

sps 7·8

vol 4 #3

The literary magazine of the 7th and 8th grades
Somerville, Massachusetts



Spring 2019

sps7·8 **vol 4 #3**

**The literary magazine of the 7th and 8th grades
Somerville, Massachusetts**

teachers and advisers:

Roy Gardner, English language arts
East Somerville Community School
Chris Mitchell, English language arts
Arthur D. Healey Elementary School
Emma Daniels, English language arts
Arthur D. Healey Elementary School
Julie Hughes, English language arts
East Somerville Community School
Emily Alcott, art
East Somerville Community School
Alan Ball, creative writing laboratory
Writers' Den

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The Writers' Den Poetry Wall: A large selection of poetry from students in all grades appears online at 12zine.com. Please visit and read.

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BBQ at MY House

Franklin Alvarado

This one time when I was 11, during the summer, on a really good summer day not too hot and a nice breeze at certain times, my family was hosting a BBQ at my house. Since I was really good at grilling meat, I had the duty to trim the meat, put on the seasoning, and I was on duty to grill the meat. I've done this before so to me it was light work.

The hammer had spikes on the bottom plus the top. I was cutting the meat because there were bigger pieces than others, and I didn't want pieces to be too big or too small. I grabbed this really thick piece of meat, I grabbed a meat hammer to make the piece thin because I wanted this piece. The piece of meat was so thick, it was like 2 inches thick. I hit the meat and all I heard was a....

“THUD”.

I hit the meat and nothing happened so I gave it another hit.

“THUD”

Another...

“THUD”

I thought the meat was Superman because the meat wouldn't budge.

The hammer had spikes on the bottom plus the top. This time I was gonna hit it really hard with all my strength and I missed the piece of meat and I hit my left hand really hard.

“THUD”

I started screaming in pain.

“AHHHHHHH”

“@#!\$, %@#!, *@^!^#\$ HELL”

I bet you can imagine what I meant with those special letters. Since the hammer had spikes on them, the spikes hit my hand, and after I lifted up the hammer really fast there was an indent on my hand. I still have an indent on my hand to this day. In my head I was just thinking about all the things I couldn't do, like play goalie in soccer, play video games, ride my bike, text people, play basketball. So I was upset about that.

I said some inappropriate things and my Mom comes rushing down the stairs because I said those things so loud that if you were a block away from my house you could hear me, and she said.....

“Oye, ¿qué pasa contigo y diciendo esas cosas?”

(HEY WHAT’S UP WITH YOU AND SAYING THOSE THINGS?)

I said....

“Mira”(Look).

She said...“Oh Dios mío, ¿qué hiciste?”(Oh my god, What did you do?)

I said....“Golpeé mi mano con el martillo de carne en un accidente”(I hit my hand with the meat hammer by accident).

I hit my hand so hard, it was swollen for a week. First red then blue and purple. I was the best person in my family to grill meat. My hand was so swollen I couldn’t pick up the tongs to put the meat on the grill.

I was the best in my family to grill meat. My Dad said he will take over and 30 Minutes later most of the meat is BURNED. So all I ate was rice and mac salad.

My lesson from this is have ADULT SUPERVISION.

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My Cat Ripped Up My Homework

Ana Luna Maldonado Clougherty

Everybody has heard the phrase “my dog ate my homework” at one point or another as an excuse as to why they did not do their homework. In fact this phrase is so overused that when someone says this it is labeled as a joke because nobody in their right mind would believe this excuse. But one time something like this actually did happen to me.

I was doing my weekly homework for Mr. Gardner and I had about one and a half pages written and it was going really well. The writing was flowing and I was feeling very confident in it when I decided that I was going to take a break, get a snack, maybe have some water etc. I was gone for about 10 minutes when I decided to start working again. As I was walking down the hallway to get to my living room I saw my cat walk out of the living room suspiciously (or

as suspicious as a cat can look) but I did not think much of it at the time. I walked into the room, and it took a few seconds for me to notice what had happened and a few more for it to process.

I saw the ripped homework on the floor. One half right in front of me and the other thrown across the room. I realized what must have happened. I let out an angry shout and thankfully I was home alone so nobody was around to hear it. I picked my homework up to see if I could salvage it. I couldn't, then I checked to see if it was legible, it wasn't, and I finally decided that it was a lost cause.

After I accepted there was no hope I considered my options. I could tell Mr. Gardner what had happened, but there was no guarantee that he would give me credit for it or that he would believe me (if someone said that to me I probably wouldn't) or I could attempt to rewrite it. I decided that even though it may be more work that rewriting was the better option. So I got a new piece of paper and made SURE that my cat was locked OUTSIDE the living room. He was clawing at the door and meowing sadly. I almost felt bad for him but then I took a look at my shredded homework and the feeling went away.

The only thing that I really remembered from my first draft was the introduction so I wrote that word by word but after that I was on my own with a little help from the paper shreds. I did my best to recreate my writing but the magic was gone and instead of flowing I felt a little like a robot while writing it. I ended up not liking my second draft very much compared to the first one but it would have to do because there was no way that I was going to rewrite it for a third time and I had to turn something in to Mr. Gardner.

So I ended up finishing my homework and had actually written more than the first time even though I did not like what I had written. Fortunately I learned my lesson and never left or will leave my cat alone or otherwise with my homework or any kind of important and rip-able paper when I am not there to supervise or stop him. It has not happened since that day and it never will again.

© 2019 Ana Luna Maldonado Clougherty

Burned

Ari Weissman-Bennet

It feels like it has been forever but really it has only been a few years, since August of 2015 when everything went wrong on a night that was seemingly perfect. This is how it all happened.

We were in one of my favorite places to go in the summer, Ponkapoag. The smell of a campfire could be smelled from anywhere on the campground. The crackling of embers could be heard as well. The night was as perfect as it could be. We were roasting s'mores. I had just finished my first and my chocolatey, sticky face grinned with delight. I went for a second s'more. I let my marshmallow burn over the warm flame until it started to brown on every side unlike Zack who thought it was best to burn the marshmallow to a crisp. Mine was a perfect s'more-making marshmallow.

Then everything seemed to go into S-L-O-W motion. As I turned my brother brought his flaming marshmallow toward me, from the grill, in all its blazing fire and hit me right near my elbow. My marshmallow fell to the ground. Before I could say, *There goes my perfect marshmallow, hope the ground enjoys it*, I saw something that lit up my arm like a firework, it was like a spark burning into my arm; it hurt a ton, like my arm was on fire! I cried out in agony!

I tried not to cry. I ran to my mom and on my way over I stubbed my toe on a rock, to make things worse. Everybody asked what had happened. I told them I had burned my right arm, or more like it, my brother Zack had burned me and it burned and stung a ton. My marshmallow was on the ground and now covered by the soft pine needles (it was weird that I was thinking more about my marshmallow than my arm). The flickering of the little spark embedded into my arm was just fading away. When it was completely gone we got a flashlight to look at it. I saw a little X in my arm with a few little swollen dots next to it. I did not like how it looked.

The people we were having dinner with got me some ointment to put on it. They said that when they got a burn it helped. In my case, it only made it burn more. What also did not help was that my

brother thought I was faking (to this day he still thinks that. Even when I tell him I wasn't faking and that had happened to him before and he reacted the same way and I never say he was faking.) I was no longer in the mood for a s'more, I was just in the mood to go to bed. So I walked up the hill to our cabin and fell asleep with my arm burning up and hoping that the next day my arm would feel better. That is how a perfect night can be turned into a bad one.

I hope my brother has learned you should be careful with fire no matter how safe you think you are being because you could get someone else or yourself hurt. © 2019 Ari Weissman-Bennet

Skates

Natalie Covin

It was the day of the field trip, and I was so excited to go ice skating again. Last Christmas, I had gotten a pair of ice skates from my parents after begging them for years. I really liked ice skating, even if I wasn't very good at it.

About a week ago, the permission slips for an ice skating field trip had been passed around the class. Naturally, it took me about a week to get it signed. It was the usual process, ask my dad to sign it, he says 'later,' I believe him, he doesn't sign it, I ask again, etc. Eventually, I just decided to ask him to sign it while I was *there*. That worked. I brought it into class two days before the actual field trip, which was better than it could have been. As I waited for the day of the field trip to come, I became impatient, as I normally did with these things.

Surprisingly enough, the day of the field trip *did* come, and I *did* get my chance to use my new ice skates. As I was leaving, my mom asked me, "Natalie, do you have everything?"

"Yes!" I responded, "Don't worry, I'll be fine!"

"Are you sure?" she asked, concerned. "Do you have your ice skates?"

"Yes, mom. I have my ice skates. Thanks I love you bye!" I reassured, rushing out the door before she could respond. I had to get to school!

When I got to school, I learned, as I probably could have guessed, that we would be walking there. I did not guess that. The

ice skating rink was fairly close, but the problem was that it was raining. And I didn't have rain boots, a raincoat, or even an umbrella!

The walk to the ice skating rink was a bit long, but also kind of nice. I didn't have glasses, so I didn't have to worry about getting rain all over them. Yet. However, it was quite rainy out, and the whole 'no umbrella' thing still made my hair uncomfortably damp, like your socks if you were walking on a wet sidewalk without shoes on. Which is another thing I did not bring! Socks! Now, when I was in fifth grade, I absolutely despised socks. We were in a war. I thought they were 'little foot prisons' and 'did not deserve to exist.' That reasoning was how I made one of the worst decisions I have ever made.

When we got to the ice rink, most kids lined up in front of the rental booth for skates. *I* did not, which made me think I was very cool. Some people asked me about my skates, to which I answered, with a proud look on my face, "I got them for Christmas!"

Having nice ice skates is all well and good, but having rental ice skates *and socks* is loads better than having clean, white, fancy ice skates with *no socks*. Now, ice skating without socks means having absolutely no control. You cannot tighten them as much as you need to, and they will flop around unpredictably like not-quite-dead fish as you try to straighten out your ankles, which is exactly what happened.

