

# sps 7·8

vol 3 #1



**The literary magazine of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades  
Somerville, Massachusetts**

# sps 7·8 **vol 3 #1**

**The literary magazine of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> 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

**Lindsey Richard**, art

East Somerville Community School

**Alan Ball**, creative writing laboratory

Writers' Den

**Cover.** The mission: to interpret a monster created and drawn by a first grader, Chase Mobilia (inside back cover), from the perspective of a 7<sup>th</sup> grader, Zia Halawa (front cover). *East Somerville Community School.*

**The Poetry Wall: A large selection of poetry from students in all grades appears online at 12zine.com. Visit to read and give input to assist in the selection of poems for awards and further publication.**

Published independently on behalf of the students at no expense to the community. Labor and materials donated. Green publishing standards observed.

© 2018 **sps 7·8** on behalf of the individual contributors

**Return to**

<http://happeningnoweverywhere.com/>

# Contents

## **essays**

### **Untamed not so untamed**

Jaqueline Henriquez.....3

*East Somerville Community School*

### **The Yankee Cannonball**

Ariyeh Weissman-Bennett .....4

*East Somerville Community School*

### **Pinko the Fish**

Ia Sofia Cabre Jockovich.....11

*East Somerville Community School*

### **The Canobie Car Ride**

Rodolfo Sanchez.....47

*East Somerville Community School*

## **fiction**

### **A Window To The Past**

Zack Buchheit .....5

*A.D. Healey Elementary School*

### **Starman**

Megan O’Leary.....12

*A.D. Healey Elementary School*

### **Forgetting**

Leslie Montiel.....17

*A.D. Healey Elementary School*

### **Framed**

William Capuano.....20

*A.D. Healey Elementary School*

### **Forever and Always**

Alexa English.....29

*A.D. Healey Elementary School*

### **The Drifter**

Boris Vira.....38

*A.D. Healey Elementary School*

### **Los Asesinos**

Jaylese Mieses.....42

*A.D. Healey Elementary School*

## **poetry**

### **Being Bilingual**

Ernst Pierre.....38

*East Somerville Community School*

# Untamed not so untamed

Jaqueline Henriquez

This summer of 2017, for the first time I finally had the guts to go on a roller coaster. I was really impressed with myself. Never in my life would I have thought of going on a big ride.

It was just one of those boring summer days. Wake up, eat, sleep and repeat. When my cousin called me to go to Canobie Lake with her, I thought to myself, "This is my chance to feel like I've accomplished something this summer." Both of my best friends, Julianna & Dennis, were really excited about how our first ride we were gonna go on was the Untamed. I was so nervous; that ride seemed really scary.

"We're here!" said Julianna. My heart was beating so fast, I was hoping that the line was long so that we didn't have to go in that exact moment. But no, the line was short. In fact we didn't have to wait at all. I started to get even more nervous. My palms were getting sweaty, my heart raced like a runaway train.

"Is everybody ready?" said the guy who was in charge of the ride.

"Yes, woo hoo!" said everyone except me. The ride started slowly and little by little we climbed the first hill. I kept my eyes closed but that didn't stop me from shaking. Before I knew it we were at the top. I felt like a bird soaring on top and bam my wing broke.

"Ahhh!!" I screamed. I took a quick look and we were upside down.

"Smile," said Julianna. While we were upside down they had taken our picture. Right after the ride had come to a complete stop.

"How was the ride guys?" said the man.

"It was actually not that bad," I said. We went to go see our picture and I looked terrified. My eyes were closed while Julianna was smiling and Dennis was screaming.

"Hey, let's go again," said Dennis.

"You're on your own, buddy," I said.

I didn't really think they would actually go again, but then I remembered it hadn't been their first time. While they were on the ride I stood there staring at them. I was still petrified after the ride but I still had a lot of fun. Maybe next year I'll go again.

© 2018 Jaqueline Henriquez

# The Yankee Cannonball

Ariyeh Weissman-Bennett

After half a year, every Thursday of playing in the orchestra along with a few concerts, we *were finally being rewarded for all the hard work with a trip* to Canobie Lake Park.

The bus ride was long and I got a little bus sick but when we finally got there and I saw a big ride, The Yankee Cannonball, I thought the park was going to be fun; that guess was very, very wrong. I knew we had to perform there but I did not know it would be taking up a good three fourths of our time and make it almost a very boring trip.

When we had finally unpacked all of our instruments, I was thinking after an hour of performing it'll be over and we can have fun; again I was wrong. As the concert rambled through and people made suggestions of how to play better, the time kept adding up, and our time on the rides kept going down. We had never expected to have it take so long. Everyone was getting so stressed, I was pining to move, every muscle in my body was tensing up. I wanted to scream! All of us just wanted to get on the rides (but really who wouldn't).

When it finally ended it was eleven and we only had two hours to go on all the rides, with lines we would only have time to do a few rides. We decided first to go on a fun ride called Da Vinci's Dream where you spin around on chairs in the air, it is more of a ride to see things than to get thrill out of it, like the up and down rides and flip-sie rides. It was a fun ride but not one I would want to go on again.

At that time I had actually really wanted to ride on the ride called Untamed but someone (Lucca) made it so we couldn't because our group had to stick together. So we had to drag ourselves along hoping that we could still make something out of the park. Then we remembered the big ride we saw on our way in and went to it, which was the number one rated ride at the park. We decided if it was such a well-rated ride that we would probably like it too. It also looked like a good ride. So we got in the long line and waited for our turn. It was a long wait and I hoped very much for it to be worth it, but when I finally got into the back car (which in my opinion is the best because you get the most motion and you are the last to go

over the hill so you go down the hill fastest) I knew I was ready for a blast.

The bar that kept you in came down with a resounding “Click.” Then the ride operator screamed “ARE YOU READY TO HAVE SOME FUN?!?” everyone screamed and the cart jerked forward, took a turn and started to S-L-O-W-L-Y go up towards the top of the hill. With a slow but steady clicking, “Click...,Click..., Click...” and then with a final click the front went spilling over the edge like a stream of lava, people screamed and I then waited for my turn to spill over, when I spilled over the edge, I screamed and gripped the bar for dear life! Up and over the mounds I went screaming my head off, scared, thrilled and happy. Then I put my hands up and continued to scream my head off. At times I felt like I was falling! We were flying around the track so fast it felt as though the carts wanted to jump off the track. We continued up and down and around turns, and then finally we came to a halt.

My legs were shaking from the up and down motion, but I had had a super time on the ride! I then realized that my time had not been ruined by the horrible, long, boring time we had during the concert.

© 2018 Ariyeh Weissman-Bennett

## A Window To The Past

Zack Buchheit

May 27th, 2017

It was just another day in London for Gilbert until the lunchtime announcement. He was hanging out with his boys, Joe, Bob, and of course, his best friend, Isaac. He had known Isaac since they were babies, because their fathers were also best friends. Even though it was late May, Gilbert still sported a huge furry coat, because he was the sort of guy that was never hot—and anyways, style was more important to Gilbert than comfort. The boys were at recess playing soccer when they heard the whistle to come in for lunch. Gilbert went in and got his lunch, his favorite, roast beef and Yorkshire pudding. Earlier that day, the teachers had told them that there would be a special assembly during lunch. Gilbert sat down with Isaac, Joe, and Bob. Mr. Gibbons, the headmaster of the school,

came up to the microphone. He tapped it to make sure it was working. When he found that it was, he started to speak.

“Hello, all students of the 9th year! I and the other faculty members of the Healey School would like you to know that there will be a trip to Paris, France, over the summer. If you would like to go, put your name on the list in Mr. Jacques’ classroom.”

All of the students went berserk. They had all been waiting for the teachers to give them news like this all year. Gilbert had been told about this trip by students from the 10th year. They had told him about how he would get to stay with all of his friends in a big hotel with no teachers in the room. They had also told him about going to the top of the Eiffel Tower and seeing the view. But what Gilbert most wanted to do was to see the catacombs. The catacombs were where dead bodies were buried under Paris as soon as the graveyards overflowed. Gilbert had always been fascinated by the catacombs because of all the skulls and bones, and had pored over any pictures he could find in books and on the internet. He could not wait to finally see them in person.

The teachers later told them that the trip was scheduled to be from July 14th to July 18th. They wanted to be there at that time so that they could be at a memorial ceremony for the Vel d’Hiv roundup, where they rounded up all of the Jewish people in Paris and took them to concentration camps.

“This was a horrific event that must be remembered so that history doesn’t repeat itself.” said Mr. Gibbons. “For this reason, we must be there to commemorate it.”

### July 13<sup>th</sup>

Gilbert was packing his bag when he got a call from Isaac.

“Bruv, I’m so pumped up to go on the plane tomorrow,” exclaimed Isaac into the phone.

“I feel you. I can’t wait either,” said Gilbert as he packed his furry coat into his bag.

“I wonder how Joe is going to do. He has never been on a plane before.”

“I think he’ll be fine as long as he’s with us.”

“See you tomorrow man.”

“Bye.”

## July 14<sup>th</sup>

Gilbert woke up at five o'clock in the morning that day. He didn't have to get up until seven, but he could not sleep because he was so excited. He woke up, went downstairs, and made himself a poached egg. He packed a few more things in his bag, and played video games until seven, and then left for school.

He met Isaac there and got on the school bus to the airport. When all of the students had gathered, they went through security, and waited for the plane. Gilbert listened to his favorite song, *Man's Not Hot*, until it was time to board. Once he boarded, he sat next to Isaac, and started watching one of his favorite movies, *Jackass*. He laughed too much so he had to turn it off, so he did not wake sleeping people on the plane.

Once they arrived in Paris, all the kids in Gilbert's year went through customs, and then got on a bus to go see what they considered their first—and most important—landmark, the hotel. All of the kids were buzzing with excitement. Joe, Bob, Isaac, and Gilbert were all in the same room. Before leaving on the trip, they had chosen who would share a room, so it was not a surprise. They turned on the Premier League game, Chelsea versus Liverpool, and started watching. Bob heated up some microwave sausage rolls and popcorn because he was still hungry after the airplane dinner. At about one in the morning, they went to bed.

## July 15<sup>th</sup>

The first full day of the trip was very exciting. First, they went to the Notre Dame Cathedral, and Gilbert was amazed by the stonework and the sheer height of it. Most of all, he loved the statues of the gargoyles. They went inside, and saw the stained glass windows and the huge columns. After that they had a walking tour through some of the back streets, and then had lunch at a huge French restaurant. Gilbert and Isaac had escargot, or snails in English, for the first time. Joe and Bob did not like the idea, so they just got steak hache and frites, which is the French version of hamburger and fries.

