okay kaiya i love you and i'm sorry ."

said Nick

Nick didn't love her, he just didn't want her to go to the cops . All the evidence is in the back of his car . " Yes we can, I love you, you can be mine until we're dead, okay love ."

she replied .

" Okay beautiful that sounds good to me ."

Nick replied . " Hey, do you want to take a shower together?" asked Kaiya . " u--uh yea sure sorry . you get in and i will be there in a second i got to grab towels ."

responded Nick . " Okay lover ."

Said Kaiya . She gets in the shower and turns on the water and she hears the door open . " Where are your clothes ?"

asked Nick . " No response ."

Kaiya.....kaiyaKAIYA ANSWERED ME YOU DISRESPECTING UGLY THING ."

The shower door slams open and Kaiya swings on him with the hammer breaking four lungs . As Nick sits there in pain crying, begging her to not do thisKaiya proceeds to break 44 of Nick s bones one bone for every hour he allowed kaiya to lay there dead with no remorse .. She grabs the knife out of her bag and makes 48 cuts on Nick mind you Nick is still alive so he feels all this pain She grabs the scissors and cuts all his hair . He is dying slowly . She says " what you do to someone else will come back and hurt you 10 times worse, in this case 48 . "

He dies ...

Hey its me Kaiya ...Thats the story about how i was raped and "killed " but i came back and got my revenge . Pro Tip: If you're gonna kill someone, make sure their dead . THE END

THE END

The killer of Halloween Night

Twas the night before Halloween in 1993. The asylum had a dangerous killer in a holding cell and he said "you will pay for this" the guard responded by saying "shut up". We see Charlie getting ready for bed while his mother tucks his brother in. She goes in to his room and tucks him in and kisses him good night. The mother leaves to go answer the phone "hello whos there" the other person said "hello honey i'm going to be late i might not come back until later tomorrow" she responded with a sigh "ok bye". At the asylum the killer broke out and set off. Charlie wakes up to go to school and meet his friends. Once he gets to the bus stop he finds out he does not have school today.

So when he gets home he sees one of the knife's gone but he doesn't really care much. He plays Super Mario World but later he hears screaming upstairs. He hides in the closet the guy comes downstairs he hears him he tries to stab him but misses him. He runs upstairs in to the master bedroom and finds his BB gun and waits until he starts to shoot him but he runs out of ammo so he starts to cry. But, his father comes home to see the killer and starts to shoot him up. First in his shoulder then the leg then a few in the chest then in the eye to finish him but he crashes through the window and 'dies'.

The father looks to see he's gone but not coming back until next year but they don't know that. The father embraces his son. Then he says "that was the killer of Halloween night". The End?

The Sanctity of Delusion

Ezra woke in a cold sweat, his forehead burning and his limbs shaking. He sits up quietly, his surroundings blurred and tilting as the night gazes upon the room. His hands meet his chest as he catches his breath, his body still trembling. Ezra inhales sharply before swinging his legs over the edge of his comforter and standing. Once he's upright, he trudges to his window and gazes upon the cold, empty street below him. His dark eyes glance back to the bed, but their attention is caught by a lone photo sitting atop a nightstand. Ezra reluctantly walks over to the picture and gives it a solemn smile.

"Oh, Jeremy..." Ezra sighs, his voice hushed.

Jeremy was the reason why Ezra was here, alone and holding on to the last bit of comfort he had left. Losing his closest friend sent an ache through Ezra's heart and looking at the photo no longer held any sympathy. Leaving the picture behind, he makes his way toward his bathroom, the yellowing lights casting a hazy glow along the door frame. He brings icy water to his face to wash away his fatigue and sadness. As he looks into the mirror, he notices that the room appears to be darker.

"Must be my eyes," he grumbles.

Ezra looks over his shoulder but sees nothing. He swivels back to the mirror and squints his eyes. Ducking his head lower, Ezra focuses on a dark mass manifesting in the corner of the shower. It grows and bubbles as it stretches its tendrils across the walls, the paint beginning to peel and stain. Ezra's mind was telling him to run, but his body was paralyzed as he watched the creature form on the ceiling. With the last bit of courage he had left, he quickly turned on his heels to face the abomination, but nothing was there. No trace had been left, as if it were never there to begin with. Confused, Ezra gasps and returns to the mirror, frantically scanning what he could see in the glass. Once again, *nothing*.

Ezra splashes his face a final time, leaning over the sink in disbelief. He told himself that he was dreaming, that he was still asleep and all of this was a nightmare. An alarm begins to go off as Ezra sucks in a breath. *BEEP BEEP BEEP*. He snaps his head toward the pitched sound and pushes himself off the edge of the ceramic. Everything feels heavy as he navigates through the darkness, outreaching his hands in an attempt to silence the clock. It's 7:00 according to the large, green analog numbers that flash on the screen. Ezra runs his fingers through his dark hair, still trying to catch his breath. He shakes off the creature in the bathroom, hoping it was caused by his lack of sleep. Throwing on a windbreaker, old tennis shoes, and jeans, he snatches his phone from the nightstand and tosses his keys into a pocket. Before leaving his apartment, he glances over his shoulder once more to ensure the monster wasn't lurking. The bathroom still

remained untouched. Ezra lets out a huff of air as he opens his door, peering into the poorly lit hallway. With a *click*, he locks his door and sets out onto the patterned carpet.

It's odd, usually, Ezra's neighbors are talking amongst themselves in this hall, but there was no one. Not even a creak or whistle of air drafted through the area. Ezra stuffs his hands in his pockets, one fidgeting with the tarnished metal of his room keys. He begins to walk toward an unknown destination, his old, torn shoes leading him down the dingy hall. Ezra grew suspicious as the hallway never seemed to end, each door unmarked and the floor's pattern continuously repeating. The dim lights seemed to fade with each stride he took, the walls disappearing into a dark horizon. Ezra continued to trek cautiously across the old carpet, his gaze traveling once in a while. Suddenly, he stops in his tracks and searches around him. The walls begin to creak, almost as if they were whispering. They howl and groan to each other, looming over the young man. He feels the ceiling reach down to him, its dark abyss overtaking the hall. Everything grew closer and closer until the walls were screaming. Ezra wanted to drop and cover his ears but he couldn't, he knew he needed to *move*.

The walls began to drip and ooze as he picked up speed, the sound increasing in pitch. Ezra grunted in pain as his ears began to ring, the sound screeching and clawing at his eardrums. He felt pressure in his eyes and forehead, the force of the noise and his footsteps colliding in his mind. Ezra tripped over a vein-like obstacle, the manifestation ensnaring his ankle. His hands hastily moved to remove the hazard, the sound still shrieking as the walls were minutes away from impact.

"Come on!" Ezra exclaimed, pulling the obstacle back with all his strength.

It wouldn't budge. Ezra felt it wrap his ankle tighter as the tendril pulsed, attempting to consume his leg. He continued to pull and dig his fingers into the object, his hands aching and burning. From above, the ceiling drooled its substance over Ezra's jacket and onto the damp carpet around him. A sharp squeal caught his attention and he snapped his gaze upward. Like before, a cloud formed as it attached itself to the walls. They stopped their movement and sound, their screeching dissipating into a cry. The hall remained silent, the only noise being the pulsing around Ezra's ankle.

He squints his eyes and calls out, "What do you want from me!?"

The creature bubbles before shifting its appearance, growing limbs and something that resembled a face. Garbled speech fell from its poorly formed mouth, fluid spilling onto the floor. The words echoed against the hollow walls, but Ezra couldn't understand. He could only peer at the creature, fear settling into his stomach. The abomination tilted its head to the side slowly, its gaze never leaving Ezra's. The man huffed weakly as no words could describe what he was seeing. He shot the creature a slight smile as a means to pacify it. It returned a wicked attempt of its own before moving swiftly toward Ezra. The latter's eyes shot down to the vein, his hands returning to pry it off. The creature was rushing toward him, its size growing to fit inside the hall. Ezra's eyes darted back and forth between the creature and the obstacle, his heart rate

quickenings. Suddenly, the screams from before became louder and louder, the figure reaching out to Ezra. With one forceful and final tug, Ezra released the vein from his ankle, the creature's limbs grazing through his jacket sleeve. He couldn't cry, no matter how unfamiliar and painful the monster's touch felt. Ezra was paralyzed, he couldn't call out nor fight back. The mass of darkness consumed him, leading him down into nothing. The peace of silence replaced the rumbling and screeching, only a faint chirping fading into the background. *Beep, beep, beep...*

"-ra!" a warbled voice called out. "Ezra!"

Ezra woke and shot up, brushing away the hands that held his shoulders. It was bright and everything was loud once more. He breathed heavily as he took in his surroundings, looking over himself. There was no vein around his ankle and his arm was unscathed. There was no sign of his jacket either, nor his keys.

"Hey, man," the voice said again, much clearer this time. "It's alright, just chill."

Ezra's vision shook but he could determine that person speaking to him was familiar. He reached out his trembling hand to grasp the forearm of the one speaking to him. The person allowed him to do so, gently pushing him back onto whatever surface he was on. Ezra's sight finally settled, although still a bit blurry. To the side of him sat a curly-haired, blonde man, sweat shining along his forehead.

Ezra rasped, "J-Jeremy?"

"Yeah, man. It's me."

He could have sworn he died, he had his picture after all. Confusion flooded through Ezra's brain, tears threatening to spill down his cheeks.

"What?"

His friend laughed quietly, his face still set in a worried expression. "You must've hit that sink pretty hard."

"That's not..." Ezra whispered, his brows furrowing in concern.

Jeremy shook off Ezra's grip from his arm and stood. "You're lucky I found you, Ez. You were laying in there yelling about a monster, or something."

Ezra wanted to jump up and explain everything, but the pain in his head spun the room. *It did happen*, he wanted to exclaim. He knew Jeremy had died, he knew what he saw was real. His head slowly turned to face where he believed his nightstand was. The picture was gone. It was like it had vanished, just like the creature had.

"Jeremy, you died! You left me here and never came back!" Ezra coughed.

"What?!" his friend said, crossing his arms and pacing around the room. "You're imagining things, dude."

"But I wasn't! It really happened!" Ezra exclaimed, gesturing his frustration with his arms.

Behind Jeremy, he took a quick glance into his bathroom. The dim light was still on and dry blood caked the rim of the sink. Slowly bringing his hand to his face, Ezra searched blindly across his forehead. He hissed as his fingers met a large gash below his hairline.

"Listen," Jeremy started. "All this talk of me dyin' and some monster would make anyone go a little crazy. Why don't you just settle down?"

"But—"

"I'm gonna leave you to sort out whatever happened, okay? Just try and get some rest."

Ezra placed his hands over his stomach, focusing on the ceiling. His apartment door clicked shut and Jeremy was gone once again. He blinked a few times, taking in a deep breath.

"Maybe I am losing it..."

What Happened to My Life?

Hello! My name is Jennifer, Jennifer Dally. I was born on October 30, 2016. I am 16 years old. I live in Destin, California about 5 minutes away from the beach. I just got released from the hospital for being treated for fire burns and amnesia. So, no, I do not really remember my life before the hospital. I had been the only child of doctors Otto and Amelia Dally. I am in 10th grade and am now living with my aunt. Nobody knows where my parents are or where they went. My amnesia is very severe. I still have no recollection of who I am or who anyone is. The doctors say that it could be permanent and I could be like this for the rest of my life. I supposedly have a best friend named Angelica Ford (who I do not remember) who I have known since preschool. My rival's name is Alivia Keene and from what people told me, we used to be friends. Anyways, lets get on with my life.