As I got on the ice, I had a feeling of '*I know what I'm doing and I have it all under control.*' It was completely unwarranted. I did not have it all under control. I was already *not the best* at ice skating, to say the least, but without any control of my ice skates, it was just a matter of time before I fell on my butt. Usually, I would get on the ice and get used to skating after a little while. This time, though, I just stayed wobbly and a bit uncertain on my feet. I skated around the rink a few times, sometimes passing people I knew and skating with them for a little while, but they would always pass me. On one loop around the rink, I stumbled a bit. Normally when I stumbled, I would just catch myself, regain balance, and keep going, but this time I didn't have that much control. I tripped, wobbled a bit, and fell. Unfortunately, though, I tried to catch myself. I landed with the entire force of the fall put on my wrist. Not even *wrists*. *Wrist*. I began crying. People ran over, but I could hardly hear them.

“Natalie, are you okay?”

“What happened?”

“Aw, I saw that fall, are you okay?”

“Do you need me to get a teacher?”

Faint background voices asking too many questions.

“No, I’m fine. I’m just going to stop skating for a little while.” I rushed out to the front room. There were coats and boots littering the benches. I sat down by my coat and tried to take off my skates, tears running down my face. I had sprained my ankles before, and my wrist hurt more than that. It felt like there were little spears in my wrist, stabbing me over and over. To make matters worse, the box I had brought my skates here in was cardboard, and since it was completely soaked by the rain, it was dissolving. I suppose from an outside perspective that doesn’t seem all that bad, but I was really, *really* attached to that box. I called over the science teacher at the time, Ms. Smith.

“Natalie, are you okay?” she asked me.

“Uh, not really, I fell on my wrist,” I hoped she would believe me if I said I broke it.

“Oh, you’ll be fine!”

“No, I’ve sprained my ankles before. This hurts more than that.”

“Don’t worry. It’s a bruise or a little sprain at worst.”

“Can I call my parents?” They would probably pick me up.

“I’m sorry, I can’t let you call them,” she said.

Great. The teacher didn’t understand what happened. I *knew* what had happened to my wrist, and it was either sprained or broken, but I would wait. My wrist hurt quite a lot. After about ten minutes of sitting there, Ms. Smith came back over to the bench.

“Okay, It’s been a while. If you’d like to call your parents, here you go,” she handed me the phone.

“Thank you!” I said, typing in one of the three phone numbers I knew (my mom’s number, my dad’s number, and 911). The first number I called, my dad, didn’t pick up. The second number did. It was my mom.

“Hello?” a voice said over the phone.

“Hi, Mom. It’s Natalie. I’m on a school field trip right now, but I fell and now I think my wrist is broken,” I tried to stop crying and speak clearly so that she could hear me, but my quiet, clear speaking concerned my mom more.

“Oh my gosh! Do you need me to come to pick you up?”

“Yeah, that would be nice. I love you!” I sniffed, then hung up the phone. I told the teacher that my mom would be picking me up, and gave her the phone back.

When my mom picked me up, she drove to the ER. At the ER, people did not walk. There were the ones that rushed through the hallways and the ones that were carried through the hallways, and there was no in between. The fluorescent lights flickered as I watched people move in and out of different rooms, and it made me dizzy than I already felt. As soon as anyone got there, they were scooped up by five nurses taking their blood pressure and asking them questions. The waiting room looked abandoned like people seldom waited there, and when they did it was certain that they would be one of five people that month.

After asking a few questions, they took us to a dark room where I was equipped with heavy lead blankets. Everyone cleared out and bolted the doors as if their life depended on it, and I could only see them through a small window, which was more than a bit frightening. Afterward, I was escorted out of the room and asked to wait while they processed the images. It was hardly five minutes when they came back and rushed me into a third room. This room contained a bed with a thin layer of paper over it, some cabinets, and a dark closet which I could hardly see into. The woman who had brought me in asked that I wait a moment, and then rushed back out the door. As expected, another woman came in wearing an enormous grin, which made me feel uncomfortable, as if she were laughing at me. She opened the door to the closet and brought down three large plastic containers. Inside each container was a mess of plastic wrap and colorful tape all jumbled together. She brought out all the colors and asked me,

“Which one would you like, honey?”

About five minutes later, I left the building with a big, light blue cast that went all the way past my elbow. The next day, I walked into school with an enormous grin on my face. I was going to show the science teacher this cast if it was the last thing I ever did. When I got to class, though, she wasn't there! Instead, there was a new science teacher in her place.

Since this incident, I have been ice skating exactly once, and I can proudly state that I did not fall once. © 2019 Natalie Covin

The Boisterous Beast

Michaela Edwards

*Across the border
into New Mexico,
we saw Chris surge
past us with a
menacing smile
spread across his
face.*

Last February break, some of my climbing team traveled to Hueco Tanks, Texas, where some of the best bouldering in the world is located. As everyone met in the airport we all became giddy with excitement. As soon as I saw my friend Maddy walk through the big automatic doors into the airport, we both broke into a run and practically knocked each other over. She lifted me off my feet and swung me around in circles.

After fueling up on some *super* nutritious Dunkin Donuts, and soda, we boarded the big white plane. Unfortunately, the fact that we were hauling around a group of seven disorganized kids meant that there would be some delays. Since we were one of the last groups to board the plane, we all had to sit in separate seats. Thankfully, Maddy was in the group of seats right behind me. Both of us were squished between huge guys who were talking and shouting over us the entire flight. We easily overheard that they, along several others on the flight, were attending a military convention in Texas. Finally we took off. We looked out the windows at the dark sky. It was so early in the morning that the sun hadn't even come up.

"This is going to be great!" Maddy exclaimed from behind me.

"I know!" I responded with a smile that was spreading across my face.

As the snow began descending from the sky, I knew that this was going to be one of the best trips of my life.

After several movies and lots of airplane peanuts, we finally landed in Texas. The plane had barely come to a stop before Maddy and I had jumped to our feet and ran out of the plane's door. There were seven kids and two coaches, so after collecting our bags, we had to rent two cars. One was an appalling old minivan, and the other was a shiny new electric car. Of course Maddy and I opted for the new one.

"We can have three kids in this car with me," our coach Simone said. She was just like a mom to all of us, and she was everybody's favorite coach.

Ruby, the most insane, hysterical, and terrifying ten year old, decided to ride with us. As we stepped out of the airport, and through the doors, we were blasted by a wave of refreshing warm air that provided us relief from the snowfall we had recently left behind in Boston. We hopped in the car and began driving to the Hacienda where we were staying.

The thirty minute drive could not have taken longer. It is impossible to explain how anxious we were to arrive. Every minute we had to wait in the car seemed to stretch on for a lifetime. As we *finally* rolled into the gravel driveway, we became fired up with excitement to begin our week in Hueco Tanks.

Three days passed. We climbed all over the desert, crawled into caves, discovered all sorts of exotic animals, and ate huge meals of exquisite food. Our fingers were torn down multiple layers of skin from constant rubbing against rough rock for three days straight.

“Guys! For our rest day we can go to New Mexico to visit White Sands National Park!” Chris said in a suspiciously joyful tone.

We all groaned. We had expected more from Chris than a boring old National Park.

“Trust me guys, it’ll be fun,” Chris insisted.

Everybody said something along the lines of, “But we don’t want to go to something like that, it sounds boring!”

“Look guys, I’ll show you a video. If you still don’t want to go we don’t have to,” he responded.

We all agreed, but were quite sure he would not be able to sway our opinions. He pulled out his iPhone X which we all thought was pretty funny. We have this ongoing joke about how hard Chris tries to be hip and trendy—even though he had no idea how to use it. Eventually he pulled up a video on YouTube. We all huddled around the bright screen and watched a miniscule man doing flips and tricks on a board. He seemed to be snowboarding, but he was in the completely wrong equipment. He was wearing sweatpants and a t-shirt, with no mask or anything of the sort. Although his intricate turns and twists were intriguing, we all were slightly confused why he was showing this to us.

“So he is snowboarding. Why is that relevant to getting us to White Sands?” a teammate named Becca asked.

“That’s the thing,” Chris stated very matter of factly. “He is not snowboarding. Those are the paper white sand dunes in White Sands National Park.”

We were shocked. It was crazy how much it looked like snow. We watched more videos of people sledding and rolling down the dunes, and we all knew that it would be a blast. We admitted to Chris that he was right. We wanted to go.

The next morning we were awakened by Chris running into the bedroom where all of the kids were sleeping and shouting some ridiculous chant. I looked over at the clock on the wall and saw that it was only 5:30.

Chris responded to our yawning, tired faces by frantically saying, “It’s a pretty long drive and we have to get a head start on traffic. Now come on let’s Move! Move! Move!”

It was hard, but we eventually rolled out of bed, and half asleep we got dressed, only putting on one or two clothing items backwards. We broke off into the groups we had in each car on all of the trips we had made so far. There was the absolutely amazing, wonderful, and fun car, with Ruby, Maddy, Simone and me. There was also the boring old janky car with Megan and Bella who were seventeen, Owen who was fifteen, Becca who was fourteen, and the one and only Chris. Throughout the days before this one, there had been an ongoing competition about whose car was better. Although it was extremely clear which one it was, the other group chose to keep embarrassing themselves and fighting for the lame car.

“We have the better people. We have a bigger car. We have Chris,” the other group taunted confidently. Apparently those fools couldn’t see the piece of junk they were sitting in.

The drive began just as any drive would. We broke out several bags of chips, thought up some trash talk for the people in the other group, and blasted music through the whole car. It was so early in the morning that we were the only two cars driving across the whole wide stretch of highway. Soon we were getting bored and were close to the border of New Mexico. As we texted the kids in the other group about how much cooler we were, and sent them videos of us jamming out to some music, we saw Chris push down on the gas and zoomed past us in the blink of an eye, his menacing grin breaking into an insane cackle. Before we knew it, Chris had started

an unsaid race between us, and we were going to stop at nothing to make sure that we won.

Simone turned up the music, until we thought the stereo was going to pop. We increased our speed up to about 80 miles per hour, until we were side by side with the minivan. As Simone pressed harder on the gas pedal, we zoomed by the car, catching glimpses of them scowling at us. Maddy, Ruby, and I were all shouting in cacophony, to *go faster!* The minivan was inching closer to us, and it felt like when you are playing tag on the playground, and the chaser is an arm's reach away. Simone pushed even harder on the gas until we were going ninety five plus miles per hour. Nevertheless Chris managed to keep the old minivan at our heels.

