THE INNER WORKINGS OF MY MIND
Written and Illustrated by:
Christina L. Marrow
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Thank you for your support.
My name is Christina L. Marrow and the coolest thing about me is that I’m a twin. My sister’s name is Christine M. Marrow, so you know taking tests and getting phone calls were really hectic. We basically share one name and I have my awesome grandmother, Mary Louise Marrow to thank for that. My mom thought she was having a boy and a girl so of course she picked boy and girl names. So one of us was going to be named Dewayne, after my dad, Dewayne Marrow, and Dorthea, after my mom, Dorothy Barksdale. So my grandmother stepped in and said, “Name them Christine and Christina, from the stories!” Yes, my grandmother got our names from her soap operas. Needless to say, my mother was super disappointed that she was having two girls since she had her sights set on a boy, but Christine soon made up for it since she did everything a boy would normally do like playing tackle football and learning to break dance.

I am a huge Disney fanatic as you can tell from my picture. Every 90s Disney movie and cartoon there is, I can cite by heart. My mother’s favorite movie is The Lion King, so it’s safe to say I know that one like I know my own name. I have lived in D.C., Maryland, and North Carolina most of my life. Whenever we would make the four-hour drive to North Carolina or drive to Philly, she would have my sisters and I recite the movie to her.

I was a teacher for nine years, a chef for two and a personal assistant for more than two years. I am an avid gamer and I love television shows. I watch almost every genre of a show there is and have a few unhealthy obsessions with a few.
I have six sister’s, Diana, on my dad’s side, Khadijah, Christine, Aniyah and Ayanna who were married in and Harmony my cousin who is now our adopted little sister.

I went to school on Capital Hill in D.C. and moved to Maryland to attend Charles Herbert Flowers High School, which was named after a famous Tuskegee Airmen. After a few years of finding what I wanted to do, I moved to Orlando Florida where I attended Full Sail University and took up Creative Writing as my major.
### Table Of Contents

1. **Title Page**
2. **Copyright**
3. **Author’s Biography**
4. **Poetry**
   - Be Calm Says The Moon
   - A Letter For You
   - The Golden Ticket To Metropolis
5. **Children’s Story**
   - Kat’s First Day
6. **Young Adult Short Stories**
   - Mother’s Song For Me – Pied Piper Adaptation
   - The Siren’s Song
   - I Just Wanted It To Stop
   - The Cabin
   - Zaria and Me
   - Dot and Dottie
   - Piper’s Wish – Pied Piper Adaptation
   - Granddaddy
   - The Girl With The Green Eyes
   - My Funeral
7. **Adult Short Stories**
   - Tonight
   - Amorem
   - Josephine and Warren
   - Adeline
8. **Author’s Note**
Poetry
The sky roars with anger as the sun fades for the day.
Not wanting her to leave because she wants to play.
Acting like a child, she slams her fist down hard, causing everything to shake.
The ground vibrates, people jump and the earth begins to quake.
Tomorrow says the clouds; she will play with you then.
But the sky doesn’t want to hear that and she slams her fists again.
Startled by the sound the clouds begin to cry.
The people head for shelter as they wait for it to pass by.
The moon comes along and soothes the rainy clouds.
She wipes away their tears and soothes the passing crowds.
The people get home safely as the moon turns in the sky, and grabs her pounding fists.
Stop with all this madness, she yells to the girl, cease and desist.
The sun is tired my child, she will play with you again, when the stars are not so bright.
Come sit with me my child and enjoy this beautiful night.
A Letter For You
This poem was written in loving memory of my Grandmother
Mary Louise Marrow July 14th 1947 – Feb 9, 2016

If you’re reading this now then my name has been called.  
A first class ticket to meet my creator and I am so enthralled.  
I’ve packed my bags with ease and now I am going home.  
Do not fear for my travel for the angels are with me, I am not alone.  
If you need to, cry for my passing but do not morn.  
I am no longer in pain; my body and mind are no longer torn.  
I want you to know that I experienced the greatest thing I have ever learned.  
I knew love, I felt love and I loved deeply in return.  
I’m leaving behind our shared memories, and any wisdom I have bestowed.  
Rather than material things that wither, fade and erode.  
I know you wanted me to stay, but all goodbyes are hard.  
This is just the next step in my adventure; I’m not in that graveyard.  
I’m being fitted for my gown and signed up for everything there is here to do.  
And in between each event, I’ll tell the creator all about you.  
I’ll tell him how you changed my life the very first time you smiled.  
I’ll tell him all your accomplishments and how you’ve made me proud.  
I’ll tell everyone with in earshot of my family, those old and new.  
I’ll sing it to the choir, how you loved me and how much I loved you.
The Golden Ticket to Metropolises

100-foot buildings encased in glass, sparkled like diamonds up high, but mirror my reflection in the windows closest to the ground.
Loud conversations, blaring horns and humming engines echoed all around.
People constricted in suits, and dresses carrying brief cases, and a wireless device.
Trapped in the same routine like a maze full of mice.
They all walk the same walk; share the same expression, the same distant look.
The need to break out into song or dance but bound by their pocketbooks.
The child they used to be trapped in the adult they have become.
No more princesses and glass slippers, no more dragons and battles to be won.
Shoved in starched polo’s and pencil skirts, no longer lined with dinosaurs or flowers.
Now chasing after the next big thing, the quickest fix, and the largest office in the tallest tower.
Searching for what society tells us is a better life.
Selling our souls and bodies for the perfect price.
Walking past our brethren, with their empty bellies and rattling cups.
Ignoring their dirty faces and shaming them because they could not afford to keep up.
The passing of sirens echoes louder until they are booming beside me. I straighten my back and shake my eyes from their haze.
I pick up my cellular device, check my pockets for cash and continue on through my maze.
Children Short Stories
Kat's First Day

Katherine is a girl with a lot of allergies, and because of these allergies, she was never allowed to go to public school. Her mother always worried about her health. When Kat went to the doctors for her annual checkup, he informed her and her mother that ever since she started her new medication, she was well enough to go to public school. Just in time for first grade, although she was a month late.

Katherine was an average young girl, she had a soft voice, large purple-rimmed glasses and she was very short. Her aunt would tease that she was short because she kept sneezing which in turn stunted her growth.

"One day you'll sneeze so hard, you'll turn into a cat," her aunt would say.

Katherine walks into her classroom, her round cherub face frowns as she watches the other children laugh and talk animated to each other. She grabs at the sides of her shirt, massaging the soft fabric between her little fingers nervously.

The classroom was bright and colorful. The window allowing a soft warm breeze, that smelt like wet soil, fill her nose. She walks closer to the window to have a closer look. Underneath the window was the classroom garden, 10 cups filled with soil and labeled with each child's name.

There was a young girl standing next to one of the cups, drowning her plant in the water she was pouring from a plastic watering can.

"Jasmine honey, don’t do that!" A woman’s voice called out from behind her. A flash of blue whips pass her and toward the young girl. The woman has long brown hair, milk chocolate colored skin and wore a long plane blue skirt with a white blouse.

“I just wanted to water her,” The young girl now identified as Jasmine said.

“Well honey, I think you have. You don’t want to drown your plant do you?"

“No, but I don’t want her to be thirsty later either.”

The teacher gets down eye level with the girl and speaks softly. So softly that Katherine can’t make out what she's saying. The woman stands after Jasmine nods at her and then she turns to get the attention of the rest of the students.

“Okay, guys come on, sit down in a circle, so I can take attendance, after that we'll go over what we're going to do today.”

All of the children quickly get into their places on the rug and sits down, including Jasmine, who blows a kiss in the direction of her plant before taking her seat. Katherine watches as her new teacher sits on the carpet crossed legged and smiles at everyone. She reaches over and grabs a green notebook and flips it open.

“Okay, first on my list… oh hello. Are you new to my class?” The teacher asks a she looks at Katherine.

Katherine’s eyes enlarge and she backs away a few steps.
“Are you Katherine?”
Katherine nods her head.
“Hi Katherine, my name is Ms. White. Why don’t you hang your book bag up in the cubby behind you and then we can get started.”
Katherine nods again and lets her backpack fall from her shoulders. She looks at the cubbies and they’re all filled with stuff, all except one. She walks over to it and deposits her belongings into it. Ms. White smiles at her as she pats a place next to her.
Katherine shuffles over toward her teacher, pushing up her purple glasses further up her nose. She reaches behind her hair and grabs a hold of the bright blue strap that hangs on the ends of her glasses and twists it between her fingers.
“Okay, class this is Katherine, she’s a new student. I want everyone to say hello Katherine.”
“Hello Katherine,” the class says in unison.
“Now, Katherine I want you to tell us something about yourself. It can be anything you like.”
Katherine hangs her head looking at the carpet before looking back up at the children that surround her. It was her first time at this school at any school and she didn’t know what to say. Her vision gets hazy and she sniffs as she tears wells up in her eyes.
“Katherine honey, don’t cry. We’re all friends here. Right, guys?”
All the children nodded as they looked from their teacher to Katherine.
“My name is Jasmine,” Jasmine said standing up, “My plants name is spud since it’s a potato. I water her every day so she doesn’t get thirsty,” she said with a wide grin before glancing back at her plant and blowing another kiss, “She’s going to grow big and strong and make me lots more potatoes,” she added as she sat down.
“My name is Roland,” a little boy with deep dimples and a head of unruly curls says, “I like your glasses and I think you’re pretty,” he says as the class hurled with laughter and he sits down.
“Okay, guys. Thank you, Roland and Jasmine. What about you Katherine, would you like to share now?”
Katherine nodded and looked at the children, “M…My name is Katherine. I… um… like movies and drawing. My mommy calls me Kat because I have a lot of allergies and I am always sneezing,”
“Allergies. My mommy and aunt call me Kat because they say when I sneeze I sound like a Cat, and that if I sneeze a lot I will turn into one.”
Roland gasps, “You will? Can I see?”
“I don't have to sneeze,” Kat says with a giggle.
“Oh,” Roland said with a laugh, his dimples deepening.
“Allright class, let’s call roll and then we can move on to our art projects,” Ms. White says as Katherine sits next to her.
After circle time, everyone was seated in his or her own desks, Katherine was seated next to Roland who smiled brightly at her.
Their desks were in clusters of four. She had Roland to her left, Walter in front of her and Kiera to Walter’s right. Ms. White placed a little bowl filled with pencils, pens and crayons in the middle of the desks and then placed one packet of markers beside it.
“Okay guys, get started.” She said as everyone moved to grab something to draw with,
everyone except Roland.

“Okay Kat, every morning I will give you 30 minutes to draw or write something of your choice. Once you finish I will put them in a book for you; everyone has their own book with their own artwork. We do this so that way at the end of the year, when you move on to your next class you will have a little portfolio.”

“It’s like a diary,” Kiera said without looking up from her drawing.

“Sort of,” Ms. white said, as she handed Kat a sheet of paper, “You can draw whatever you like, okay?”

“Okay,” Kat said as she reaches over Roland’s blank paper for the markers.

“Ms. White, you forgot my chalk,” Roland says as Ms. White walks over to him.

“Oh that’s right, I’ll be right back.”

Ms. White walks toward a silver cabinet filled with art supplies. After shuffling a few things around she pulls out a rectangular box and brings it over to Roland, who thanks her.

Roland opens the lid to the box and smiles. He reaches in a grabbed a black piece of chalk and began drawing. After a while Katherine turned to see Roland dragging his hands across the paper, scooting the crumbled up pieces of chalk around the page.

“I’ve never drawn with chalk before, why do you like it, if it breaks like that?” Katherine asks.

“Because he like making a mess,” Walter said picking up his paper and shaking the chalky remnants of Roland’s drawn onto the floor.

“It’s not a mess and I like it because it’s creating dust,”

“Dust?” Kat says with a frown.

“Yup,” Roland said picking up his paper and before Kat could realize what he was doing. Roland sucked in a deep breath and blew the dust in Kat’s direction.

Katherine turned her head but the damage had been done. She sucked in a deep breath and closed her eyes as she felt her sneeze build up in her chest.

“Ah… mew”

The sound was soft, quick and feline. The whole class got quiet as Katherine let loose 3 more.

“Ah… mew, mew, mew,”

“You do sound like a cat!” Roland exclaimed.

“Roland!” Ms. White scolded, “Did you blow that chalk in Katherine’s face on purpose?”

“Yes,” he said hanging his head in shame.

“You have lost your chalk privileges for the rest of the day. You know better, we will try again tomorrow. Katherine are you alright?”

"I think so," she said as she sneezes again, this time, however, she felt something pop on her head.

"Ears!" Kiera shouted, "You have cat ears!"

"What?" Kat said as she brought her hands up, and sure enough, there were two cat ears sitting on either side of her face, "Ah mew!" she sneezed again.

"Look, now she has paws!" Roland said as Kat looked down at her now black paws.

"She’s turning into a cat!" Walter says as Kat sneezes again.

This time, when she sneezed she turned fully into a cat, well a kitten. There was a small black kitten sitting in Katherine’s chair, wearing small purple glasses with a blue string and Ms. White stood shocked.

“How do we turn her back?” someone yelled from the back of the group that had now
gathered around Katherine.

“I… I don’t know,” Ms. White said as she scooped up the young girl.