October 21, 2032

I woke up to the smell of pancakes and bacon cooking in the kitchen. I got up, put on my robe, got my slippers, and stomped down the stairs. I remembered that my family was there. My family consists of my aunt and myself. I heard through the front door speaker that it was Angelica coming to pick me up for a party. Before I had lost my memory, I guess I had agreed to go to a party at Alivia's beach house. We had decided that we would get ready together so that she could do my hair. No offence to my aunt, Cassie, but she is not that talented with hair.

As soon as I finished breakfast, we headed upstairs. She was dressing up as a killer clown, and I was dressing up as a dead volleyball player. We were off in less than an hour. When we arrived, we decided that it would be best to stay outside with everyone else so that we did not have to see Alivia. Too late! She found us as soon as we arrived. She had the same idea, but instead of a volleyball player, she was a dead bride. Her boyfriend, who was also a volleyball player, had the same costume. She got so upset and told him that he had to change. So, he did. She controls him like a remote control car.

The party was over in a minute. Alivia called the police because someone had brought their real-life dog to her beach house. She decided that real dogs were a violation of the party. Her parents are scientists who build high-tech technology. All of her pets are robots. Her beach house is so futuristic that her house cleans itself. No chores for the princess! Anyways, after the police thing happened, I went home and went straight to bed. I feel depressed almost every day of my life because I don't know who I am or who all of the people around me are.

October 22, 2032

I would be spending my day at home. Angelica was busy, Aunt Cassie was working, and the mall was closed for renovations. I decided to go up to the attic and look at pictures to remind myself of who I used to be. All of a sudden, a flash went past my eyes. It looks like a flame. It was like these pictures and memories sparked something in my head.

As soon as that image happened, Aunt Cassie was home. She had been home early, I thought. I went downstairs to see what was going on. Her plans were ruined by the rain and she decided to come home.

I sat awkwardly at the kitchen table. Wondering if I should say something, or if I should keep it to myself. I decided that keeping it to myself would be the best option until I knew more. I

needed some time to myself, so I told Aunt Cassie that I had a big presentation due for forensics. As soon as I got upstairs, I pulled out the pictures that I was looking at. I decided to keep a few with me so that maybe, just maybe, I could spark more memories.

I sat in my room for three hours trying to get more glimpses of what happened that day. I decided to give up for the night. I put the pictures on my nightstand and closed my eyes. Just as I closed my eyes, I saw another glimpse. I was holding a black bottle with a white skull and crossbones. "POISON," it read. I cried myself to sleep that night, not knowing why I was holding that bottle.

October 23, 2032

I did not get much sleep. My eyes were all puffy from crying and I felt exhausted. I noticed something very strange, since I got out of the hospital, this was the first time I had a dream. My dream had been about a time I was with my parents. We were in a large green field riding horses. I remember, My dad had asked me, "Ready for Nationals Jenny?" I did not know why this specific memory was in my dream. I had not seen any horses in the pictures the day before.

After analyzing my dream, I went downstairs to eat breakfast. Aunt Cassie had made waffles and smoothies. I ate half of a waffle and barely drank my smoothie. Aunt Cassie did not seem to notice as she left for her normal Saturday lunch date with her friends. I cleaned up my dishes and went straight upstairs. I felt more confused and sadder than usual. I wanted more than anything to know more about who I was and what had happened to me, and to my family.

I could not sit at home anymore. I got my boots, jacket, and keys, and drove around town. When I passed the police station, I saw something unusual. Aunt Cassie was in there, on her own, not with any of her friends. I parked my car behind the grocery store and spied as long as I could. Aunt Cassie would surely get home before I would, so I went into the store and bought some milk. We were out anyways.

When I returned home, Aunt Cassie was making dinner. She asked me for the milk so that she could make macaroni and cheese. I sat in the kitchen while she made dinner. After dinner was made, I quickly ate, saying nothing to Aunt Cassie, and ran upstairs to try again.

I calmly concentrated on my dream and the picture, then someone was there, in the scene. It was my father, saying he was sorry. Sorry for what? I did not know. I closed my eyes and remained calm to figure out more. Finally, it all came back to me. I started the fire.

My parents and I had gotten into a fight about my old boyfriend, Jordan. They told me that he was nothing more than a player and I did not believe them. They were going to force me to break up with him, take my phone away, and make me move halfway across the country. I did not want that to happen. All of my anger came back at once.

We all went down to the family room in the basement, I gave them a soda with poison in it and then waited until they fell asleep. After they were asleep, I put gasoline around them and the room, and then lit a match. After I dropped the match, I went to leave. I remembered that I forgot the necklace Jordan gave me in my room, so I went after it. Right before I stepped out of the door, I tripped on the rug and hit my head on the flower pot. I remember the blue and red lights coming toward the house, and then I blacked out.

I killed them, I killed them in the basement of the house. Is that why Aunt Cassie was at the police station? No one can know about this. I am leaving tonight. After Aunt Cassie pays for not telling me that she knew...

SPL Spooky story entry:

Spooky Story Entry



Fierro, Lei'Nani <fierroleinani-100@wsd3.org>
to Security ▾

6:20 PM (2 minutes ago)



My name is Lei' Nani Fierro and I have a short story that I would like to enter into the spooky short story contest.

Link: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1FYb_nO_jB2E3SR8Rx7O47MDSiS8pHzez2XQe_Uc8TSg/edit

One attachment • Scanned by Gmail ⓘ



Lei'Nani Fierro - S...

← Reply

→ Forward

La Ilorona's Reimagined

Dear dairy,

The date is february 10, 1675. My husband and I just got home from a date. I had an amazing time but he's really mad right now and I don't know why. I'm hiding in the closet so he doesn't hit me.

He will never find me here...

"I hate you" he screamed in my face

He was on top of me. I tried to push him off of me but it didn't work. He took advantage of me being weak, naked, and afraid. He did his business . I laid there in fear. I feel very used . He hurt me the worst this time but I love him and I cant leave him. It's july 18, 1675. I feel weaker than ever before. I can't walk. I have to get up to make him breakfast. I got up to go to the kitchen but it hurt to stand. He was standing there in a suit.

"Where are you going?" I asked him

"Nowhere" he said standing there with a Blank face. " Where's my breakfast?"

" I'm sorry, Mi cordazon. I came down here to make it." I said in fear

"Don't even start, I have to go to work."

He walked out of the house. I started to go back to the room to change into nice clothes. My shirt barely fit over my belly. Am I getting fat, I said in my head. I remembered that night again. I went to the market later that day and bought a pregnancy test. I took it. It came out positive. Oh lord I thought.

Dear diary,

It's july 19, 1675. I have to kill it. I have to have it and kill it. Is all i'm thinking.he can't know. He'll kill me...

It's august 21, 1675. I had a baby. I walked to the river with him. I did it. Oh lord, I'm sorry. His cold dead white body flowed so peacefully down the river. I sat there crying but I didn't know why. I'm sorry is all I could think. I jumped in after him. I hit my head on a sharp rock. I had to find him. Where am i? I thought. I had to keep looking for him. I ran and ran but got know where. I walked to the train tracks near the river and weeped forever. I was bound to look for him until I found his lost young soul.

"I'm sorry" I weeped out over and over again.

5/10/00 11:50 AM

up

3000-192-067

"Pen Pal Killer"

February 18, 1994

Xena Pov:

Dear Pen pal, I was born in 1980 and my name is Xena. My mom insisted I write to a penpal in order to make a new friend. I don't really understand how this works and I was wondering if you have a schedule where we can email back and forth to get to know each other.

Sincerely, Xena

Days Later

Anonymous Person Pov:

Dear Xena, My name is Elliot and I was born in 1979. I do know a few things about pen palling like, You should email your pen pal at least 10 times a week bare minimum because then you can lose contact with them because of little communication, Find cool subject to talk about so it doesn't get boring talking about the same things over and over, only email them at night because that's when they are the least busy and don't under any circumstance tell anyone about your conversations because then your pen pal won't trust you anymore. Anyways moving on, I can't wait until we get to know everything about each other. I wanted to ask when your birthday is and where your hometown is.

Yours Truly, Elliot

3 hours later

Dear Elliot, So sorry for the late response; but about your question My birthday is actually on 02/29/80. I am a leap year child which is crazy because i'm actually only 3 if you think about it simply because my actual birthday is every 4 years. Also my home town is Hino, Tokyo; which is in japan but i moved to The United States less than a year later so I don't know much japanese; although my parent want me to learn about my native language so i'm taking classes from my cousin who lives in Tokyo still. I have three questions starting with: Would you ever meet a penpal in real life? Are you a High school student? What is your ethnicity?

Xoxo, Xena

An hour later

Dear Xena, It's fine for the late response. I was eating dinner anyway and had to clean up. I have never met someone who had a leap year birthday and it kinda fascinates me to think people have a birthday on a special day that is rare. It's a 1 in a 1,461 chance being born on Feb. 29th. About the questions you have, I have never met someone in real life after being pen pals with them because I'm new to this too but not as new. I am a sophomore in high school. I believe in God. :)

Xoxo, Elliot

After they start to get to know each other they talk with each other for years on end until they both graduate from college; or thats what Xena thought...

June 1, 1998

Dear Elliot, I can't believe we finally graduated! I get to go to my dream college and we both are going to go to Harvard. I was wondering if you wanted to meet up on the first day of school so we can finally talk in person. We have been emailing each other for years now and I think it's time to finally meet each other. I mean unless you are not comfortable with meeting yet which I'd totally be fine with. I was just thinking about it because we are both finally adults. I was also wondering what career path you choose because getting into Harvard isn't easy and you have to pick that hard fundamental job and have the highest GPA from your school. On top of that you also needed the best essay on why you should go to the best college in the nation. Or not to judge because I know you're rich, did you just pay the bank in order to get into college?

Love, Xena </3

10 hours later

Dear Xena, I would Love to meet you! We can meet by the statue at the front; speaking of daddy's money...yeah i might have bought my way in but to be honest, it was definitely worth it. How about this, Wear a red scarf on your wrist, so i know it's you when it's time to meet! I'll wear one as well so we don't get confused. Speaking of wearing the red scarf, what will you be wearing so I know for sure that it's you.

Signing out, Elliot

Later in the evening

Wassup Elliot, That would be a perfect meeting at the statue. I'll be wearing a White dress with a red flower in my hair, and my shoes will be white sandals. I was wondering if we are gonna meet before or after school because I don't wanna miss the beginning of class even though we might not be late. I just want to make sure we both get to class on time, especially since it's the first day of school at the best school in the world, you know. Sorry I talk a lot, I am just really excited.

All love, Xena Mwah

After a while they finish talking about how they are gonna meet up. Xena was so excited to meet Elliot but she was scared because she had caught feelings for him without knowing what he looked like and she didn't want her feelings to change the way their friendship is because it's an awesome relationship.

After a few weeks pass by they have less then a week until school starts and Elliot gets his master plan ready. You might ask; what is his plan? Is he going to ask her out or is he going to tell her he wants to move in together since they both don't have a dorm and are getting apartments?