“*Oh my god!*” Ruby screamed at the top of her lungs, “*Step on it!*”

We moved slightly faster, but we knew it wasn't enough to win.

“Just to be clear you aren't going to tell your parents about this?” Simone asked. It was more of an order than a question, as we were breaking several laws. We were well over the some odd sixty mile per hour speed limit, and us kids in the backseat were practically jumping around with no sign of a seatbelt on any of us.

“Well, duhhhh,” Ruby responded.

With that the car lurched forward leaving Chris and his lame minivan in the dust.

We had been driving for close to two hours and were quite a ways ahead of the minivan. Other cars had begun to appear on the road, and we had no vision of the minivan behind us, so we started to raise the pedal a bit and relax. We were almost to the national park and a huge cloud of confidence hung on our shoulders. That was when a huge Coca-Cola truck that had been gliding behind us merged into the next lane to the left. We looked out the back window and there we saw Chris's maniacal smile through the windshield, quickly approaching. This was the home stretch, only several minutes until we would arrive. There was an unspoken consensus in the car that despite the increasing amount of vehicles on the highway, we were going to prevail. Simone accelerated the gas until we were pushing 115 miles per hour. We pushed the car forward trying to escape our competition. We rolled down the windows my hair flying all around. We heard the rickety minivan

engine wheezing and growling, trying to push as fast as we were going. We were sure that the minivan was going to break down, as it was going faster than any minivan is supposed to go. We could just see the entrance, all we had to do was stay ahead and make one right turn into victory. The boisterous beast came along the left side of us. We could see Chris grimacing as he pushed the minivan as hard as it could go. We were in the right-most lane, and the entrance was off the right side of the road. There was no way that they could get far enough ahead of us to make the turn. We were seconds away. Simone slammed down on the gas, Chris clearly sweating in effort to keep up. It was right there. The entrance was less than twenty feet away. As we zoomed forward, Chris pushed the pedal to the floor and angled in front of us missing the hood by a mere two inches. He swerved into the entrance almost spinning off the side of the road from the aggressive turn.

They had won. They had really won. And in an old rickety minivan of all things.

“Nooooo!” Maddy, Simone, Ruby, and I shouted.

We drew back in defeat, stunned how far Chris had managed to push that minivan. Still having not lost much of our speed we made an only partially controlled turn into the entrance. But suddenly, we saw a very odd sight zoom right in front of us. A small grandma had just almost taken off the front end of our car, driving over 100 miles per hour in her Honda Fit. She had on bright fluorescent pink lipstick, outlining her lips by at least three times their size. Her cheeks were powdered to a cake with a shade of blush nearly the same as her lipstick. Her bleached blond wig was hanging half way down the back of her head the entire front half of her receding hairline exposed. With two lit cigarettes hanging out of the side of her mouth, she cackled stretching her neck long to see over the windshield which she was barely tall enough to do. As she surged by we could hear the song *Turn Down For What* blasting out of her open windows. As she flew further down the highway, we all burst into laughter at the odd sight, despite the fact that she had almost totaled our car. We slowed down and pulled into the parking lot. As we stepped out of the car we saw Chris standing on a trash can, holding his two thumbs together in the shape of a W, and raising it up to the sky in celebration of the victory he had just won.

© 2019 Michaela Edwards

fiction

The Killings

Phoebe Milhous

My name is Ciel Smith, I'm only fourteen years old. I lived with my parents in a huge mansion located in northern Japan. They have recently been murdered, and now I have no blood-related family to my knowledge. I live with my butler John, in my parent's mansion (I've inherited everything they owned). I have a photogenic mind and can probably outwit almost anyone as of now. Doctors have discovered a disease that creates pain in my ears from extremely high frequencies no one else can hear. It's never been heard of before and they don't have a name for it yet. I don't know much about this new disease, but I do know it's killing me from the inside out. I can hear my organs start to shake and whine, the way a pup would for their owner's attention. I feel their slow torturing pain of being. But this story isn't about my condition, it's about the Killings...



It was a rainy, blistering night, and I was still awake, sitting in the living room watching the news at a quarter to twelve. The voice of the news reporter's voice starts, interrupting a commercial.

"Breaking news, a 5-year-old girl named Lucy McGovern's parents were found on Wednesday. Lucy survived a murder strike that killed both her parents, she miraculously escaped out into the street with almost no injuries but one on her..."

The reporter's voice dissipated as the ringing pain in my ears started for the second time that week. It was only Tuesday, and the effects of my unknown disease were taking a huge toll on my physical and mental body.

"MOM!" I howled, struggling, "Get the doctor! It's happening again!"

My mom bolted down the stairs straight to the phone.

"Hello? Yes, we need our doctor and an ambulance here right away! It keeps getting worse every time it happens!" she screeched into the phone. Moments later I was unconscious and was being taken to the hospital.

When I woke up, my head was throbbing with pain and my hands were wrapped in bandages up to my wrists with blood seeping through the cloth. *What happened last night?*

My mind was winding in all different directions, not knowing where to go or where to stay. There was a cloud of thoughts but it quickly faded. I slowly moved my legs over the side of the bed to find more bandages and blood covering the rest of my body. I tried to stand but fell back onto the bed. It's worse than I predicted. I lay back down and called for a nurse or doctor to explain what went on last night.

I had never been in this wing of the hospital before. Trust me, I'd been to mostly all of them by then. It was different, quieter. It was like I was the only one in the wing. The silence was unbearable, I could hear small static sounds.

About ten minutes later the doctor came in slowly,

"Hey, how are you doing, Ciel?" he questioned.

"Perfectly fine. Why? Is everything all right?"

"Oh, yes. Just checking in on you. Ciel, can you tell me what you remember about last night?"

"Uh, yeah, sure." I described everything that I could remember to the doctor. He nodded and shook his head like something was horribly wrong, but he didn't say anything. Once I was done, I turned to him.

"Why do you look so disturbed?" I questioned.

He looked at me with a solemn expression and calmly reached his hands to hold mine.

"Ciel, before I tell you, promise me you won't do anything stupid. *Promise me.*"

"Okay, I promise I won't do anything stupid, but why? Did something happen?"

"Ciel, your parents were found dead, decapitated, when the ambulance arrived and no one can find the killer. There was no way that your parents would commit suicide so that's out of the question. The only possible answer we have is that someone came in while you were having an episode and killed them. Fortunately, your butler was not at the home and can still take care of you until you are of age. The killer started with that little girl on the news and then came for your parents but they didn't hurt you, except for the cuts on your body."

My eyes went wide. *Why did this happen to me?!* The tears started to roll down my cheeks combining into huge puddles; they stung my eyes and they burned the flesh of my skin. I sat there waiting for someone to hug and comfort me as my mother had, but no one did... The doctor stood and told me he would come back in a bit with some food and new clothes. I didn't respond, just sat there with a glossy finish over my eyes, fat tears rolling down my face.

Hours, minutes, seconds. They all went by, but I didn't know what to do with all the time. *My life is done. There is nothing here for me now, what should I do?*

Everything stopped. The ringing in my ears started again and then there was nothing. No sound, no one near or around me, the only sounds I could hear were the faint screams of a scared family and a weak, painful, scraping. *Where were the screams coming from?* I was in a hospital; no one should be screaming like that here. Plus, there was no one in this wing as far as I could tell. Then everything came back. I was standing at the other side of the room looking outside into the sunrise through the open window. The bandages previously surrounding my legs and arms were lying on the ground as if they were never anything important. My body moved on its own accord, picking up the bandages and walking back to the bed. I sat down in the position in which I was before and placed the bandages around to seem as if I had taken them off. Nothing seemed right, *how was I doing this, what was I doing?* Suddenly my body felt like *my* body. *I was in control. Had someone used my body for a period of time? Was that what happens when I have a blackout?* Questions ran through my mind wanting answers.

The doctor came back in but almost dropped the food tray when he saw me standing back at the open window, the bandages left on the bed. He slowly ran to the desk to put the tray down and walked over to me.

He stood beside me and softly exclaimed,

“I'm surprised to see you standing. You walked all the way from your bed with your wounds? I've confirmed that you can leave tomorrow afternoon after two more tests. I'll arrange for your butler to pick you up.” I nodded, turned and walked back to my bed to eat the rice balls filled with pink salmon.

“Hey, you can move to a different room with more people if you want, I could bring in one of your friends from school too!” The doctor said cheerfully.

“I don’t have friends, I was homeschooled, and I think I’m okay in here, alone,” I stated coldly. I started to eat when a nurse burst in.

“Doctor, there’s been another murder! They’re still alive but dying quickly, we have to hurry!” she panted.

“What? Okay, I’m coming right now. Ciel, stay here. Don’t go anywhere.”

They bolted out of the room and ran down the hall closing the door behind them. I stood and walked over to the door. *It was locked, they locked me in? Why would they do that to me? They probably didn’t want me to go anywhere without surveillance. Probably to make absolutely certain that I didn’t do anything stupid. I could just climb out of the window but that’s dangerous and extremely risky.*

The rest of the day passed by quickly. By the time I knew it I was already in the backseat of my family’s limo, riding back home. Everything in my mind was still jumbled into a million pieces that didn’t make sense. Soon we rode into the lot out front. It started to pour, but I was already safe inside, comfy and warm in my room. Everything that happened yesterday, everything racing through my mind needed to be processed. I lay down on my bed and slept for what felt like an eternity.

The next morning I woke up and ran down the steps, into the kitchen where my butler, John was standing over the stove. I walked over to where the TV remote was and turned on the news.

“Another mysterious murder was discovered last night. The parents of twin daughters were found on their living room floor. The mother is dead and the father was found barely breathing and is now in critical condition. The police have found no evidence of the killer and are looking for the twin girls as I speak. The police are telling everyone to lock their doors and keep an eye on your family. Please, everyone, stay safe and be careful. This is a very dangerous new threat.”