“Maybe if we get her to sneeze again she will turn back,” Kiera suggested.

“Okay,” Ms. White said as placed the girl on top of the desk while someone went to go get another piece of chalk.

Roland grabbed the chalk and scrubbed it against the paper creating more dust. Once he got a nice pile of dust he brought the paper eye level with Kat and blew as hard as she could. Seconds later Kat’s little mouth opened and she sneezed. This time, when she sneezed she turned back into a little girl and was covered in black chalk.

Ms. White let out a relieved breath as she took Katherine’s glasses off and unhooked the string. The young girl’s face and glasses were covered in black chalk.

“Are you alright?”

“Yes, I think I’m alright now,” Kat said with a squint of her eyes.

“Hold on honey, I have to clean your glasses. Roland, what do you have to say?”

“I’m sorry,” Roland said as Ms. White walked to her desk looking for the tissues, “I just wanted to hear you sneeze, I didn’t know you would turn into a real cat,” he said standing next to Katherine and taking the bottom of his shirt and stretching it up to wipe Kat’s cheek.

“It’s okay,” Kat, said with a smile, “I didn’t know either. I guess my aunt was right”.

Ms. White came back over and handed Kat’s glasses to her before smiling at the young girl. For the rest of the day when Kat sneezed and turned into a cat, Roland was right there to turn her back human again, with a new piece of chalk.

The next day when Katherine came to class, everyone greeted her but there was one voice that was louder than all the rest.

“Kitty!” Roland exclaimed as he ran to greet her.

From that day forward chalk was banned from the class except a few pieces to help turn Kat back human when she changed.
Young Adult Short Stories
Mother’s Song For Me

The world slowly moves around me as I walk down the hallway of my school. Every conversation is about his death and every eye is on me. I ignore their pitiful gazes and hold my head up higher. Never mind that there are bags the size of quarters under my eyes or the fact that they are tinged with pink.

I shove my earphones further into my ears as people try to approach me and I slide right past them. I slip into my classroom and slump into my desk. I close my eyes and burry my head further into his overly large sweatshirt. His smell calms me and the heat of my body fills the empty space within the shirt, making it seem as if he is holding me.

A hand on my shoulder jolts me to reality a pair of green eyes filled with pity stare at me. “We are about to get started,” my teacher says. She isn’t usually nice or soft spoken but her eyes tell me she knows, that everyone knows. I nod and pull my earphones out, letting his last message to me, that I have had on repeat for the past 48 hours slip away.

I refuse to look around the room although the demanding eyes all around me wants me to do so. Whether it’s to see how I am coping or just to see me, I don’t know nor do I care. Ms. Sue’s voice deepens and my blinks become elongated as my mind shifts back out of reality and back into his arms.

I am with him, standing next to him and smiling. He places a tender kiss on my lips and I close my eyes trying to savor the moment.

“I love when you do that,” he says.
He… because I can’t bear to say his name, not even here in my fantasy. Saying his name makes it real, saying his name will make me scream it, make me wail it, so I say he.

“Do what?” I ask lacing his fingers within mine.

“Look so at peace when I kiss you,”

“Well, that’s because I am at peace. I don’t have to worry about school or my parents. It’s just me and you and right now.”

He smiles and kisses me again.

“I lov—”

A hand on my shoulder jolts me from my fantasy again. I must have fallen asleep because I am lifting my head from my desk. Ms. Sue gives me a pitiful smirk and hands me a worksheet.

I sigh and sit up.

Classes go on as if nothing happened, homework is still given out and those who sleep and joke around in class still do. In some way I am thankful for it, a sense of normality. Knowing that no matter who dies or gets murdered, that some things will always stay the same; that the world will always turn. I am happy about it but it still upsets me. There should be posters on the walls of him, scholarships in his name, he was the Valedictorian for God sake and there is nothing on the walls but posters for Prom King and Queen. Anger surges through me as I look at the smiling candidates staring back at me.
Am I selfish to not want to be bothered but want people to stop and know that he mattered, that his life mattered; that he will be missed by his family but especially by me? Am I a horrible person for wanting to shout his name and wanting people to shout it with me?

I’m brought from my inner rant by a group of girls talking about him.

“I feel bad for her,” one girl says.

“I don’t. If he had nothing to hide he wouldn’t have ran. He deserved to get shot and those police officers deser—”

My hands are around her throat within seconds. I don’t even remember approaching her but her friend is screaming bloody murder and soon a crowd has gathered.

“You weren’t there! You don’t know shit!” I shout.

I don’t even realize it’s me who is shouting until my throat is hoarse and I can barely breathe from coughing.

A pair of strong arms surrounds me as I continue to kick and scream. A voice whispers for me to calm down. It sounds like his voice and this touch, although constricting, feels like his and I go limp, sobbing as I am lowered to the ground. I curl in on myself as my head touches the linoleum floor.

“You weren’t there,” I repeat over and over again before I feel myself being lifted from the ground and hauled away.

I awake in the nurses’ office and my parents standing around me. I am taken home where I am informed to stay until I am ready to come back. My dad carries me to my room like a child and puts me to bed. Sleep comes immediately and I see his face, I see that night, and I am back inside this nightmare again.

“I love you,” he says and before he can kiss me screeching tires and sirens surround us. Three cop cars and six officers peel out of their cars, guns raised and pointed at us. My heart is pounding and I immediately began to back away. I can tell in their eyes that they seem more afraid of us then I am of them.

“Whoa whoa, what’s this about? What did we do?” I hear him yell as he steps in front of me, shielding me.

“Get on the ground and put your hands behind your back!” One of the officers yells.

“What did we do?” he shouts but the officer shouts back and everything is happening so fast.

I pull at the back of his shirt, making him walk backward. The officers come from behind open car doors and yell for us to stop moving.

We stop.

He is shaking, I can tell, his shirt is practically vibrating in my hand.

“Get from behind him and lay face down on the ground,” another officer yells. I jump and quickly do as I am told. Before I am fully on the ground I look up to see him yelling at the officer that he has a bottle in his pocket and he has to remove it in order to comply.

The officer isn’t listening and he reaches into his pocket and then the world goes silent as on single word changed everything.

“Gun!” I hear him shout.

Bullets soar through the air and sparks light up the night sky like fireworks. He jolts back as if he is dancing and I see his mouth fall open in a silent scream. His name claws it’s way out of my throat as I see his body hit the ground and I surge up as if to catch him.

“Michael!” I surge out of my sleep in a cold sweat and my parents come barging into my room. My mother reaches me first and wraps her arms around me, trying to soothe my
nightmares away. An hour and a bath later, I sit on my bed, clutching his sweatshirt to my body and sobbing yet again. I can see my mother’s shadow in the hallway; she’s holding something. Soon music fills my room, it’s soft and… bright. I can recognize the tune from when I was much younger and she played it for my dad when he lost his mother.

“I can soothe your pain, my love, I can take it away for a while,” I heard her whisper to my father who was sobbing in their bedroom. I watched her go into her closet and pull out a harp. She sat on the bed and plucked the strings, soon my father’s cries softened and then became silent. The next morning he was better and every night she played the song again for a shorter amount of time until one night she didn’t have to play it.

Her soft voice filled my ears and my body fell limp against my pillow. I closed my eyes and sighed in relief as I listened to her song for me.

“I’ll take your pain away my love, and I will let you feel it bit by bit. Let me soothe your tears, my love, so all you remember is the sweetness of his kiss. This pain will pass my child and one night you’ll sleep soundly without this song. Dream only of happy times my child and wake in the morning as if nothing is wrong.”
Zaria, Sophia, and Diana stood backstage at Madison Square Garden. The screams of the crowd had their hearts pounding as they peered through the door that separated them from their fans. Zaria and Diana went out to get a better view. Sophia stayed in the dressing room thinking.

She and her sisters are triplets whose mother died in childbirth, so they've bounced from group home to group home most their life. One day, the group home where they stayed hosted a talent show, where potential parents came to see the children. When the girls stood up to sing a song the reaction was unexpected. The parents fought and screamed over them, shoving each other trying to get to them and not only that but adopt them. The director, who ran the home, shut the event down. The other children were angry with the girls and threatened them. Fearing for their lives the girls ran away. While the girls were living on the streets they used their voices to get what they wanted and even perfected how long they needed to sing to get people under their control. A “Trance”, the girls creatively called it, they made sure they didn’t sing too long so that what happened at the group home didn't happen again.

“What are you thinking about?”
Sophia turned to see her manager Paul walking towards her.
“Oh nothing,” she sighs, “Just the past.”

Paul smiles and walks further into the dressing room closing the door. “I was thinking about tonight’s performance, now I know we agreed for you guys to only sing a few songs but I think the crowd would love it if you sang more than the three you've chosen. Before you object, just think about it. You girls have worked too hard to get here and your fans have paid all this money just to hear you guys. Don't you think they deserve more than three songs?”

“But--”
“No, just listen,” Paul, places his hands on Sophia’s shoulders, “I know you want to sing more than 3 songs, and the crowd would go wild with adoration if you did too. Just think about it. I already talked to the band and if you decide to keep singing then they will keep playing. Isn’t this what you girls wanted, so you could finally be loved and accepted? Just think about it, okay?” He kisses her forehead and turns to leave.

Sophia stands there thinking on his words when the door bursts open, her sisters run in and grinning like Cheshire cats. Paul starts to walk out the door when he stops and looks back at Sophia.

“Think about what I said okay because I know your fans would love you even more if you did,” Paul says as he leaves closing the door.
“If you did what?” Diana asks.
“Nothing,” Sophia says.
“That didn’t sound like nothing,” Zaria says as she looks at the door where their manager once stood and her sister.

“Paul tried to convince me that we should sing more than our scheduled time,” Sophia says turning away from her sisters to smooth out invisible wrinkles in her clothes.

“Sophia we can’t, you know that,” Zaria said fearfully.
“No, I know,” Sophia, said turning to face her sisters.
“Then why does it sound like you were actually thinking about it?” Diana asked.
After staying quiet for a beat Sophia sighs, “Because I think we should maybe give it a try. The last time--”
“The last time we decided to sing longer than we agreed upon three people got injured and the EMT guy said that one was in critical condition because of that crazy mob.”
“I know but with us practicing--”
“No,” Diana said finally, “I don’t want to discuss this. If we're doing this than we have to agree. 3 songs, 2 minutes long and then we’re done, or Zaria and I will cancel the show and that is the end of it. I will not risk our fans lives just because you want to sing a little longer.”
Zaria nodded agreeing with Diana and looking firmly at her Sophia.
Sophia sighed but gave her sisters her award-winning smile, “Okay.”
Moments later the announcer calls their names to come on stage and the crowd goes wild with excitement. The girls run on stage, the music and their hearts beat at the same pace.
The girls sing loudly as the crowd roars and jump up and down as if they were trying to touch the sky. Sophia felt the rush of the crowd and as she and her sisters finish the last song, she catches a glimpse of her manager nodding for her to sing another song. Sophia’s head and heart are racing and before her sister could leave the stage she did the unthinkable.
“How would you guys like to hear another song?” She yells.
Her sisters looked at her, fear etching their caramel faces.
“No,” Diana and Zaria whispered urgently.
“One more song,” Sophia says as she glances back at her manager who was smiling wide with two thumbs waving excitedly in the air. Before her sisters could object the music starts up and she began to sing a soft melody. Not wanting to cause a scene her sisters join in glancing between each other.
Diana tries to bring the song to an end but Sophia walked closer to the stage’s edge and sings louder. Caught up in the song Sophia doesn't see how unruly the crowd is getting. Someone screams and a fight breaks out; the crowd is over stimulated and becoming violent. Diana, Zaria ran to Sophia who stops singing and steps back from the crowd in fear. Security struggles with the group but to no avail.
The crowd jumps the stage, the girls scream as they run away from their crazed fans and backstage where their dressing room is located. Before they could make it backstage, rough hands grabbed them, shoving them into an opened room and slamming the doors shut. The sound of ragged breathing and crying echoes throughout the room as Diana hold a trembling Zaria. Their manager and a few stagehands pulled the girls into one of the storage rooms. Sophia looks at her sisters, their hair disheveled, their clothes were torn, and their faces wet from tears. Their hearts were racing and their lungs were on fire. Zaria and Diana were holding onto each other. Zaria whimpers and hiccups a cry and Sophia look over to her sisters who were covering in fear.
“I’m sorry,” Sophia, cries wiping the hot tears from her cheeks, “I’m so sorry.”
Warning

This very short story mentions and describes a teen girl trying to commit suicide. If you do not like stories like this than please feel free to skip this story and go to another. If you still would like to read it then, please scroll down or turn the page on your device to continue.
I Just Wanted It To Stop

Sad girl bawling.
Tears slowly falling.
Hushed sounds.

Body roughly trembling.
Breath hitching tightly.
Arms reaching upward.

Stepping on chair.
Stifling sobs.
Abused heart shattering.

Eyes shut.
Inhales deeply.
Rope clasp snuggly.

Foot moves gently.
Chair wobbles.
Demon voices whisper.

“No-more,” she breathes.

Pressure builds.
Girl leaps. Chair falls. Rope tightens.
Neck snaps.

Calm.

Serenity.