After lunch, they went to the Louvre, and saw famous paintings like the Mona Lisa. They then went to a fair with big Ferris wheels and many games. They had dinner, and then went up to the top of the Eiffel tower to see the view at night. It was amazing and because



Paris did not have very many tall buildings, the height seemed a lot bigger. To conclude the day, they all had dessert crêpes, stuffed with Nutella and whipped cream, and went back to the hotel.

### July 17<sup>th</sup>

Gilbert woke up extremely excited. This was the day that he got to see the catacombs! He had been dying to see them since he had learned of them in the 5<sup>th</sup> year, and had been begging his parents to bring him to Paris and see them. Now, he would finally get his chance. For the occasion, he put on his favorite pair of jeans, a Bape tee, and his Yeezys, and went down to the buffet for breakfast. After a lot of baguettes, and big bowls of hot chocolate, the class left on the Metro to see the catacombs. The entrance was on the other side of town, so there was about a 20 minute Metro ride.

“I can’t wait to go to the catacombs” said Isaac.

“I’ve wanted to go since the 5<sup>th</sup> year. It seems like such a scary, but sacred place.” said Gilbert.

Once they arrived, the group went down into the depths of the catacombs. Gilbert could hardly breathe from excitement. They wandered from room to room surrounded by thousands of bones. In one room, Gilbert and Isaac were completely awestruck. They ended up staying there for a long time gazing at the bones. The wall had years etched into the stonework above every group of skulls, dating all the way back to the 1700s. Gilbert, as if drawn by a magnet, reached out and put his finger into one of the eye sockets of a skull. The dust wiped off revealing a date that seemed to glow on the skull. July 16<sup>th</sup>, 1942. He realized something strange was happening, and looked to Isaac, his heart pounding. They ran from the room out into the corridor and desperately searched for their group. They could not find them anywhere.

“Where are they?” gasped Isaac, with fear in his eyes. They ran for the stairs where they had entered, planning to call one of the teacher’s numbers when they found a phone. But to their dismay, as they emerged from the catacombs, they saw that everything looked different.

At first, they thought that they must have just come out in the wrong place, so they went up to a stranger, and asked to use his cell phone. He gave them a strange look, and walked away quickly. Instead, they went into a nearby store, and asked to use the telephone.

They tried every number, but nobody responded, so they decided to go to the hotel, and wait. As they left, something caught Gilbert's eye. It was a newspaper stand. Every newspaper had a date. It said July 16<sup>th</sup>, 1942. Glancing around, he saw that everybody was wearing old fashioned clothing.

Gilbert realized that something in the catacombs must have caused them to go back in time. It was hard to process, but he realized that they were in Nazi occupied France. They had to get back to 2017, and fast. He told Isaac all of this and Isaac was scared. Not only because he was Jewish, but also because it was July 16<sup>th</sup>, the day of the Roundup. They started sprinting back toward the catacombs, when they heard a loud voice yell, "Halt!" They stopped, and turned around to see two French policemen. At least they were not Nazi soldiers, Gilbert thought. The policemen each took one by the arm, and brought them back to the station.

The man questioning them spoke very good English. He asked them about why they were running, and why they had such strange clothes on. They told him the story, but he clearly didn't believe them. He then asked if they knew of any Jewish people, and Isaac lied, saying that he did not. He was getting worried, and started fiddling with his necklace. Now Gilbert was worried. What if the officer saw the necklace, with the gold Star of David on it? Then Isaac pulled it out. The policeman yelled, and grabbed both of them. He dragged them outside, and threw them into a truck, and it started down the street. There was no escape. Isaac was sobbing and clung to Gilbert. He knew where they were going. He knew that they were being taken to the Velodrome, the big bike racing arena where all of the Jewish people were rounded up before being sent to Auschwitz. He knew that they would be held there, and put on a train to Auschwitz. He knew that meant the end.

Once they arrived at the Velodrome, they waited for hours. One man even took a picture of them. Eventually, everybody was loaded onto the train. "Please no," muttered Gilbert.

And then, as if his prayer had been answered, he was taken off of the train.

"This one can't be a Jew," said one of the soldiers. "Look at his hair. Look at his eyes."

Gilbert's hair was blonde and thick and his eyes a bright blue, the Nazi definition of a perfect human. Gilbert tumbled to the ground relieved, but terrified. Isaac was still on the train.

He had to get Isaac back. The train started moving, and Gilbert ran alongside it. He jumped on Isaac's car, and got the door open. Isaac was about to jump, when the muzzle of a gun was pressed to his head. Isaac drew back, and so did his hope. He started yelling and crying. He knew what was going to happen. Gilbert looked at him, and tears started pouring down his face. Why? Why did he touch the skull? He saw the train cross a bridge, and Isaac cross out of his life.

As he walked through the streets, back towards the catacombs, he sobbed. He kept crying until he had no more tears left, and then he just walked. When he reached the catacombs, he went back in, and to the room with the skulls. He found a section in the wall with 2017 written on it, and found July 16<sup>th</sup>. He touched this skull, and then left. He found his group, and told the teacher what happened, while crying. She thought that he had gone mad, but then the truth of Isaac's disappearance became clear.

### August 9<sup>th</sup>

Gilbert was getting more depressed every day. Joe and Bob came over every once in a while to say hi, but all Gilbert wanted to do was lie in bed. Gilbert's parents had set him up with a psychiatrist, but he still knew the truth. Isaac was gone. He still cried every day.

### September 6<sup>th</sup>

Gilbert was in class learning about the Vel d'Hiv roundup. It was sad for him, and he was trying to hold back tears. He just kept flipping through the book until he saw something that caught his eye. It was the picture of them. Without asking, he put the book into his bag, and ran out of class. He ran out the door, and to the local police station, who had been hunting for Isaac since he went missing. He showed them the picture, and they just stood with their mouths open until one of them said "If you could go back in time, couldn't we do it too and save him?"

For the first time in months, a big smile broke out across Gilbert's face.

© 2018 Zack Buchheit

## Pinko the Fish

Ia Sofia Cabre Jockovich

On my 10<sup>th</sup> birthday I had a small party with friends and family. After eating cake, my family huddled around me as I opened presents. Ugo, my little brother, who was about 4 at that time, said he wanted to go first, he was so excited to give his present to me. He had joked the entire morning saying his present was the best in the world and that I was going to love it. He grinned passing me a small vase with a cloth over it singing “Happy Birthday.” I dramatically took off the cloth and was surprised to find a fish.

Fish aren't my favorite animal. They don't really do much but eat and swim. In fact as a kid I was terrified of the Disney movie *Nemo*, but this was the first present Ugo ever gave me. I mean he has given me lots of presents that my mom had picked out, bought, and put his name on, but this one was special. With the look of excitement on his face he had obviously thought this present out. I'm his big sister and I would do anything for him. I was there when he was born, I held his hand as he took his first steps. This fish, as dumb as it may sound, was rather sentimental.

The bowl had been decorated with pink rocks and a plastic castle so I automatically assumed the fish was a girl. The fish was a normal looking red betta fish with a pretty flowing tail. The bowl was adorably decorated with accessories. My feelings toward the fish gradually started to change. I became so grateful and excited to have my own pet. I was going to name the fish Pink after the color of the rocks. I told my family the name and the thinking behind it when Ugo told me it was a boy. After brainstorming other names I decided to call him Pinko. My family all thought it was silly but I started to really like that name.

Everybody knows fish don't have long lives. But Pinko had a really long one. I think it's because I took really good care of him. I didn't want to repeat the same mistake that I did with my first fish. My first fish died a day after I got it. In my defense I was only four.

Anyway, I loved Pinko. During the winters I put him closer to the heater. In the summer farther away from the sun. During his last days he was throwing up and barely moving. I think he died

because he was a little too close to the oven, radiating heat maybe. I don't know, I'm not good at science. When he died we went to church and prayed for him.

I guess the real reason I really cared for Pinko was because my thoughtful little brother gave him to me. I mean he used his own two dollars which in his mind, at that age, was close to a million. He grew to be something special for me taking care of him with Ugo. I mean you can't really do anything with a fish except feed it and have one sided conversations. So Pinko was really a symbol of love and appreciation.

At the beginning, receiving the gift, I wasn't exactly thrilled to get a fish. Who really wants to take care of another living thing. Well actually lots of people but not me when I was 10. As time went by I grew to like Pinko. What I've been trying to communicate throughout this narrative is that what gives something value isn't the thing itself but who gives it to you and who you share it with. And this was a perfect example for what Pinko meant to me.

© 2018 Ia Sofia Cabre Jockovich

## **Starman**

Megan O'Leary

Camila Aliyah Moseby woke up to *Starman* playing in her ears, her Tuesday alarm. With her eyes still closed, she rolled over and turned off the alarm.

“Camila, get ready for school!” she heard her mom call up to her.

Camila pushed off her blanket and swung her legs off the side of her bed. Rubbing her eyes, she walked over to the light switch and turned it on.

Camila got dressed, putting on blue jeans, a plain black t-shirt, and old gray sneakers. Before going down the stairs, she glanced over at her calendar. The date was Tuesday, October 11th, 2016. Camila took a red marker and put a red X on the day. She then ran downstairs.

“School's starting soon, you should get going,” her mother said. Cam checked the time. It was 7:35 A.M. She needed to be at school by 7:45.

Cam made some toast and wrapped it up to bring with her. She put on her jacket and opened the door.

“Bye, Mom!” she called.

“Goodbye, Cam! Have a good day,” her mom called back.

Camila made it to school on time. Her first class of the day was geometry. She sat down and looked at the board. They were learning about proving triangles congruent. Cam heard a voice next to her.

“Hi, Cam!” her friend Sophia whispered. Sophia had been Cam’s friend since fourth grade. Sophia had long brown hair that she had tied back in a braid.

“Morning, Sophia,” Cam whispered back.

The first class of the day seemed to go by very fast, as did the others. Before long, it was lunch.

Cam got her food and walked over to the usual place where her friends sat. She greeted her friends and sat down. Sitting at the table were Sophia and Tahlia. Tahlia had transferred to Sophia and Cam’s middle school in 7th grade. Her two friends were talking about how they had to write a seven page paper for English class.

After lunch, Cam went to the rest of her classes. While walking to chemistry, a boy tripped in the hallway, the books in his arms going everywhere. Camila saw this and rushed over to help the boy. After this, she continued on to class.

Before she knew it, school was over. Cam didn’t have any clubs or activities on Tuesdays, so she walked home and started her homework. After she was done, she read a book and played on her phone for a little while. At 5:30, *Jeopardy* was on. She decided to watch it. Her mother was home at 7 o’clock. They ate dinner together, and then got ready for bed. Cam got into bed at 9 o’clock. At 11:50, she was still awake.

At 11:59, she started to drift off to sleep. As time was changing from 11:59 to 12:00, a bright white light started to fill Cam’s room. Cam tried to open her eyes and see the light, but she couldn’t. Instead, she fell asleep.