I turned it off and walked back to where John was cooking and looked over his shoulder at what he was making. (I could barely see anything so I had to jump up to see over his shoulder. I’m a short person.)

“What’s that?” I questioned.

“Just a little something for you this morning. Come now, you’ve had quite a couple of days so please sit and eat,” he returned.

“Okay, thanks, John.”

“It’s nothing. When you’re finished go back up to your room and do the homework sent for you from last week.”

“Okay, sounds good.”

I finished eating and did exactly what was asked of me. I went straight to my room, to my desk, and started doing my work.

The buzzing started again.

“Man, I’m on the last question too.” I moaned. I did what I normally did. I stayed right where I was and tried to suppress the pain, but something was a bit off. The ringing was still there but there was no pain. I realized *I* wasn’t controlling my body. I could still see almost everything that was happening, my vision came in and out like waves on a sandy beach. I couldn’t do or say anything. I was like an empty shell, a ghost following their family in the afterlife.

My controlled body finished the last problem with ease, stood and walked back into the kitchen.

“John, I’m going to the park with a book.”

“All right, just be back by lunch.”

“Thanks!” I yelled running out the door.

My vision blurred and before I knew it I was in someone’s apartment. I walked into their bedroom and found them lying down, calmly, and peacefully sleeping. My vision blurred again and when it came back the man’s throat had one clean strike through it. Dead, he was dead and now there was blood covering the wall and soaking through his sheets and blankets. Again my vision blurred, then the knife was placed in the man’s hand. My vision went black, the timing was longer. Then a cold, dead jolt went through my body and I found myself in a park lying under a tree.

I didn’t quite know what was going on, I couldn’t comprehend what had just happened. I tried to replay the scene in my head but I was missing bits and pieces of the image. I started to walk home telling myself that I would tell John later. As soon as I stepped into the crosswalk, a car zoomed past, hitting me. I fell to the ground, landing with my wrist hitting the edge of the curb. I heard a heavy and hollow crack, then a burst of pain went up my arm and into my chest. Turning over to kneel I screamed in pain from my newly

broken bones. People from the park gathered around me and tried to understand what had happened. One finally called an ambulance. John had heard the commotion and ran outside. He probably saw my bold dark green vest and rushed to my aid.

It felt like an eternity of darkness to light, until the ambulance finally came to save me from my miserable life. I was folded in John's arms when they came and transferred me to a stretcher. I screamed in pain whenever they touched me.

My eyes slowly trembled open and adjusted to the brightness of the hospital lights against the darkness of the night. I slowly tried to push myself into a sitting position but realized my body was only so flexible. My arm was elevated above my head with a heavy cast weighing the sling down. I looked around as much as I could and found John asleep in a chair near the window. The doctor was typing at a computer faced away from me, he looked spooked and worried. I decided to let my presence be known, so I cleared my throat and asked: "Ehen can I get out of here?"

The doctor jumped so high, I think he might have touched the ceiling. He shook his head, then answered,

"Well, I still need to do a few more tests on you so probably the day after tomorrow. Oh, and thank you for that scare."

I went back to thinking about earlier, the driver was smiling and sticking his head out the window to look back at me. Was he trying to kill me? If he was, he failed, but who hired him and why. I couldn't wrap my head around what exactly he was trying to do. I left the issue in the depths of my mind that never see the light of day.

I decide not to wake John. Instead, I get out of bed and walk around the garden at night. (I told the doctor where I was don't worry.) I look at the stars and the moon. I think about my parents and about how they died.

"I never knew who killed my parents ... I hope they died happy."

Suddenly there was a small gunshot and a jolt of pain ran through my shoulder, and down my entire body. I stood there feeling the blood gushing out of the wound. I fell backward and then my vision and everything else went black as night...



I opened my eyes and my vision filled with a bright blinding light. The pain was gone and my clothes were now white. I had large white wings that could probably carry me across the world in no time. There was this huge gate that had clouds covering the perimeter of what you could see. A couple came towards the closed gates and pushed them open.

“Mom?, Dad? What the hell. Wait, am I dead?”

Nothing was making sense, if my parents were dead and they were here in flesh and probably blood, then what was I doing there? Questions seeking answers raced through my head, my brain hurt and nothing was being answered.

My parents walked closer, and I tried to back away but found myself at the fiery pit of doom and torture, at least that’s what the sign said. I whirled around and faced my parents knowing I would cry for the first time in forever. My parents stood in front of me and said simultaneously, “Welcome to heaven! We can show you around and answer everything you want to know about being dead, son.”

I jumped back again and ran my fingers through my hair trying to act cool. I didn’t quite know what was happening but I knew that I was probably dead and in heaven. (I didn’t see Jesus or God anywhere, maybe that was just a myth but who knows.)

I stood as they looked at me with contentment and love, but my heart was overflowing with emotions of guilt and pain. I didn’t know why I felt guilty, maybe because I left them behind and wasn’t even able to live a full life for them. My mother finally took my hand and guided me towards the open gate and into the world of the dead. There were unicorns and gnomes, and everything you can imagine. Nothing ceased to exist in heaven. We walked through a large garden that looked like it was growing roses, but they were all sorts of different colors.

“Go ahead, eat one.” My father called from up ahead. So I did, I took one right off the branch and took a bite. It tasted like a real, sweet, chocolate covered strawberry, like something just made the second I took a bite.

As we walked I kept munching on the roses. We finally made it to a room filled with drawing and art. The sound of water running filled the room and everything felt as calm as a clear summers day. We kept walking, and the rooms started to get darker and darker

until they were only lit by a few candles. The three of us sat down at a small round lace covered table, with a round ball in the middle about the size of my hand. My parents stopped smiling.

“Son, this is the confessions room. When people die and come here they first must come to this room to confess everything to the darkness and nothingness here.”

I looked into the round ball and things I wanted to say came to my mind but I held my tongue.

“Ok, if you tell me who killed you I’ll confess everything that comes to my mind. Is that a deal?”

They looked at each other with bewilderment but quickly their expressions changed into delight.

“Well of course! We love a good deal. We’ll go first, then you.” my mother exclaimed excitedly. I turned all my attention to them. I needed to know who had killed them, I needed to avenge them and live a longer life for them.

“The person who killed us was... you. Ciel, you killed us,” they replied unanimously.



When I opened my eyes I was back in the hospital. John and a bunch of doctors and nurses stood over me like they were amazed to see me awake. Some had tears in their eyes and tissues in their hands. I sat up and started to cry. *I killed my own parents, and they weren’t mad? What the hell is happening to my life? How is this even possible right now, I should be dead.*

Questions ran through my mind and I couldn’t control my emotions anymore. I was bawling and nothing was going to make me stop, I snapped... **“GET OUT! YOU DIDN’T DO ANYTHING TO BRING ME BACK! I WANTED TO DIE, I DESERVED TO DIE AFTER WHAT I’VE DONE!** Just, (voice crack) just leave me alone” I screamed through fat pig like tears.

I walked back to the room I was staying in earlier. It was the same old room that reeked of cleanness. I went straight to the bed and jumped landing face down on the pillow. What was I going to do? I was a murderer and I can’t really do anything to stop myself other than lock me up until I die.

“John. I don’t know what to do anymore,” I announced suddenly to the quiet room.

“Why is that? You’ve never come to me for advice before.”

“It’s just that I talked to my parents when I died. They told me I killed them. John, I’m the mass murderer everyone has been talking about recently. I am killing people without knowing it. What am I supposed to do?”

“Ciel, I don’t know what you’re talking about, but you can turn yourself into the police, be locked up in an insane asylum for the rest of your life, do whatever the hell you want! No one can control you as you can. You might be able to control this power?”



Years later...

I let myself into a medium sized house through the second-floor bedroom. I knew the parents were home with their two children. Sneakily I walked into the kitchen and grabbed the sharpest knife I could find as usual, then walked quietly into their study where I knew everyone was. I jumped and stabbed the two parents, then their daughter, but their son was nowhere to be seen. *He’s in the bathroom!* The realization came to me fast. I ran to where I heard a small shuffle and a flush. I waited by the door until it opened and I tried to stab the kid but he was too fast and I only managed to hit his arm. He ran to the front door but I stopped him just before. He jumped to try and get the attention of someone outside. I grabbed him and stabbed him in the chest, just missing his heart. Finally, I threw him headfirst into the stairs to try and give him amnesia, then ran to the sink, washed and dropped the knife, then ran back the way I came in. It was done, my last murder, ever. I decided to take a few years off everything. I locked myself away in a tower (literally. I went to England and rented just the tower and entryway so John could bring me meals and things to do over the time of three years). I was doing well and I wanted to come back to Japan to visit my home. Once we got home I rushed to my room and let in all the air of my old life. We planned to stay for about a week, but plans didn’t really go the way we wanted them to...

The next morning I awoke to the buzzing in my ears. This was the first time in the span of three and a half years. It wasn’t like it used to be, this was different, and It hurt like hell!

“AHG, John, help me!”

My heart stopped and my lungs gave out. All my organs failed and I fell to the ground of my old bedroom. John ran up the stairs,

but before he could get into the room and a chance to help, I had died. I left a note on my desk explaining everything that happened. That note is what your reading right now, this was all real, and everything in this actually happened. This is my final goodbye, to John, and to everyone I ever pushed away. I'm gonna be with my parents again. I never meant to die this soon but I knew my body wouldn't be able to live for much longer. My body gave out on me, I never gave up on the world, though.

Well, it's my time to go. Goodbye world, goodbye John. Live for me, for my parents and for every person I ever killed. I'm going back to heaven to say sorry to everyone I have killed. They can hate me, that's fine. I deserve it.

John, I'm sorry, live a better life than I did. And live a much longer life than I ever could. Goodbye. I love you...

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The House on 54 Foster Street

Thanimul Chowdhury

Chapter 1

Noelle Davis was sitting on her carpeted floor, folding her clothes, and packing her luggage as she was getting ready to move out, not permanently though, it was complicated. Her parents were renovators and when they had a house to renovate, they had to temporarily stay there until the house was in good condition to sell. Noelle "moved" around so much, she started getting used to it. She was homeschooled by her parents which made it easier for them. But Noelle wasn't comfortable moving now since it was so close to Christmas and she wanted to spend it at home. Of course, her parents thought it through and decided to bring the presents with them. And as for the tree, they were going to have a special company deliver it to the house. Noelle wasn't okay with this idea.