Demon voices muted.
Heart gently heals.
Eyes dry.

Arms extended. Feet jumping. Smiling brightly.
Sun shining.
Laughing loudly.
Fresh grass swaying.

Serenity. Calm.
Girl gasps. Hands clench chest.

Demon voices screaming.
Grass withering.
Birds perishing.
Frogs decaying.

Cruel wind frigid.
Light hastily vanishes.
Darkness engulfing.

Blinding ivory light.
Pupils burning.
Head pounding.
Breathing echoing.

Eyes adjusting.
Room clearer.
Faces staring.
Machines blaring.
Ears ringing.

Machines hum softly.
Demon voices fading.
Girl groans painfully.
Mom’s face hovering.
Warm hands caressing.

Mother. Tears falling. Breath shaky.
Girls heart breaking.
Mom leans sobbing.

“I just wanted it to stop,” girl cries.
Ruby’s heart pounded loudly in her ears as she ran through the dense and dark wooden area; her lungs felt like they were going to explode. The harsh frigid wind bites her face while the thin prickly branches scratch her bare legs and feet. Her ankle screams in protest every time she tries to run faster. The fall she took down the hill a little ways back really messed up her ankle. The sounds of howling and footfalls in the background have her frantically trying to push herself to go faster.

“Hey, over here!” One of the voices yells, “I think the hounds caught her scent.”

Her foot is killing her; she bites down on her tongue keeping herself from screaming and to keep going. The sounds of the dogs and men are getting louder, she looks ahead, searching for any signs of help or life. She sees a cabin up ahead with it lights on. Swallowing hard and taking one glance behind her she runs toward the cabin.

She limps up the porch and pounds like a mad man on the door, praying that whoever lived there would hurry and... The door flies open and standing in the opening was an older white couple, the husband sporting a shotgun.

“Please! They’re trying to kill me,” Ruby yelled ignoring the shotgun and rushing toward the couple. The wife grabs for Ruby pulling her past her husband and into the house while the husband scans the area before slamming the door shut.

“What trouble you got following you girl?” the man asked as the barking of dogs gets louder.

“Harold she’s injured, we have to hide her,” the wife says.

“We don’t know what she’s done Carol, those men could easily kill us,” Harold yells as the voices of the men echo outside of the door.

Sighing harshly he gestures with his shotgun toward a door in the back of the cabin, “Put her in the cellar,” he says as he walks toward the door.

The woman hurries Ruby to the back of the cabin and young girl glances around at her surrounding. There weren’t any pictures up and there was a funny smell that she hadn’t noticed before.

When the woman opens the door to the cellar, the smell seems to get stronger, “I’m sorry dear,” the woman says as if reading her mind, “It’s quite damp down there but I promise we will come get you when the coast is clear.”

The hairs on the back of Ruby’s neck stand on end but she does as she was told and walks down a few of the stairs.

“Thank you,” Ruby said as the door shuts, earning a small smile from the older woman.
The sound of muffled voices became clear as Ruby hears the front door open.
“Sorry to disturb you, Harold, we’re looking for a young girl ‘bout yay high and…”
“Oh yeah we saw her,” she heard Harold says.
Ruby gasps as she backs away from the door forgetting about the steps behind her. She goes plunging down them, crashing hard on the cold concrete floor.
There was no way they hadn’t heard her and now her leg was bent at a funny angle. She groans loudly as she tries to pull herself across the floor.
The door swings open and a blinding light illuminates the cellar and standing at the top of the staircase were Carol, Harold, and another unidentified man.
“This little lamb came running right to us. She's going to be delicious,” Carol said as she licked her lips slowly.
Ruby’s eyes widen as she looks around the newly lit cellar. Hanging by chains and bungee cords were the decaying bodies of young girls and boys. Some missing legs and arms while others were just carcasses.
“You should really be careful as to whose door you knock on for help, my dear,” Carol says sickly sweet, “The devil just might answer.”
I am finally chosen from the huge bin of colorful yarn balls. The lady that rummages through us is older and in her basket lays two silver knitting needles. As she grabs me first, a beautiful lavender color, and a cream white yarn ball, and throws us into her basket

She takes me home and after talking into a small device for what seems like forever she sits down and unravels me. She weaves the white yarn into my lavender tresses and I imagine what I will look like when she finishes. She stays up for a long time, the sun has set from the window where she sits and I now lay in her limp hands as a soft snore escapes her.

The next few days she works diligently on me and finally finishes, holding me up and examining my beauty. She smiles, running her fingers over my edges and soft center. I am a lavender and white blanket. She folds me and places me on a shelf. I sat there for a while until one day she comes running into the room screaming into the small device she has perched on her shoulder as she paces around the house grabbing things. She throws her device into her purse and gathers me up as well, throwing me into her bag and rushing out of the house.

Moments later I hear gasping and cooing, the lady picks me up out of her bag and I am being wrapped around something warm and tiny. I look at this new lady and then at the smaller version of herself in her arms. It’s a baby, and her eyes have not opened yet. I feel her wiggle and jerk in my arms and I tighten her in my embrace, she must seem to enjoy it because she reaches out and grabs ahold of my thread. I hear another lady say the babies name out loud, “Zaria”.

In the years that follow Zaria takes me everywhere, she even named me “Fluffy”. She takes me to school and even shares her lunch with me, she cries when her daddy says he has to bathe me.

I am shoved into a dark hole, which quickly filled with water and soap. “A bath,” I think. I have been present when Zaria has gotten her baths and even helped to dry her off once or twice.

Once I am finished my bath and properly dried, Zaria grabs ahold of me, bury her curly head of hair into my soft fibers. Checking me once or twice to make sure I am truly clean, she runs down the hallway where there are other little girls just like her. They scream and run making me fly into the air and soar through the house. Soon I am tied around Zaria’s neck and we’re playing superheroes with the rest of her friends.

Once the girls are gone Zaria’s dad offers to take one of Zaria’s friend's Melody, home since her mommy is stuck at home and her daddy is at work. Zaria holds me tightly as her daddy straps her in and then straps Melody in. Once he’s done he pops in Zaria’s favorite CD and she sings excitedly with Melody.

Moments later the sound of the tires screaming followed by the sounds of Zaria and Melody yelling drown out the tunes blasting on the radio and then everything goes dark.

Later I’m being snatched out of my Zaria’s clutched hand and thrown to the side of a brightly lit silver room. Beeping and yelling ring throughout the busy room as I watch blood pool around her body, seconds later the beeping stops and everyone is silent. I can see Zaria but she isn't moving, she doesn't cry out for me. Hushed voices fill the quiet room and a few people leave. A woman drapes a crisp white sheet over Zaria and anger fills me because that's my job. I'm supposed to hold Zaria, she's mine and I'm hers. If they would just let me hold her she would get better. I've been with her through every cold and every fever but before I can force myself off the table and towards her I am gathered up and shoved into a bag.
Days later I am taken to a church and it was there that I saw my Zaria but she was still, and didn’t hug me when I was draped on her even though I squeezed her as tight as I could. Her face was cold and she didn't laugh when my strings tickled her nose. Cries from her friend Melody brought me from thoughts of Zaria to where I was. This was not Zaria’s room, it was a church and everyone was gathered around Zaria crying and I realized it all. Zaria would never hug me again and I would never fly around the house again with her or share a lunch together. I didn't understand not until Zaria’s mommy and daddy’s cries echoed throughout the large church and that I wasn't here to make her better, we were all here to say goodbye.
“The winning lotto number will be announced at 10 pm sharp, so stay tuned,” the T.V. blared. Granddaddy’s eyes widened as he frantically checked his pockets and then the coffee table.

“Shit,” Granddaddy said as he looked at his watch, 9:15 p.m. A small gasp came from his right.

“Awe, bad word pop pop,” Dot said with a frown.

“Oh, sorry honey, your mama was supposed to be here hours ago. Come on, we’re gonna go to the store,” he said grabbing his keys.

“Bag, pop pop,” Dot said trying to pull the heavy bag off the couch.

“We’re not gonna be gone that long, come on,” he said as Dot ran toward him and Dottie grabbed her plush pink bunny and walked toward the car.

“Car seat, pop pop,” Dot said.

“Ugh, I ain’t got no damn…” he said as he stopped and walked to the back of his white and blue Ford station wagon, and opened the trunk. He rolled out two tires and placed them in the backseat. He placed each girl in the hole of the tire and then buckled her in.

“Pop pop, this isn’t—”

“You’re safe, those are brand new tires from TirePlus. What you’re sittin in is better than any car seat. You can just ask the Michelin Man himself, he gave it two thumbs up,” he said getting in the car.

He pulled up to the first store he came to and looked up at the half lit up sign, Wal-Mart. He jumped out the car and pulled the girls out of their tires, without unbuckling them. He ran, dragging the girls behind him through the brightly lit warehouse, towards the service counter.

“I need a lottery ticket, yall sell some here?” he asked.

“Yeah,” The pimply, red-rimmed eyed employee said pointing to the counter where a heavyset man was standing. Without a word, Granddaddy grabbed both girls and began to run over to the counter when one of them pulled away. He turned to see Dot grabbing herself and dancing.

“What is this? What are you doing?”

“Pee pee,”

“Don’t you wear one of them diaper things?”

Dot shook her head.

“Can you hold it, while I get my ticket?”

“Um…”

“Tell you what, if you can hold it while I get my ticket you’ll win a chance to watch Barney again before your mama comes to get you,” He said grabbing the girl’s hand again,
pulling her to the counter.
“How many tickets sir?” the Caucasian man said with a despondent look.
“One,” Granddaddy said as he pulled out his wallet and grabbed his last $2. Dottie stood, thumb in her mouth, holding her bunny and staring at her sister who was switching.
“Pee pee,” Dot groaned again as Granddaddy quickly nodded at her.
“What numbers are you playing?” The man said as Dot wiggled closer to Granddaddy and tugged on his shirt.
“Pee P—” she said when she stopped.

Granddaddy looked down to see a dark stain running down her legs all the way to her shoes and began to pool on the floor.
“Shit,” Granddaddy said as Dot looked up at him. The girl’s eyes welled up with tears as she tugged at her shirt, to hide her accident. “Don’t cry honey, you’re fine, ain’t no one gonna say nothing, you’re a child, peeing on yourself is expected, Hell I do it all the time,” he said as she opened her mouth in a silent scream and sucked in a deep breath, “Damn it.”
Dot let loose a high-pitched scream that had everyone around them turn to face the trio.
“It’s okay honey, don’t cry, you can barely see it,” Granddaddy said as a woman approached him.
“Is there something wrong?”
“My granddaughter, don had an accident and she’s upset about it.”
“Well, come with me and I’ll help you get some clothes for her,”
“I ain’t got the money for clothes, we live ten minutes from here,” Granddaddy said looking at his watch, 9:25.
“She’ll get a rash if you leave it on her, it’s okay, I work here, I’ll buy’em. Come on sugar, let’s get you out of them wet clothes,” she said to Dot who was now calming down.
“I…” Granddaddy said looking between the woman who was walking away and Dottie who still sucking her thumb, holding her bunny and glaring at him.
“Look, I will be right back, here, watch her. She don’t do nothing but suck her thumb. She don’t even talk,” he said as he picked up Dottie and placed her on the counter, “Here are the numbers I wanna play, I’ll be right back.” He said quickly jotting down some numbers on the back of a receipt and slamming it and the pen on the counter before he ran after the woman.
“Sir I’m not—” the man said after him.
“Excuse me sir, can you help me,” a woman in the self-check out lane said. The employee looks at Dottie.
“Stay here,” He says as he left Dottie on the counter, holding her bunny in her lap.