As the days go by Xena gets her hair done. Elliot gets his outfit ready. She also gets the prettiest white dress. He gets his backpack. Now it was time for them to go to the airport to fly to Massachusetts.

On the first day of school

Xena is now walking around the statue, looking for Elliot. She trips on a string, scarring her leg a bit and hitting her head on the cold Pavement. She comes a few hours later. Tied up, She's just barely processing what happened as she notices Elliot pacing back and forth mumbling to himself. *"I hope that was the right person, if not I'd have to-"* he stops and looks in her direction and smiles. *"Well good morning Sunshine!"* Xena is taken aback by his height and voice. *"Where am i? Who are you?"* He turns around and picks up a plate of food and walks back over to her. *"You're currently in my Cellar, but don't worry! You'll be able to leave soon...Maybe. Here, eat this. You're gonna need it. As for who I am, the name's Elliot. You're Xena right?"* She nods hesitantly. *"Good! Ah, silly me, how can you eat with your hands behind you? Here"* Elliot unties her hands and allows her to take a few bites of the food, watching her intently. Xena takes a few more bites before feeling dizzy, she looks up at Elliot who is now smiling with malice. *"What...Did you put in the food?"* Elliot laughs to himself before answering, *"Doxylamine. To help you stay asleep! Now ,now, don't worry your pretty little head about anything my dear. Just sleep.."* Xena no longer can fight the urge to sleep and soon faints. Elliot goes to the closet and pulls out a long...sharpe...knife. He goes up to her as she slowly opens her eyes to see the horror on her face. He giggles. *"Now, Now mi Amor everything is going to end soon enough"* She starts crying begging him he doesn't have to do it. *"I am sorry we couldn't be together but I swear i will meet you again one day"* as he puts the knife up to her neck. Shes shocked by everything. **SLASH.** Everything goes dark.....

Trapped

By Steven Willard

It was a cold and dark night in the city. Lucy was walking her dog to its daycare because she was going on vacation. She is going to Yellowstone national park in Wyoming. It has always been a dream of hers to visit the geysers. She wants to watch all the animals in the park during the fall because that is when they can see the animals. Once she got there her dog started going crazy. As she walked up to the lady running the desk. The lady's name was rose. "Hi Lucy, how are you," said Rose. "Hi, Rose, I am doing just fine, how about you," said Lucy. "I am doing just fine, are you here to check Jack in?" Said, Rose. "Yes I am", "Ok have a seat and we will call you up when you can check him in." Said, Rose. "Ok" as Lucy went to sit down she saw a magazine about the rarest things to happen in a national park. On the very first page, it was an article about what to do if you got stuck on top of a geyser. It says to get away from it as fast as possible because geysers can reach up to 200 degrees Fahrenheit. She was going to keep reading about it but then all of a sudden she heard her name and it startled her. "Hi, how are you doing?" said the person as they reached for Jack's leash. "Hi, I am doing just fine" and then she gave the leash to the person. "Now, how many days are you going to be gone?" She responded with "I will be back in 4 days". "Ok then take care and have fun" said the person. "Ok bye Jack", then she left. As she was walking back she saw a billboard for Yellowstone. It was advertising their new geyser. It is big enough to fit the roof of a car in it. She shrugged it off and continued walking down the street. Around half an hour later she got home and started packing. As she went to sleep that night she had a weird feeling that something was going to go wrong, but she just went to sleep. As she woke up in the morning she looked at the time and realized that she had slept in and her flight was in an hour. She ran to her suitcase, grabbed it, and then sped to the airport. Luckily it was the end of fall so barely anyone was there. As she walked up to security they started searching her bag and a beep went off from the metal decor. As they opened it they pulled out the magazine that she was reading yesterday. The security guard said, "You can't take this in there". She said "Ok", and then she took it out and handed it to him. As he closed the suitcase she wondered how did that get in there. She spent the rest of the time waiting at the airport thinking about it. Right as she was boarding the plane she saw her mom and dad

boarding the same plane and she walked onto the plane as fast as she could and sat down so they would not notice her. At the age of 17, they kicked her out of the house because she did badly on a test, and she has hated them ever since. Luckily she did not see them while on the plane. When she got off she saw them waiting by the exit and they noticed her. They both said "Hi" and tried to talk to her, but she just walked right by them and ignored them. As they asked her what was wrong she said "I don't know maybe the fact that you kicked me out of the house at 17 because of one test." They responded with "We thought you were going to come back, we have missed you" She said "I don't care, and please leave me alone so I can enjoy my vacation." As she said that she walked away and left them speechless. Luckily her bag came around before they could catch up. As she stepped out into the cold air of Wyoming she saw a taxi coming so she waved them down. As she stepped inside her parents rushed to get in but she slammed the door. The driver asked "Are they with you", and she responded "No". As they realized what happened he started driving away. He asked, "where to". She responded with "the hotel by Yellowstone." When she got to the hotel she saw the same magazine and thought that it must be a very popular one. She checked in with them and went right to sleep because it was 11 p.m. When she woke up it was around noon. She starts to get up and then sees the magazine on the bookshelf next to her. She did not notice it because she was so tired last night. He just ignored it and started her day. She took a shower brushed her teeth and got ready for a tour of Yellowstone. She left and locked the door behind her. As she steps out of the hotel she sees the place where the tour is. She walks over there and checks herself into the tour. About 10 minutes later she sees her parents checking in and she instantly regrets booking the tour. When the host tells all of them to come over to the car she sits on the other side of the car. As they are going through the tour the guide says that the buffalo often charge but are held back by the fence. As we are pulling up to the biggest geyser we are waiting for it to explode, then all of a sudden they hear a cord break, then she falls unconscious. When she wakes up she sees her parents dead in front of her. She unbuckles her seatbelt and then realizes a buffalo had knocked them onto a geyser. She tries to open the door but it is stuck in the dirt. She had tried screaming, she had tried calling somebody but she had no phone service. All of a sudden heard some noise from down below. Then all of a sudden the world goes black and she feels a burning sensation all over her skin. Then she feels nothing...

A night alone

I opened my eyes gasping for air as I had awoken from a nightmare. It's the same time every time I wake from a nightmare, 3 am on the dot, a bit unsettling. I turned to my side facing my beautiful wife but was greeted with wide eyes and a creepy grin. She was staring at me, I smiled back at her.

"What are you doing up love?" I say softly sitting up to rub the sleep from my eyes craving a cup of coffee. My heart sank when she answered.

"I just wanted to make sure you were okay." Her voice was a high pitch that scraped and scratched at my brain, it made me ill. She had never talked like that before.

"Well thank you, dear! Forgive me I will be back, I am off for a cup of coffee." I get up out of bed, wrap myself in my robe, put my slippers on and head off down the stairs to the kitchen. I open the fridge to grab the creamer, upon closing the fridge door my wife was standing there the same grin painted on her face. Wider, now, than it was before, but only all the more unsettling.

"Oh! Hunny!" I say my voice quaking. "You scared me!" I chuckle nervously clutching my shirt with a shaky hand.

"I just wanted to make sure you were okay." She repeated again her voice scraping at my brain again, I winced. The sound of her voice made me want to gouge my eyes out.

"Ohh... Thank you, dear." I reach out to touch her face but recoil when I flesh against mine.

"Forgive me but I must check on the garden flowers!" I chuckle again shaking. I turn and begin making my way out of the door basically sprinting down the dimly lit pathway to a large tree. My heart sank as I turned around the tree to see dirt sprayed everywhere in thick, wet, red clumps. 'How could she have crawled out?' I thought, being interrupted by soft footsteps behind me, I reach out for the axe lying upon the tree only to find it wasn't there. I could have sworn that cut severed her head from her shoulders. She did always say she would lose her head if it wasn't attached to her shoulders. Who knew the ground could be so warm?

The Imaginary Friend

By Stella Pe

A little boy named Logan played in his backyard with his imaginary friend (who was wearing a black hood that was covering his face but you can only see his mouth) and they were fighting crime and saving the world. But when Logan's dad took the dog outside to play with Logan, the dog started barking at the imaginary friend as if he could see him. As the dog barked with a shrill sound, the imaginary friend said, "Kill the dog."

"What," said Logan confused.

The friend said, "Kill the dog!" in an angrier voice.

"With what?" said Logan as he looked around for something to use.

The imaginary friend walked over to his dad's tool shed and broke the lock with his bare hands and grab a simple sharp knife, handed it to Logan, and said, "Killed the dog!"

Logan took the knife and walked towards the huge, black dog. He hugged him and petted him one last time. Then, Logan held the knife over his head and said, "I am so sorry."

Logan aimed the jagged knife and stabbed the dog right through his eye and mouth. As he extracted the knife from the skull of his lifelong friend, Buckley's right eye fell off the end of the knife and rolled over Logan's left shoe, The dog fell right to the ground and blood splattered all over. Logan cried for a few minutes over the death of his dog.

He turned to his imaginary friend and shouted, "I did it! I killed Buckley as you asked."

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“Great now put it under the house and act as if nothing has happened,” the imaginary friend said with a creepy smile that you could hear through his black hoodie.

Logan dragged the dog under the house far enough to where no one could see it. After a little while, Logan went back to visit his dog. That night for dinner, Logan told his mom he had some meat for her to cook for dinner.

Logan went back to fighting crime and saving the world. Or did he?

No dogs were harmed during the writing process of this story.

Fear The Light

April 1, 2022

I finally got my dream job at Site-46 and I'm now working with Dr. Igotta! I'm so HAPPY!!! I was also anxious about meeting the other member of the crew, David, but they turned out to actually be really nice and friendly towards me so I think I'll look forward to working with them! Oh, and I've also been looking forward to checking out the brand new bunker I've been hearing about.

April 8, 2022

After getting to know the team a little bit, I was told by upper management that the building would be shut down for renovations and higher security and that we'd have to work and live down in the bunker for a little while. Although I was just a little sad that I couldn't go out in the sun while it was still summer. Also, one really annoying fact about the bunker is that the door takes a lot of energy to actually close and lock because the door handle was put in the wrong spot when it was created. But anyway, It's getting late so I'm just gonna go to sleep.