Camila woke up to *Starmen* playing in her ears, her Tuesday alarm. With her eyes still closed, she rolled over and turned off the alarm.

“Camila, get ready for school!” she heard her mom call up to her.

Cam figured that she had accidentally set the wrong alarm for today. Camila got up and got dressed. Before she went downstairs,

Camila looked over at her calendar. She expected it to be Wednesday, October 12th. But there was no red X on Tuesday.

“That’s not right,” she mumbled to herself. She could have sworn that she put an X on the calendar yesterday. She put a red X on Tuesday and Wednesday and walked down the stairs.

“Hey Mom, do you know where my violin is? I have orchestra after school today,” Camila asked her mom. Her mom looked at her strangely.

“Cam, you don’t have Orchestra today. That’s on Wednesdays,” her mom replied.

“Today *is* Wednesday.”

“No, it’s not. It’s Tuesday.”

Camila was starting to get frustrated and could see that her mother was as well.

“Okay, fine, it’s Tuesday,” she said.

Camila brought her violin to school anyway. When she made it to school, she looked at the board. She saw that they were learning about proving triangles congruent.

“Hi, Cam!” Sophia whispered to her.

“Hey, Sophia,” Cam replied, “Didn’t we learn about this yesterday?”

Sophia gave her a confused look. “No, this is the first day that we’re learning about it. Hey, why did you bring your violin? It’s Tuesday.”

Camila thought that she had learned the same things in her other classes as well, but didn’t say anything about it. When she made it to lunch, she heard her friends talking about how they had to write a seven page paper for English class.

“Hey, didn’t we talk about this yesterday?” Cam asked.

Both of them stared at her. Sophia broke the silence with, “No, we got this assignment today.”

Cam knew that they talked about that yesterday—she was certain. Why were they saying that they didn’t? Cam’s confusion showed on her face.

“Hey, Cam, are you okay?” Tahlia asked with concern.

“Y-yeah, everything’s fine,” she replied.

Cam walked to her Chemistry class, still feeling that something was off. While walking, a boy tripped, his books flying everywhere.

Cam rushed over to help him, and saw that he was the same boy from yesterday.

“Bad luck, falling twice in two days,” she joked.

The boy looked puzzled. “What are you talking about?”

After school, Camila walked to the orchestra room. She looked in and saw no one there, which was unusual, but she decided to wait and see if anyone would show up. After twenty minutes, she gave up and walked home.

Cam looked at the homework she’d gotten in school. She thought that it looked exactly the same as last night’s, but was unable to find last night’s homework to compare it to. After homework, she turned on the T.V. to watch *Jeopardy*. They were the same contestants and questions from last night.

Cam’s mom came home at 7:00. She and Cam ate dinner in silence, until finally she asked, “Camila, is something wrong?”

Cam tried to think of a way to say what was going on, but couldn’t.

“Nothing’s wrong, Mom,” she replied.

“Are you sure? Would you tell me if there was?”

“Yes, I would.”

Camila couldn’t go to sleep again. She kept thinking about everything that had happened. At 11:59, she began to fall asleep. Right before she closed her eyes, she saw a bright white light.

Camila woke up to *Starman* playing in her ears again. Before doing anything else, she stood up and walked to her calendar. Sure enough, there was no red X on Tuesday or Wednesday. Cam tried to accept what was going on—she was repeating the same day over and over.

Cam went through the rest of her day in silence. She didn’t pay attention to any of her classes. She was trying to think about how this could have been caused.

After three more days, it became clear to Cam that whatever this was, it was not going to stop. After the shock of what was happening wore off, Camila became scared. What if she kept repeating this day forever?

On the sixth day, Cam stayed up until 12 o’clock. She thought that if she could stay awake until morning, the days would move on.

At 11:59, Camila was sitting up in bed, waiting for morning. As 11:59 was turning to 12:00, a bright white light shone in Camila’s



room. Cam screamed as the light with no source filled up the entire room.

Cam woke up with *Starman* playing in her ears.

Camila guessed that whatever was happening, there had to be something big behind it. Something that had the power to send her back in time over and over again. The problem was that she didn't have a clue what it could be and her only clue was the white light.

The next night, Cam stayed up until 11:59 again. When the light showed up this time, Cam started to walk towards it. While walking towards it, she heard a voice.

“Camila Moseby is staying up later and is starting to make connections between the light and us.”

That was all Cam remembered, and then she woke up with *Starman* playing in her ears.

Cam knew that someone was behind all this now. She needed to find out more about what was going on. That night, when the light filled her room, she ran towards it.

Cam woke up, but this time, she wasn't in her room. There was no *Starman* playing in her ears. She looked around and saw that she was sitting in a chair. There was a woman in the chair across from her.

“Who are you? Where am I?” Cam asked.

“All the usual questions,” the woman replied. “Let me explain everything. I am not from Earth, although it may look like I am. It is because my species can change what we look like. I am from another planet. My species is doing experiments on Earth creatures. We are doing simple experiments that cause no harm to Earth creatures and we always erase their memories of the experiments afterwards. We simply want to understand your behavior.”

This was a lot for Camila to wrap her head around. As she was trying to process all this information, the alien continued,

“We have a great respect for humans. I would like to let you know that you are the last experiment. After this, we will be leaving the Earth and going back to our home planet.”

“Are you going to erase my memory?” Cam asked.

“No, we would like to have you remember us when we eventually return to Earth,” she said, and handed a bracelet to Cam. Cam put on the bracelet. “We have a feeling that you might try and call this a

dream, so look for this when you wake up. Goodbye for now, Camila.”

As she said that, the alien lifted up her fingers and snapped them.

Camila woke up to *Don't Stop Believin'* playing in her ears, her alarm for Wednesday. She lifted up her wrist and sure enough, the bracelet was there.

© 2018 Megan O'Leary

## Forgetting Leslie Montiel

“Kristin, Kristin?” Mrs. Britt questioned.

“Ah... sorry Mrs. Britt. What did you say?” I mumbled, as I slowly wiped away the saliva on my cheek.

“I said, never mind. Please see me after class.”

“Okay,” I responded as I heard murmuring around the classroom. I knew they were all looking at me. I felt ashamed. I was sleeping in class. Everyone probably thought I was an idiot, but they didn't have any idea what I was dealing with. Ignore them, I thought to myself over and over again.

“You didn't get enough sleep, did you?” I heard and saw my best friend, Shawn, behind me.

Suddenly, the bell rang. I grabbed my notebook and pencil and carelessly put them in my backpack. I lowered my head and started walking toward the door in an attempt to leave, but failed miserably.

“Kristin, where are you going?” asked Mrs. Britt as she raised her eyebrow and gave me a puzzled look.

“Uh... I was going to the bathroom before we talk, but I can wait,” I replied.

“Kristin, what's going on? This always happens to you.”

“I'm sorry Mrs. Britt, it's just that I like staying up late to watch this T.V. show,” I lied.

“Really? Well, the next time this happens I'm going to have to call your mom. You may leave.”

*Please no.* “I understand,” I murmured, rushing toward the door.

**3:00 P.M.**

I walked home. My house had two bedrooms, but I used to sleep on my mom's room floor every day. As I opened the door to my

mom's room, I saw my mom sleeping on her bed. I gave her a kiss on her forehead, hoping that she wouldn't wake up. As I stood up, my mom woke up.

"Hey, who are you?" she exclaimed as she started sitting up.

"Mom, it's me, Kristin. Your daughter." My eyes started to get watery.

"I'm sorry, Kristin. I know that this happens to me every day."

"Yeah," I whispered as I gave her a smile.

"Mom, go watch T.V. while I prepare your food, okay?"

Every day, I'd come out of school and go straight home to watch Mom.

The sky grew darker and in New York, it got pretty cold. I told Mom to go to her room to sleep. When she was lying down in bed, I sang her a lullaby that she loved singing to me when I was five. Maybe that's why I like to sing so much. Then she asked, "That's a very nice song. Who taught you it?"

"You did, Mom," I whispered, looking into her desperate eyes.

"Mom, you look tired. You should get some sleep," I said.

"Are you going to sleep here?"

I nodded. I didn't like to sleep in my bedroom. I was afraid that something might happen to her, so I just slept on her floor. It took me a while to fall asleep due to the coldness of the floor. I didn't sleep with Mom, because I was afraid she might forget who I was and she'd call the police, or do something crazy.

**7:00 A.M.**

"Who are you? Why are you here? This is not your house," Mom exclaimed.

"Mom, it's me."

"I never had a daughter, I didn't even get married."

"Yes, you did, Mom," I said, trying not to cry.

"Get out of my house now!"

"Mom... just remember... you're forgetting." I grabbed my backpack and ran out of my house, crying. *She's forgetting*, I kept thinking as I ran faster and faster. As I was going down the stairs of my house, I saw Shawn.

Our eyes met and he jogged to me.

"Why are you crying? Why do you still have your pajamas on?"

I didn't say anything. What was I supposed to say? "What's going on?" he asked in a more serious voice.

“Nothing,” I sniffled, wiping my tears away.

“If you don’t want to tell me, then just say so.”

*Keep quiet. He doesn’t have to know about your life, even if he’s your best friend.* I kept on thinking to myself, but I couldn’t hold it anymore. “My mom has Alzheimer’s,” I sobbed.

Shawn’s eyes widened.

“You have to send her to a group home,” Shawn whispered.

“No, that would mean I’m abandoning her and I can’t do that.”

“No, it wouldn’t.”

“Just promise not to tell anyone.”

He never said I promise.

**7:45 A.M.**

After I told Shawn about my mom, we rushed to school. I sat in my seat in Mrs. Britt’s classroom. School went by fast that day. Well, at least it felt fast.

**2:35 P.M.**

After school, I walked home with Shawn, when I saw a small white bus in front of my house. As two men stepped out of the vehicle, I rushed up to them.

“What is this? What’s happening?”

“Ma’am, we came to look for Katherine Val,” one of the men said to me. My mom? They were looking for her? Why?

“Ma’am, just move out of the way.”

“Answer my question,” I sobbed.

“Ma’am?”

“Just answer.”

I tried to push them back so they couldn’t get to my mom, but they were too strong. One of them pushed past me, opened the door, and grabbed my mom.

I broke into tears, “Please don’t take her.”

“We have to. I’m sorry,” one man said.

“Is there any way she can—”

“Sorry miss, we have to take her.”

I turned my head and saw Shawn standing on the sidewalk, watching the scene.

“It was you, wasn’t it? You called them.”

He ignored my words as he just stared at me.

I turned back to try and get my mom, but I couldn’t. They were too strong.

They placed her in the bus.

“Do you have anyone that can take care of you?” the first man asked.

“No,” I whimpered, tears running down my face.

My mom wasn’t crying. She had already forgotten who I was.