Granddaddy groans as the woman grabs yet another pair of pants to try on his granddaughter. It was now 9:35 and he was tapping his foot loudly on the linoleum floor.
“How about this—” the lady says when granddaddy snatches Dot up and rips the price tag from the pink pants, which in turns rips a giant hole in the back of her pants.
“Shit, look I got to go,” he says giving the tag to the lady, placing his hand over the hole.
“Bad word Po—”
“I know, I know,” he said rushing back to the counter, “Did you print it?”
“Yeah,” the man said. Granddaddy snatches it and grabs Dottie from the counter walking away but stops.
“This isn’t the numbers I gave you,” he said looking at the man who frowned.
“Yeah it is, you wrote them on there,” the man said pointing to the paper.
Granddaddy places both girls on the ground.
“I didn’t write this!” he yells.
“Well I typed in what I saw, she must have written over them,” the man said looking at Dottie, who stared at her pink friend on the counter.
“How the hell could she have written this, if you were watching her?”
“Look, sir, I have a job and babysitting isn’t one of ’em.”
Granddaddy balls his fists up so tight his knuckles cracked. Before he could haul off and hit the man, he glances at his watch, 9:40. He released a breath and flipped the man off before shoving the ticket in his pocket. He scoops up his granddaughters and began to storm out.
“Pop pop, Dottie’s bunny,” Dot said as her sister did nothing but point to her friend.
Granddaddy jerked the toy by its ears from where it was perched and storms out.
He places the girls in their tires and threw the bunny on the seat next to him. As he pulls off, he stares icily at the bunny, and then he picks it up and strangles it. Dottie sits mouth agape as she watches her friend’s body and neck jerk wildly.
...
Granddaddy slams the car door, unbuckles them and walks into the house, where he plops down defeated and angry. The girls sit on the couch and Dottie places a hand on her limp bunny.
“And the winning numbers are…”
Granddaddy stares down at the ticket in his hand in pure and utter astonishment.
“Oh my God. I can’t believe it, Holy shit I won!” Granddaddy said jumping up out of his chair and looking at the girls, “I won! Granddaddy won!” he said kneeling down in front of them smiling. Dot scowls at him, slides off the couch, turning her back to him and effectively showing off the hole in her pants, and walks into the guest bedroom. “I… ugh… What about you, Silent Bob? I know you’re happy for me,”
Dottie glares at him and takes the hand that is placed on her bunny and extended her middle finger. Mimicking the action he displayed earlier when he was angry.
Granddaddy gasped, bug-eyed at the gesture as she too slid from the couch and walks toward the guest room. Granddaddy sits flabbergasted until he looks back to the couch at the pink bunny, he strangled moments ago. Its neck was stretched and it sat limply on the plastic seat cover. He grabs it, the ticket and sighs deeply, and walks into the guest room.
Dot was lying on the bed with her back to him and Dottie sat holding her sister’s hand and frowning at him.
“Girls, I’m sorry. I was being a real horses ass,” he says and Dottie’s frown deepens, “I’m sorry, I know, bad word,” he said with a breathy chuckle, “Seein yall mad at me, really hurts. Silent Bob, you helped me win and that wouldn’t have happened if you, Dot, didn’t pee on yourself,” he said looking at the girls, “Granddaddy is truly sorry, can you girls ever forgive me?”
Dottie tilts her head thinking, her eyes landed on her bunny and then her face turned mischievous as she looked down at his hand. She takes her thumb out of her mouth, looks him in
the eye and says, “I want half.”

Granddaddy's smile drops as he looks from her to the winning ticket in his hand, “Half of what?”
Piper’s Wish

Piper walked through the crowded hallway with her head down, so not to make eye contact with anyone. She pushed her purple glasses further up her nose and shoved her hands in the front pocket of her blue sweatshirt. The other kids in the hallway bumped into her unapologetically and she fought to keep her balance as she made it to her locker. She opened the small metal door and took a moment to stare inside of it. She hadn’t bothered her mother about getting decorations like the others kids in her grade because she thought it was pointless. She hated her school and everyone in it. Why would she take her time to put a mirror in her locker when everyone told her she was ugly enough, or stickers of her favorite celeb crushes or TV show characters when they told her how dumb they were. The last thing she wanted was to draw any more attention to herself or at the very least put something in there she loved and watch her tormentors destroy it.

With a tired sigh, she reaches into her locker to get her spiral notebook and agenda book when the metal door came slamming shut. With a gasp and the reflexes of a cat, she snatches her hand away. Jasmine Boyd stood smirking with her pack of copies behind her. Jasmine had long dirty blonde hair and dressed in the current of trends. Right now it was all white Jordan’s, tight dark blue True Religion jeans, and a white polo shirt.

“Hi Piper,” Jasmine said as she reaches out to touch Piper’s hair. Piper turns her head roughly away from the girl’s hand and glares back at her, “Oh don’t be like that, I was just being polite.”

“Yeah, she was just being polite. So what are you supposed to say when someone says hi to you?” one of her copies said.

The first bell rang overhead and soon the hallway was filled with teachers stepping out of their classrooms to usher the students into them.

“See you in class Piper,” Jasmine taunted as she turned around, whipping her hair purposely in Piper’s face.

Piper growled her frustration as she turned back around and quickly opened her locker. She swapped the contents of her book bag with a few books she needed for her next class and slams it.

As soon as she reached her class the late bell rang and Jasmine and her copies all snickered and laughed.

“Settle down class, so I can take attendance,” Ms. Sue said as Piper took her seat. After attendance, Ms. Sue passed around strips of paper and then went to her desk and grabbed a box full of books.

“Okay class, since all of you know that Christmas is right around the corner, I want us to read the story Annabelle’s Wish. When we finish and discuss what the story means to all of us, I want you take your strip of paper and put a wish on it. A wish you want to come true more than anything.”

The class groaned at the prospect of reading a story about a reindeer while everyone else in their grade was decorating their classrooms and hallways for the holidays.

Ms. Sue has everyone in the class read aloud and by the time Piper gets to read for the
third time, it's near the end of the book. So far the story has been about friendship, love and selflessness. The young boy in the story is named Billy, who lives with his grandfather because both of his parents are dead. He was caught in a real bad barn fire one year and became mute because of it. Every Christmas Eve Santa Claus would visit the barn, which was now repaired and filled with animals. He would give the animals a special gift, the gift of talking to one another and the year he came to give them the gift again, Annabelle was born. Annabelle being the baby of the bunch didn’t know she couldn’t talk to humans and tried to strike up a conversation with Billy. The other animals figured that since the boy was a mute he couldn't tell anyone they could speak and allowed her to talk to Billy.

Annabelle’s mother tells her that if she is really good she can get a special wish from Santa, so the young calf does her very best to be good. Annabelle sees Santa and his reindeer one night and knows that her special wish will to become a reindeer and fly with him on his sleigh. One night Billy’s wicked aunt comes to town with a crooked lawyer demanding guardianship of Billy, for profit. The antics of the aunt and her crooked lawyer get the courts to give custody to her. That night Santa visits Annabelle to hear her wish and it is not what Santa expects.


Everyone looks up at her to see what the hold up is. Piper’s eyes fill with tears as she forces herself to continue reading; “…Annabelle gave her Christmas voice to you. And because of this, she will never speak again.” Piper stopped reading and continued to stare down at her book, her tears dropping onto the glass in her glasses and sliding down them and onto the page.

“Is she crying?” someone in the back asks.

“Okay, David it’s your turn you read. Piper if you need to be excused you may,” Ms. Sue says as she watched the girl quickly rise from her seat and leave.

“Freak,” Jasmine whispered as Piper walked by.

As soon as Piper was ready she came back into the classroom and by then the story was over and everyone was writing out his or her wishes. Piper took her seat and began to write. After a few moments, Ms. Sue spoke again.

“Alright, now that that is finished I will give you guys free reign to decorate the classroom as you see fit. Just place your wishes into this, bucket,” she said pointing to a small green bin on her desk, “And you may start.”

Everyone got up and shoved their wishes into the bin before darting off in different directions to grab whatever they could. Piper waited until everyone was finished, and dropped her wish off and then went back to her desk. She pulled out her spiral notebook and began to draw.

Ms. Sue sat at her desk and grabbed the bin, dumping all the wishes onto her desk and began reading them. Some if not most of them were trivial wishes, about materialistic things some of the children wanted for Christmas and then there were those that wished for un-divorced parents, a home and then there was one that made her smile.

“This is one I can do,” she said to herself as she looked down at the neat handwriting that said, “I wish I had a friend.”

Ms. Sue went into her desk and pulled out an old wooden pan flute and began to play. The music was so soft and gentle but still overpowered all the children’s voices until everyone was silently listening.
Piper stopped drawing and watched as Ms. Sue played the flute in expert fashion. She was drawn from her trace when a soft voice called her name.

“Piper,” the voice said. She looks up to see Jasmine standing at her desk.

Piper sighed unenthusiastically and looked down, “What do want Jasmine?”

“Can you help me cut out snowflakes for the windows? I know you really good with art and I could really use your help. If you don’t mind.”

“S… Sure,” Piper said as she looked at the girl, closed her notebook and stood.

Ms. Sue smiled at the two and continued to play her flute.
Shrieks of delight rang loudly as Granddaddy chased his twin granddaughters throughout the house. A few minutes later the older man slumped to the floor. His grandbabies ran over to him and fell on his back.

“Again! Again!” they chanted.

“Again? That’s the second time we played. Granddaddy is tired.”

“Again! Again! Pop Pop,” they repeated.

The older man sat up and rested his back against the couch as he watched the sets of pleading brown eyes and long brown hair smile back at him.

“You girls tuckered me out. Why don’t we play the nap game? Huh, does that sound good?”

At the sound of the ‘N’ word Dot plopped her thumb into her mouth and shook her head.

“No nap!” Dottie said shaking her head and crossing her little arms.

“Mo, map!” Dot echoed with her thumb still in her mouth.

“But if we take a nap now, we can play another game when we wake up,” Granddaddy said with a grin.

Both girls shook their heads refusing to give in.

“Okay, what if I turn on cartoons and we just lie down for a while and rest?”

Both girls looked at each other, a silent exchange of dialogue spoken before they looked back at their grandfather and nodded.

“Okay,” Granddaddy said letting out a soft groan, as he stood stretching his frail limbs, his joints popped like fresh green beans. Taking both girl’s hands in each one of his, he walked them to his bedroom and place them on the bed.

The bed was massive and a sea of blue sheets swallowed them up as they rolled playfully under the covers. Setting the T.V to ‘Baby Looney Tunes’ the older man crawled into bed. A soft moan of comfort escaped his mouth as the mattress and comforters conformed to his body like hands of a masseuse, soothing his aches and pains with delicate touches.

Before he closed his eyes he felt two small bodies cuddle into his sides. He glanced down at them-- one sucking her thumb like it was going out of style and the other holding onto his hand and her sister’s. Kissing the tops of their heads he sighed with content as sleep welcomed him like an old friend.

After 30 minutes Dot turns to face her sleeping grandfather and shakes him.

“Up Pop Pop! I wanna eat now.”

Her sister rubs her eyes and turns over to look at their grandfather. After a few more shakes the girls glance at each other and in silent agreement they scurry off the bed. They clasped their hands together and walked into the kitchen.

Dottie looked at her sister and she instantly turned to face her. With her thumb still in her
mouth, she used her other hand to point to the table where their Aunt placed their travel bag.

Smiling at each other Dottie curls up into a ball on the floor under the table and Dot climbs on her and grabs ahold of the brown tablecloth. The toddler leans back pulling the cloth off the table and the bag closer to her. As it inched closer and closer to the edge she leaned further back. A grunt escaped her little mouth as she pulled harder.

A gasp left her mouth as the enormous bag and a few dishes fell toward her like a giant rockslide. She closed her eyes tightly as she let go of the cloth and braced herself.

Before she could feel the impact of the massive weight hurtling toward her, a pair of strong hands jerked her and her sister away. The smell of Old Spice and caramel filled her nose as she opened her eyes to see her grandfather looking down at her with relief.

“Pop Pop!” she exclaimed with a smile.

“Baby, what are you doing? You could have hurt yourself?” he questioned as he placed her and her sister down after checking to make sure they weren’t hurt.

“Hungry Pop Pop wanna eat now,” Dottie said she watched their grandfather picked up their bag and the broken dishes.

“Okay baby but next time wait for someone to help, don’t do this again,” he scolded.

Opening the girl’s travel bag, he pulled out two bags of apple slices, bowls of spaghetti and two princess sippy cups. Placing the bag back on the table and disposing of the glass, he warmed up both bowls and sat them on the table.

“The spaghetti is still hot, let’s eat the apples first while they cool off okay?” he said as both girls nodded.

He grabbed both their hands and led them back into the bedroom. This time closing the door behind him. He placed both girls on the bed, making sure their bags were open and they were content, he laid back down.

The sound of knocking rang through the house followed by the high-pitched screams of the hinges letting everyone know the door was opening.

“Daddy,” Rhonda’s voice called out as her and her husband’s heavy footfalls echoed closer to the door.

The bedroom door opened and they were greeted with two wide smiles and the sounds of cartoons.

“Hey girls, you eatin’ on granddaddy’s bed?” Rhonda asked animatedly as she kissed them both on their heads before reaching over to shake the older man.

“Daddy,” Rhonda said softly not wanting to startle him as Earl bent down to take an offered apple slice from Dot.

“I saw the spaghetti on the table, you didn’t like it?” Uncle Earl asked kissing Dot on the cheek.

“Pop Pop said too hot,” Dottie answered bitting down on the apple.

“Daddy,” Rhonda called again tuning out her nieces as she tried to wake the older man. She reached over and touched his cheek but snatched it back when her warm palm met ice-cold skin. She hesitantly reached two fingers to his neck and with a gasp she turned to her husband.

“Take the girls in the living room,” she said her eyes filled with tears.

A few moments later, the EMT’s arrived and wrapped the older man in a black plastic bag. They gave their condolences and informed the couple that the man had most likely died two hours ago. Rhonda and Earl frowned at them in confusion as they looked back at the table where the two steaming bowls of spaghetti still sat.
My Funeral

The sound of muffled voices wake me from my sleep and as I open my mouth to tell them to be quiet and get out of my apartment, my lips seem to be stuck. I must have slept longer than I thought for my lips to be dry enough to stick together. I take a deep breath through my nose and swallow hard; my throat feels like I swallowed sandpaper and this room smells musky.

I try to open my eyes but they don’t budge and my heart starts to beat faster. “Calm down,” I tell myself. I have been fighting off a very bad cold so my eyes must have drained and sealed shut. I lift my hands to try and wipe the crust from my eyes but they won’t move.