April 9, 2022 (0)

I was jolted awake by the sounds of distant sirens and my phone's emergency Alert system frantically vibrating so much that I thought it would melt. Then, the message my phone played went as followed:

(EAS)

THE NATIONAL PRIMARY EAS SYSTEM has issued a NATIONWIDE ALERT at the request of the US GOVERNMENT. This is not a test. Due to a meteorological event All contact with visible light produced by the sun will cause living organisms to liquefy at the point of contact, with the effect spreading until the entire organism is converted. Visually, this is reminiscent of melting wax. The time this takes is largely dependent on the level of exposure and size of the organism. Despite this alteration, at no point do these living amalgamations or organisms perish. Upon completion, these organisms, now referred to as Amalgams, take on a gelatinous consistency. Motile organisms will attempt to orient themselves in a fashion reminiscent of their previous form, to varying degrees of success. 6.8 billion casualties have occurred within the two hours. This Amalgam effect does not seem to result from exposure to ultraviolet rays, but rather light in the visual spectrum (~390 to 750 nm). The effect is similarly present in moonlight. Any and all personnel exposed to this sunlight are considered to be lost and Compromised personnel are to be abandoned.

beds trying to rest. Some of them looked at him with concern but none of them tried to approach him. "There were many young kids seemingly in the ages of 17-8. Jackson, now with enough strength to get up, tried to approach some of the others but they all backed off, Feeling nervous being alone he felt scared. but he did hear someone whispering who was the closest about how had been there for months and some of the other kids who used to have friends came with them and were now taken and never seen again. The kids did look like they were there for a long long time, their clothes were torn and dirty even though they were in a clean white room Suddenly at one of the walls in the room the wall folds up revealing black glass on the other side. Then a speaker could be heard introducing Jackson to where he will be living the rest of his life. "Why was I taken, and where is my father!" yelled out Jackson angrily The kids around him seemed to be scared, all of them backing away from him. The speaker had then scoffed and the black screen on the glass lifted up, showing Jackson's father's coworkers behind it. "Jackson felt something inside him boiling up till he finally couldn't take it and lashed out on the glass frame.", making his hands get red, he cries, "What have you done to my father? `` The scientist motions a hand gesture and "a door suddenly opens with a guy wearing tactical gear appearing and shocks Jackson with a taser, making him jump off the window and onto the floor." Jackson cries in pain and falls onto the floor with a thud. The guard then looks at the other kids, they all back up trying to get as far as they can. The guard scoffs and then goes back through the door, closing it.

The scientist "Laughed as he watched Jackson groaning in pain on the cold dark floors, with the black window shades slowly closing", ``are you alright" asked one of the older kids. "not really" replied Jackson, holding back tears. "Well let me introduce you to everyone" said the older kid. My name is Micheal, this is Gracie, Alex, Gray, Mary, and hop." as we pointed to each of the kids with the respective names. Then suddenly in the walls opened a tile that had pushed out trays of

food for everyone. Each person then grabs a tray and starts eating, Michael offers Jackson to eat together. Jackson looks around then he hesitantly agrees. After they get the trays with a small sandwich, apple, water, and potatoes, they go to a corner and Jackson asks why they were there, "I don't know, there use to be more of us but we slowly dwindle in numbers as were taken." After they all Ate, each person goes to bed, and they all try to get comfy. " Try to get some sleep Jackson, you'll need it," Micheal said and sees him off and goes to his own bed. Eventually all the lights turn off in the room, making it look pitch black. Jackson, still nervous, tried to sleep with what he had, but had a hard time before finally, his eyes started to drift, then he closed his eyes and fell asleep.

The lights suddenly flashed on, everyone groaned as their eyes hurt from the sudden light. Jackson had gotten up but was still tired from a restless night. Suddenly the door opened and multiple guards came through, following behind them was the scientist that brought him here. Some of the kids screamed in fear as the guards pointed guns at each one. The scientist motioned his hand to jackson and then they came running towards him, Jackson tried to get out of his blankets and run before they got to him, he got out of the blankets, but not before they reached him and grabbed him by the arms, Michael tries to run up to one of the guards to punch them but he gets shocked by another guard before he reaches Jackson. Jackson tried to squirm and wiggle his way out, he would even try to kick the guards but with no avail they brought him to the door. After they went through, Jackson was seeing the true nature of where they were. Dark hallways with pipes going down them, many doors on each side leading to unknown locations. It was very dark and humid. The guards kept dragging Jackson until they got to a door with a sign saying "Conference room" they would open the door and throw Jackson in, landing with a thud. Jackson now was in a room that had one light, chair, and table. It was black on all

sides with some pipes going through. On one side of the room there was a large glass window with the scientist on the other side. Jackson wanted to ask more questions but felt like it would be futile. The scientist then said to Jackson, "Hello there Jack, my name is William, I am the head scientist here and a coworker of your dad, James. We brought you here because we need you." "Why do you need me" replied Jackson, "And where is my dad" he said angrily. "Oh Jack, we need your blood, and we need your blood to help your father." replied William. "What did you do to him", yelled out Jackson "Oh, we didn't do anything to him, he was doing a test with an unknown material found inside the asteroid. Do you wish to see your father??" William said with a grinning smile. Jackson then winced as he was curious but scared of what might have happened to him. William then put up a video camera footage on the wall behind him on a tv he didn't see because of how dark the room was. Jackson then turned around and didn't see anything at first, but then as the lights started to flicker he then saw IT. In the room there was a very tall humanoid being that had the skin of a black hole, Long skinny arms that almost reached down its body, It had 3 very long fingers , It's hands look like it could easily rip a man to two; IT had tall skinny legs that end with a sharp point, IT's eyes were pure white like the snow and glowed like the moon. IT's glowing white mouth revealed its sharp crooked teeth, IT's tail was whip-like and yet sharp enough to cut through metal. It gave Jackson shivers just looking at it, giving him the sense nowhere is safe from it. Whatever it was, it was no longer his father. Jackson looked back at William as he was looking at him with a smile, Jackson had then gasped in terror as he realized what truly happened to those other children, they were food for this monster the Scientist had made. "How is that my father? That THING is not my father, and how will MY blood help him??" Cried out Jackson, terrified. William then calmly responded, "It would use your blood as a smell it wouldn't go for, so if we slowly drained your body for a few months and use it as a sort of repellent, we would use it for war, attacking and killing anything it sees and smells that isn't its own family." "That's

pure insanity" cried out Jackson. It may be, but thank you for the nice name. That monster that used to be your father is now named "Insanity". Jackson, now terrified of being drained of his blood just to shield the scientists Started to scream, his terrified screams would travel down the hallways and pipes. William, now grinding with joyfulness of seeing the sacred expressions of Jackson, wasn't aware that the screams had reached the chamber that held insanity. On the camera Insanity could be seen, head twitching as it was receiving the sounds of the screams. But then suddenly on the camera there could be heard a scream, a death curdling scream that sounded like scratching metal and pure rage. William now looked at the camera with concern but then he started to panic as both Jackson and William saw Insanity on the screen using his claws to tear through the wall, trying to break through, Alarms would scream with red lights as insanity would break those walls. William then told all guards in the facility through a speaker to contain the creature. Suddenly the camera that showed Insanity's room became static and blank. William then leaves the room making Jackson panic as the guard behind grabbed his arm and led Jackson out of his room.

Lights flickered as Jackson heard gunshots echoing down the halls, Jackson then noticed a door opening revealing William as he came out. His face was sweating and was shaken in fear. Suddenly a scream could be heard, then an explosion that caused almost all the lights to go out. Jackson and William fell to the floor as the floor began to collapse , Jackson still recovering from the hard fall only thought of one thing....ESCAPE. Jackson then noticed two guards making their way towards him. With a sudden jolt of adrenaline, Jackson quickly got up and ran like he never ran before, retracing his steps towards where the children were still being held up, wanting to help them get out of this terrible place. The guard almost Caught up but then the lights go out again, Jackson tries to stop moving to make no sound, hoping the guard would pass him. Jackson could hear the guard and the clanking of metal slow down trying to hear him, there was a monument of

silence until they could hear a scream down the hallway near them. The guard then started running to the scream, The lights then turned on again, Jackson seeing the guard going down the hall but then suddenly Jackson sees a large hand suddenly grab the guard from the side hallway, yanking him into the darkness, he screamed for a moment but was then silenced in a instant. Jackson didn't move, he was terrified of what he just saw, but then the claws went around the corner of the hall, Jackson thought quickly that he needed to hide or he would be seen, he then went into the nearest hall right before it turned the corner, he then saw a bench to then hide under, he would quickly get under as he heard cracking stone as the point of its foot pierce the ground with each step, it was getting closer, and closer, but then it suddenly stopped, complete silence, Jackson would then, very slowly and quietly get out of under the bench, and hug the wall as he slowly approached the hall he entered from, suddenly he heard what would be breathing but extremely raspy and quite from behind him, he then started running. Insanity was behind him and started a chase, it swept his long claws at Jackson's back but missed as Jackson started to run as fast as he could down the main hallway toward the white room they took him out of. Jackson looked back for a moment, it was on all fours and started to run at him, climbing walls and the ceiling, tearing the lights and walls, destroying anything that was in front of him, it was so big that it had a hard time fitting the halls. Jackson then looked forward again trying to run but his legs were giving out. Gunshots then rang the hallways as one of the guards in the side halls started shooting at Insanity, driving his attention away from Jackson. Jackson then got to the door where it led to the white room, he then tried opening it but it wasn't budging, he then heard the screams, but suddenly cut from down the hall. He then tried kicking it, which then opened it as he then ran inside trying to close the door as quickly as he could before it got to him. After he shut it he looked into the room, the children looking scared. Micheal then ran up to him,

"Jackson, what's happening out there, we heard this terrifying scream and the alarms going off."

We need to try to get out of this facility as quick as we can, they have this monster that broke free and is killing everyone!" said Jack panicky. Suddenly the wall to the window started to open, Jackson yelled "HIDE", which everyone did. Jackson and Michael hide right under where the window was opening trying to get out of view.

The speaker then went off saying, "where are you kids, stop hiding." suddenly they all heard the scream again from insanity as then the glass breaks with the scientist's body flies into the room, some of the kids hiding let out a small scream before they silence themselves. Then we clicked from the throat of Insanity that could be heard right above Jackson as it was climbing through the window, just missing Michael and Jackson. It approached the body of the scientist through the window, their blood staining the white coat. It then picked them up by a claw, then its jaw started to widen unnaturally then he started lowering the scientist into his gaping jaw, Michael tried to motion the other kids in the room to try to get to them without getting the attention of the monster. Jackson then tried to open the door without making a sound, which was very slow, he would keep looking back and forth at insanity as it seemed to be playing with its food, lowering slowly so if the scientist woke up it would see their end. The kids were slowly moving to Michael trying to not be noticed, then suddenly there was a loud scream as the scientist woke up, hearing this, Jackson yanked the door open and motioned the kids to run, insanity seeing this then closes his jaw on the scientist on his neck, making his lifeless head fall on the floor as insanity started retracting his jaw back to normal. The other kids started to run to the door but one of them tripped on insanity's tail, falling to the ground to only be snatched up by its long tail around their foot lifting them into the air, as they were screaming. Jackson grimaced as he would have to leave them because he knew he couldn't do anything for them, as the rest of the kids got

through he tried to close the door as insanity full retracted his jaw together, but then it decided to hold the kid that was in his tail and pull on there legs and arms, tearing them in half silencing there screaming, then started to run at jackson who was closing the door. As insanity slammed into the door Jackson tried to lock it but then noticed the ripped door that led to the room where there was the large window, looking at the other kids. "Everyone run, run as fast as you can and dont stop, go to the very end of the hall." commanded jackson. They all started running without hesitation. Jackson then heard breaking glass as insanity climbed back through the window, they looked each other in the eyes for a split second before he screamed at them and started the chase. Jackson started to run for his life again, but when he took a quite glance at insanity it was getting bigger, its body would start bulgioning out as it increased in size to be as big as the hall, its mouth becoming the the front and about 8 eyes around it, it then started opening and closing its mouth as it started to eat the entire hallway. It was still fast though as it was moving though everything. As Jackson caught up to the rest of the group, they all saw insanity getting closer. "Everyone go right, then left, we have to get to the stairs." called out jackson. Michael quickly askes, how do you know? "I went there when my father had taken a kid to work, NOW GET MOVING!!" all the kids started following Jackson's instructions as the giant mass of insanity was gaining on them. When they all got to the stairs Jackson told them they had to go up as high as they could. They all started running up the stairs as insanity got to the stairs breaking through the walls. They were getting high but then insanity started climbing the stairs, devouring what was in front of it trying to reach them. The floor beneath them started to crumble as the facility was crumbling from all the destruction. Suddenly some stairs fell that some kids were climbing, there screams falling with them as they fell down into the jaws underneath. Micheal was trying to carry one of the younger kids too tired to continue. " We're almost there!" cried out jackson.