© 2018 Leslie Montiel

## *Framed*

William Capuano

Twenty-five dead. Eleven women, ten men, four children. One bomb. James was quite proud of this. He was the one that set the bomb up. But right now, he wasn’t sure if it was worth it as he sprinted up the stairs of an eleven story hotel. “Stop!” yelled the detective, about two flights below him. “Stop or I’ll shoot!” James kept running, stair after stair. *Bang! Bang!* Two shots, quick and precise. James didn’t even slow down. The detective put his gun back in his holster and kept running. James was at the top, no more stairs left to go up. He looked around, disoriented. There was a hallway, and a ladder hanging down, no doubt going up to the roof. James tried to think, but there was no other option. The detective got to the top of the stairs and saw James at the top of the ladder. *Bang!* Too late. James was now at the roof and took off. The detective quickly climbed the ladder and saw James running on the open space of the rooftop. *Bang!* This time, the bullet hit its target. Right in the back of his leg. James fell to the ground and screamed in agony. The detective moved closer to James, keeping his gun on him. “Get on the edge,” he said sternly. “The edge of the roof, now!”

“Screw you, Luke!” James shouted. *Bang!* The gunshot echoed in the air. James screamed multiple swears as the bullet hit his other leg, right in the thigh.

“Move!” ordered Luke. James made his way to the edge, limping terribly, and fell to the ground. Luke put his gun against James’s head. “Are you proud?” Luke asked. “Are you proud of killing those innocent people? And for what? What did it gain?” James spit right in Luke’s face.

“You’re nothing! You’re nothing compared to Osiris.” Luke wiped his face, drew back from James and holstered his gun. *Osiris again*, Luke thought. *So far, every terrorist has mentioned that name.*

“And who is Osiris?”

James said nothing, he just smirked. Luke nodded his head. Luke bent down and pulled James up and held him over the edge of the roof.

“Should I ask again?!” Luke yelled. James looked down and saw the ground, eleven floors down, certain death if he fell.

James was terrified, but knew he couldn’t say anything. He was more afraid of what Osiris would do to him if he talked. Luke nodded and unclamped his hands from James’s jacket. Luke looked down and saw James falling through the air. Beep! Beep! Beep!

Luke sprung out of bed. Beep! Beep! Beep! It was his alarm. Luke quickly shut it off. The clock read nine o’clock. Luke held his head in his hands. What he was dreaming about happened last week. He had been suspended from work for further investigation. Luke told The Capitol that James had fallen, but there was a witness who specified that Luke had dropped James off the roof. *The Capitol*. Luke scoffed. The Capitol runs the city now. They took over when the government fell. Their methods were far more...extreme than the government's. The Capitol shot to kill when riots started. That’s why there were so many bombings happening. A group called Scorpio formed to fight against The Capitol, and their methods were even more cold blooded and ruthless. Luke had no leads on Scorpio. Nobody did. The only thing that kept coming up was the same name. *Osiris*. Luke had to have a tracker on him that was put in his mouth. The Capitol didn't want Luke going anywhere, but Luke didn't like being monitored. He had a professional come in to disable the tracker. A guy who owed him a favor. He made it look like the tracker was always at Luke's house. Dave knew what he was doing. He had a large frame and had a muscular build, but most of all, he was good with his hands. Dave could do just about anything. He had a mind like a steel trap. “Just be careful,” Dave advised. “If your mouth presses too hard on the tracker, they’ll see where you are.”

“Thanks man. You're the best around.”

“No problem. You saved my sister’s life. I think I still owe you.” Luke got up and checked his phone. There were seven missed calls from John Rogers. That was his boss. As Luke got dressed, he called John back. John picked up after only one ring.

“Hey John,” Luke greeted. “Did I get my job back?”

“Luke,” John said. “This isn’t about your job... I’m very sorry to tell you this...your father is dead.”

Luke was at his father's house within five minutes. There were ambulances and journalists already there. He quickly pushed through the crowd and got to the front. There he saw his father, surrounded by yellow tape, lying on the ground with two stab wounds in his stomach. Luke felt a hand on his shoulder. He turned and saw his brother standing next to him. They quickly embraced each other. “You okay, Vaughn?” Luke asked.

“Yeah, I think I’m good,” he answered. “I think I’ll be just fine.”

When they were kids, Luke would always provoke his father, so he wouldn’t go after Vaughn. After their mother was shot during a robbery, the beatings got worse. It got bad enough, Luke even tried to run away one time. That didn’t go well at all for him. He hadn’t even seen his father for two years before this. Luke spotted John in the crowd and walked over to him. “John,” Luke said. John turned.

“Luke, I’m sorry for your loss,” he said apologetically.

“Thank you. Me and Vaughn’ll be okay,” Luke assured him.

“Do we know who did this yet?”

“Not yet,” John answered. “The Capitol’s safety patrol found the murder weapon tossed in a sewer drain not two blocks from here. They’re running the prints now.” Luke nodded. After about twenty minutes of waiting, four safety patrol officers came walking toward Luke. The safety patrol officers wore white vests with the word “Capitol” imprinted in the middle and white helmets with tinted gray visors. They were called S.P.O. for short. Vaughn worked as an S.P.O. during the day. It paid well, but it was very dangerous when there were riots.

“What can I do for you?” Luke asked the S.P.O.’s.

“Luke Davidson, you are under arrest for the murder of Robert Billings, your father. Put your hands behind your back.” Luke was too stunned to even reply as they handcuffed him and pulled him to his feet. “You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used ...” Luke didn’t listen to the rest. He was thinking. *I*

*didn't do this. I didn't do this. Who could've framed me? And why? And how?* All of these questions were running through his mind as he was dragged into a Capitol cruiser and driven to a police station to be held and questioned. That's about all the police do anymore. The safety patrol has taken over all the other tasks. Vaughn watched all of this, keeping his smile to himself. *That was easier than I expected*, he thought.

After a night in a tiny cell, a quite short man with cleanly cropped brown hair came up to Luke's cell with ten S.P.O.'s behind him. Luke must've been at least a foot taller than him. "Hello, Luke," the man said. "My name is Mike Sterling. You're being transported to a prison called Terminus." Luke saw Vaughn in the crowd of S.P.O.'s behind Mike.

"You're coming with us?" Luke asked him.

"I gotta make sure you get there safe," Vaughn answered. "That's what big brothers are for."

"You know I didn't kill dad, right? No matter how much I hated him, I never would've killed him."

"I know Luke, I know. I don't know how you were blamed for this. But I'll find out. I promise."

"Um, excuse me," Mike interrupted. "This conversation is irrelevant. We must get moving. I have a deadline, unlike you." They got in two army vans, with Luke, Vaughn, Mike, and three S.P.O.'s in one, and the rest of the S.P.O.'s in the other. Luke sat there in his cuffs. He was cuffed to the inside of the van, so there was no possible way of escape. He still couldn't believe what had happened in the past few days. *If Vaughn couldn't figure this out, I might be in jail for life.* Luke thought as they drove. After about two hours of driving, they were in an almost completely deserted city.

"How much longer are we going to be in this van? I need to use the bathroom," Luke said. One of the S.P.O.'s struck out and hit Luke right in the jaw.

"No questions!" he ordered. Luke drew back from the man and kept to himself for ten more minutes of driving when the van suddenly bumped over something and it swerved to a stop. The van behind them stopped, too.

"What's going on?" an S.P.O. asked the driver.

"We must've ran over something sharp. Our tires are popped," the driver answered. "I'll go out and check." He got out of the car



and shut the door. He looked down and inspected the tires. The driver of the van behind them got out and walked over.

“What’s the hold up?” he asked. As the driver stood up his head exploded in blood and his body slammed into the van. “Sniper!” the other driver screamed as loud as he could, as he ran back towards his van. He almost made it too. His back was hit with another bullet as he opened the door. Blood spurted onto the windows of that van. Inside Luke’s van was chaos. The S.P.O’s were frantically trying to get their weapons together.

“It’s okay,” Mike said, shaking. “These windows are bulletproof.” He was more trying to convince himself than anyone else. The six S.P.O’s got out of the other van and took cover behind the vehicle. The men came out of nowhere from both sides of the van and they had automatic weapons. The S.P.O’s didn’t stand a chance. They were gunned down within seconds. They didn’t even get a shot off. The men had black masks over their faces. They started walking toward Luke’s van. There were at least twenty of them.

“You two stay here!” one of the S.P.O’s shouted at Luke and Mike. “On three, we go out!” he ordered. The men were getting closer. “One...two...three!” All the S.P.O’s got out, including Vaughn. All Luke could hear was gunshots. He saw the S.P.O. to his left fall to the ground through the small window of the van.

“Mike, uncuff me!” Luke yelled. “Mike, now!” Mike was trembling in fear.

“I-I... I can’t,” he said. “It’s against protocol.” Luke heard more gunshots.

“Mike, we don’t have time for this. We’re going to die. Do you hear me? We’re going to die if you don’t uncuff me right now!” Mike nodded his head quickly. He fumbled around for the keys, then gave them to Luke. The gunshots stopped. Luke got his chains off quickly.

“Can they get in?” Mike asked nervously, as the men surrounded the van.

“The van is steel plated. They’d need something extremely strong to get in here,” Luke answered. As if on cue, a man walked by one of the windows with a huge circular shaped saw. “Something like that...” Luke said, as he backed away from the back of the van. The cutting started. It was a loud buzzing noise and Luke could see sparks coming off from the inside of the van. “Mike, get me a gun,”

Mike was frozen in place. “Mike!” He unfroze. He grabbed a pistol from his holster and handed it to Luke. Luke got out of his seat and jumped to the back of the van where the men were cutting open the vehicle. Luke aimed the gun right there. He waited. When the door fell open, Luke shot two of them quickly. He got out, and another man was there waiting for him. The man swung his rifle at Luke's head. Luke ducked and swung a right hook at his face. It connected and the man fell to the ground. Luke grabbed the man's weapon and looked up. There were about seven other men with guns pointing right at him, surrounding him.

“Drop the gun!” One of them ordered. “Now!” Luke dropped his gun and held his hands up. The man stepped and slammed the butt of his gun into the back of Luke's head.

Vaughn and a tall man with short black hair were standing next to each other in a small room. “Do you really think this will work?” the man asked.

“He has no reason to doubt it, Marcus,” Vaughn said, smiling now. “Besides, his brother just died. He'll be caught up in grief. I just wish he could understand my point of view. How awful The Capitol is and what needs to be done to get them out of control.”

“Well, why can't he?” Marcus asked.

“He wasn't old enough to remember when our mother died,” Vaughn said, looking down. “We told him it was a bank robbery and she got caught in the crossfire... It wasn't. It was The Capitol. She was participating in a protest. It was peaceful too. Then The Capitol came.” Vaughn sneered. “They shot her. They shot ten people in that protest. This is why we must stop at nothing to take The Capitol down. Even the deaths of innocent people. Their deaths will be worth it. I promise you.”