As Noelle was thinking about it, she heard three small knocks at her door. It was her mother, leaning against the doorway of her bedroom. She was wearing a black blazer matching her black pants over a buttoned up shirt where the first button was unbuttoned. She was also wearing a rose gold watch that wrapped perfectly around her wrist. And to top it all off her black, shiny heels.

Noelle zipped up her luggage, pressured her hand against the floor, and made herself turn around. “Hey, you done packing?” Mrs. Davis asked Noelle.

“Yeah, almost. I just have to get a couple more things from Walmart.”

“Okay that’s fine but you have to come home early. Your father and I have decided to leave very early in the morning, since it’s so far away,” her mother explained. It was true. They had lived in a quiet neighborhood in Medford but they had to renovate a house in Amherst. That was an hour and forty-four minute drive from where they were. Noelle had to search that up when they had first got the news.

“Okay, I’ll just go now, then,” Noelle told her mom.

“Wear a jacket. It’s freezing cold outside,” Mrs. Davis told Noelle as she was getting up. Noelle had some kind of feeling. She wanted to tell her mom that she wasn’t comfortable with moving now. Mrs. Davis started to walk away.

“Wait, mom!” Noelle stopped her. Mrs. Davis’s heels started to make a loud squeaking noise as she was turning around to face Noelle.

“Yes, honey?” she responded.

“I need to tell you something.”

“What?” Mrs. Davis asked.

“I—” then Noelle realized it was too late and she didn’t want to get in trouble. “Do you want anything from Walmart?”

“No hun, it’s fine.” Then Mrs. Davis’s phone rang. “It’s work. Um, get me some plantain chips if you can.” She picked up the phone. “Hello?” Mrs. Davis turned around and started to walk away. “No, we’re going tonight. It’s so far away! They couldn’t give us a house in Somerville.” As she was walking, her voice disappeared in the distance.

Noelle started getting ready. She put on her ripped jeans and a hoodie with no shirt under, just a tank top. She put on her short red boots with three inch heels that matched with her hoodie. She grabbed her phone, which had a clear case on it, and headphones so she could listen to music while walking to Walmart. It wasn’t far away. Walmart was only five minutes away from her house.

Noelle put on her headphones while she was walking down the stairs. She carried \$20 with her. Just enough to buy snacks.

“Hey, where are you going?” Noelle’s older sister, Margot, asked. Noelle took out her left headphone.

“Walmart,” Noelle responded.

“OOOO! Can you get me some snacks please?” Katie, her little sister, asked.

“Sure.” Noelle walked out the door and down her front step.

Katie was five years younger than Noelle, which made her ten, and Margot was five years older than Noelle, which made her twenty.

After Noelle’s fifth song on her playlist ended, she finally reached Walmart. She took her right headphone out of her ear so she could hear people talking *and* listen to music at the same time. She went to the chip section and tried to find herself some Hot Buffalo Wing Pretzel Pieces. *Found It!* Noelle quickly grabbed that delicious, crispy bag of Pretzel Pieces and put it in her basket.

After she was done, she had to check everything. *Mom’s plantain chips, check. My pretzel pieces, check. A bottle of Coke, check. Katie’s candy, check.* Noelle had everything. She went to go get a basket since her arms were getting tired. As she was walking, she was looking at her snacks thinking of how she’s gonna eat all of it when she first gets in the car. Then, she felt a hard chest bump right into her. All her snacks fell.

“Oh my god, I am so sorry,” said a deep voice. She looked up and saw a guy with brown hair that was pushed to the side, bushy eyebrows, a stubble beard, and caramel skin. He was wearing jogger jeans, a white and black Adidas hoodie, and white and black Adidas shoes.

“Oh no, it’s okay,” Noelle replied.

“Here, let me help you,” the guy insisted.

They both bent down and started picking up her snacks. They put them into her basket one by one. Then, both their hands fell on the pretzel pieces. They looked up at each other.

“Those are my favorite,” he told her.

“Mine too.” She grabbed the bag and put it in her basket.

She grabbed her basket and walked away. She was waiting in the self check-out line and she saw the guy in the chips section. He walked out of the section with Hot Buffalo Wing Pretzel Pieces in his hand. Then, it was her turn to check herself out. She scanned everything and put them in a plastic bag one by one. *Beep. Beep.*

Beep. \$10.00 came out for her total. She put in her \$20 bill which was snatched from her hand by the machine. She took her \$10 change back, her three plastic bags filled with snacks and walked out of the store. A fresh breeze hit her when the doors slid open.

She had put in her right headphone. Noelle sang in her head. Half-way through the song, someone tapped on her shoulder. She turned around to see who it was. It was the guy.

“Hey!” The guy greeted her. “Sorry to bother you.” Noelle took off her right headphone. “My name’s Vincent. Vincent McCallister.”

“Hi?” Noelle was confused as to why he came to talk to her. “Um, why are you talking to me?”

“I’m new here and I wanted to meet some new people,” he explained.

“Oh well, my name’s Noelle Davis.”

“That’s weird. My dad’s best friend’s daughter is named Noelle.”

“That’s cool.” After a couple minutes of chatting, Noelle knew so much about him, but who was he? She had never seen him around the neighborhood.

Noelle had reached her house and she was still walking with Vincent. She kind of found him cute.

“Well, this is my stop,” Noelle told him.

“Oh wait. I forgot to give you my number.” Vincent told her. “It’s 857-231-8800. Call me sometime.” Noelle typed the numbers down on her phone.

“Okay got it.”

“Well, see you around,” Vincent told her.

“Bye.”

Noelle walked up her front steps and went inside her house. She thought she had just fallen in love. But she wasn’t sure.

Chapter 2

Nighttime came around. Noelle was bringing her luggage downstairs, struggling to carry it. She finally made it down the stairs. She put her luggage on the wooden floor and sat on the stairs. She wiped the sweat from her forehead with the back of her hand. Her plaid cashmere scarf and her brown trench coat were making her sweat even more. *God, I should have put this on last!* She thought to herself. Then she heard her mom calling from the dining room. She

put her luggage, trench coat, and scarf in the living room and walked to the dining room, where she heard the voices of her mom and dad. But she mostly heard the clanks of her black boots, echoing through the halls of her house while she was walking. She made it to the dining room.

“Hey honey. Set up the plates and cups, We have guests coming,” Mrs. Davis told her.

“Who?” Noelle asked.

“Your dad’s best friend and his family,” her mother answered.

Noelle washed the plates and the cups and set them down on the table. She heard her doorbell ring from the other side of her house. Mr. Davis walked to the door and looked through the peephole.

“They’re here!” he yelled. He opened the door. “Jimmy!”

“Devan!” Mr. McCallister yelled. They had both hugged each other as if they hadn’t seen each other in *ages*.

“Hey Camila,” Mrs. McCallister hugged Mrs. Davis. “Hey Maria.”

“Come! Join us for dinner!” Mrs. Davis told them.

They all walked to the dining room where Noelle was. She looked towards from where they had come. Then, as they walked in, she saw him. Vincent. Noelle greeted everyone and Vincent walked towards her.

“So you’re Noelle Davis?” he asked.

“Yep, that’s me!” She responded.

Noelle looked behind Vincent and saw a text from Margot.

“Meet me in dad’s office NOW!”

“Hold up. I’ll be right back,” Noelle told Vincent.

“Okay?”

Noelle left the dining room and dashed to her dad’s office. She saw Margot sitting on the couch and a whole empty space right next to her.

“Shut the door,” Margot demanded as soon as Noelle walked in. “Tell me about Vincent!” Noelle rolled her eyes and smiled. She walked towards the couch and sat next to Margot.

“Well let me tell you how we met,” Noelle said.

“Okay.” Margot responded.

“Well, I was at Walmart getting snacks for the trip,” Noelle began. “Then, I was holding too many snacks so I went to get a basket. While I was on my way, I bumped into Vincent, but I didn’t

know who he was at the time. I dropped all my snacks and he helped me. Then I went to go check out my things. After that, I walked out and he caught up with me. We walked home together and he gave me his number. Now he's here," Noelle explained the whole story.

"Do you like him?" Margot asked.

"I'm not sure." Noelle started to blush.

"You like him! You're blushing!" Margot screeched.

"Oh my god! Can you shut up?!" Noelle demanded while laughing. Then, their mom came into the room.

"Hey, dinner's ready."

"Okay mom," they said simultaneously.

Noelle and Margot walked to the dining room. Lasagna was for dinner. *Yum!* Noelle thought to herself. She *loved* Italian food. She sat next in between Margot and Katie, right across from Vincent.

After dinner, the moving company had arrived. She put on her trench coat and scarf and took her luggage. Then, she saw Vincent standing in the living room.

"Hey, I want to tell you something," Vincent said.

"Sure, what is it?" Noelle asked.

"Even though we just met a couple hours ago, I wanted to tell you that..."

"That?"

"I like you and I want you to be in my life."

After Vincent finished his sentence, he moved closer to Noelle and pulled up her chin. Then, not even a minute later, she heard Mrs. Davis calling her. "Noelle! It's time to go!"

"Sorry, I uh gotta go," Noelle told him. Noelle looked at her phone. It was five A.M.

"Yeah, I forgot." Vincent told her. They smiled at each other. Noelle was in love.

Chapter 3

Halfway there, the sun was starting to rise. The red, pink, and purple tint looked so beautiful in Noelle's eyes. She took out her phone and started to take pictures of the beautiful scenery. *Click, click, click* and posted those pictures onto her Instagram. Two minutes later, Noelle heard a *ding!* come from her phone. Someone had commented on her photo. She clicked to see who it was and

what they said. It was from Vincent. “Wish I could be there with u
♥” Noelle smiled widely. She had never been so happy in her life.

“Mom? How long ’til we get there?” Katie asked.

“Katie, you’ve been asking that question 800 times,” Margot commented.

“Well, it doesn’t hurt to find out, does it?” Katie responded.