They all then started to go faster as there was hope up ahead until they reached the top. At the top was William, he was holding the rifle he had earlier. As they got up he pointed the gun at them. "Stay right there children, for you shall be sacrificed for the greater good." Jackson then got up with the rest and saw William with the rifle pointed at everyone else. "Why are you doing this to us" cried Micheal. "We were trying to cause a breakthrough with biological weapons to make the world better. None of you would understand that" Jackson filled with rage charged at william trying to get him to drop it. William, surprised by the suddenness, turned his gun to Jackson and shot his leg. Jackson let out a pained scream as he fell down to the cold floor. "You still needed Jack, as you are a key in keeping that monster in control." as Jackson cried on the floor William then pointed back at the others about to fire his weapon just as the door and wall behind william was devoured by the gaping jaws of insanity, as some of the kids scream, william tried to turn around to shoot at the monster but it didn't do much affect, Insanity then dropped his jaws onto him, killing him instantly. After his body dropped insanity looking at the other kids, Jackson ran up in front of them, arms out trying to stop it from eating them. It seemed to stop for a monument and looked at Jackson, it seemed confused as maybe a memory had been triggered. It looked at him but it then seemed like it wasn't interested, it then went into the world, being free.

The kids were able to see where they were, outside in the middle of a forest. " we're finally out!! Cried Michael as some of the others were crying as they got out alive. Suddenly they could hear a helicopter landing nearby, they all heard it and started running to the sound, when they got to a open area with the helicopter, there was a government official standing there, he saw the kids as they approached and looked confused, he then approached them, "where did you guys come from." asked the man to jackson, "we just escaped a facility we were brought to that we were

taken to from our familys." The man looked at him with surprise, we need to get yall back home then," He then called for other helicopters which then picked up the other kids, after they all got to the city again, their families were waiting for them, the other kids instantly ran to them reiniting, Jackson and Michael were the last one to go. "I'll see you in the future Jackson" "Me too" replied Jackson, sounding sad. When Michael saw their parents Micheal ran to them crying with happiness, but then Jackson saw his mom, he ran up to her, even though his legs were worn out he kept going until he reached his mom's arms, crying with happiness of being alive.

Marie Kt

Address: 1010 1st St. W. St. Cloud, MN 56301

Age: 17

Grade: 11

Mystery Story: Cat and mouse hunt

"911, what's your emergency?"

"I'm Layla. My friend, she doesn't move. I don't know what happened. I was only one hour away." The call ends.

Agent Walker, a body was found. With a critical posture he moves to his car. Next to him is his partner, Agent Brad. Crowds of people walk across the street, ignoring the conspicuous blue lit car. The blue light comes on and a shrill sound appears. Time flies by in a matter of seconds and they reach the mysterious place of events.

A woman in her 20's storms out of the house with bloodstained clothes. She doesn't notice anything and with complete confusion she moves to Agent Walker and his partner. Her hands are covered in blood, which drip and leave a trail behind her, leading up to the house. Agent Brad holds her tight and tries to calm her down. With a stuttering voice she begins to speak.

"My-my friend. She-she is dead. Blood is everywhere. Oh my gosh."

Agent Walker and Agent Brad look at each other skeptically. A click sounds and the disturbed woman sits in handcuffs.

Without any idea of what stands in the way of them, the two men dressed in black enter the room of action. A weird smell comes towards them, Gas. Only a short time is left for them to leave this crime scene. In reaction they run out of the building.

The house explodes, and debris flies through the air.

After the puff of smoke they can only see the extent of this chemical disaster.

Everything is burned out. Not even one stone stands. After a time the other Agent's cars arrived. Everyone is shocked. Nobody can imagine finding DNA in this debris.

The forensic scientist goes on the search, while their hope dwindles.

Meanwhile, the woman is being questioned in the interview room.

After half an hour of exhausting questioning, the dead body can finally be verified by the mysterious woman. Rachel Johnson, 24 years old and a student at the University UCLA.

She is originally from Texas. Her parents died in a car crash and she has only her two brothers left.

After a while Agent Walker gets a call from forensics. They found a dead corpse with quite a few injuries on the body. Worryingly, they couldn't exactly identify the DNA but they're sure it fits Rachel's profile. A shot took her life. Clearly the woman was murdered in cold blood. After a disturbing call with the brothers, the two stressed-out agents head to Texas.

The house looks old and run down. The two agents ring the bell hesitantly and a tall, broad, about 28-year-old man opens the door in a terrible, miserable mood. Behind him is a second man identical to himself.

The two agents immediately notice the cabinet of weapons. After a fast look they realize it could be a weapon from this house. Both are eventually arrested and transported to Los Angeles. There are now three suspects who don't want to confess anything. The database of the three shows no matching evidence. Now only the identification of the cartridge can sneak a hint. The wait makes Agent Walker and his colleague pretty nervous. Not a single clear trace could help them. Only this little sleeve could be a direct hit. Sixteen hours of patience are now over and the forensic is finally coming out with details. There is a match. A pistol has the same bullet number. Now it is clear. Pablo, the younger brother, is recognized as the owner of the gun and eventually arrested. He tries to claim his innocence, however, no one believes him. For the police, the gun is enough. It appears the inheritance of the parents is the reason for the deed.

However, there is one who has doubts, Agent Walker.

He doesn't like one detail. How did he know we were in the building before the explosion happened? He immediately thinks of the best friend of the victim.

The sirens light up and with full certainty he races to her.

The door is open and a smell comes towards him. The same smell as the other smell from the other house.

He runs into the house at lightning speed. There he finds a body lying motionless on the ground. With all his strength he pulls him outside. Drops of sweat roll down his forehead. Once outside, he realizes it was a fashion mannequin. A small wrinkle under his eyes vibrates. Anger erupts and he slams into this inanimate object with all his might. Then, he stops.

A small rag sticks out of the pile of clothes. It's smudged and he can only make out single words. She knew too much.

He drops the little message and goes into the house. Every step is emotional for him.

He can only guess that the house will soon explode. In every room he pays attention to the smallest detail. Pictures of her and Rachel are everywhere. Focused, he goes over each individual. He gets stuck on one. A man about 30 years old is in the arms of Layla. Probably a friend or the brother he believes. He notices a small tattoo on his arm. A little butterfly. He looks very familiar and goes through all the individual suspects in his head. In a photo taken by Rachel, this butterfly was in the background. She must have known him. After a phone call he finally knows more. It's Layla's husband.

Why didn't she ever mention him? His stomach says something's pretty weird about her.

The message, her disappearance, and the 911 call. Something doesn't add up. She was the only person who visited Rachel that day according to her. He realizes he has to find her. He draws attention to the newspaper in hopes that someone can identify them. During the whole search operation, the sentence she knew too much brought him no rest. Thousands of calls and no hits. His hope is getting smaller and smaller like the amount of sand in an hourglass.

Days of investigations pass, but no trace of her. During this time he got in touch with Layla's husband. However, he had an alibi at the time. He was on his way to Mississippi to deliver groceries. Meanwhile, investigators are starting to think that Layla murdered her best friend because of money problems. Layla owed a lot to the bank and recently heard that Rachel was inheriting her parents' inheritance. Everything is starting

to fall in place from examining the little piece of paper. Time crawls at a snail's pace and the case becomes huge in America. A murderer is on the loose. A scandal for many. Weeks, then months pass and nothing reveals even a small trace. The files are put aside and the resources disappear into dozens of boxes in the warehouse. Everyone moves on and it's in the past now.

No one looked into this pile of documents except Agent Walker. He couldn't stop. He gave her all his free time. Secret research in the station was now part of everyday life for him. The little piece of paper was the big question mark for him. His snooping went so far but still he found nothing. But one day he felt the different. There was a small note in his mailbox. You can't play cat and mouse. If the mouse moves too
34° 4' 19.2" N, 118° 30' 46.8" W.

He recognizes the place. It's the Murphy Ranch. Once there, he moves in slow motion to the building. It's quite remote and uninhabited. Carefully, he walks around the building. At first there is nothing there, but on the second time, he finds something that he never thought to see here.

The husband of Layla. Slowly he goes to him to cope with him. The husband responds by slapping the agent in the face. Walker falls to the ground and faints. He is unresponsive for minutes. When he comes to, he's tied up in a tattered old-fashioned chair. He hears murmuring from a back door. The voices keep getting louder. They evolve into screaming. With full concentration he tries to decipher a sentence in this mess. He adds up one to one. What if the husband had an affair with Rachel and things escalated?

The door opens and a female-shaped figure emerges. With blurred vision, he notices them. His vision slowly begins focusing on one image. Apparently, he recognized the face. He can't believe it. He takes a second look to make sure he's not hallucinating. In front of him stands Rachel, alive and well. He is confused. How is she alive and who is the dead woman in the house? With a strong voice, the reborn dead woman begins to speak.

"Heads up. You were so close.

The dead girl can smile."

He listens to her carefully.

"You were so focused on Layla. The poor girl. Now you can visit her in the cemetery."

She smiles and enjoys his failure.

"I thought you were smarter. You were pretty stupid at first, but when you saw the photo of Layla's husband. That's when I started shaking. But bad luck. The alibi with the delivery person worked pretty well. You were all pretty stupid then. I never thought you'd take it from him and look now. You're in bondage and I'm standing here in freedom. You were so gullible. You couldn't even get the facts together. Layla got in the way. She was just annoying. Her husband could not part with her as she would have everything. And so we solved it now."

Puzzle pieces come together. Everything finally makes sense to him.

"Who was the woman at the crime scene?" he asked.

"Ah that was me. Latex has been quite helpful." she said.

Rachel starts laughing. But she didn't know one thing. He recorded everything and had sent the location to his partner. In seconds the troops would rush in. They are here. Rachel and her companion are handcuffed in no time. And so the solved case was placed on the stack.

Louis Maisonet
4540 Fountain Springs Grove Apt 114
719-725-7647
Age 17
Grade 12th

Screeeeeeeech

Scraping of metal on a hard surface slowly approaches the stiff and almost motionless body of a young man named Robert, his body covered by shadows in a faintly lit room....

Screeeeech

It got closer, almost as if only a few feet away

Screeech

It was right next to him, Robert held his breath.....

Thump thump thump

Thump thump thump

Thump thump thump

His heart was ready to escape his body, his head feeling light and his lungs tight in his chest.

Crash

Robert fell over as wood crashed over his body, crushing his chest and causing pain to spread over his body, a person carrying a bat with screws poking out raised his weapon and started to drop all of his weight into the weapon, Robert stared in fear, but a sound repeated.. something faint...