Luke woke up. His hands were tied behind his back and he was sitting in a chair. He looked up. He was in a small room with no windows. There were two guards next to him. The door opened and Marcus walked into the room. “Who the Hell are you?” Luke asked angrily, “And why am I here?!”

“Calm down,” Marcus said. “You're with Scorpio now.”

“And who are you?”

“I am Osiris,” Marcus said smiling. “The leader of Scorpio.”

Luke became enraged. “You're the one that set up all the terrorist attacks!”

Marcus nodded, grinning proudly. "I quite like the one I set up about a week ago. A man named James executed that plan. I believe you know him." Luke started struggling in the ropes that were tying his hands behind the chair. "The next attack will happen about an hour from now," Marcus said. "And it'll be on the actual Capitol building. A bit of symbolism there. And you can do nothing to stop it. Oh yes. I almost forgot, your brother. I'm so sorry, but my men gunned him down. What was his name again? Bon? Don?"

"I'm going to kill you!" Luke screamed and tugged ferociously at the ropes. Marcus started leaving the room. "Do you hear me Osiris! You're dead!" The door closed.

After two hours, one of the guards left, leaving only one with Luke. Luke tried and tried to get the rope off his wrists. He tried to remember his training. After about thirty minutes, the ropes were loosened and the guard hadn't noticed. Luke slowly unraveled the rope from his wrist. The guard was facing away from him. Luke jumped up like a cat and pulled the rope back against the guard's neck. The guard became unconscious after six seconds of that. Luke tried opening the door. It slid open, unlocked. There was one guard Luke could see, and he was walking in the opposite direction. There was a stairwell going down. Luke peered over the railing. He spotted two guards. He moved back from the railing, thinking. Then he remembered. The tracker. He remembered what the electrician said. "If you press hard enough on the tracker in your mouth, they'll see where you are." Luke quickly reached inside his mouth and pushed his finger hard against the tracker.

"I thought we were supposed to let him escape," Marcus said to Vaughn as they watched Luke take on the two guards through cameras.

"Well, we can't make it too easy for him now, can we?" Vaughn said, smiling.

Once Luke exited the building, he ran out onto the sidewalk and looked around, disoriented. He recognized this place. He was in Washington D.C. Luke sprinted to the nearest car on the road and broke the window with his elbow. "Police!" he yelled. "Get out of the vehicle." A middle aged woman stepped out and Luke jumped in and closed the door. He started speeding down the road and tried to avoid the traffic. There was a red light and Luke became stuck behind the cars. No cars were moving. He started beeping the

horn. "Let's go, let's go!" he yelled, frustrated. Once it changed to a green, Luke weaved around the cars in front of him and zoomed towards The Capitol building. He heard sirens in the distance. It didn't matter. Luke needed to get to The Capitol soon, or else even more innocent people would die. In less than five minutes, Luke was there. He screeched to a halt in front of the building. He jumped out of the car and sprinted up the steps. A guard stopped him from going in.

"Sir, stop," he said sternly. "You can't go in this way."

"Look, you don't understand, there's going to be a terrorist attack here, I need to stop it!" The guard grabbed Luke's shoulder.

"I'm going to have to ask you to come with me sir. Now." Luke grabbed the guard's arm and turned so the guard was to his back. Luke flipped the guard over his back and down the steps. Luke didn't waste any time. He kept going and sprinted into the large building. There were three men Luke saw who were already dead, lying on the floor. There were bullet holes in all of them.

Vaughn was sitting at a desk. There were screens all around him showing the rooms in The Capitol. He was talking into a microphone. "And three, two, one, go." Luke heard a noise. It sounded like wheels. He turned around and saw a man pushing a cart on wheels with a silenced pistol tucked in his holster.

"Hey!" Luke yelled. "Hey, stop!" Luke started chasing after him as the man sprinted down the hall with the cart. Luke caught up to him quickly and tackled him to the ground. The cart fell over. Luke grabbed the gun from the man's holster and hit him in the head with it, hard. Luke gasped for breath as he got off the man. He walked over to the crate on the ground and opened it, expecting a bomb. There wasn't. There was nothing but an iPad. Just sitting there. "What the..." Luke said aloud, confused. Luke picked the thing up. Right when he did, it rang. He answered it. It was a FaceTime. "Where's the bomb, Osiris!?" Luke yelled at the screen.

"Whoa, calm down brother. It's me." Vaughn came into view of the picture.

"What the..." Luke said, confused. "Vaughn?"

"Yes, Luke. Me. I am the one and only Osiris." Vaughn held his hands up.

"What? How? Why?" So many questions were running through Luke's mind.

“The Capitol needs to fall. And this is the best way to do it.” Luke didn't even respond. He was too stunned. His only brother, his brother he'd grown up with his whole life, was Osiris, the leader of Scorpio.

“That's how Scorpio knew what prison I was being taken to. That's how they got my fingerprints,” Luke realized.

“Yes, I got your fingerprints everywhere in my house,” Vaughn smiled. “You're probably wondering why you were framed for your father's murder, right?” Vaughn said.

“Our father. He's our father Vaughn,” Luke answered. Vaughn ignored him.

“I wanted to show The Capitol that even the greatest of us could fall. I wanted to show them that even one of their own would turn on them. Their best detective. They'll believe that you were the one who set the bomb up.”

“For what reason?”

“How about you are a murderer on the run who was spotted at The Capitol attacking guards?” Luke was floored. He couldn't believe this was happening.

“But... there's no bomb. The case is empty.”

“Hahahaha,” Vaughn laughed. “That's just a decoy. Do you think I would have let you have even the slightest chance of stopping me?”

“Vaughn, don't do this,” Luke pleaded. “Please, Vaughn, please—”

All Luke heard was a huge bang and the last thing Luke saw was fire coming straight for him.

One hour ago. The police station was chaotic. Luke had escaped from The Capitol and was on the run. “Hey!” a cop shouted out to John Rogers, Luke's former boss. “I got a hit on Luke's tracking device.” John ran over to him.

“Where is it?” John asked. “Come on, where?”

“38 Independence Avenue, Washington D.C.”

“Did everyone hear that?!” John shouted. “38 Independence Avenue! I need units there now, on duty, off duty, I don't care! Get them there now!”

Vaughn watched as Luke was vaporized. He did feel slightly bad. Luke was a good man. He just never got the full picture. Suddenly, there was a loud crack. It was the door being kicked open. There were gunshots. Vaughn stood up to grab his gun, but the S.W.A.T.

team was already up the stairs and had their guns aimed at him and his guards. "Get on the ground, now! Hands on your head!" Vaughn didn't move. He was laughing, hysterically. *That's my brother*, he thought, as he raised his gun up to his head. *That's my brother*.

"It's been two weeks since The Capitol was attacked," a news broadcast was saying. "The Capitol is out of control and in chaos. The people have voted to have the government back in control and that will happen in the coming weeks. The last of Scorpio's members are being apprehended thanks to a detective named Luke Davidson, previously accused of killing his father. His brother, Vaughn Davidson, has been accused for being the one who planned The Capitol attack and has taken his own life before the authorities could apprehend him."

© 2018 William Capuano

## Forever and Always

### Alexa English

She's gone. My mother, Alexandria Martino, is really gone. I'll never see her beautiful smile again, hear her comforting laughter. I won't have her to just hold me after a hard day at school. I have nobody to openly talk to and feel no judgment. Loneliness. Loneliness is what I feel run through my body. My dad, Christian Martino, will never be able to comfort me like my mother could, could never cheer me up like she did or help me get past school. As if my thoughts were read, I feel my brother Noah's arms wrap around me. My brother is only seven but he seems to understand me perfectly. He lost his mother too but he seems to be comforting a sixteen-year-old instead of getting comfort himself. Pathetic is what I feel. Noah had always been very close to my dad. He knew how much I loved my mother. Loved. Feels so weird to be saying loved instead of love. I hate this feeling. I feel tears welled up in my eyes all over again. I had taken a week off from school because I just couldn't bear being in that hellhole, but I do miss Liam. Liam Wilson, my best friend, well, my only friend. I haven't talked to him at all. I'll finally get to see him at school, tell him I'm okay. That's a lie, a big, fat lie. I'm anything but okay. I feel a tear roll down my cheek. Pathetic. I have been crying for the past week and I can't stop. I'm so stupid. Worth-

less. I can't do anything right. I can feel anger bubble up inside me. I'm so stup—

“Naomi,” I hear a soft voice coming from my door pulling me out of my thoughts.

I look up to see my dad, “What?” I respond in a weak voice while I wipe the last of my tears.

“Sweetheart, are you sure you want to go to school? You can take the week off again if you need. Do you want to?” my father asks me.

“No, no I'm okay. I can do this,” I whisper the last part to myself for reassurance.

Noah lets go and leaves my room closing the door softly behind himself. I slowly stand up getting ready for the day. I put on a blue tee-shirt that I had gotten from Dad's mechanic shop while volunteering over the summer. I quickly throw on a pair of regular jean shorts. I walk out of my room to the small bathroom that's right across from my room. I brush my teeth, then my long wavy brown hair. I look into the mirror only to see my bluish green eyes that look like my mother's; I have the olive skin tone of my father. I immediately hate what I see. What else is different? I wait for my mom to walk in grab my face softly between both her hands and tell me how beautiful I look. Then I remember that she's gone and I won't have anybody to encourage me. It makes me want to bawl my eyes out again but I can't, I have to be stronger. I quickly leave the bathroom, no longer wanting to be in there, and head to the kitchen. I don't feel like eating, remembering all the meals I had shared with her. The dinners where she would have me doubled over laughing or the breakfasts where she would encourage me and tell me to have an amazing day at school knowing I hated it. I just walk over to my dad and brother and give them a hug and say goodbye.

“Have a good day Naomi. If anything happens, don't be afraid to call the mechanic shop. It is just right down the road from your school. I can get you,” my dad tells me.

I appreciate that he is looking out for me, but I have to do this. “Thanks, Dad but I think I'll manage.”

My brother gives me one last big long hug. When he lets go, I head out the door and already feeling the heat of the blazing sun. Gosh, Florida sucks. It's always too hot. I wait for the school bus. It pulls up and the doors open. Oh, how much I didn't miss this. I

walk on. Some kids scattered around the bus and I sit in the first few rows of seats. I pull out my phone and headphones and place them in my ears. I lean my head against the window slowly trying to desperately drown myself out of reality. I have a few minutes of peace and all of a sudden something hits me on the top of the head. “What the hell! Are you serious?” I ask to no one in particular.