“Okay girls, calm down, we’re almost there,” Mrs. Davis answered. Noelle went onto Google maps. They were almost there, Forty-four minutes to be exact. “Turn left” the GPS said in a monotone voice. Noelle didn’t mean to put it on. “Shut up!” Noelle shouted. She canceled out of Google maps and went onto Snapchat. She had started looking through her friends’ stories. They were all posting pictures of their family at their house and the fun things they were doing with their cousins. Making cookies and such. Noelle felt kind of jealous.

Ten minutes later, Noelle started to feel hungry. She grabbed her little backpack filled with snacks and pulled out her pretzel pieces. She opened the bag and got that nice hot buffalo wing scent which made her mouth water. She took out one big piece and started to savor it.

“Oo! Oo! Can I have some please?” Katie asked.

“Sure.” Noelle rolled her eyes. She passed a couple of pieces to Katie. She could hear the loud crunches coming from Katie’s mouth.

Noelle draped her trench coat over herself and tried to take a nap. A couple of minutes later, Noelle felt someone shaking her leg. It was her mom. “Yes mother?” Noelle said with an attitude.

“Wake up! We’re here!” Her mom whispered.

Chapter 4

They had arrived at the house. Mr. Davis parked in front of the two car garage. He turned his head around to face Noelle and her sisters.

“Okay guys, let’s go,” he told them.

Noelle slid her van door open and got out of the car. She grabbed her bag which was filled with empty candy wrappers and chips bags, and put on her trench coat and scarf. Noelle studied the house. The house was made entirely out of bricks that turned black over time. Vines were crawling up the house. The house had an iron

rooster that pointed north, south, west, and east. Noelle got an eerie vibe from the house. *But you can't judge a book by its cover, I guess* Noelle thought to herself. Mr. and Mrs. Davis were talking to a realtor who had been waiting for them to arrive. After Noelle's parents were done talking to the realtor, they walked back to where Noelle and her siblings were.

"Okay guys, we're gonna show you where your rooms are. Get settled and do whatever," Mrs. Davis told them. As she said that, Noelle heard the sound of car tires crunching sticks and rocks on the dirt drive, as the realtor drove off.

Noelle opened the wooden door which made a loud and long creaking noise that echoed throughout the house. It was dark. The only light that filled up the rooms was sunlight coming from the colossal rectangular windows which had pulled-back silk, dusty, red curtains. Noelle tried to open up one window that was blocked by the red curtain. Dust flew into Noelle's nose as she was trying to push away the curtain from the window. *Achoo!* Noelle sneezed harshly. *Nope! I'm done with this* she thought to herself.

The house had wooden floors which would also make creaking noises when you walked upon them. Everything about this house gave Noelle chills. It wasn't pleasant at all.

Chapter 5

On Day 2, Noelle woke up in her Frankenstein-looking bedroom. She got up and picked up her phone from the table next to her. She had two missed FaceTime calls from Vincent. She freaked. So, she decided to text him.

"Hey. Sry i couldn't pick up ur call. Went to sleep early." *Shwoop*, the message was sent. She exited Vincent's text messages and saw a text from her mom at nine. It was now ten o'clock. She said that they all went out grocery shopping. *Without me?* Noelle thought, but she brushed it off. Then she heard creaking downstairs and a door open. She thought her parents and siblings came home, but they would usually call her name when they got in.

"Mom?" Noelle shouted. No answer.

"Dad?" Still no answer.

"Katie? Margot?" After she shouted that, she heard a door slam from the left side of her room. Noelle was terrified. The she heard

her phone ring. She jumped back. She looked at her phone, it was from her mom. Noelle quickly picked it up.

“Hello?” Noelle called out.

“Hey! So sorry honey. There is so much traffic. We’ll be there in about thirty minutes or so okay?” Noelle was quiet after her mom said that. “Hello?” her mom called out.

“Mom, please come home quickly,” Noelle told her mom, shaking.

“Hold on hun, I can’t hear you. I’ll talk to you when I get home. Bye!”

“Wait! No! Mom!”

Mrs. Davis hung up.

Chapter 6

Noelle was eating dinner with her family. She could barely put the food in her mouth. She couldn’t stop thinking about what happened this morning. Her face was blank. Her parents knew something was wrong.

“Noelle, honey, what’s wrong? You’ve been quiet this whole day,” her mother asked.

“We need to leave,” Noelle responded.

“What?” her mom asked, confused.

“I said we need to leave!” Noelle shouted.

“Noelle, calm down and tell us what you’re talking about,” Margot said.

“Someone or something is in this house. We need to go before it gets worse.”

“What are you saying, Noelle!?” her dad shouted.

“This morning! You guys were gone. I heard the wooden planks creaking and a door open and slam shut. Something is in our house and we need to go!” Noelle explained to them, but they didn’t believe her.

“Noelle, this house isn’t haunted or possessed or whatever you’re thinking,” Mr. Davis told her.

“It might be! I mean look at how old this house is!”

“Noelle! We’re not leaving until this house is fully renovated! Understand?” Mr. Davis yelled.

Noelle walked away rolling her eyes. She went up to her room and lay down right on her bed. She pulled her comforter over her

and tried to sleep. *Christmas is just two days away* Noelle repeated to herself. Then she fell asleep.

Two hours into Noelle's deep sleep, she heard two girls calling her name and shaking her. She had woken up. It was just her two sisters.

"What? What do you want?" Noelle asked. She was annoyed.

"It's Mom! Something is wrong with Mom!" Margot screamed.

Noelle saw two doctors in her parents' room. Margot, Noelle, and Katie ran into their parents' room. Noelle saw her mom tied to the four corners of the bed. She was shaking, her eyes rolled back, and a shitload of blood coming out of her mouth and absorbing into her white gown. Noelle couldn't believe what she was seeing. Her mom's screams had a demonic tone added to it. Then Noelle heard a glass vase break on the table behind her.

Mr. Davis and a doctor went outside the room. Noelle was eavesdropping.

"What the hell is going on with my wife?" Mr. Davis asked.

"We have dealt with no such thing before," the doctor responded.

"Then what is it?"

"I know you won't believe this but this may be an act of possession of some sort. You need to go see a priest to exorcise this thing inside of her."

"This is bullshit." Mr. Davis commented.

"It's the best we can do right now, Mr. Davis," the doctor explained.

Noelle's jaw dropped after she heard those words. Her mom was possessed.

Chapter 7

Mr. Davis, Margot, Katie, and Noelle all sat together at the dining room table. Mr. Davis was confused as to what happened to his wife. The doctors had given up and left a while ago. She could hear her mom's screams which had some demonic tint to them. Noelle found out what was wrong easily.

"The doctor was right," Noelle announced.

"What are you talking about?" her dad asked.

"I heard you and that doctor talking. She is possessed."

“Noelle! Stop saying such stupid things! Your mom is sick!” her dad yelled.

“Dad! It all makes sense! The footsteps, the door, and now this! But of—”

“NOELLE!” Mr. Davis yelled. Everyone was silent. “Go up to your room. I don’t want to see you for the rest of the night.”

Noelle went upstairs. She slammed her door and went to sleep.

The next morning, Noelle got dressed to go to a nearby church. She needed to talk to a priest. She thought they might know something about the house.

She went downstairs and saw her dad on the couch in pajamas. He looked stressed.

“Hey dad,” Noelle said quietly. She didn’t know if he was gonna yell at her again.

“Hey, honey,” her dad responded. His voice was raspy. “Where are you going?”

“I need some fresh air after what happened last night. I’ll be back soon.” Noelle walked away after she said that. Right when she was near the door, her dad called her.

“Noelle, wait.” Noelle turned around to face her dad.

“Yeah dad?”

“I’m sorry about last night. I had just lost my temper. I was just worried about your mother,” her father explained.

“It’s okay Dad. Where’s mom now?” Noelle asked.

“I’m right here!” Her mother yelled from upstairs. “I’m fine Noelle. I don’t know why you’re so worried about me.”

Mrs. Davis wasn’t acting like herself at all. *Something’s not right* Noelle thought to herself. “Okay, well I’m going! Bye!” Noelle dashed out the door.

She looked for the nearest church in her area. *Nearest church*, she typed on her phone. One popped up. Grace Episcopal Church. It was only a five minute walk. She took the directions Google maps gave her. After walking for what felt like hours, she finally reached her destination. It was a big church. *Caw Caw! Caw Caw!* Noelle heard a crow on the roof. A cross carved largely onto the face of the building.

She opened the doors of the church. Murals covered the church. The only lights that filled the room were candles. Noelle walked through a long row of wooden seats to get to the priest’s office. She

finally arrived in front of the door. She knocked three times, then she saw the door knob turn to the right direction. An old man with a black robe and a purple sash stitched with a gold cross opened the door.

“Hello, young lady. What is your name?” the father asked.

“Noelle Davis,” she responded.

“Okay Noelle. Come in and have a seat.” Noelle sat down on the leather chair. “So Noelle, what is your issue?” the father asked as he was sitting down.

“Okay, well my parents are renovating this house,” Noelle started.

“Hmm, and where is this house?” the father asked.

“Fifty-four Foster Street,” she answered.

“Oh no,” the father reacted.

“What’s wrong, Father?”

“Listen to me, sweetheart. You and your family need to get out of that house immediately.”

“Why?” Noelle was confused.

“Okay, you cannot tell anyone this.”

“Okay. I promise.”

“In 1899, a man had just come back from a long business trip. He wanted to go home and see his wife and children. But when he got home, he saw his wife with another man and they had children together. When he saw that, anger had filled inside of him. His wife told him that she didn’t love him anymore. He got angrier than he was before. Then, the next day, he came into the house with a gun and shot everyone, even his kids and their kids. After he killed them, he had realized what he had done, so he tied a noose and jumped from the second floor. Families have moved into that house and they have come to me about possession in their family members. The ghost that possessed them made them act normal but strangely normal. Then things have not gone well.” The priest explained everything. *That’s why mom was acting weird*, Noelle thought to herself. “I cannot deal with possessions anymore, if that is the reason you came here.”

“No, Father. It is fine. I have just been hearing weird noises. Now I know what to do,” Noelle answered.