Drip

Drip

Drip

Drip

Suddenly Robert was sitting in a car driving over to a town called Davis(hopefully a new beginning), his eyes were heavy and his arms were faint "you have arrived at your destination". He parks the car in his friends driveway, he gathers his things and walks over to the door

Ding

He waits for 10 seconds and starts to look around, tall yellow grass, fallen leaves, musty smell almost like socks or rotting meat. He gets a little irritated..

Ding Ding Ding Ding

Wet clothes on his back wasn't the most pleasant feeling.....

Ding Ding Ding Ding Ding Ding Ding

Creak

White hair, green eyes and wrinkles smiled at the young man causing him to smile back

"You must be Robert, I'm Valerie please come on in" said the old lady

Robert awkwardly steps into a dusty house with lots of furniture and pictures of kids.

"Wow Lilly told me your family was big"

"Oh yees. 13 kids in one family"

"How was it raising them?" Robert felt this was a stupid and awkward question but the lady answered nonetheless

"Running a family this big really was a struggle.. trying to get them all food and a ""deserved room"", hahaaaaa, BOY was it a Struggle. Come sit, I'll bring Lilly down here"

Robert sat down and admired the room, candles making the house smell like sweet vanilla, pictures of Lilly and the rest of her family, and a statue of an old man... *Step*

that isn't a statue The old man took big steps and sat across from Robert at the very long and decorated table.....

"What are your intentions with my daughter?".

"Excuse me?".

"Should I be worried about you Boy?"

"Sir, trust me you don't have to worry about me and your daughter doing anything"

"Have a man coming down a long way, seems like you two might have something.. more special going on"

"Trust me.. she's not my.. type"

"Better not be" he starts to slowly drink something from a can as loud footsteps come down the stairs nearby. A girl who Robert recognized to be Lilly, green eyes, small brown hair, and a narrow nose, very beautiful.. perfect on Robert's eyes

"Omg Robbie it's been too long" Lilly said as she went in to hug him

"Yeah.." Robert said a little sad

"You've grown so tall, I remember back in school you were so tiny" Lilly admired everything new about Robert

"Yeah.. big strong guy" her parents stop and blankly stare.... "Sorry?" Robert said.

" I don't doubt it". She presses her finger along the underside of Robert's arm, muscle, a little blubber and wetness. Robert tenses up and says

"So What Are We Eating?"

The next half hour consisted of awkward moments and questions, a couple of laughs and a decent meal that definitely filled everyone's stomach.

Drip

Drip

Drip

Drip

Squeak

Kshhhhh

Lilly started to grab soap and put it on her sponge and started to spread it across every plate, Robert walked up behind her and said "you don't have to do all that, you invited me over".

"It's ok, it's usually my job anyway"

"Or I could do the dishes and you who has been working very hard could relaaax"

"I'll be fine" her arm felt a tug bring her body towards Robbie's.

"Relax, please."

"It's fine, it's only dishes"

"You're working two jobs, you need time to relax. I don't wanna see wrinkles on your beautiful face" she puts his hand towards the sponge and walks away blushing

"NO, I'm nooot, ill be baaaaaack" she walks back up the stairs, and Robert starts to clean the dishes, minutes passed by and nearing the last couple of plates, something catches his eye, a knife with a red... substance? He washes it and puts it to the side and keeps cleaning, once he's done he puts the sponge aside and quickly rinses his hand before walking around the house admiring pictures of the family *13 kids. I'm surprised I only know of one. But I guess I never really asked back then.. 12 siblings, I wouldn't even know how to handle that many*. He walks up the stairs to see dirty walls and stains covering the floor.

"What the fu—"

Stepstepstepstepstep

Robert immediately looked towards the sound, and his eyes widened at the sight of some sort of person wearing saggy black clothes across the long dark hallway holding some sort of long item in their hand, Robert opened a door but instead of entering hid around the corner next to the door and the hallway...

Screeeeeeech

Screeeeech

Screeech

Thump thump thump

Thump thump thump

Thump thump thump

Crash

Back and crushed, raised bat about to fall on Robert's face.

Drip

Drip

Drip

Drip

Blood dripped from the killers arm and Robert without hesitation scratched at the area as the bat fell next to his face as the killer struggled with their wound, Robert grabbed the weapon, slowly got up and slammed it right into the killers head, no hesitation struck fear in Robert's eyes, the killer grabbed the bat from his hand, and used their other hand pick him up from the floor, using the other to now aim the nails on the bat right at Robert's neck, and they whisper

"I thought you would be stronger.."

Crack

The killer took his body and took it back down the stairs and dropped the body in the tall grass.. they take off their mask, green eyes, beautiful face, small brown hair and a narrow nose.. "I thought you would be stronger"

Kira k - skinwalkers

A late night a slight miss rolled against the floor. The house was obviously worn and old. 90, I didn't know about anything that was going to happen that night. What had happened. It was innocent. Inside the house I explored it was well past its youth, its worn steps leading to the front door. If you could call it that any more, it was a door that had fallen off its hinges, it was barely even a door walking in the smell. It was rancid. It was to the point of it smelled if a hospital had been left in the rain. It was damp to the point I believe that it was now just a house left for the harsh weather. It was taken over by the harsh nature. Walking inside seeing old paintings scratch marks weird substances spilled against the floor. Old paintings that had worn though there were in good condition they almost looked untouched if I'm honest. There were some questionable things there. There were old dolls, almost wooden, carved in the fireplace in the charts. Though they didn't seem to be burnt, they tried to burn them but failed in the end. Walking to the stairs 34 stairs in total 12 of them missing and or broken a loud shot of thunder called my name from outside. "Of course it would start to storm especially when I'm in a spooky house" I thought to myself gently letting my air expire from my lungs gently gulping at the thought.

Moving towards the kitchen there were big jars with animal parts? Big animal parts, most of them broken, cracked or damaged in some way shape or form. There was a cross on one of the walls. It was bigger than me behind that cross a shelf. "Odd-" I muttered looking at it. The house had no light. It was old, grabbing a lighter from my pocket lighting. It took a few flicks to get it ignited, seeing the small flame in my hand quickly lighting a nearby candle, grabbing it and picking it up, closing my lighter. Walking around the kitchen the table was made with food now covered in maggots that would soon be flies glancing towards the cross. I set the candle down pushing the cross to the floor. Glazing at the wall that had scratch marks behind the shelf pushing and shifting the shelf out of the way seeing a crept door behind it scratch marks going into the door opening it with son jiggered movements.

Opening it up I saw what to be a couple chained and hung up above an embedded pentagram. They had masks on their faces: an ox and a dog. Their arms had big hooks though they had no blood but it looked infected. They were dangling from the roof, a wife and husband. It was so very odd to look at. I thought I was going to throw up right then and there.

Walking past them I started to check the things behind them shelves tables with "things" on them I didn't know what to call them at this point that's when the smell hit me.....blood fresh blood to say the least it was fresh and it wasn't sitting there then a loud **Crunch** was heard from the south east from me the loud crunch was bone chilling I could hear the low growl of a hound? If I thought it was that... it wasn't the loud exhaling and inhaling from the beast was nothing like a human nothing that was from this world to say it.

It was more than I could have ever thought of. Glancing to the side of me it was....bone curdling I couldn't fully see it in this dim light but what I did see a female male thing its face cut broken open into a bunch of parts that spread open her jaw unhinged crunching biting into a german shepherd the dog long dead then it has been it couldn't even be called a dog anymore it was so....gory it was really strong scented the girls bones **Snapped** misplacing themselves its skin if you could say that was ripping with this god awful sound of static skin being ripped apart quickly. Yet sloppy. You could see the bones out of the skin, the flesh barely hanging on at this point. It made me think it was done at that point. Gently turning, stepping on a piece of glass, the thing snapping its head with a loud snapping sound that a human neck would make.

The dogs fleshed paw barely hanging on the paws flesh/fur caught in the things mouth.

In a quick movement the paw was adjusted, getting engulfed; the crunch was the worst part of it.

The monster came rushing in front of my face a black a sort of red black oozing out of its mouth it stared at me with such intensity it didn't have eyes its sockets were....cold and empty I didn't know how to speak to it I didn't want to breathe the thing learned its head down before screeching to the top of its lungs. I quickly moved out of the way running towards the door. Only realizing that I had left the candle back in the room going into the pitch black. Quickly ducking

under some debris that was in the living room trying to stay quiet. The thing following behind me crashing into things screeching trying to find me. At this point I was waiting for death but I didn't want to die. Huffing slightly, catching my breath the creature became quite oddly quiet to the point I had started to panic. Footsteps emanated from the upstairs but..... The monster I could hear it on all fours in the kitchen still trying to look for me.

Me not knowing how to act and or try and go about this situation I leave the area I was in the monster quickly coming after me. It was like it could hear me before I did something. I tried to look for a way out a window but it was pitch black the smell I remember so faintly right as I crashed into something. I remember the smell of a mother. That sweet scent like she had just finished baking cookies and she was calling me to go get dinner. It was something out of a book, a fresh sugar cookie smell. I crashed into what to be assumed as a chair crashing down the thing quickly jumping and crashing into something the only way I could see was by the lightning of the thundering storm that was going on outside. Skittering across the floor just to make it to what felt like a wet rug I laid there silent hoping to god that the creature would just give up. 'For once' I thought to myself 'why did I have to go out why did I have to disobey my mother's wishes it was his dying wish he wanted me to be the one to find out what had happened he wanted to explore this place but never got the chance I now know why' sighing laying on the floor feeling as if all life had given up on me my own body wouldn't move I felt so drained at that moment I didn't know this is how my life would end 'the pathetic life once loved by all and now ready to go sprout now a worn flower its petals deflowered ready to give up on anything that was to come.

I should have already given up. There was nothing I could do in this situation with everything going on. I just closed my eyes. It was already dark. It started to get very cold. The cold wrapping around me like a blanket embracing me like a motherly figure. It was almost warm. It was like it wasn't getting cold. I could feel the monster walking around its harsh bones cracking and shaking with each step it had walked. It was getting closer that was for sure.

I just wanted to leave at this point. My body had become so weak at this point I couldn't scream even if I wanted to there was no use. At all it was all up to fate. It was getting so very cold I believed it was below the temperature and the only source of light with a swift breath went out. The last thing that I relied on or used to the only light, the thunder, was a comfort yet a curse. Listening to the deadly sounds of this house, its wooden steps, the steps above me and the thing looking around and breaking things just to find me. 'Please' i muttered ready to say my last words with absolutely no one listening "lord please don't let me die like this" i muttered the master screeching over my words but i didnt care as i closed my eyes i could hear faint steps walking towards me i didnt bother to open my eyes i didnt want to.

When i had come to i was laying on a makeshift cot a bed sort of thing a female infront of me it didnt look like a house it was outside the smell of rain felt nice. Dusk had arrived over the horizon 'its over-' i thought to myself the female tending to me the female smiled soon speaking.

"You where out for awhile is your wound feeling ok i thought you had bled out there for a second" giving a gentle chuckle

"B-bled out!?" i started to question my own sanity i had a wound that almost killed me?