I see a balled up piece of paper. I pick it up, and open it. When I do, I regret it instantly. The piece of paper reads ‘welcome back loser, didn’t think you would return, not that anybody noticed you were gone.’ I thought kids would stop the verbal abuse, but I guess not. I can hear kids snickering in the background obviously trying to not burst out laughing. I roll up the paper and put it in my pocket wanting to forget about it because it hurts. It not only hurts because what they said was hurtful, but because it was true. Nobody cares or notices me, but I try not to think about that now. Music has always calmed me down, made me feel a bit better. Yeah, I know that sounds pathetic, however it's one of the few things I had to make me feel better. I turn up my music louder afraid if I don't I will start crying, again. The bus comes to a stop in front of my high school. Let the torture begin, I think to myself. I open the doors and I don't even get four steps before I'm being pulled into a bone crushing hug. Liam. I immediately hug him back. We pull away and I take in his features. He has curly brown hair, an olive skin tone much like mine. He has freckles scattered over his cheeks that always make me think of stars across the night sky, and his chocolate brown eyes. I can see the bags under them. Had I caused that? Not even five seconds later, I'm immediately bombarded with questions.

“What happened? How are you? How was the bus ride? What can I do to help? Why didn’t you answer my calls or texts?” he asks scolding me with a stern look.

“Please, Liam, I don't want to talk about this, not here anyways,” I tell him quietly.

His look softens and he pulls me into one last quick hug, “I’m sorry,” he says while pulling away.

“I-It's okay. Let’s just get to class and get this day over with,” I tell him and I hear a soft chuckle escaping his lips.

“Okay, hey would you look at that? We both have chemistry together,” he says pulling out his schedule with a smile on his face.



“Well then, what are we waiting for, let's go,” I tell him and he nods his head taking off for class.

As I'm walking down the hall, I can see some students giving me pity looks. Word travels around. I hate this. Being the center of attention and the looks. Ugh, I don't want pity from people I don't know. Pity and sad looks aren't going to bring my mother back. People are looking at me like I'm some damaged broken little girl. Sure, that's what I feel like on the inside, but is it seeping through to where people can see it? I just want this day to end. Liam suddenly notices my discomfort and he quickened his pacing, making me quicken mine too. We finally get into the chemistry room and take the two front row seats. People start entering the room and lastly the teacher. Miss Casterly is our chemistry teacher. She looks surprised to see me, but quickly turns her shocked face into a professional one. She starts the class and tells us to take out our books. We do as she says and I can feel her glancing at me every once in a while. I work with Liam and we finish just before the bell rings tell us that class is over. We pack our bags and stand up to leave.

“Naomi, can you wait a minute please?” she asks and I look over at Liam to see him already looking at me as if asking that I'm okay.

I gave him a small nod and he walked out of the door. I turned around to face my teacher, “Yes, Miss Casterly?” I ask have a feeling I already know what is coming next.

“How are you doing?” she asks.

There it is, the question I can't answer. What does she think? My mother just passed. Does she think I'm fine, that nothing's wrong? I want to break down on the floor and just cry, and I want to be wrapped in my mother's arms. I want my mom back. I just don't want to feel broken like a little girl. I want someone who can understand me and help me. I want to pick up my broken pieces and place them back together. But the thing is, I'm more than broken. I'm shattered and nobody can fix me. I feel empty, I feel like I have a big hole in my heart. I feel like I want to die. So the answer to her question is no. No, I'm not okay and I don't think I ever will be and that scares me.

Of course I would never tell her this, so all I can manage to say is, “Yes, Miss Casterly, I'm okay. Thanks for asking.”

She gives me a nod with a look on her face telling me she doesn't believe me. Am I that easy to read? I leave the class and head to my

locker. I meet up with Liam and we head to algebra. We don't have it together but Liam always walks me to my classes. As I'm walking, someone bumps into my shoulder with enough force to send me to the ground.

"Watch where you're going freak. Just cause Mommy's gone doesn't mean anything," the student says sauntering off and I can hear the laughter of his friends echoing throughout the hallway and even some of the students around me. How could people be so cruel? Don't they understand that I'm having a hard time? The answer to that is no, because most of them haven't lost somebody that they loved like I did. Loved, there's that word again. It just reminded me how much I lost. I feel two arms wrap around me and help me up.

"Hey, let's just go to class okay?" Liam says in a whispering voice.

I feel tears prick at my eyes again and all I do is give him a weak nod and with that he wraps his arm around my shoulder and walks me to algebra. I arrive at the door and walk in. I sit in the back and open up my book to start the questions written on the board; however, I can't seem to focus. Why am I so stupid? Can I seriously not grow up and handle this? I just want to disappear into thin air, to be gone. I feel invisible and broken, not broken, but shattered. Suddenly, a hand snapping its fingers come into my view. I shake my head and look up at the teacher as she looks at me expectantly.

"Um, I'm sorry, but what was the question?" I ask with my cheeks turning bright crimson red and my fingers play with the hair tie on my wrist.

"What did you get for question three, Ms. Martino?" she asks, annoyance in her tone.

I feel all eyes on me. I can see my name falling out of people's mouths among the hushed whispers. Suddenly, I feel like I can't breathe and start inhaling and exhaling rapidly. What's happening? Suddenly it hits me, I'm having a panic attack. The student next to me notices and gets the teacher's attention. I can't focus on anything. I can't breathe. I feel like I'm slowly sinking underwater, like I'm drowning and there is nobody to bring me back to shore. I feel someone throwing my arm over their shoulder and I'm being lifted. My vision blurry. I feel weak, I feel completely and utterly pathetic. Suddenly black dots cover my vision and my grip weakens, then, there's nothing.

“Naomi, sweetie wake up,” I hear someone say while I’m being pushed gently.

“Ugh I’m up, I’m up,” I say slowly sitting up.

I look around and see my dad and brother standing by the bed and Liam sitting in a chair next to me.

“Come on, Naomi, we’re heading home. Liam is coming with us,” Noah says while grabbing my hand and leading me out of the room.

We walk out of the office and out of the high school. The minute I push the school doors open, I feel like a weight has been lifted off my chest. The nurse had said it was best if I went home after my incident in class. Liam had called his mom to ask if he was able to come home with me so I wouldn’t be alone, and she agreed, understanding Liam’s reasons.

We walk over to my dad’s pickup truck. I take the front seat while Liam and Noah are in the back. The ride is weird, completely silent, and we’re not left in an awkward silence but definitely not a comfortable one either. Let’s say it feels tense. We pull up to the house and walk in. I head to my room, despite my name being called. I sit there with a blank look on my face. I feel numb. It has been a few minutes of silence. Thoughts coming up in the back of my head, ones I never thought I could think of. Liam walks in and sits next to me without saying a word. I could feel his eyes on me. He brought me into a tight embrace and said nothing. I had always felt actions were just as important as words, and no words could give me comfort this way.

“Naomi, you’re going to get through this,” he tells me pulling back slightly to wipe the tears that had escaped my eyes.

I could only shake my head, if only he understood, “No, I won’t Liam. This will never get better, and you and my dad, Noah you’ll all end up leaving me,” I tell him, my tears getting heavy becoming like a waterfall rushing down my cheeks.

He holds me as my tears come falling down breaking into sobs as my body shakes rapidly. “Naomi, listen to me, I may not know what it is like to lose someone, but I do know what it’s like to feel lonely and unwanted. I’ll help you, so will your family, Naomi. You have people who will love and care for you. Look at it this way. Your mother may be gone physically, but she will never leave you. She will always stay with you in your heart and mind. School’s going to

be hard, but we will get through it together like always,” Liam says to me as if I’m just a broken child.

“Stop that Liam, stop treating me like I’m a little girl who can’t handle her problems.”

He pulls back from the hug with a scared look on his face.

“I’m sorry, I’m just scared,” I reply, feeling sorry for yelling, trying to bring my breathing back to normal.

“Naomi, listen. It’s okay, Naomi, it’s normal to be scared but—”

I quickly cut him off saying, “You don’t understand, Liam, I feel shattered. Like I’m all alone and nobody wants to help me. I can feel myself cracking, and this hurts so much mentally. It hurts me physically too. It physically hurts, Liam, and I can’t stop this feeling. The feeling of loneliness.”

“Listen here, Naomi Martino, you’re strong, one of the bravest, strongest people I know. I don’t see you as a broken little girl, I’m just worried for you and want to help anyway I can. You are wanted and you are loved. It’s okay to be not just broken, but shattered as you say. It’s fine to feel like you can’t be fixed. However, you must know you’re not alone Naomi. You never will be. You never truly will be okay, because this is heartbreak, but it’s fine to not be okay, to not be perfect because nobody is. It’s okay to have cracks in you because we all do. They’re like our battle scars from the awful things life has thrown in our path. What does matter is how you wear them. You can wither away and disappear into nothing, or you can wear them proudly and show off to people what you have overcome and accomplished, and yes you may not be okay, but you’ll never be alone. Which one do you want to become? Which one would your mother want you to be? Don’t fear that I’m leaving you, because I never will. Remember our pact we made all those years back? Always and forever.”

I start to think about Liam, and how he’s feeling. I feel a little bit of guilt come over me, because I continuously ignored and interrupted him. I’m so lucky to have him around, with how I have treated him. Taking him for granted. Yet he hasn’t shown one ounce of irritation or annoyance towards me. I can feel the tears come to a hold. I look up at Liam with bloodshot, puffy eyes and a genuine smile that hasn’t come across my face since the tragedy, I thought about his words and how wise he is, all I could muster up as a reply was, “Always and forever.”

I woke up realizing I had fallen asleep by Liam. He was lying beside me, snoring heavily. I couldn't help but let out a little laugh at how loud he was being. How didn't this wake me up? I shove him gently. Nothing. I push him a few more times. Still nothing. He's lying there still as a rock. I nudge him harder, then elbow him. Seriously what the heck? I finally give up and just push him off the bed.

"Ugh, what was that for, I was sleeping?" he questions groggily.

"Well, I don't know, how about the fact that we have school," I tell him, a bit shocked I had to push him off the bed to wake him.

"Ohh, yeah, I forgot about that," he says smiling sheepishly.

I shake my head at him. I get up and find clothes to wear today. I quickly shove Liam out of my room, not wanting to hear his bantering anymore, and change. I put on my light baby blue tank top and place a blue flannel on top, I put on some simple ripped jeans with grey Nike's. I search my room for my bag. I grab it and hurry out my door. I walk into the bathroom, looking at the time, it says 7:25 A.M., meaning I have ten minutes to be out the door and at the bus stop with Liam. I brush my teeth like usually, then throw my long hair into a high, tight ponytail. I look up into the mirror telling myself I'll never be pretty enough. I take a minute to think about what Liam had said to me yesterday, reminding myself that nobody is perfect and my faults are what make me *me*. With that I leave the bathroom and head to the kitchen. I see Liam already by the door. I walk over giving my dad and Noah a hug goodbye, mutter a quick "I love you."

"Why does it always have to be so hot?" Liam whines and starts stomping.

"Can you not act like a five year old for two seconds?" I ask him with an amused smile while raising my eyebrows at him.