My heart starts pounding again and the voices seem to become louder and more frantic. I try to yell for someone to help me up but my mouth won’t cooperate. I hear what sounds like my daughter standing beside me and before I can say anything, what she says next makes my heart stop and my blood runs cold.

“I’m going to miss you, mama, say hello to daddy for me,” she says and it sounds like a sob.

My mind is racing as my breathing quickens and I feel like I’m getting light headed… why would she tell me to say hello to her father? She knows he’s dead.

“She never went to the hospital,” I heard her voice say again, “She kept saying it was a cold but it wasn’t,” a cry escapes my daughter’s mouth and I feel a warm hand against my cheek and what I know is a kiss on my forehead.

“I’m so sorry mama I should have come home sooner,” I hear her cry and then something wet drops on my cheek.

I’m not dead! I want to yell but my fucking mouth won’t move. I hear her husband tell her to come sit down and the voice of my sweet granddaughter asking, “How long I will be asleep until she and I can play again”.

My heart is breaking as my sister reads off what sounds like the summary of my life and I realize I’m at my own funeral. I try desperately to move or make any kind of noise to show that I am still alive. I call out to my family and friends but no one seems to hear me.

Is this it? I think, is this what death is like? This Dark Abyss? Where is the choir? Where are the pearly white gates? I’m supposed to be surrounded by music and clouds, but the only sounds I hear is the chorus of cries and my daughter is the lead singer.
Please be advised that some of these stories touch on sensitive subjects so please read with care. Each story that contains sensitive subject matters has a warning before each of them.
Warning

The follow story contains a rape scene between a child and an adult. If you do not like stories like this than please feel free to skip this story and go to another. If you still would like to read it then, please scroll down or turn the page on your device to continue.
Frank walks gently down the deserted hallway. The moonlight peeking through the open drapes illuminates the pale white walls with a hint of blue. His heart shuttered with excitement as he descends further down the hallway. He takes a deep breath calming his heart and steadying his mind. The cool wood panels of the floor balance the heat radiating from his body as he walks carelessly to his destination. He took the route closest to the wall knowing it wouldn’t protest to the weight of his body, because he had taken this route many times, so much, in fact, he could do it with his eyes closed and still know which boards would squeak and moan and which ones will keep his decent a secret. Toys that were left unattended and abandoned littered his path. Using his bare foot to slide them to the side, Frank kept his steady pace.

He turns the doorknob quietly until it clicks and braces his weight against it. The door stalls and Frank inwardly curse as it comes into contact with the back of a chair and piece of folded carpet. He chuckles softly and gently slides his hand through the obscure space and gradually pushes and the chair and rug away.

Once the door is fully open he throws a quick glance back down the hall to make sure he hadn’t woken anyone up and turns back into the room with an accomplished smile.

Once inside, he turns the doorknob prematurely so that the lock didn’t click when he closes it. Once the door is finally closed he smiles at the sleeping figure underneath the blanket and makes his way over to her. Languidly sitting on the part of the bed that was not occupied, he reaches over and softly caresses her raven black hair. He lifts the soft blanket and climbs underneath and wraps his arm around her slim waist.

She fit perfectly into him as he molds his body into hers. Her backside fit snuggly against his crotch and her hair smelt of strawberries and honey. Frank inhales deeply and soon, his fingers were gliding through her silky black locks. Sudden movements caused him to pause and slightly back away. Afraid that he has frightened her and not wanting her to scream the whole house awake, he places a hand lightly on her mouth.

“Hey, it’s okay Rachel, it’s just me,” He said kissing the back of her neck. Which became tenser with each feathery light offering.

A soft hand came to rest on the one he had on her mouth as she bucks into him and then kicks her feet back into his when he pressed them against her. Frank chuckled deeply making his chest vibrate against her back.

“I’m sorry, the living room was freezing and the blanket out there was really thin.” He whispered as he kissed the base of her neck.

As he continues his delicate assault of kisses, he slides his right hand under her nightshirt and caresses the skin there. He stops his hand right above her heart, he can feel her heart pounding against his hand as if it were trying to reach out and touch him. He moves his hand to the left and grabbed hold of the small and hardened nipple there and twists it between his index finger and thumb. A small mewing sound squeaks beneath his hand and he chuckles breathlessly in her ear.
“You like that don’t you,” he teases as he glides his hand down her stomach toward her panty line.

When he reaches the elastic waistband and his middle finger begins to edge beneath it, she squirms and tries to turn over to face him. Frank quickly rolled her over so she is facing him and with the quick withdrawal of his hand, his mouth closes over hers in a bold unrepentant possession. His tongue dashed between her lips and slides along hers. Her soft nails scrape his shirt roughly; he pushes her onto her back, and up against the pillows, kicking her legs apart, forcing himself between them. He hauls her arms above her head and keeps them there.

“God, you’re beautiful,” he breathes into her mouth as she gasps for air, “I love you so much,” he says as he kisses her again, thrusting his tongue into her mouth and tasting the sweetness of the chocolate dessert she had just hours previously.

Removing one hand from the ones he has pinned, he runs it over the now pushed up nightshirt and down her stomach. He nudges his hand into her underwear, thrusting two fingers inside of her. She inhaled sharply, he moans at the softness of her skin and the moisture he finds there.

Rachel grumbles something into his mouth and moves almost violently against him as he continues to massage her mercilessly. She pushes against his chest and bites his lip hard. Wincing, he pulls back and stares at Rachel, the metallic taste of his blood now coating his tongue.

Her chest heaves as she tries to catch her breath. He looks down at her, removing his hand from her underwear with a speed that causes her to flinch. Her brows furrow and her eyes fill with fear as to how he will react, but to her surprise, he just smiles and sucks on his lip giving her a lust filled gaze. A yelp escapes her mouth as the weight of his entire body falls onto her and he places his hand back onto her mouth.

“Shhh… you’re going to wake up everybody,” he laughs as his assault of kisses trailed down her neck.

Rachel squirms under him, rubbing the soft material of her socks profusely against his legs. She starts to buck and toss when he pulls her underwear to the side and frees his rock hard length. She made another noise underneath his hand and he smiles again at her, staring into her soft brown eyes as they looked back up at him… pleading him.

Using his own legs to keep hers open, he guides himself into her, her whole body going stiff. He sucks in a deep breath as he almost came undone with how tight her muscles feel around him. He moves gently, at first, so not to hurt her but when he feels her body adjust to him he picks up his pace.

Rachel screams under his hand as she inhales sharply through her nose. He grabs ahold of her hair and yanks it back to bare her throat to him. His mouth attacks her there too, kissing, sucking and biting his way down over the sensitive vulnerable skin there. He sucked on the hammering pulse at the hollow of her throat and scraped his teeth over her collarbone.

She squeezes her eyes shut as he works himself vigorously against her. Her mind blares with a million thoughts and emotions as it tried to take her away. He drags her senses back down into the molasses of the situation again with another yank of her hair. He was so close that he was intensely aware of every throbbing vein pulsing along the length of his member as he continued his pace.

Her breathing came in ragged pants, as her body reacted wildly. She could barely breathe as her eyes roll back into her head and her body erupts. His movements become harsher if it was at all possible. He slams into her with deep punishing thrusts, short and urgent as if he couldn’t
bear to pull out too far. His hand releases her hair and wrists to go to her hips, hauling her down on him in time for him to finally release.

Rachel cries out and he growls enclosing her mouth with his, swallowing her screams and groans as she clenched around him. She goes limp immediately, her body still pulsing and her breathing still ragged. As soon as she felt his weight lift from her and stand, she rolls over, not even giving him a glance and grips the covers around her. His heart still racing with exhaustion and it was quickly taking over his body. As he opened the door to go back to the couch, Frank turns back into the room and says quietly.

“Good night honey…oh, and please don’t leave your toys in the hallway, okay?”

A small voice barely above a whisper hiccups back a response “Yes… daddy,” and Frank closes the door.

After waiting a few minutes Rachel drags her sore legs off the bed and hisses as she walks back over to the door. Using her pink flower rug to slide the heavy chair she purposely made her older sister Jasmine, place in her room, and shoves it against the door, hoping, this time, it would stick.

Further, up the hallway, a door creaks open as Jasmine comes out of her room, eyes red and puffy from crying. She looks down the hallway and exhales a harsh breath as she leans against her little sister's door and cries.

“I’m s sorry Rache,” she whispers as more tears fall. “I never thought he’d pick you, it was only supposed to be me.”

She stays like that for a beat until her sorrow turned into rage and she turns her attention to the living room. Taking a deep breath to try and calm her breathing, she makes her way into the living room and stops when she sees her father fast asleep on the couch. Smiling. More hot tears spilled from her eyes as she briskly walks into the kitchen and grabbed a Chef’s knife.

As she holds the knife in her hand, it becomes heavy with what she plans to do. She catches a glimpse of herself in its steel side. Her long raven black hair had been cut to her neck in a Bob and died blonde as to kill the weaker part of herself. Her lower lip, nose and right eyebrows were littered with piercing. Her eyes red and pupils void of any emotion. She looked down at her wrists where her last moment of weakness was on display for everyone to see into straight and deep horizontal lines.

Sniffing quickly she licked her drying lips and turns toward the living room. Making sure not to make a sound and creeping back into the living room, the way he used to creep into her room, she stands over her father’s head pointing the knife at him.

As she raises it diagonal to his throat the soft patter of feet and the distant sound of a toilet flushing, coming from her parent’s room, which was right next to Rachel’s room, had her stopping in her tracks. Jasmine looks at her father’s sleeping form and then backs away from him and then out of the room. She sets her attention on the room he shares with her mother and decides to go here instead.

Her anger grew with every step as she thought of how her father talked her mother into giving Rachel her old room, telling her that the room furthest from theirs was bigger and better for a teenager and saying that their 3 year old who was now 7, should be closer to them so they could keep a close eye on her. Her grip on the silver cool steel handle tightens as she thought of how her mother would scold her for walking around her old bedroom in the middle of the night, claiming the walls were as thin as tissue paper but couldn’t hear the pounding of the headboard or the squeaking of the bed as her father assaulted her every night for years until she got her period.
But tonight her mother will hear her and her father will stop, tonight things change and tonight many will die. She reaches for the doorknob and turns it hauntingly slow the way she watched her father do it night after night and the door squeaks open.

Her mother sits on the bed staring at her as she walks in. Her eyes also red and the front of her shirt has wet marks on it as if she had spilt something on it and attempted to wash it out instead of just removing it. Jasmine walks further into the room, leaving the door ajar and continues to walk toward the bed.

“I know why you’re here and I don’t blame you,” her mother says, her voice broken and soft.

Jasmine remained silent as she walks closer to her mother, her eyes never leaving her face.

“So you knew what he was doing?”

“I suspected,” her mother breathed.

“You knew!” Jasmine yelled and her mother flinched and quickly nodded her head as fresh tears streamed down her face.

“Your… you’re going to wake your father,” she hic ups as her eyes dart toward the door.

“I don’t care because once I am finished with you, he’s next, besides daddy is too relaxed to wake up, you should not that,” Jasmine says her voice dripping with disdain.

“You don’t think I tried to stop him!” her mother yelled, “You don’t think I tried everything to get him to leave you alone! I never knew—”

“DON’T YOU DARE!” Jasmine yelled closing the distance between her and her mother her eyes filling to the brim with tears but refused to let them fall.

“Don’t you dare say you tried everything because you didn’t,” Jasmine whispered, “Night after night he would creep out of this room and into mine, climbing in bed with me and…” she stops as her stomach begins to flip and her tears finally fall, “You heard that headboard hit this wall just as clear as I heard it coming from down the hall, you listened to him FUCK ME! Every night for 8 years until I got my period and still you did nothing!”

“What could I have done!”

“Call the police, have him arrested, and fight him!”

“You could have too!” her mother yelled now standing “You could have said something! Told a teacher but no you just laid there and did nothing!”

“I WAS WAITING FOR YOU TO RESCUE ME! You were my mother you were supposed to be my savior, I WAS CHILD! A defenseless child who being pinned to a mattress by her father!”

“Well you know what so was I!” he mother yelled walking away from Jasmine to pace the room. “I was raped too by my father and my brother, no one came to my rescue either! I had to learn to deal with it”

Jasmine shook her head in disbelief, “So instead of helping your defenseless daughter and stopping what you claimed happened to you, you allow the same thing to happen just a few feet away from you. And then you allowed it to happen to Rachel.” Jasmine said as her voice faulted and her tears came running down her face again as her thoughts filed with what her father had done to her sister.

“You didn’t do anything either,” her mother said as she used her shirt to wipe her nose, “You laid down the hall from her and listened to him hurt her too!”

“Fuck you! I was drugged out of my mind every night because of what happened to me! I never thought he would go after her!”
“You know what, go ahead, kill me, that’s why you came in here, so do it and get it over with.” Her mother says opening her arms, falling to the ground and closing her eyes.

Jasmine walks over to her mother and lifts her hand and rubs her dark brown hair. Her mother sighs and more tears freshly fall, soaking up the front of her shirt, it wasn’t until she heard the crazed chuckle that makes her open her eyes and look at her daughter, “And put you out of the misery you seem to be drowning in? I don’t think so, in the 10 feet it took me to get in here I came up with a far crueler punishment for you.” Jasmine says as a smile spreads on her face, still petting her mother’s hair. “I am going to slowly cut out your retina’s and then pierce each one of your ear drums since you don’t use them anyway,” Jasmine says as she yanks her mother’s head back and her mother grabs ahold of her wrist.