"Yeah your wound" she pointed to my right thigh which had a decent sized hole though it Did i not notice this because i was in a panic? It hit me!? No no it couldnt have i started to freak out this freaked out the female who was quick to comfort me

"Hey its ok calm down you left a blood trail so i was able to find you but be quiet we are outside of the house"

I sighed in relief it was off on how she found me in time but i didnt mind it at least i was safe and out of there resting in the females arms she wrapped her arms around me gently kissing my forehead with a smile. Resting against her i smiled before seeing it my face going a pale white i had seen a ghost a new wound that a bone would snap out of looking up the females face unhinged.

end.

"Hallo? Hallo? Jemand da?"

Es war still im Zimmer. Der Mann war allein. Er weiß nicht, wohin er gehen soll. Er hat etwas gehört. Es waren metallische Füße auf dem Fliesenboden, die auf das Büro zugingen. Das Ding kam den Flur entlang. Der verängstigte Mann schloss schnell die Tür. Beide. Er hörte es an der Tür hämmern, um hineinzukommen. Die Akkulaufzeit liegt bei zehn Prozent. Es ist jedoch zwei Uhr morgens. am Morgen. Fünf Prozent. Nicht gut. Zwei Prozent. Schlechter. Ein Prozent. Äh, oh. Die Tür öffnete sich, als der Strom ausfiel. Die metallischen Schritte sind zurück. Die Schritte hielten vor dem Büro an. Und er hörte das Ding einatmen, aus, ein, aus, ein und aus. Der Mann ging zur anderen Tür, um nachzusehen, bevor er entkam. Er rannte, aber er wurde erwischt... er war umzingelt.

"Hello? Hello? Anyone there?"

It was quiet in the room. The man was alone. He doesn't know where to go. He heard something. There were metallic feet on the tiled floor, heading toward the office. The thing came down the hall. The frightened man quickly closed both doors. He heard a pounding on the door to get in. The battery life is ten percent. However, it is two in the morning. Five percent. Not good. Two percent. Worse. One percent. Uh, oh. The door

opened when the power went out. The metallic footsteps are back. The footsteps stopped in front of the office. And he heard the thing breathe in, out, in, out, in and out. The man went to the other door to check before escaping. He ran, but he got caught... he was surrounded.

Convenience Store on Drennen

By Christian Tl

I woke up this morning thinking to myself if today was the day. Every day is the same thought, am I gonna make it out this time? I never thought this is how it would end.

I pulled up to Quas's house late that night as we hadn't decided whether or not we were going through with the plan. As I hopped out of the car, my heart dropped as my footsteps stuttered. It was like my body was telling me something that I didn't listen to. I walked up to the porch and knocked on the metal screen, each knock echoing through my ears. Quas hopped to the door, handing me a drink and my ski mask.

"So we doin' this tonight?" Quas exclaimed with excitement.

"Well, what else do we have to do tonight?" I said with a mellow tone.

"Aight so we have 3 options. We can hit the one on Montrose, the one on Bradley, or the one on Drennen. I mean the one on Montrose closes in 20 and the one on Bradly is out there. Drennen is in the city, but this late I bet no one's there."

"Well, it seems you got the obvious choice man."

"Aight let's get it done," Quas said, hopping up, tucking his Glock into his waistband.

Dimly lit by the blue LEDs in his living room, Quas stared into the mirror almost in a meditative mood. I stood staring into what seemed to be red lights as voices rushed into my head.

"YO MARK!" Quas screamed. "Let's go man, what was that about?"

"My bad dawg, I just got distracted, man."

"You're good, let's just hit it."

We jump in the car, turning the radio up to clear our minds. *Twenty minutes and we'll be out. Twenty minutes and I can go home and sleep. Twenty minutes.* Lyrics echoing through my head as we drive down Drennen.

"Full of adrenaline, ignorant to what death can cause, ain't no coming back, family dressed in black, plus it's hot now, the cops outside, it's hard to flip a pack, and my daughter gotta eat," I turn the radio down.

"How's your baby doin', man? How's little Quas junior?" I laugh with worry.

"He's good man, he's real good. His mama, she's the one with the problem. I barely get to see him 'cause she messin' around too much."

"Damn," I say, sighing.

"That's why I gotta do this shit just to pay her man. I love that kid. I'd do anything for him and she keeps planting seeds in his mind about me, man. It's not cool."

"Wow, man, I'm sorry that ain't it," I say as I pat him on his shoulder.

"Aight man we here, roll past, see if anyone's inside," Quas exclaimed.

We drove past the convenience store, looking to see if any customers were inside. We didn't see anyone so we pulled across the street and parked the car. Sliding on my ski mask, I grabbed my uzi out of the car door loading a chamber, *Klink*, the slide cracks against the metal. I turn to the bright neon sign, seeming to overshadow the night sky. I feel my heart pounding out of my chest as I look over at Quas. *Click clack*, as he pumps the shotgun. We run up to the storefront and Quas kicks open the door. Putting the shotgun at the clerk.

"Put your hands up or I'll shoot!" Quas shouted.

I aim my uzi at the clerk and walk up to him behind the counter.

"Open the register man," I said menacingly. "Open it right now!"

"Oh okay, I... I just need--"

"I don't care, open it right now," Quas screamed.

"Okay, please just don't hurt me!" The old man begged.

I push the old man out of the way onto the ground and start loading the money into the bag. The old man reaches to grab something under the counter. *PRWAP, PRWAP, PRWAP.*

"WHAT THE HELL MAN!" Quas screams from in front of the counter.

"I HAD TO, HE PULLED A PIECE ON ME!" I said in a panic.

"Okay... Okay, let's go to the back, grab the tape, and dip. LET'S GO!"

We ran to the back and grabbed the tape from the outdated security system. I turned to run out the door when I crashed into a filing cabinet knocking it over as it crashed to the ground. VHS Tapes scattered across the floor. I look up at Quas as he looks down at the tapes. I jump up and crack my neck.

"We gotta get out of here, bro," I said.

"For real let's g—" A blood-curdling scream comes from a door in the office.

"What was that?" Quas questioned.

"Who cares! Let's go, we're out," I said, running out of the office.

I run to the front door and push on it. The door doesn't budge. I look and see the bars on the outside of the store have been closed and locked. I turn around and see the old man standing behind Quas with a gun to his head.

"QUAS!"

I run pushing Quas out of the way— *CLACK*.

"You stupid—" *BLAM*.

Quas stands up and kicks the old man to make sure he is dead. Quas picks me up and takes me to the office dropping me in the chair. *BLAM*.

"Wha— What the hell happened?" I asked.

"I'm going in this basement, you heard the screaming, the tapes, something isn't right here," Quas said angrily.

I reach up and feel my head and the blood-soaked wound. The graze of the bullet knocked me out. Quas gets the door open as we hear more sounds coming from

the basement. I struggle to stand up and walk over to the door. A dark pit lit by the one bulb at the top of the steps. Quas takes his first step as the creek echoes in my mind. I follow behind as we use our phone lights to see. We see a hallway with a couple of closed doors. A creek comes from the end of the hallway as a door slowly opens. Our lights dart to the end of the hallway as Quas aims his shotgun at the door. A woman crawls out bloodied begging for help. Quas starts slowly walking over to her. The door behind the woman slings open as a masked man with butcher garments runs out the door. The man looks up- *CLICK, CLICK*.

"THE GUNS JAMMED!" Quas screamed, stepping backward, tripping on himself, and running into me.

The man started running towards us with a knife. We start to run up the stairs, *SHINK*.

"QUAS!" I screamed as I watched the man stab the knife into his back. "NO, NOOO!"

"Run!"

I scrambled up to the tops of the steps as I reached for my uzi I had left on the floor. The screams of Quas scratch through my ears. As I run back to the stairs, I trip on the tapes.

"Oh no!" I exclaim as I fall down the stairwell.

Crashing into the man and Quas taking them with me down the stairs. I slowly jump up and hold the gun to

the head of the man. I look down at Quas's lifeless body and the woman behind me. I look down at the man with his distorted long face, almost as if it was stretched out and covered in what seems like blood. *PWRAP*, I put one shot in the man's head. I swear to god I did not miss. *I put a bullet in his head.* I go to Quas and check his pulse. I feel something, so I grab him by his shoulders and use all my strength to pull him up the stairs. I lay him on the ground at the top of the steps. I take the bag of money and dump the money out. I put the tapes in the bag as I walked over to the old man's body. I find the keys to the door and unlock it. I grab the bag and run to the car, turning on the engine and driving the car up to the store. I jump out and get to the door looking up. The man standing with his knife in the door. Shook, I look up as he starts to walk towards me. I aim my uzi at him and ring off the rest of my clip. The man taking the bullets like pebbles. Still walking towards me, I hesitate but run towards the man, tackling him to the ground and breaking his grip on the knife. We crash into a glass fridge door. I start wailing at the man, breaking his face and distorting it more. I hop up and run to grab Quas, dragging his body as fast as I can to the car. I see the man get up and stomp toward the car. I drive off as he puts his fist through the window of the passenger side door. I look back to see him standing lit by the neon lights of the store. After that, I drove here.

"Mhm, okay, so you said this was the convenience store on Drennen right?" said the officer. "Give me one second, I am gonna go check on something okay."

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"Yes sir, thank you," Mark said.

Mark looks in the window at the street and in the distance, he sees under a lamppost the man with the distorted face standing there staring. He rubs his eyes and looks up to see nothing.

"Ahem, okay, Marcus it looks like your friend is going to be okay. More news as well. We got to the convenience store and there was the old man you told us about and we found the basement, but it was cleared out. You said you had some tapes?"

"Uh yes... yeah I do, they are in my bag along with the keys for the store," Mark exclaimed.

"Okay, thank you. We will be back here soon to figure out some more things with you."

That night changed me. I still see his face. Quas and I haven't talked in a couple of weeks. I sometimes wish I would've chosen another location. Maybe it would have been different. Maybe I would never have found those tapes, the rooms, that man.

Dimly lit by the blue LEDs in his living room, I stood staring.

"YO MARK!" "Let's go man what the hell was that about?"

Emma C

Creative Writing

Acker

10-17-2022

The girl in the Alley

"Morning Max!"

"Good morning, Clidia," I reply, lifting up the coffee in my hands as a makeshift wave. I walk past our station's welcoming secretary. I make my way through the hallway that leads to the "pit", an open area with all of my team's desks together with white boards and cork boards so we can organize our investigations.

I see both John and JB sitting at their respective desks. Both have old case files out with their computers open and each with one earbud in. This early morning on a Monday, I'm surprised that anyone's in yet. Normally I'm the first one in, being the team lead and seeing what has to be done for the day. My team, thankfully, only deals with the high risk cases or the more complex ones. I sit down at my desk and go through my normal routine. Slowly, the other three members trickle in and take seats at their desks getting to work.

At about 10 am, I receive a call from Clidia telling me that dispatch just answered a call about a dead body. After gathering a few pieces of information, I give her a thanks, and hang up the phone. I look up at my team, only to find them all looking at me expectantly. "Let's go. We got a body."

We pulled up to the location that was called in, located on the north end of the downtown area. This is an area of transition between classes and white collared to blue collared. John parks the SUV and jumps out. The young bucks always have more of an excitement for this than the rest of us. I roll out of the front passenger seat, with Robertsons jumping out behind me and Hills gets out behind John. By the time the four of us close our doors, the other vehicle carrying the rest of our team pulls up. JB opens the front driver door first, then Tyler, and finally Megan climbs out of the front passenger door.