He narrows his eyes at me and mumbles a 'whatever' and we continue walking. The bus shows up, but I'm a bit hesitant to enter, thinking about yesterday. Liam seems to notice because he grabs my hand pulling me along giving it a quick reassuring squeeze. We find two seats on the bus. I can hear kids talking about me. I hear one girl say to the other "That's Naomi Martino, she's a freak from what I heard. So is her little dumb sidekick," she tells her friends while she laughs.

I notice Liam look over at me with a sad expression and he says, "Just don't think about them. They are just some stupid girls who

like to make assumptions about my amazing best friend. They don't know you and you aren't a freak."

Liam starts up a conversation about aliens. Weird topic, but not my place to judge. At school, time flies by. There were a few comments here and there, but Liam was there for me. It is now the end of the day and me and Liam are heading home.

"I don't understand how you get an A in art, that class is impossible," Liam says confused.

"Liam, that's the easiest class, how can you not get an A?" I ask shocked.

"Whatever. Are we heading to your house?" he asks me.

"Yeah, I'm starving so we can eat when we get home," I tell me just as my stomach grumbles.

"I can see," he says with a chuckle.

We arrive at my house grab a snack and head upstairs to my room.

"Thanks, Liam, for yesterday," I say while glancing towards the ground.

"No problem, Naomi, I meant every word," he says with no hesitation.

A smile grows on my face, but doubt leaks in the back of my mind, "You really meant everything?"

"Yeah, we're best friends Naomi, I would never leave or intentionally hurt you," he tells me with a soft look.

"Thank you, again" I tell him again, feeling better. Happier.

"You're welcome Naomi. Now let's watch a movie shall we?" he asks with a wide smile.

"We shall," I respond, a smile gracing my lips, and I'm actually feeling happy. I didn't think I would feel happy again, but thinking about my family, my dad and Noah, I feel more reassurance. Glancing at the boy who has been like a second brother, always there for me and loyal, I feel like I can do anything. I feel hope.

© 2018 Alexa English

# Being Bilingual

Ernst Pierre

Being bilingual gives you some power  
You can speak any language any hour or any second of the day.  
It makes you feel bright  
When you speak the other language right  
It makes you feel smart  
Being bilingual is amazing

Lè ou bileng ba ou kèk pouvwa  
Ou ka pale nenpòt lang nenpòt èdtan oswa nenpòt dezyèm nan  
jounen an.  
Li fè ou santi ou byen klere  
Lè ou pale lòt lang lan dwa  
Li fè ou santi ou entelijan  
Lè ou bileng se etonan

© 2018 Ernst Pierre

## The Drifter

Boris Vira

I rode a streetcar to the city limits, then I started to walk, swinging the old thumb whenever I saw a car coming. I was dressed pretty good, a white shirt, brown slacks and sports shoes. I had gotten a haircut maybe a week ago at the barber college in town, and I had a shave and a shower in the morning, but no one would give me a ride. There had been a lot of hitchhike robberies in the area, and people just weren't taking chances.

Around four in the afternoon I came upon a roadhouse, just at the end of the commuter area. I went on past it a little ways, walking slower and slower, arguing with myself. I lost the argument, the part of me that was on-the-beam lost it, and I went back.

The roadhouse looked like a longer version of all the other houses on the outskirts of town, built of brick and false timber. The

plate-glass window in front seemed to be the biggest in town. There was an old pool table, a pay phone, and a horseshoe-shaped bar, upon which a couple of the town's earlier drinkers were already gripping bottles of beer. A bartender sat on a stool behind the bar, a little dazed. I stepped forward through the room and took a seat on an empty stool, both seats to my sides also empty. I made sure of that. *Pawtucket Patriot Ale: just one dollar!* read a goodly poster above the tap. I ordered one.

The bartender slopped the beer down in front of me. He scooped up the change I laid on the counter, sat back down on his stool, and picked up a newspaper. I said something about it being a hot day. He grunted without looking up. I said it was a nice pleasant little place he had here and he sure knew how to keep a drink cold. He grunted again.

I looked down at my beer, feeling the short hairs rising on the back of my neck. I guessed— I knew—I should have never come in here. I should never go in any place where people might not be as nice and polite as I was to them.

I put my half empty beer down, and sauntered back to the restroom and washed my face in cold water. I counted the money in my pocket, totaling it up in my mind. Four bucks. A little less than four bucks. I stared at myself in the mirror for a while, wondering what they would write about me.

*Jack Spang / 25--30 / 5'9...*

I looked into my face a little more and thought

*Brown hair / Brown eyes / Dangerous, potentially armed / Extraordinarily handsome...*

I laughed and rinsed my face again. *Armed and Dangerous.* Just like a film. I wasn't armed, but I suppose I could be called dangerous.

Just last week I had been halfway across the state. I was running away, running across some field, towards nowhere, really. A forest, and then a highway. Some poor sap's car had broken down. He didn't even see it coming. I dragged him back to the treeline and took the seventy dollars out of his pocket and rode his car out of the county, and from there... He was alive, sure. I'm not a monster. He didn't have my face or my number and I had dropped his car off somewhere. Untraceable. I broke out of my memory and pushed it out of my mind.



I walked out of the bathroom and back to the bar. A man had appeared next to my seat. His eyes followed me across the room. He had a long face, like he never smiled but he was smiling anyways. His hair poked out from under his cap maybe because he was too cheap to get it cut, and he kept a cigar in his fingers. I sat down and thought about my next words.

“Rather a warm day,” I said. “Really develops a thirst, doesn't it?” He raised his head and looked at me. Taking his time about it, looking me over from head to foot.

“I'll tell you about that,” he said. He smiled a little, then his face cleared. “I have a theory on the subject if you're really interested.”

“Yeah, what's that?” I said.

He pushed his hat back on his head, taking time about answering and giving me a mean grin. He took the cigar out of his mouth, looked at it, and put it back in again.

“I think thirst is a funny thing, very interesting. I read in the paper somewhere that saltwater, from the ocean, only makes you thirstier when you drink it. So if a sap starts wandering through the waves on a boat, goin' nowhere. the sun beating down on his ripped pants and bruised knuckles--” I knew what he was getting at but stopping was too much trouble.

“--and making a stain on the sea, he can't just drink what's below him, no matter how much he wants to. I suppose it's mother nature, stopping him from leeching off her juice, right. That's really what I like to apply to my district.”

“Alright, mister, you must want trouble.”

“This town, it's my district.” he said as if he didn't hear me. “When I see a vagrant rounding my streets sucking up my beer, I'd rather see him out, easy or hard, you see?”

I played it dumb-- kind of good-natured dumb. I said I certainly wasn't going to wait much longer,

“I think I'll just have one more beer, and then I have to go into town and catch a plane,”

I kicked myself for saying that, I should have left, but I don't take orders well, not here. The bartender slopped me out another beer.

“Catch a plane? I can't fancy a guy like you being on a plane. Maybe it's because they serve free coke. Or so you could sleep on the benches!” he said.

“You act like this to all the people you meet?”

“Sure do, if they can’t afford a car, unless they’re jacking it.” The man stared back at the bartender. I bore my head away, away from both of them.

I started to drink the beer, my eyes beginning to burn, a hedged-in feeling creeping over me. They had my picture, and hanging around wasn't going to do me a thing. But somehow I couldn't leave. I couldn't any more than I could have walked away from the last bastard who was jerking me—or the Burlington police office that night. Those officers had been fouling me, too, hitting me, and calling me all sorts of dirty names. They'd kept it up, just like these guys were keeping it up. I can't walk away, just like I couldn't walk away from them. I can't get them to stop, just like I couldn't—

It all came back with neon-like clarity. The lights were scorching my eyes, the almost beerish smell of ammonia stung my nose, and above the encouraging cheers of the brutish inmates to my sides, the sound of the policeman's skull, under my foot, repeatedly hitting the cell bars with sickening thumps— and then I was running, running towards the highway, and then...

I raised my glass and took the rest of the beer in one gulp. I wished I could leave. I wish he'd lay off me, but he didn't.

“Speaking of planes--” he was saying. “I heard the funniest story about a man on a plane. Honestly, I thought I'd die laughing when I--” he broke off, laughing.

“Why don't you tell it to him?” said the bartender, jerking his head towards me.

“You'd like to hear a real funny story, wouldn't you, mister?” the man asked.

“Yeah, what is it?” Really, I didn't want to hear his story, but that was that.

“All right,” he said. “This one will slay you. It seems there was an old man, with a long gray beard, on a plane from Los Angeles to San Diego. The fare was fifteen, but he only had twelve, so they dropped him off at Oceanside.”

I waited. He didn't say anything more. Finally, I said, “Yes, mister? I don't quite get the point.”

“Well reach to the top of your head. Maybe you'll feel it.” They started laughing.

I felt dizzy. The two men finished their laughs and straightened out. They saw me up like I was supposed to be doing something that I wasn't doing.

"Okay Mac, disappear," said the bartender.

"I haven't done anything."

"Beat it!" he snapped.

"I haven't asked you for anything," I said. "I look respectable, and I was polite-- I really didn't do anything! I'm an ex-serviceman-- I'm-- I went to college, I took a half of a year of college-- and--"

The veins in my throat were swelling. Everything began to look hazy and red. Through the fog, I heard someone's voice.

"Easy on your motor kid. You wouldn't wanna--" The last word was completely slurred in my mind. The bartender was reaching over the counter at my collar.

"Okay, easy Ernie, don't hurt him!" and then he let out a yell. Because I had grabbed the bartender's arm and wrested him over the counter in a headlock. I dragged him halfway across the bar and then slugged him so hard my wrist hurt.

I let go of him. He slid below a table and I ran.

© 2018 Boris Vira

## *Los Asesinos*

Jaylese Mieses

"I hope you know you're not leaving this house dressing like *that*," my brother, Enrique, scoffed. 'Twas the night of homecoming at my high school. I was a senior at Fort Hamilton High and Enrique was still giving me crap. He acted like he could control me just because he was a few years older than me. I broke up with my boyfriend because of him, and he acted like he could control what I wear?

The lustrous, pearl-beaded fabric of my dress glinted, light reflecting from the lamp's glow. It fit flawlessly, the dress molded my torso beautifully, complimenting my feminine shape. The gown draped past my toes, slightly drifting from my legs. It was the color of a dark red ruby. It was strapless, so it made sense why Enrique didn't like it. That didn't mean that I was going to blindly obey. I was going to wear the dress and he couldn't do anything about it.

"It's a dress, Enrique. You can't make me take it off, I'm 17 years old, practically an adult," I barked. I looked beautiful and I knew it. I wasn't going to let Enrique make me feel differently. "Wearing that *thing*," Enrique grunted. "That will only send these little boys the wrong message. You're still a kid. You want them to think you're *una puta*? No! *No permitiré esto!*"

"Let them *chicos inmaduros* think what they want, Enrique. *¿Soy una puta?* No. So why should I let their opinions affect me?" I argued. "Valentina, *eres muy hermosa. Esos niños pequeños* will only take advantage of you. I won't let them make *mi hermanita* look stupid."