As Jasmine pressed the tip of the cool steel horizontal to her mother’s now tightly closed eyes an ear piercing scream rang through the entire house followed by three gunshots. Jasmine dropped the knife and let go of her other as Rachel’s screams reached her ears and she dashed out of the room. Her heart stalls, as she looks at her little sister holding a smoking 9-milliliter gun and her father groaning and rolling around on the floor.

Rachel was panting and crying all at the same time as her hands shaking furiously. She was mumbling something under her breath but Jasmine couldn’t make it out.

“Rache, what are you doing?” Jasmine says barely above a whisper afraid of startling her sister and receiving the last of bullets in the clip.

Rachel still stood staring at the blood that was now pooling between her father’s legs, her hand still extended and aimed for him.

“Rachel, had me the gun,” Jasmine breathed as she walks closer to her sister. Once she was close enough she grabs her hands and that seems to break her sister’s trance. Rachel looks at Jasmine and starts crying.

“I just wanted him to stop! I just… I just… I didn’t want to feel him anymore,” she practically shouted in her sister’s stomach.

“Call… Call 911 please,” her father gasped as he continued to hold himself and roll around on the floor.

Jasmine looks down at her father as he looks up at her and then to her mother.

“Get me some help!” he demands, “Please,” he begs clenching his legs tighter. Jasmine raises the gun and points it at her mother, her hand steadier than her sisters.

“Jazz what are you doing!” Rachel shrieks

“She knew Rachel she knew what daddy was doing and she didn’t care.”

“What?”

“Yeah, go ahead mom, tell Rachel how you listened to daddy rape her and me for years and did nothing.”

“Rachel I couldn’t—”

“STOP LYING!!” Jasmine yells as blue and red lights flashed outside of her house followed by the screaming of sirens.

The door burst open and Rachel and her mother screams.

“Put the gun down!” an officer yells.

“But—” Jasmine says as her eyes dart from the officer’s weapon, which was pointed at her and to her father who was still bleeding and crying on the floor.

“Drop the gun!” the officer and his partner both yell.

Jasmine jumps at the sound of the other partners booming voice and drops the gun and the room fills with a flash and the sound of thunder.
Amorem

Barbara growled in frustration as she looked at her diamond embedded watch once again. Her husband sat next to her engrossed in whatever article he was reading in the newspaper. The sun hid behind a thick blanket of clouds, which gave the day a dismal feel to it.

“What is taking so long? We’re going to be late!” Barbara said as she leaned toward her chauffeur.

“Madam, there is nothing that I can do, the traffic is at a standstill.”

“How can that be? We took this route because traffic rarely comes through here.”

“I’m sorry Ma’am, I don’t know.”

Barbara sighed irritated as she fell back into her seat. She glanced back at her watch and then her husband. Walter sat next to her his brow furrowed as he read an article in the marketing section.

She sighed again as she shook her head in disbelief. This was the last showing of ‘Amorem’ and epic romance story she bought the last tickets to see and her husband finally took time off to see it with her.

She glanced back at him as he flipped another page and she sighed again looking at her watch.

“Dear please, we will get there,” Walter said as he jerked the paper when it began to fall limp.

“Yes but at what time? When is the show almost over? I wanted us to… ugh,” she said looking out the window.

Walter glanced over at his wife and smiled. She was the epitome was beauty and perfection, her long blonde hair was loosely curled, her soft cream skin smelt of honey and vanilla. Her simple but elegant soft grey dress hung loosely on her now shaking leg. She worried the white fur coat she was wearing so much he thought she might singe the fur.

He reached over and grabbed her hand, which caused her to look at him.

“You look beautiful,” he said with a smile.

She smiled softly back at him.

“Thank you.” She whispered squeezing his hand.

The moment lasted a second before Walter turned back and focused on his paper. She rolled her eyes and glanced out of the window.

“What the—” the chauffeur began when he caught sight of a light fog billowing in the distance.

At the sound of the driver’s panic both Walter and Barbara looked out the front window. The fog was light but it was coming right for them. Driver’s opened their doors to see what was causing it when a dark shadow appeared in it. As the shadow got closer it seemed to split until there were numerous of shadows.

“What is that?” one driver yelled.

“I don’t know,” a voice yelled back.

Suddenly a man burst through the fog, his face contorted with fear and his feet hit the pavement so hard it left small rubber streaks in its wake. The man’s eyes were bloodshot red and his clothes torn. Then another appeared, this time, a woman in the same condition, her black coat and skirt torn, her feet bare as she ran. Screams erupted from her mouth as tears streamed down her face.
More people burst through the billow of smoke in the same if not worst condition, screaming and crying. Some grabbing on to one another while others fought hard to keep up. People started getting back into their cars but Walter remained standing. He wanted to know or, at least, see what these people were running from. Then the sound of a stampede echoed through the street as hundreds if not thousands of people emerged from the fog, some coughing and gagging others pulling up or dragging the fallen out of the way.

Before Walter could ask what the hell was going on, 6 large German shepherds dashed out of the fog. A small silver canister soared through the sky like a shooting star landing at least 6 feet away from him. He quickly jumped back into the car and locked the doors.

“Walter, what is it?” Barbara asked frantically, fear covered her face as more people screaming sprinted past the car.

“It’s a riot” was all Walter could get out before the sounds of police and screams became louder.

Barbara looked out the window again, a woman had fallen to the ground outside her window, and she was crying and coughing. A man who ran passed her stopped and yanked at her arm, begging her to get up. The woman made it to her knees when one of the dogs appeared and latched his powerful jaw around the woman’s arm ripping her backwards.

Barbara gasped as the man kicked at the dog, demanding it to let go.

The woman screamed in pain as more people ran past them. Barbara was frozen in place at the sight. An officer ran toward the pair and the dog and lifted his baton and gave such a striking blow that blood poured from the man’s head as he hit the ground with a thud.

The officer then turned his attention to the woman who was trying to get her now bloody arm from the ferocious dog and began to hit her.

Barbara turned her head away from the window and covered her ears, trying to drown out the woman’s cries. She had heard about the boycotts and the riots but had never seen them. The papers and the news talked about them but she never imagined they were like this. They said “They” were aggressive and threw Molotov cocktails but the woman lying on the ground right outside her window held nothing.

Barbara began to cough as the tear gas blew through the vents of the car. She took off her fur and placed it on her face hoping that whatever was going on outside her window would quickly vanish. Walter pulled her closer to him whispering to her that all this would be over and they could enjoy the rest of their day at the play. That everything would be alright as long as they stayed in the car. That the police only wanted the protesters and that they had probably done something wrong that resorted to this kind of tactic.

Barbara was shaking now not only from the coughing but from fear, she couldn’t get that woman’s screams out of her head and she couldn’t get that officer's face out of her mind. The woman was defenseless and unarmed and still he hit her, his eyes danced with enjoyment as the woman begged for her life.

The last sound she ever thought she would hear out in the chaos rang so clear it was like the world had become silent because of it.

“Mommy!” a child’s voice rang out.

Barbara jolted upright her eyes burned from the little bits of tear gas that was in the car and searched the blinding white fog for the body that released the cry of help. Crouched in the corner of a doorway, was a little girl crying and coughing. She rubbed furiously at her eyes and tried to bury her face into the neck of her dress. Barbara’s eyes scanned the bits of the street she could see but she could not locate the woman the girl was crying out for. There were so many
people trying to get away from the policeman and their dogs, that her small voice was not being heard.

The sound of barking followed by a command to sic had Barbara turning to see an officer release his K-9 in the girl’s direction. Before she knew what she was doing Barbara threw open the car door and ran toward the girl. She didn’t care about her husband’s cries for her to get back in the car or that of her driver who yelled that she would get hurt. She didn’t care about the $6,000 dress that was now dragging on the dirty and blood streaked pavement. She didn’t even care about the play that she and Walter would never see. She only cared about getting to the young girl who cried out for her mother. She had to reach her and protect her from the animal that commanded his dog to attack her. She didn’t care that in doing so the dog just might attack her, she had to save this little girl since she hadn’t saved the woman who had fallen outside her window.

She just had too.
Josephine and Warren

Josephine leans against her fainting chair, staring blankly as Warren walks the remaining guests out. She glances toward the window and it’s now late afternoon. As the front door clicks shut, she hears Warren’s footsteps begin to ascend up the stairs.

“Warren,” she calls out as she swings her legs from the chaise and stands. Her long purple and white evening gown swishes along her feet as he walks toward him.

Warren’s footsteps stop and she walks toward him, “How was Hannah’s journey?” she asked nervously at his back. He sighed tiredly and turned around to face her. He gives her a slight nod and waits to be addressed again, “Will you join me for dinner?”

Warren gives her a small nod and begins to turn around to walk up the stairs.

“Warren,” Josephine says as she ascends the stairs after him, “What’s wrong? Have I done something to upset you?”

The man turns around and stares at her for a beat before shaking his head. He points in the direction of the dining room and gives her a small and forced smile, letting her know he will join her for dinner and then he starts up the stairs again.

Josephine sighs and walks back down the stairs she walked up and headed toward the kitchen. She goes into her fridge and pulls out a variety of fruits and cheeses. She walks over to the counter and prepares them on a small platter, along with a variety of sliced bread and crackers. She grabbed two wine glasses and one filled with a red wine and the other filled with water. She placed everything on the dining room table and sat down, waiting for Warren to come join her. A few minutes later she heard footsteps coming down the stairs and smiled.

Warren entered the dining room and sat down. He gave Josephine a small smile before reaching over and grabbing several grapes, some cheese and a slice of wheat bread. Josephine did the same and the two ate in silence.

“How is everything? This fruit is from one of the humans who worked on an organic farm. I traded him the fruit for his sense of smell,” she said with a smile as she bit into a piece of Swiss cheese on a cracker.

Warren slammed his fists on the table, startling Josephine and she looked up at him. He glared at her and she looked away from him and picked up her wine glass. After a beat, Warren went back to eating.

“Warren I—” Josephine started when a soft hum echoed throughout the room. She turned to her right but knew there was no one else in the house but her and Warren. The hum became louder and soon the words were heard loud and clear. It was a hymn sung by the angels in the choir and they were singing his favorite song ‘Be Still My Soul’.

“Be still my soul my God doth undertake, to guide the future as he has past. Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake. All now mysterious shall be bright at last. Be still my soul. The waves and the winds still know his voice who ruled them while he dwelt below.”

As the words, the angels were softly singing filled the empty house, and the harps
plucked majestically, Warren’s eyes filled with tears and they spilt down his cheeks as he listened closely. Josephine watched as he opened his mouth to sing the words but nothing but air escaped. The hand that rested on the table was clenched in a white-knuckle embrace and as more tears fell he suddenly jerked away from the table and walked away.

“Warren,” Josephine called as she stood. The angels still sang softly and she balled her fists up. She glared outside to the soft late sunlight as it began to set for the day. She swiped viciously at the tears she didn’t know had fallen, fell down her cheeks and stormed toward the front door. As she approached she could see in the windows near the door that the clouds were swarming quickly as if to rain. As soon as her hand touched the doorknob thunder boomed outside. She swung the door open with such force it cracked the wall behind it. The sky darkened quickly, angry clouds swarmed across the sky as if someone was rearranging magnets on a board.

“Why are you doing this?” Josephine shouted to the sky as the wind began to pick up, “Hasn’t he suffered enough!”

Thunder boomed and lightening crackled splitting the sky. A light shower of cold rain fell from the sky.

“You think I care about a little rain! You’re forgetting that I’ve seen your backside for years!” She shouted as the sky cracked again and the rain poured down harder. She glared up at the sky as the trees around her bent and groaned under the harsh wind.

“Why are you torturing him? I did it! It was my fault! You know that and still you make him suffer!”

Thunder, that sounded like a bomb was going off, boomed overhead and Josephine jumped at its loudness but still stands in place. Her long brown hair whips from its bun and roughly bites at her cheeks and eyes.

“Is that your best? You don’t scare me! You never have! How dare you give us the capacity to love and then banish us when we do!”

Lightning cracks and rips down from the sky striking the ground beside her, “Is that suppose to scare me!” she shouts as tears spring from her eyes, mixing with the harsh rain pounding on her face. Another flash of lightening closer, this time, 5 feet away, the grass charred and angry, “Hit me! Do it!” Thunder boomed again, the clouds dark as night and flashing as lightening was prepared to strike again.

“Hit me!” she screamed when she was suddenly jerked around. Warren grabbed her roughly by the shoulders, his white button down shirt, wet and sticking to his chest. His black slacks whipped around his legs as he pulled her closer and closer to the front door. As soon as the door was shut the rain stopped and the clouds began to part. The sun set like normal and the light fro it slowly dimmed, cascading brilliant colors across the sky as if the storm had never happened.

Josephine sat on the floor as Warren grabbed a few towels and wiped her face with them. She continued to look at the ground; ashamed of what she had done and said, praying that he didn’t hear her. Her head began to lift up and she saw Warren staring at her. He brought his hand to her cheek and caresses it along the side of her face. Her eyes began to water and she turns her head away.