Noelle walked out of the church and dashed to her house. She had to stop this herself if the priest wouldn’t.

Chapter 8

Noelle came back home. She had opened the door and everything was dark. At the end of the hallway she saw a flickering light shining on a woman. It was her mother, or so she thought, but it was the ghost of the man.

“Noelle,” the demonic voice called. The demon was laughing like all demons in horror movies do. The demon turned around still laughing.

“What the fuck do you want!?” Noelle screamed. The demon screamed right after. Three windows shattered behind the demon.

“KILL HER!”

“What do you mean?” Noelle yelled.

“I’m going to kill your mother,” the demon said quietly. Noelle heard giggling from the demonic thing.

“No, no, no, no, no!” Noelle screamed.

The demon disappeared. The she heard a laugh. She saw the demon tying a noose around her mom's neck.

“Karma’s a bitch.” The demon jumped off the second floor. Noelle heard a crack from her mother’s neck. Her mother was hanging. And black shadow came out her mouth. Noelle fell down on her knees and started to cry. “No! Mom!”

Her father and her sister came from behind her. “Noelle! We have to go now!” They were holding their luggage.

“But mom! She’s gone!” She responded.

Everyone was speechless. Mr. Davis rubbed his palm against his forehead. Everyone was crying.

Chapter 9

The next day, Christmas didn’t feel like Christmas. They didn’t have their mom and it didn’t feel right. Noelle was in the kitchen trying to make cookies without crying. Her father and sisters helped her clean the whole house since their grandparents were coming.

Noelle heard the doorbell ring. She opened the door and it was Vincent and his parents. They both gave each other a nice and long hug. Then, she saw a van pull up in the parking lot. It was her grandparents.

“Hey, why don’t you guys go inside. My grandparents are here,” Noelle told them.

“Of course, honey,” his mother responded.

Noelle’s grandmother walked up the stairs with open arms which means she was going to give a hug.

“Oh, honey,” her grandmother said while hugging her. Noelle felt tears streaming down her face. She covered her face in her grandmother’s shoulders and started sobbing. Her grandmother rubbed her hands back and forth on her head and tried to cheer her up.

They had all hung out in Noelle’s house until the Christmas dinner. Noelle and her grandmother prepared turkey and chicken which smelled delicious. Noelle herself made mashed potatoes and a chocolate cake.

They had dinner normally and enjoyed every minute of it.

10 years later

Noelle is in her last year of law school, trying to become a successful lawyer like her sister, Margot. Katie is in her third year of college dreaming to become a writer. Noelle had married a man named Vincent Campbell. Her father walked her down the aisle even though he was battling cancer. She has a baby named Melvin who is turning one year old soon.

One day, Noelle got a text from her friend Kelsey, her college friend. They had a lot of things in common. Her parents are renovators and Noelle’s parents were renovators.

“Hey Noelle!” Kelsey texted. Noelle read it two minutes after it was sent.

“Hey how r u?” Noelle replied.

“I’m good. So I just wanted to tell you, I’m throwing a big spring break party since you guys are free ♥” Kelsey responded.

“Okay, when and where?” Noelle asked.

“When—tomorrow night Where —54 Foster Street, Amherst MA.” Noelle’s jaw dropped to the ground.

“Kelsey, where are you m?”

“At the house the party is going to be. My parents are renovating this house but they’re gone somewhere idk.”

“Kelsey listen to me. **GET. THE. HELL. OUT!**”

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The Shooting of Eastwood High

Isabella Jannuzzi

11:15 in the morning, History class. Rosalina Adams sat in the second row, her desk scattered with papers, a notebook, pencils, and a closed laptop. Her notebook was open to a page overflowing with notes. Around the edges, “Rosalina Thomsen” was written neatly with colored hearts surrounding it. The classroom was lit poorly with the narrow ceiling lights. Rain plunged to the concrete right outside the first floor window. The oak trees visible in the schoolyard rustled in the harsh wind.

On the Smartboard was a document that most students in the class were working on. Some sat in silence, their papers filled to the brim with answers. Rosalina was one of these people. As Rosalina was attentively skimming through the sheet of work, she raised her hand halfway. She had noticed something.

“Yes, Rosalina?” Mrs. Wicker glanced up from her computer, pushing her slim black glasses farther up on her face. Her voice seemed hesitant, her eyes filled with wonder. *What’s Rosalina going to bring up now?*

“There’s a typo on the paper,” Rosalina answered confidently. Mrs. Wicker rose from her spinny-chair and sauntered over to the desk Rosalina was sitting at. Rosalina pointed to one of the lengthy paragraphs once her teacher arrived at her desk. She circled a word repeatedly with her pointer-finger, really emphasizing the mistake. “Right there. It says ‘tomorrow,’ but that’s not how you spell tomorrow.”

A student beside Rosalina snickered. Mrs. Wicker pretended to be surprised by the mistake, although she genuinely could care less. “Yes, I know there’s a typo, Rosalina. Thank you,” quickly shutting Rosalina up. Mrs. Wicker headed to the front of the class and wrote, in messy handwriting, a sentence on the board. The sentence was followed by the name, Thomas Edison. “May I get everyone’s undivided attention, please?” she called aloud.

When the classroom went silent and all eyes were on Mrs. Wicker, she began to speak. “It’s okay if you didn’t finish. I’m going to go over these with you. Question one asks, ‘What is the date that

Thomas Edison died?’ Thomas Edison passed away on October 18, 1941. I hope you all got that right, and if not, please write it down.”

Rosalina read through one of the smaller paragraphs. She smiled, faintly. Mrs. Wicker was wrong. She raised her hand once more, gaining the attention of nearby students when she was called upon. “Actually, Thomas Edison died in 1931, not 1941. The month and day are right, though.”

This was a normal day in every class. Rosalina would always correct her teachers whenever there was an opportunity to. She enjoyed letting her teachers know that they weren’t always going to be right; it humbled them. Rosalina was good at that. She often acted like she was the teacher, and teachers were her students. She liked having that sort of power, even if she was only fifteen.

Mrs. Wicker plastered a smile on her face. “My, my, aren’t you and Anthony very similar. He always corrected me when I taught him!” Anthony was Rosalina’s older brother. He was a senior. Hearing these words, Rosalina smiled. Her brother was definitely someone to look up to. He was responsible, intelligent and organized, not to mention he was one of the nicest people you’d ever meet, and he was big on correcting people, just like Rosalina.

“If she ever quits, it’s going to be because you keep correcting her mistakes. I don’t think she even feels like a teacher at this point,” a boy sitting in the desk behind Rosalina whispered to her. Rosalina tensed at the deep, appealing voice. It belonged to none other than Spencer Thomsen. Rosalina had had a crush on Spencer since the eighth grade. Spencer was someone Rosalina adored, someone she always talked about, whether he was the topic of conversation or not. She was extremely grateful they were good friends.

Rosalina turned her head and met Spencer’s enchanting brown eyed gaze. She gave him a warm smile, opening her mouth to somehow choke out a response. The ringing of the school bell stopped her. The classroom fell silent. *Why was the bell ringing? There was still ten minutes left for second period.*

The principal’s voice came onto the loudspeaker. He sounded urgent and worried. “The poster has been ripped. It cannot be put back together.” This was code for, “The school is in lockdown. This is not a drill.” Eastwood High had a rather smart principal. If there ever was a lockdown, like what was happening right now, the

intruder would not be able to know what was happening. It was very clever, unless the intruder knew the code.

Mrs. Wicker quickly flicked all of the lights off. The class was swallowed in darkness. She ripped the keys out of her cardigan pocket and locked the door, ushering all fourteen of her students into the corner. "Sit down. Don't you dare make a sound, and do't move," she ordered. Mrs. Wicker was never rude to her students, but everything changes when people's lives are in danger.

Rosalina sat with her knees huddled up to her chest. She was quite calm, which was the complete opposite of the vibe in the room. A girl next to her was having a panic attack, two boys were laughing about the whole situation, and another girl was struggling to hold back tears. Mrs. Wicker assured them that the police would be there soon. Of course, no one actually believed that. When did the police *actually* show up on time?

Rosalina looked about the classroom. The silence frightened her a little. Mrs. Wicker's room was always loud and could be heard from two hallways down. Lost in thought, her eyes landed on Spencer, who was right across from her. She stared at him for a long time. All Rosalina wanted was for Spencer to be safe, and more importantly, alive.

A loud *bang* sounded throughout the school. Whispers erupted from the students in Mrs. Wicker's room. Rosalina felt goosebumps line her arms. It couldn't have been a desk that fell over, it would not have been that loud. A door slam can't make that noise either. It couldn't have been a window breaking, there was no sound of shattered glass. It didn't come from a person, nor an animal. The tension was so thick you couldn't even cut it with a knife.

"What was that?" a student whispered.

"I don't know," a second student replied.

"Are you two stupid? It was a gunshot! Someone is here with a gun!" another student cried.

"Max, Kyra, Venus, shush!" Mrs. Wicker hissed. "Stop talking!"

Rosalina began to think about the sound. Three more bangs were heard. It was definitely a gun. Panic struck Rosalina's heart. There was a shooter. Her breaths became heavier, her once rigid body starting to tremble violently. "I don't want to die, I don't want to die, I don't want to die. Please don't let me die. I don't want to die!" she thought, shutting her eyes. Rosalina buried her head in her

hands. It was only a matter of time before the shooter discovered Mrs. Wicker's classroom.

Rosalina was silently thanking everything there was that Anthony was sick today, and he wasn't in school. He'd be fine. But May. May Dyer, Rosalina's best friend in the whole world, was in the classroom across the hall. Tears streamed down Rosalina's cheeks. She didn't want to cry, not in front of so many people, but it was acceptable under the circumstances. She'd never experienced anything like this before.

Mrs. Wicker began to cry too. To her students' surprise, she didn't hold back at all. She mumbled things inaudible and constantly wiped her soaked face. She was an ugly crier. Mrs. Wicker murmured to her students that she loved them all, and she was sorry that they had to go through a dreadful thing like this. A school shooting.