I sighed. Enrique treated me like a little girl sometimes. I was 17! I could wear whatever I wanted to. I gave him a dirty look.

"*No me importa.* I'm going out like this. I'll text you, 'Rique." He opened his mouth to say something but just like that, I was gone.

---

I arrived at my high school around eight P.M. There were still people walking in the silver doors of the gym. As the door opened, the music coming from the inside got louder. I smiled to myself. *Finally, I can be a regular teenager for one night.*

I spotted my best friends, Alanis and Ivelisse. They were twin sisters and tonight they wore matching blue gowns with black pumps.

"Valentina! *¡Ven aquí! Estamos aquí!*" Lisse shouted.

FHHS was filled with Puerto Ricans, and that's why we spoke in Spanish a lot. Most of us grew up speaking Spanish and had to learn English when we had to go to school.

I strolled over to the doors where my best friends stood. "*Hola, Lanis.*" I kissed her cheek as well as Lisse's cheek. "Are you ready for the best night of your life?" Lisse shouted, happily. I giggled and we all walked into the gym, arm in arm.

Almost everyone was on the gym floor dancing with their friends or significant others. Many of the underclassmen were either getting drinks or sitting on the bleachers with their friends, knowing tonight wasn't their night. Alanis, Ivelisse, and I walked to the food area and grabbed a few cups of Kool-Aid.

"I brought a surprise..." Alanis turned toward us and pulled out a silver flask from her purse. We laughed as she spiked our drinks. I

took a sip and the strong, creamy liquid flowed down my throat, feeling a burning sensation as I swallowed.

About two hours and four drinks later, my head was pounding and everything started buzzing. Lisse, Lanis, and I were dancing with each other on the gym floor. The music was loud, I could feel my heart beat matching the beat of the song. I felt numb, but in a good way.

As I slowly moved away from the twins, all of a sudden, I felt big arms circle my waist and I felt myself being carried. I mumbled to myself, confused. Lisse and Lanis weren't paying attention because they were dancing with some guys. I cried out, as I was suddenly dropped on the hard, cold floor and there was a sharp pain in my lower back.

"Valentina," a strange familiar voice grunted. "Oh, Valentina. Still beautiful as ever, especially on this lovely night. I missed you. So much, *mi amor*. It pains me to still think that you're the one who broke my heart. After all the love I gave you, Tina. You still left me."

"Who are you?" I asked, my vision blurred. I couldn't bring myself to my feet, I was too weak. I blinked repeatedly, in an attempt to clear my vision, but it didn't work. "I'm hurt, *gatito*. It's me, Mateo," the voice slurred. Realization struck me. Mateo. *Of course*, it was him. I had broken up with him a few weeks before, because of Enrique. I wanted to apologize. *It wasn't my fault, I wanted to yell. You know it was Enrique that didn't want me to be with you.* But I just couldn't.

"Why am I here, Mateo? *¿Estas loco?*" I asked, turning over on my hands and knees to get up. Mateo had short brown curls with matching brown eyes and stood a good twelve inches above me. He was Dominican, and that was why Enrique didn't like him. He hated Dominicans for as long as I could remember and I was forbidden to socialize with them. But Enrique had a special hatred for Mateo. I didn't know why. He refused to tell me anything about his personal life.

Mateo and I were together for a while without Enrique noticing but he found out and forced me to break up with him. I knew better than to lie to Enrique so I broke up with him a few weeks back. Ever since then, Mateo was quiet. Silence was very rare for Mateo Del-

gado. I knew he had been doing something. Planning. I didn't know it was to hurt me.

"You broke my heart, *asesina*." Mateo pulled something dark and big out of his pocket. I flinched as he held up a 9mm glock with a silencer and pointed it at me. "Mateo, *cálmese*," I croaked, staring at the gun. Where would Mateo get something like that? *Asesina*? Why did he call me an assassin?

"You made me look stupid, Valentina. Can you think of how that may look to everyone. Some *boriqua* breaking up with *un dominicano*? No, I told you that you were going to regret that. Today's the day" He cocked the gun, ready to shoot before I kicked his leg in. He cried out in pain and dropped the gun. It slid across the floor to where I stood. I bent down to pick it up but he grabbed my ankle and pulled. I yelped in pain, but grasped the grip of the gun firmly and pointed it at Mateo. "Let go of me, Mateo!" I yelled. His big brown eyes widened and he stood up and ran out of the closet. I stared at the gun as tears rolled down my face.

I rushed home after the craziness in the closet. I looked through the window of my living room and saw Enrique sitting on the couch with two men in black. I pressed my ears against the window to listen to what they were talking about.

"Listen, Valentina can't find out. I've been keeping a decent eye on her, but she seems to have a big mind of her own," Enrique stated, arms crossed.

"Sí, *pero* you have to make sure she doesn't wander onto the Dominicans' turf. They know that she is your sister. If they find her, they *will* kill her."

What were they talking about? What can't I find out? I barged into my house and walked straight into the *sala*. Enrique's hazel eyes widened. The two men turned quickly toward me with guns pointed. I grabbed the gun out of my purse and pointed it.

"*¡Baja las pistolas! Todos ustedes!*" Enrique yelled. "*¿Quién es ese?*" The tall dark man kept the gun pointed at me, but looked at Enrique.

"*Mi hermanita!*"

Slowly, the men lowered their guns, faces turning bright red. Oh, this is rich. What kind of authority does Enrique have for these men to be pointing guns at me and listening to him when he says to put them down? "Valentina, why do you have a gun? Why are you

home early?" Enrique was flooded with questions, but I didn't care. They were keeping something from me and I planned on figuring it out.

"What are you hiding from me? What can't I know?" I pointed the gun at him, angrily. "Valentina, put the gun down." He frowned. He didn't look as scared as I hoped for. He looked like he was almost used to it. I glared at him but lowered my gun. "What happened at the dance?" Enrique asked as I sat on the couch. I took a deep breath, preparing to tell him everything.

About five minutes later, Enrique and the two men were caught up on everything. "Enrique, is she talking about Yafui's son?" the short, burly man questioned. Enrique nodded. The tall one, Darky, nodded his head toward the hallway. "*Ven*," he said. Enrique held up his hand toward me and followed the men toward the hallway. I stayed quiet, but moved close enough where I could hear them speak.

"*Podemos usar Valentina. Cuéntale sobre 'los asesinos'. La necesitamos si queremos vencer a Los Jefes Dominicanos*" Darky spoke quietly to Enrique. I raised my eyebrows. *Los asesinos? Los Jefes Dominicanos?* Were these gangs? I gasped. Was Enrique in a gang?

"*No!* She's my little sister. You think I want her to know how our parents died? No, she's too young," Enrique spat. He walked back into the living room and looked at me. I needed to know. This would change *everything*.

"Rique, are you in *una pandilla*?" I looked at him with wide eyes.

Multiple emotions crossed Enrique Feliciano's face: anger, confusion, sadness... regret?

"What are you talking about?" Enrique wasn't a good liar.

"*Sé que eres.*"

Enrique was in a gang. Were *Mami* and *Papi* in it too? Is that how they died? I had so many questions. Why didn't he tell me? Am I that untrustworthy? I was almost eighteen years old. I could handle the truth. Did he expect to hide it from me my whole life?

"*Lo siento*, Valentina. I didn't expect for you to find out this way."

I glared at him. How dare he lie to me my whole life about this? Not only the cause and death of my parents, but him being in a gang? Unbelievable.

“*Qué quieres decir?* You’ve hidden this from me all my life,” I argued. Enrique just looked at me. Anger and regret filled his eyes. He looked guilty.

“*Lo siento, Valentina,*” he said once more. “What can I do to make it up to you?”

I was in shock. I stared into Enrique’s brown eyes, & sniffled. Enrique wasn’t going to like this, but I wanted answers. All of them.

“Tell me everything,” I stated. Enrique took a deep breath.

“But... as soon as you tell me, teach me.”

“Teach you what?”

“How to fight. Teach me everything you know.”

“Why?”

I almost laughed. “Because I want to join. And I want to be the leader.”

© 2018 Jaylese Mieses

## The Canobie Car Ride

### Rodolfo Sanchez

It was 2015 and I was 11 years old. “Let’s go to Canobie Lake.” The whole room filled with cheers. The day was hot and humid, I’ll say the temperature was like in the 80s, now imagine how the inside of the house felt with one AC on and no windows open because we wanted the AC cold air to fill up the house. Everyone was running up and down the house getting towels, bathing suits and sunscreen. “I’m going on the log” “I’m going on Untamed” “I’m going on the Yankee Cannonball” everyone shouting back and forth excitedly.

I was pretty excited for Canobie but I wasn’t aware of what came next. When we went downstairs everyone had a smile on their face, but those smiles quickly turned upside down once we saw what car we were going in. My uncle’s 2001 Honda Accord, the worst car to fit 8 people. We were all trying to fit in ’cause we also had to fit our bags, so everyone started getting on top of each other trying to fit the best way possible, two people were sitting on the floor and the others were carrying each other. When we were finally done fixing ourselves the door could barely close. Our sweaty arms rubbing against each other, it was really uncomfortable and disgusting. A NIGHTMARE, that’s the only word I could use to describe what was hap-



pening. "Push over," said my cousin to the right, "You're stepping on me," said my cousin to the left. It was complete madness, it was driving me nuts. As the time went by we got a little more calm, the windows were open some nice breeze was coming in but all good things must come to an end. Traffic, there was cars everywhere. Beep! Beep! "Hurry it up!" Now I just think we were cursed 'cause there's no possible way that there should be this much traffic on a Saturday afternoon but things were just getting worse.

Time passed and we all started to become agitated and what made it worse was that because we were not moving much in traffic there was no cold air coming in from the windows. So now we're all stuck inside a burning car with no AC, no cold air coming in from the window and stuck in traffic. Now you know that feeling you get in your stomach when you're about to cry, that feels like butterflies are flying everywhere yeah that's the same feeling I had. My neck was bothering me I was covered in sweat with other sweaty people touching me and we were stuck in traffic it couldn't get worse than that. I think the only thing that kept me sane was me and my cousin talking about how DC is more powerful than Marvel. Twenty minutes go by and we're almost there. "We're here!" everyone shouted in relief, now when I saw those words "CANOBIE LAKE PARK" it felt like when you lie down on your bed after a long day at work or school. When we arrived we all pushed each other out of the way, it looked like a bunch of sweaty pigs fighting over food.

Now that has to be one of my worst experiences in a car and I hope it never happens again.

© 2018 Rodolfo Sanchez

# Return to

<http://happeningnoweverywhere.com/>