“Stop,” she says barely above a whisper, “You doing that just reminds me that all of this is my fault and I will never feel your touch again.” She pushed herself off the floor, gather’s her long gown and walks toward the stairs, leaving Warren soaking wet and staring at her.
Adeline tossed and turned in her bed as the rain gently fell outside. Her soft moans and cries of discomfort echoed throughout the room. The cotton sheets on her bed tangled around her tormented form, her eyebrows pinched, full lips in a frown and her long dark brown hair wet with sweat. Her heart raced as her nightmare blasts in full Technicolor and HD images behind her eyelids. The smell of blood filled her nose as it gushes like a damn from the child in her arm’s chest. Her mouth opened in a silent scream, her tongue blue, and purple from the birthday cake she had earlier. The multicolored plastic party bag filled with sweets that will never get eaten lay attached her wrist like a bracelet. Adeline’s chest tightens and she can feel tears falling down her cheeks. The sight of the man laying in front of her with his arms out, in a protective stance, laying lifeless on the floor and staring at something she is too fearful to look at has her heart racing. She takes a deep breath and yet the air refuses to fill her lungs. What is going on she thinks and how has this come to be? Who is the man wielding the gun and how had he found out where she lived? Her heart is beating so fast and hard, she can fill it against her ribcage. The man is muttering things to her but she can’t make them out. Suddenly the door slams open and the noise echoes through the house.

Boom

Adeline jerks awake as the sound of thunder rumbles outside. The balcony doors swung open from the rain that is now pouring harder outside. She sits up and grabs her chest; her heart is racing and her eyes sting with fresh tears. The nightmare she had, felt so real and she could still smell blood in the air. She stood from her bed and walked over to the balcony closing the doors and locking them again. Her bedroom was dark but the flashes of light from the lightning made disfigured figures on the far wall. Adeline walked over to her desk and flicked on a light. She sat down and stared at the piece of paper on her desk, it was half filled with markings of a new story and half empty. Another boom of thunder caused her to jump and look toward the patio, just I time to see the lightning flash again outside. Her nightmare comes pouring back into her mind and a pang of sadness grips her heart. The little girl in her arms and the look of fear in her eyes seemed so real but how can that be? She had no children and yet she woke up with tears in her eyes.

Lightening flashed again and she looked down at her hands remembering the feel and smell of the little girls blood on her hands. She rubs her palms together and then wiped them down her face. A soft groan escapes her; exhaustion seems to be the theme of her life now since she keeps being awakened by horrible and weird nightmares. This one by far was the scariest and sad. Usually, she would wake up from a dream where she and a man she had never met spend nights tangled in each other’s arms. On those nights she wrote endlessly and then on the nights like these where she would awaken with fear gripping her heart and screams stuck in her throat, she would sit at her desk and force the nightmares away.

Adeline sighed once more staring at her bed, wondering if it was worth the trouble to try and sleep again or just staying awake. She chose the latter and looked down at the papers scattered on her desk. She picked up her quill pen, dabbed it with ink and began to write. The rain stopped hours ago and Adeline rose to open the patio doors. Sunlight flooded the room and the sweet smell of moist grass air filled her lungs and the room. Adeline stood there for a while
letting the sun warm her and the sweet morning dew takes her to another place and time, a time that seemed to only be real in her dreams.

A bird singing the sun up along with letting the rest of the world know it is awake brings her back from her thoughts and she returns to her desk. She turns off the light since the room is filled with it and continues to write. Her mind is flustered with nightmares and memories she had no recollection of creating. Her desk was now filled with balled up pieces of paper and she still hadn’t written a cohesive sentence to go with the little bit she had written yesterday.

An aggravated growl escaped her mouth as she threw the newest of her mistakes over her shoulder. It wasn’t until she heard a grunt of disapproval that she realized she was not alone.

“Adeline, must you make such a mess? It is hard enough to keep this side of the house clean as it is, I don’t need your crumpled up scribbling’s to add to it.” Joanna said placing the tray on the side of the desk where there was less mess. She turned and walked over to the discarded ball of paper.

Adeline sat in her all white long sleeve lace nightgown, which tied like a corset in the back. She sat on the edge of her seat and on her toes as if she would take off in a ballet routine in seconds. She dabbed her quill pen into the black ink and began writing again.

“Mm, leave it, no use in picking it up now when it’s brothers and bastard cousins will soon follow,” Adeline said vaguely as she continued to write.

“The more reason to pick it up now,” Joanna said shoving the paper ball into her apron pocket. As she stood she smoothed out the wrinkles in her long blue and white patterned dress.

Another growl escaped Adeline as she balled up yet another mistake and tossed it to the side, away from where Joanna was standing. She couldn’t understand why her mind was in shambles she couldn’t think nor but a coherent thought on the page. For the past three nights, she could have sworn she heard voices coming from outside her door but when she went to go check nothing. Joanna had been adding to the stress since the young woman had come up with an absurd game of placing things where they did not belong and or forgetting to bring her items within moments of requesting them. Addie couldn’t blame the girl since neither one of them got out much and living in a secluded area did seem to make pulling pranks on the people you were forced to be around that more tantalizing. But that still didn’t mean that that it didn’t get on her last nerves.

“If I didn’t know any better I would say you enjoyed the mess you make since you seem so keen on making them,” Joanna said walking over and picking up the trash and breaking Adeline’s train of thought, “You have a trash bin Addie use it.”

“Will you get out? I can’t concentrate with you hovering beside me, judging my mistakes.”

“First of all, no one is judging you, and second I will go when I see that you have eaten something,” Joanna said walking over to the tray.

Adeline rolled her eyes but gave the woman her attention. Joanna picked up the porcelain teapot, decorated with wild flowers and outlined in a gold trim. The teapot rattled as the young girl poured, concentrating extra hard not to spill the hot liquid.

“Jo, are you all right?” Adeline asked as the young woman placed the teapot down.

“I’m fine,” she said with a sigh and a small smile, ”My wrist has been bothering me, but it’s nothing.”

“How long has it been bothering you,” Adeline asked taking the young woman’s hand into hers and rubbing her tender wrist.

“Oh for a while now, but it’s nothing I just need to rest it some, that’s all,” she said
looking at Adeline who still looked at her with a worried expression.

“Well, I don’t think it’s nothing, ring the doctor and have him come look at it.”

“If you insist,” Joanna said picking up a teaspoon and delicately scooping sugar from its pot and putting it into Adeline’s cup. After stirring the liquid to make sure it was evenly blended she handed the cup to Adeline.

Addie accepted the cup and drank from it eyeing the cookies on the tray, “What did I do to deserve such a treat?” she said placing the cup down and picking up one of the two sugar cookies.

“Not a thing,” Joanna said taking a napkin from the tray and placing it in front of Addie, “I was in the kitchen and decided that I deserved a cookie for all of my hard work, so I made a batch. It wasn’t until I had eaten almost all of it that I figured why not share them with you.” she said with a playful smile.

“How kind,” Addie said taking a bite. She grimaced and then looked at the cookie as if it had insulted her.

“What’s the matter?”

“Nothing, the sugar is a bit bitter. What kind of sugar—” Addie began when the doorbell rang startling both women.

“Who could that be?” Addie asked.

Joanna shrugged her shoulders but left the room to go check as Addie finished her cookies.

The cookies were bitter and the milk smelled just as bad. She scarfed down the cookies on the bases of hunger alone and stood to pour the curdled milk out. As she finished and sat back down, Joanna came back into the room.

“Who was at the door?”

“An admirer of your work,” Joanna said as if she was telling her the weather.

“An admirer!” Adeline smirked at that and began to disrobe as Joanna picked out a beautiful gown.

After hurrying to get dress and fumbling with her hair, she stood turning and smiling at herself in the mirror.

“Will you come on, I don’t trust that William person. He’s probably down there stealing from us as we speak,” Joanna said crossing her arms and looking into the hallway.

“William? Is that his name?”

Joanna grumbled out her response and glared at her friend who was taking forever to get moving.

“Alright, Alright, I’m ready,” Addie, said smiling as she walked into the hallway, Joanna leading the way.

“I don’t trust that William person. He’s probably down there stealing from us as we speak,”
“So you’ve stated,” Addie, said with a smile that quickly faded when she realized, Jo, had been doing that a lot lately, repeating herself. She thought it was another game of hers but she was beginning to worry. As she came down the stairs and into the foyer, she didn’t see anyone. She looked back at Jo, to see if she was certain she had let someone in. Joanna seemed lost in her own thoughts, she was mumbling to herself as she finished coming down the stairs to stand beside her. She hadn’t even realized she’d passed Jo, on her way down the stairs. She quickly dismissed the thought and turned to find her mysterious admirer.

“William?” Adeline called when she hadn’t seen the young man standing by the door where Joanna, had said she left him. William walked in from the den and Adeline’s mind went drowning back into her dreams. He looked like the man in her dreams. His hair was a little shorter and he didn’t have the facial hair but those eyes were unmistakable and he looked positively dashing in his suit.

Adeline stood at the base of the stairs in a white and pale baby blue evening gown. The pale baby blue bodice was form fitting with sleeves that stopped at her elbow. The blue lace stopped short in the front but casually stretched out to the sides and down her back in a diamond shape. The white portion of the dress began where the blue stopped. The dress was so long that it drug against the floor and hid her feet. As soon as Addie let her eyes travel up and down the man’s body. He reminded her of someone, someone sweet and gentle and as a name weighed down on her tongue, Joanna’s voice erased all traces of it when she was brought out of her thoughts.

“Why were you in that room?” Joanna asked, frowning at the young man.

“Oh, I was just looking around,”

“Why were you in that room!” Joanna demanded louder.

“Jo, he answered you,” Addie said glaring at her friend, “Be nice.”

“Well, Ms. Lyle, you look beautiful,” William, said as he walked over to her, interrupting her thoughts.

Adeline placed a hand on her cheek and turned her face from him, “Thank you,” she said with a soft chuckle, “You make me blush. Have we met before? Your face looks awfully familiar,”

“Maybe we met in a past life,” William said with a smile as Addie chuckled.

“Perhaps,” Addie said smiling at William.

Joanna cleared her throat loudly and glared at William when he looked at her.

“Oh yes well I um… came by to talk to you about your book ”, I wanted to thank you for writing it. It was one of the best books I had ever read, it actually changed my life.”

“Really how so?” Adeline asked with a wide grin when William peered behind her to Joanna who gave him a look that said he was on thin ice.

“Oh well, it… it’s a long story and I know you have been sick lately, I don’t want you to get worse,” William said with a defeated look.

“Ill? Who told you I was ill? I am as healthy as an ox,” Adeline said looking at Joanna who was looking at William. “Come, sit with me in the den and we can talk about my life changing novel,” she said with a small giggle, “Joanna dear, will you bring William and I some tea?”

“Addie, you just had tea and you still haven’t finished the writing you seemed so determined to fill the floor up with this morning.”

“You are working on a new book?” William asked as Addie looped her arm through his and led him into the den. Joanna scuffed and walked off toward the kitchen.
“Yes, it’s in the early stages of course but I’m sure it will come together soon.”

As they walked into the den Addie saw the pillows by the fireplace and laughed picking them up.

“When I walked through here, I thought it odd to place those there,” William said as he watched Addie place both pillows on the couch.

“Jo has been doing this lately, even bringing me hot water with no tea. I think it’s a game she has developed, we get so bored here anyway so I think it’s her way of finding something fun to do,” Addie said with a laugh as she took her seat.

“What is your new book about?” William asked as he sat on the couch.

“I can’t say. I don’t like to talk about my books before they are finished.”

“Superstitious?” William asked with a smile.

“No, just cautious,” Adeline said with a smile of her own, “So what about you, what do you do?”

“I’m studying to be a doctor;”

“A doctor very nice;”

“I also write a little as well;”

“Oh, what kind of things do you write, poetry?”

“Mostly scribbling’s of my professor turning into a fire-breathing dragon or turning myself into a sorcerer and using magic to know everything there is to know about being a doctor,” he said with a laugh.

“Well you’re off to a good start my first story was that of a flower and how it’s petals turned into butterflies and flew way,” Addie said with a laugh of her own.

Joanna walked back into the den with the tea tray, she walked slowly and slightly bent forward as if the tray she carried weighed as much as two cinderblocks then porcelain china.

“Jo, you have the momentum and posture of an old lady,” Addie said with a small laugh.

Jo rolled her eyes and placed the tray down on the end table between the couch and love seat.

“By the way, I found these two pillows over by the fireplace, you’re going to have to find a better spot to hide them if you want to make this game of yours worth playing,” Addie said as Joanna looked at her with a confused look.

“So William, how did my novel change your life?” she said leaning over to fix herself a cup of tea.

“Don’t you have somewhere to be Mr. Malloy?” Joanna said glaring at the young man who grabbed his cup of tea.

“Joanna,” Addie growled through clenched teeth.

“You are very busy and I am sure Mr. Malloy is too,” Joanna said staring at William. The young man visually gulped and sat his teacup down.

“She’s right, I don’t want to distract you or overstay my welcome—”

“Good,” Jo said taking the man’s arm, helping him to stand.