Rosalina looked up through her teary eyes. She met Spencer's anxious gaze. They smiled at each other. The type of smile that only happened in cheesy movies. The one that said, so clearly, "I really like you, but there's a big chance we're going to die, so we can't have a future together."

Rosalina broke away from the stare. She wondered who the shooter was. A student? A teacher? A psycho? She wondered why they were doing this. Why take so many people's lives? Why force everyone to lose more of their faith in humanity, when it's already absolutely terrible? Why ruin the future of our nation? Why turn school from a place of learning into a shooting range? Just why?

"No! No! Please, no!" a feminine voice shrieked from the classroom across the hall. Rosalina recognized it easily. It was May's. Swiftly after May's deafening pleas, gunshots resonated loudly in Rosalina's ears. The closer the shots were, the louder and more painful it was. Rosalina's heart was filled with fear and grief. Her best friend was dead. They were next.

As the end of Rosalina's life grew nearer, she prepared herself. The bullet would hurt. She would bleed. If it didn't hit her head, her neck, or her heart, she would bleed to death. She would sob in pain and beg for her life not to be taken, even though she knew it would be. As terrible as it sounded, she preferred the bullet to hit her heart or her head, that way she wouldn't have to suffer for a minute or two. She would be dead immediately with only a second

of pain. She would die with her classmates surrounding her. Mrs. Wicker always told them that they were a team, and they would go through everything together. Rosalina didn't think Mrs. Wicker meant death as well.

There was an aggressive thudding against the classroom door. Time stood still for Rosalina. She tried to prepare, but she wouldn't ever be fully ready for her awful fate. Murdered at fifteen, with culinary skills amazing enough to become someone famous, someone known world-wide. Her dreams were being ripped away, and she couldn't do anything about it. The door could only hold for a small amount of time before it was opened.

To Rosalina's surprise, the door was not busted open. The lock was stronger than she thought. Just as she calmed, very slightly, a large, veiny hand broke through the small glass window on the door. Students in Mrs. Wicker's classroom screamed as shards of glass fell to the floor and the mysterious hand was covered in dark red blood. The hand reached down towards the handle. The hand now showed a wrist, and the wrist showed an arm. Whoever the shooter was, they were wearing a suit. *Not a student. Not a psycho. Who could it be?*

The door handle jiggled violently. A semi-automatic pistol hung through the broken window, and a bullet went straight for the handle. Metal pieces plummeted to the ground and the door swung open. A tall, slightly chubby man stormed into the classroom. The students all stared in shock at who it was. By his messy light brown hair, his Nike sneakers that he always wore with his suits, and his attempt of a goatee, Rosalina recognized him as Mr. Davis, the Physics teacher. He was always the teacher students had a hard time connecting to. He was a very strict teacher and gave an hour and a half worth of homework every other night. He never did anything even slightly amusing in his class; it was strictly notes and tests and lectures that seemed to drag on for an eternity. Rumors had spread that Mr. Davis was insane, but Rosalina had never believed it. She always thought that students said that because they simply didn't like Mr. Davis, but now she knew the rumors were true.

Without any sort of warning, Mr. Davis began to shoot with no sign of hesitation. He didn't even seem scared. He *wanted* to do this, and he seemed so happy to. Rosalina counted the number of gunshots. *One, two, three, four.* Two students lay limp on the ground, one was screeching in pain. The fourth bullet hit the wall,

chipping some of the beige paint off. Mrs. Wicker wept. “Mr. Davis, please! Stop!” she begged, as if Mr. Davis was suddenly going to put his gun away, resurrect the murdered teenagers, apologize, and turn himself in. What a wild imagination.

Mr. Davis made eye contact with Rosalina. She was one of the best students in his class. She always did her homework and she participated. Although Mr. Davis did make *many* mistakes, and Rosalina corrected every single one of them. Maybe that was why he was going to kill her, because she corrected him on a daily basis. She tried to think of that as his motive, and he wasn’t crazy, just fed up. But could one simple student, out of over 100, be a reason to kill every single one of them?

In a rush, Spencer pulled violently on Rosalina, causing her to miss the bullet that was headed for her chest. Rosalina was stunned. She cheated death once, all thanks to Spencer Thomsen. Would she be able to do it again?

He covered Rosalina completely, using his back as a shield and his hands to hold her down. “Spencer, what the hell are you doing?” Rosalina howled. She couldn’t believe what was happening. It felt unreal, like a dream and a nightmare at the same time. Spencer was risking his life for her.

Spencer didn’t reply. He was dead silent, tears flooding his eyes. Another gunshot. Spencer’s body jerked in an inhumane manner. His body sagged and he fell to the floor, blood gushing out of the back of his head. Rosalina stared at Spencer’s limp body in pure shock. She suddenly began to wail out, screaming for him to come back. *Why would he do that? Give up his life for a girl? For someone he was merely friends with?*

As selfish as it was, Rosalina saw a glimmer of hope. “Maybe I’ll survive,” she thought, sniffing. Perhaps she did have a life ahead of her. The thought was torn away from her as fast as she thought it up. A sharp, hot pain emerged in Rosalina’s neck, followed by a gunshot. She couldn’t tell which one came first, it was all too fast for her brain to comprehend. She looked down in alarm, bewildered. A seeming waterfall of scarlet red blood oozed down her neck, her skin destroyed. *No.* In the matter of a second, she went still, her eyes clouding up with lifelessness. *No.* Her rigid body slumped down onto the checkered ground. The last sounds she heard were gunshots and cries. She couldn’t see, talk, think, or feel anything.

She was numb. Her hearing slowly faded out. Rosalina Adams was dead.

* * *

“In the shooting of Eastwood High, taking place on March ninth, thirty-five students were killed, and eight teachers. Many more have been injured. The shooter has been identified to be Tim Davis, a forty-two year old physics teacher at the high school,” the newsman reported. Anthony Adams sat rigid in fear on the sofa, listening intently to the news report. In the other room, Mrs. Adams was impatiently pacing around the dining room, calling a number multiple times. On her phone was Rosalina's name. She looked as if she had been crying. *Rosalina was in school while the shooting happened.*

“Tim Davis has been taken into custody and faces a sentence of life in jail without parole. Police at the scene have recorded and made a list of the people who have died. This list will be shown now.” A rolling list of the murdered people was shown, taking up three to four seconds before moving to a new part of the list. Anthony quickly paused it on the first section of the list and attentively read through it. He was looking for one name in particular, although he found many others that would affect him differently.

Having found the name Rosalina Adams, Anthony let out a breath of disbelief. He stared in shock at the black text. *Rosalina Adams. Rosalina Adams. Rosalina Adams.* Anthony cried out for his younger sister, collapsing onto the floor and letting out hard, painful sobs. Mrs. Adams dashed into the room, almost instantly knowing why Anthony was freaking out. Covering her mouth, Mrs. Adams turned away, tears rolling down her cheeks. She rushed over to her son, kneeling down and cradling him. “My baby is dead...” she wailed, clutching onto the soft fabric of Anthony’s shirt as tightly as possible. She choked on her own sobs.

Anthony felt as if everything was tumbling to shattered pieces. He felt a hole in his heart that he knew couldn’t ever be mended. Someone he had loved so dearly, from his first glance to his very unfortunate last, was *gone*. Rosalina wasn’t just a victim of a school shooting, she was a younger sister, she was a daughter, she was a granddaughter, a cousin, and a niece. She was a chef-in-training, she

was an excellent student. She was a best friend, she was a crush. Most importantly, she was *Rosalina Adams*.

So, as the terrible feeling of grief and heartbreak consumed what was left of the Adams family, they sat on the living room floor, mourning the loss of their dear Rosalina Adams, all the while half-heartedly listening to the news report about the wretched shooting of Eastwood High.

“The hardest part of losing someone isn’t having to say goodbye, but rather, learning to live without them. Always trying to fill the void, the emptiness that is left in your heart when they go.” —Anonymous

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Invisible

Stephanie Perlera

I feel invisible walking down these hallways.

Everyone pushing and shoving me as if I was nothing.

No one notices me, I feel all alone.

But none of that matters when I’m doing something that I love, which is writing. When I’m writing I’m in another dimension. But like everything else it comes to an end. I’m insecure, I know I’m not good enough.

I don’t know how everyone else does it, they look confident and powerful.

When they walk down the hallways they’re not pushed, they’re noticed.

I wish I was like that but I’m not. I’m just plain me trying to get through school.

Trying to become a famous writer.

Someone who is going to get noticed and appreciated.

But it’s all a dream which won’t come true.

But I can only hope.

© 2019 Stephanie Perlera

An Ode to Grape Soda

Demerise Hirsch Calzaretta

Oh, grape soda. You are the best soda around
I wish that there were more grape soda stores in town
 You are the best flavor
 You have the best taste
Whenever I see some grape soda, I drink it with haste
 There is no drink better than you
 I'm not lying, this is true
When I grow up, I would like to be a grape soda maker
 Or taster
I think that all grape soda should be free
I think grape soda should grow on trees!
 Grape soda is good
 Grape soda is great
 Anyway
I wish I could drink it every day
 I love you, grape soda
 Fanta & Crush
 You are truly the best
 You are the best flavor
 You have the best taste
Whenever I see some grape soda, I drink it with haste.

© 2019 Demerise Hirsch Calzaretta

Silence

Katarina Dvornik

People are afraid of quiet.
The silence when nobody
Knows quite what to say
That sends shivers up your spine.
But silence—
Real silence,
When you're not filling up the darkness
With blathering words that evaporate fruitlessly,
When you let the nothingness wash over you, engulf you—
Holds a certain warmth inside you,
A dark, calm, warmth,
An instance of swimming, intangible thoughts.
Silence recoil, like one of a rubber band
That has been stretched so much
And for so long
That it does not even feel the pull
Until suddenly the tension is lifted
Dissipating as if it were never there.
Silence is a subtle balance,
That creeps up
Like an intricate feathery vine
So that you don't even notice
Until everything has changed.
Like a veil behind you,
Touching you with a gentle softness
And pushing with unseen fingers
The thin skin
Of toughness and puffed up chests,
The real darkness
Of hatred and crushing fingers
That shrivel a soft silence.

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