We all come together at the hoods of the two cars. One of the officers at the scene walks up to us with his hand out. I shake it as he starts the introductions. "I'm Officer Watson. Me and my partner were the first ones on scene. We got a call from the shop owner this morning at about 9:30. She was taking out the trash when she saw feet. She thought it was just some homeless person sleeping, but when she walked closer..." he left that statement at that, "She called the cops right away. We have the shop owner in her office with my partner. Thought she might be more comfortable there, she looked pretty shaken up."

"Thank you Officer." I shake his hand one more time, then turn to my team to give out job assignments. "Hill, take John and the two of you get her statement and any other information you might be able to. Robertsons and Megan, go around to the neutering stores to see if any one might have seen or heard anything. JB, you and I will stay here and gather scene evidence."

We break off into groups and get to work.

"I will grab the cameras out of the cars." I give JB a nod as he walks away from me.

I see the coroner at the body. "What do we have, Tom?" I squat down next to him, trying to get a better look at the victim. Tom has been with the county for as long as I have been on the force.

"Not much as of right now. The victim is a female in her early to mid 30's. She sustained two GSWs to the chest and a third to the shoulder. According to liver temp and rigor mortis, she has been dead for about two days. I won't know more until I get her back to the lab and run tests."

"Thanks, Tom." I pat him on his shoulder and stand up. Turning around I see that JB has returned and is starting to take photos. Collecting evidence and laying down the makers is not part of what my team does, but I have found that taking photos has worked very well when we are trying to solve the case, that way we can have the evidence there without all of the red tape of physically having it.

I walk over to my teammate to pass on the info that I just received. He gives me a funny look, one that I have come to understand as his thinking look, than asks, "If she has been dead for roughly two days, and the owner only just found her, then where was she?"

"That's the million dollar question right now." We spend about another hour at the scene collecting all the info, then, as a team regroup and head back to the station.

Once we get in, we gather around our conference table surrounded by cork boards and white boards that we use to organize our thoughts. It takes about thirty

minutes to individually gather our thoughts and ideas, and print out any digital things we may find useful, like the photos that JB took or the notes that our tech genius took on her phone.

"So, what did we find," JB asks once it looks like we finished our internal thoughts.

John is the first to speak up, "the store owner said that she lives on the second floor of the building right next to the alley. Her dog was barking late last night, but she did not think anything of it cause he will sometimes bark at the random person that passes by on the street. She did not recognize the victim, either. Said that as soon as she found the body, she dropped the trash and ran back into the store and called 911." While he is talking, he puts all of his notes up on one of white boards with magnets.

"The owner was just a scared old lady who found the body. She did say though that her only other employee was supposed to open and not her. I got the employee's contact info just in case," Hill added.

Megan is the next one to take the floor. "Talking to the surrounding businesses, none of them saw anything abnormal, though some of them did say that they were willing to give us any security footage we might need. At the scene, once we got back, I ran the victim's figure prints and photo through local and state databases and I got a hit." She stands up and puts a clean photo of the victim on the center board. "Here we have 32 year old Emily Vent. She was reported missing by her younger sister on Saturday afternoon. Both her and her sister are local girls, born and raised." The second Megan said the name, Vent, Hill started to frantically search through her notes.

"Something wrong, Hill," I ask, speaking for the first time in the meeting.

"The name sounds familiar....Found it. The employee from the shop, her last name is Vent."

"Thanks for stealing my thunder, H," Megan fake pouts, "But, yes, Emily's sister, Catherine, does work at the mom n' pop shop where the body was found."

"Let's start there. We will go over the evidence once we get Tom's autopsy report and with any luck, the tox screen. JB, Amy, and Hill, the three of you go to the sister's house and talk to her. Keep an eye out for anything unusual, we have no idea what role she might be playing in her sister's death. Meg, can you text them the address, then do a deep dive into the sister. Call them if anything pops out as strange. Do me a favor and start with her bank accounts, I just have a gut feeling about something. John, you're with me." Everyone nods their heads in acceptance to my requests.

John and I are the last ones out of the conference room. "So where are we going, Boss man?" I roll my eyes at his nickname, I have told him to not call me that but at this point I have just accepted it.

"We are going to go to the county morgue and harrass Tom about the body. Then we will run to the lab and see what they have processed." We walk out of the building and jump into the SUV. "The lab will be a long shot, but we're there. Might as well ask. But Tom works fast so he may have most of his findings down."

The short ride to Tom's offices is a quiet one filled with a comfortable silence. We find Tom just walking out of his lab area and moving it towards his desk. Hearing the main door opens, he stops and turns towards us. "I was wondering how quickly you were going to show up," he commented. He made eye contact with John. "I don't think we've met before. I'm Tom, stick around long enough and we will become good

acquaintances.” He turns towards the swinging door that leads back to his lab and makes a follow me motion. “I’ll get right to the point, cause of death was as I suspected the two gunshot wounds to her chest. I was able to remove the bullet from her shoulder wound and sent it upstairs for the techs to match. Our victim appeared healthy, but once I removed her clothing, I found lots of fresh bruises. I have yet to receive the tox screen for her blood, so you will have to pester upstairs for that. Under all of the bruising, the poor woman also had several ribs broken with very minor healing, indicating that they were broken. Only days before her death. I found freezer burn on the back of her calves, so I took several skin samples, and even those samples showed signs of freezer burn at a cellular level. I had to rework some calculations, but I now put the time of death at roughly eight am on Friday. So she has been dead for three days instead of two.” All throughout his little speech, Tom was pointing out the parts that he was talking about. John had stayed quiet throughout it all, trying to take in all of the information.

My phone rings. I don’t look at who is calling and answer right away “Detective Vee.”

“Max,” JB replies, “we got a problem. We are at the sister’s house, but she says that her sister was kidnapped. They called her on Wednesday and demanded money. 50,000 dollars worth. When we first got here she started to freak out saying that we just got her sister called.”

“Has Megan called you yet?”

“Not yet,” there is an awkward pause on his end. “Speak of the devil, hold on, let me make a conference call with all three of us.” I hang up, knowing that he will call me right back. I start to make my way back to the office and towards the main doors.

"Tom, as always, thank you. But I have a feeling that I now need to talk to the forensic techs." As we walk out towards the elevators, my phone rings again with the conference call with JB and Megan.

"Megan, what did you find?"

"That, that gut of yours always seems to be right. I was digging through Catherine's bank accounts and found a major withdrawal of 50,000 dollars, cash. Her bank has a policy that says that any withdrawal over five thousand must be made in person. She demanded the money apparently fast and the reason she stated was for a family member. I tried to track her cell phone usage over the past four days to follow her through GPS. Her movements looked normal on Wednesday, just to work and home. Thursday is the same, other than a detour to the bank. Friday, Saturday, and the first half of Sunday get weird with her phone being off for the entirety of all three days. What twenty year old these days goes without the use of a cell phone for an extended period of time. Other than that I could not find much on her."

"That throws up some red flags. What do you want me to do, Max?"

"Bring her to the station. We are going to have questions about her whereabouts and the kidnapping. Also where did she get 50,000 dollars that fast? We don't want to spook her though, so make up some excuse. Stay there with her. John and I just finished at Tom's and are making our way to forensics now. We will see if they have anything. What evidence they do have, we will bring the info back to the team."

"Will do." I hung up the phone after that. Just then, the doors to the elevator open and we both step into the cart. I fill John in on the sister on the way up to the labs.

"What are you thinking," John asks once I convey the information.

"All we have right now is circumstantial evidence, and nothing concrete. I'm hoping that this trip to the lab can paint us a better picture of what happened. But a young female who withdraws 50,000 dollars, goes without cell usage for two and a half days, during which her sister was killed and reported missing for a week should make anyone suspicious."

The doors open to the forensics lab. We step out and make our way to our point of contact with the lab. We talk to him for about thirty minutes, gathering any information he might have on the case. When the conversation is over, John and I get back to our vehicle and drive to the station.

We walk in through the back doors, making a b-line to where the team's desks are trying to gather everyone up for a meeting about the new developments on the case.

Once everybody is seated in the conference room, I decide to open this time. "Techs found three strands of foreign DNA on the victim's clothing. They were able to match one to her sister, but have been unable to match the other two. The rape kit came back negative. The bullet that Tom removed from her shoulder was found to be from a .45. The other two wounds matched the shoulder wound, so they are working under the assumption that the same gun caused all three injuries. We found drag marks, but no blood at the scene. Tom said that he found signs that the body had been frozen and the new time of death is now eight am on Friday morning. Megan said that Catherine had turned off her cell Friday morning, all day Saturday, and the first half of Sunday. Megan also did find proof that Catherine did withdraw 50,000 dollars, cash, so that part of her story is true. What did you guys find out, Hill?"

"When we first answered the door, Catherine seemed fine until we showed our badges. After that, she tried to shut us out. Once that did not work, she quickly shuffled us into her house and proceeded to tell us that her sister had been kidnapped. She supposedly received a ransom call during the day on Thursday. They demanded 50,000 dollars, cash, and set the drop time for Friday at nine am. The drop place was set for a local park, once she got the bench, they called her once again and told her to leave the money in a nearby trash can and walk away. Once she did that, they told her that they would release her sister and she would be calling. Apparently, she has been holed up in her house waiting for her sister to call her, but she never received the call."

Megan is the next one to contribute. "I continued to dig on the family once y'all left. Emily was reported missing by Catherine, that much is true. I found security footage at the precinct that filed the report. I ran a trace on Emily's phone and found that she had been active on it until Thursday night. Furthermore, the last text that Emily received was from her sister, asking her to meet her for coffee in the morning. Financially, I can't see why anyone would want to kidnap Emily. Nobody from the family has much money and neither of the girls seem to have any enemies. Emily doesn't have any social media accounts that I could find, and Catherine only has Instagram."

Once she is done, I give the team a few minutes to absorb the information. "Ok, let's start by working the kidnapping angle." My phone rings, interrupting me. "Hello?"

"Max, it's Sam, from the forensics lab. We were able to match the other two skin cells found under the victim. Their brothers. Go by the name of Fred and Jack Johnson. I just sent you their address."

"Thanks, Sam," I said to him. I turn back to my team, "change of plans, the techs got a match on the other two DNA samples found on Emily. Two brothers, Fred and Jack Johnson. He already sent me the address, they share an apartment in the downtown area. Amy and Hill, stay here and talk to the sister some more, try to get as much information out of her as you can. Try to find discrepancies in her story. Megan, work your magic and pull digital files on the brothers. The rest of us let's go arrest the brothers."

We end up taking both vehicles to the house. All of us jump out of the cars and quietly close the doors. "Megan said that both brothers are home right now. Tyler, John, take the back door, wait for my signal to enter. JB, you're with me, we'll take the front. Thermal imaging shows we have two bodies in the living room, so we will meet in the middle there."

We all break off, keeping low with our guns out. "Entry in three, two, one." On the count of one, all hell broke loose. A combination of "Police," and "Get on the ground," being shouted by the four of us.

JB and Tyler both each subdued a brother and cuffed them. They did not put up much of a fight.

Once we get back to the station, we put each brother in a separate interrogation room.

JB and Tyler each interrogate the brother they arrested. During that time Megan gives us a file with the info that she pulled on the brothers. Next, I talk to Amy and ask for any new info that she might have gotten out of the sister.