Addie stood as well trailing behind them as Jo all but threw the man out of the Mansion.

Jo quickly retrieved the young man’s jacket as he and Addie said their goodbyes.

“Will you visit me again?” Addie asked in a hushed voice as if she were ashamed of asking. “It’s just that we don’t get many visitors out here and it would be nice to have some company once in a while.”

William looked at Joanna who was getting ready to object.

“I would love too,” William quickly said taking his jacket from Joanna.

“Tomorrow at noon.”
“Okay,” William said as Joanna shoved him out the door and then slammed it. “Why did you invite him back here?” Jo said rounding on Addie as the woman waved her hand dismissively and began to climb the stairs. “Because we never get visitors—” “For good reason! We don’t know who that man is, he could be a murderer for all we know,” “Well I guess we will find out tomorrow at noon, now won’t we,” Addie said turning to Jo, giving her a knowing look before ascending the stairs.

Jo shook her head as she went into the den to grab the discarded tea tray. She took it back to the kitchen and began the dishes. Joanna didn’t know this William person and he made her nervous. She, like Adeline, seemed to recognize him from somewhere but couldn’t put their fingers on it. How did he find the house, when it was unlisted in all the registries? Why did he look so familiar and why was he so intrigued with Adeline? Yes, she was a writer but who still reads nowadays? She didn’t know who this young man was but she was going to figure it out.

That night the rain fell softly, washing away the morning’s pollen and filling the air with the damp smell of wet grass. Addie loved to listen to the rain dance on the balcony and the pounding drums of thunder. So she had left the doors open as she sat at her vanity, dressed in a light blue silk gown and brushed her hair. She waited for Joanna to bring her, her midnight cup of tea but the young woman never showed. She would have gone down to get it herself but the young woman made her do everything but swear on a bible that she wouldn’t step foot in the kitchen or her room. Normally she would follow these instructions but she really wanted her tea and she also wanted to make sure that her friend was okay. She was acting paranoid when William was here and she seemed a bit agitated as well.

She stood from her vanity and walked out of her room and stared down the hallway to where she knew her friend slept. The hallway was dark since this part of the house was surrounded on both sides with rooms; there were no windows to provide outside light. Addie knew the house like the back of her hand but with Joanna’s little game in full effect, she didn’t know what was waiting for her in the darkness. She moved her hand along the silk wallpaper and tried to find a light switch.

As soon as her hand touched the cool plastic she flipped the switched up and as if on cue a powerful boom of thunder made her jump followed by the sharp crackle of lightening and then the hallway was black again. Addie’s heart pounded as she felt along the wall for the switch again. When she felt it she flipped it on and off and still nothing happened. She walked back into her room; the patio doors were still open, so the blue light from the room lit up her room enough for her to see. She walked over to her desk and pulled out a candle from her drawer. After placing the candle in a holder she took a match and lit it. The room took on a yellow hue and she contemplated closing the patio doors but feared that with it being suddenly quiet, her mind will create noise.

She shook off the lingering fear as she turned to the hallway and peered into the murky darkness. She walked toward the door and then out it, her candle providing enough light for her to see but cast enough shadows to make her glance over her shoulder at almost every step. The hallway had an eerie feeling and with every shadow cast by her candle, she felt like someone was watching her. Thunder boomed again and she jumped along with releasing a terrified yelp before stopping where she was to pull herself together. She didn’t understand why she was suddenly so frightened. Thunder had never frightened her, but then her nightmare came back to the forefronts of her mind, the man with the gun, the child she held in her arms, surrounded by a
pool of blood. After taking a much-needed deep breath she hurried down the hallway.

She finally made it to Joanna’s room; the door was closed so she knocked on it softly.

When she received no answer she turned the knob and walked in. The room was much smaller

than hers but it still had a king size canopy bed, a closet and there was a writing desk on the far

wall. The drapes were drawn and the only light in the room was from her candle.


She moved toward the bed to find it empty. She turned to leave when something shiny

on the floor by the writing desk caught her eye. She walked closer to the desk and knelt down to

find her teapot. She slowly reached down and picked up studying it to make sure that it really

was the floral teapot she had just used this morning.

Addie then turned to put the teapot on the desk when the sound of thunder startled her

again and she dropped the teapot. It crashed onto the desk spilling the little bit of tea on the desk

and breaking into three large pieces. Addie inwardly cursed and placed the candle down to pick

up the broken teapot. As she reached for the broken porcelain her eyes fell on the letters that

were scattered all over the desk. Some were written in Joanna’s handwriting and the others

looked to be the scribblings of a child. The one thing that they all had in common was that they

all had her name scribbled in some form or another.

One of the papers with Joanna’s name on it said, “Your name is Joanna,” another said,

“The woman down the hall’s name is Addie, call her Addie.” Addie stared at the paper for a long

while. Why was Jo writing messages to herself like this? Was this another game she was

creating? Had she stumbled on it too early? As she pondered this her eyes fell on the child-like

scribbling’s and as she read them her blood ran cold and her breath hitched.

“Our name is not Joanna! Who the hell is Joanna?” another read, “The woman down the

hall is not Addie! Who is Addie?” “Addie is evil, Addie is fake! Addie must end!”

The last one had her reaching for the candle and as soon as the cool metal touched her

hand another crash of lightning boomed outside and Addie jumped.

“Why are you in this room!” A voice screamed out causing Addie to scream and turn

around. Addie stood in place as a woman she had never seen before stood in the doorway. Her

light brown skin glowed a hue of blue when lightening flashed again outside and her long curl

black hair had streaks of gray in it that fell limply on her shoulders. She wore a long white

nightgown and her face was in an angry growl.

“Why are you in this room!” The woman shouted again, this time, charging toward her.

Addie screamed and tried to run past the woman when the older woman roughly grabbed

her wrist.

“Why are you in this room!” she demanded, “Why are you in this—”

Addie didn’t allow her to finish repeating herself, she took the candle she was still

holding and hit the woman as hard as she could on the side of the head and ran as fast as she

could down the hall and then down the stairs. She ran as fast as her legs could take her and then

toward the front door. She had every intention of swinging it open but someone calling her name

stopped her.

“Adeline!”

Adeline turned to see William coming from the den. She wrapped her arms around him,
happy to see such a familiar face. Thunder crashed again and she let go of him, “What are you
doing here? How did you get in?”

William stalled for a moment and then answered, “I heard you scream and then I came

running in here, the door was open and I assumed Joanna forgot to lock it.” Adeline nodded, it

seemed like a reasonable explanation since Jo had been acting strange lately. She wouldn’t be
surprised if she did forget to lock the door. She looked toward the door and her heart dropped. She looked at William’s appearance and took a hesitant step back out of his embrace and then another, her heart was pounding and the voice in her head demanded her to run.

“Addie what’s wrong?” William asked taking a tentative step forward.

Addie’s eyes began to water as fear clenched at her heart making it hard to breathe. “How did you get into this house? There is only one key that locks and unlocks the front door. The key is in the door and I know Joanna wouldn’t put the key in the door without turning it.”

“She must have because the door was open, Adeline, you have to believe me,” William said taking another step toward her as she gradually kept stepping backward.

“If you came from outside then why aren’t you wet?” she asked in a voice barely above a whisper and with that question, William looked down at himself and then back at Adeline.

“Listen, I can explain,” he said just as lightning cracked across the sky, lighting up the whole area and causing him to jump when the thunder soon followed.

Addie took the momentary distraction to shove him as she ran past, toward the kitchen. He fell to the floor but still lunged for her feet but missed. She ran into the kitchen to find a weapon of any kind but she couldn’t find any. Joanna hadn’t put anything in its right place. In her moment of panic in the semi-dark kitchen, she pushed a bunch of papers off the counter and when she moved to run past them she slipped on one of them. She caught herself on the counter before she could fall and hurt herself but her face and eyes were fixated on one of the papers facing up to her from the floor. There was a small window next to the back door but it was big enough to shine some moonlight in from outside.

Lighting struck again giving her a quick clear view of what the paper said. She hesitantly picked it up as her mind raced and her chest tight from the breath she hadn’t known she was holding. The paper was in Joanna’s handwriting and what was written on it had her put her hand over her mouth, to keep herself from screaming.

“Contact William, he will help you get rid of Addie before it’s too late!”

Addie dropped the paper and for the first time took a look around the kitchen. It was filled with notes taped to the fridge and cabinets. There was a bowl of fruit that sat rotting and there was trash piled up in the corner by the door, and that’s when she smelt it, the hint of rot in the air.

A small squeak of fear escaped her mouth as she slowly backed away from what she was looking at. Suddenly arms grasped her from behind holding her in place.

“Addie please calm down, I’m—”

“Get off of me!” she screamed jerking within his tight grasp him.

“Stop it, please, just calm do—”

Addie lifted her foot and stopped heavy with the heel of her barefoot. William’s grip loosened and she brought her head forward and then snapped it back as hard as she could landing right on William’s nose. He let go of her and she dashed forward toward the other side of the kitchen. William quickly recovered and chased after her. As she tried to run towards the other set of stairs and elevator leading into the other side of the mansion, William grabbed ahold of her.

Addie screamed when William’s wet hand clamped down on her arm, she turned bringing her arm up to her mouth and bit down hard. William let out a ferocious scream as lightening cracked again outside, the room lit up bright enough for her to see that William’s face was bloody and his hand was too from holding his nose. She knew if she took a chance up the stairs he would catch her so she took a chance and ran into the elevator and slammed the gate closed and tried to grab the wooden door when William pulled it from her grasp and held it open.
Addie screamed at the top of her lungs, as tears ran down her face. Fear gripped her so bad that she thought she just might pass out from her ragged breathing. Her heartbeat pounded so hard, she could feel it press against her ribcage. She forced herself to stay standing; she lifted her foot and pressed it against the security gate so William couldn’t pry it open.

“I’m not trying to hurt you! I’m your son!” William shouted.

Addie gasped at the confession but still kept her foot firmly on the security gate.

“No, you’re not! You’re trying to kill me! You broke into this house to kill me,” she sobbed.

“Mom, I swear I’m not.”

“Don’t call me that! You broke into this house, I saw Joanna throw you—”

“Yes, she threw me out and I went around the side and came in through the window. But it wasn’t to hurt you it was to help you,”

“I saw the writings in the kitchen, you and Joanna are trying to get rid of me!”

“Of Adeline not you,”

“I am Adeline!” she shouted kicking the gate causing him to jump back.

“No, you are not, your name is Katherine Malloy and I am your son William Malloy!” He shouted back.

“You are a liar! I am 28 years old how can you be my son? You and I are almost the same age!”

“You are not 28, your name is Katherine Malloy you are 56 and Joanna’s real name is Gwen, she’s 58, and she’s your sister. The year is—”

“Stop it!” Adeline yelled kicking the gate again, “You’re lying!”

“I’m not lying,”

“Yes you are, my name is Adeline Lyle, I am 28 and it is 1898!” She screamed as more tears streamed down her face.

“Okay wait, I’ll prove it to you. Joanna has been writing me e-mails for years and about a month ago I received this letter. I had never received a letter from her but as soon as I read it I understood why’” William said reaching into his pants pocket and pulling out a folded up envelope. He knew she wouldn’t take her foot down to lean toward the gate and grab it so he, rolled it as best he could and squeezed it into one of the diamond shaped holes.

Adeline eyed the letter trying to figure out if this was a trick or not. As if seeing her hesitation William backed up even further so that there was, at least, ten feet between him and the gate. He pushed the outer door open far enough so he could catch it if she felt like trying to close it. Addie hesitantly reached out and grabbed the letter. She looked at the envelope and it was indeed written in Joanna’s handwriting and it was addressed to him, William Malloy. She took the letter out of the envelope and read it:

Dear William,

I am writing you this letter because I am sick. I have gone to the doctor several times and they have told me that I am showing signs of early onset Alzheimer’s disease. I am trying to keep your mother well but I am forgetting small things like if your mother likes honey in her tea, or if she prefers orange juice or milk with her breakfast. I am scared that I will forget to give her, her medicine or to call her Addie. I have started writing myself little notes around the house and have banned her from coming into the kitchen and my room for obvious reasons. I am terrified of waking up one morning and not knowing who my own sister is or her going into some kind of psychotic break and no one knows that were out here. I started this thing thinking that if we
played along with her delusion that she would eventually break out of it but it has been going on for 35 years, the moments of clarity that she used to have are all gone now and seems that the delusion is getting stronger. Please come home, I will call the airport and pay for your ticket and there will be a car waiting for you. Please come as soon as you get this.

I love you, Aunt Gwen.

“I knew from the moment she asked me whom I was, that she had gotten worse,” William said wiping his hand across his lip to catch the still dripping blood. The storm quieted down and the rain patted quietly against the windows, “I was afraid to leave you guys here alone. I figured that if it was getting so bad that she needed to hand write a letter than by the time I got it in London, she would have forgotten to give you your medicine.”

Adeline shook her head slowly as she stared at the letter, her leg burned but she refused to put her foot down.

“Mo— Adeline listen, you were an amazing author and you had fans that adored you. One day a crazed fan found out where we all lived. I was out with aunt Gwen and you, dad and Whitney had just come home from a birthday party. The fan had broken in and before dad could do anything he shot dad and Whitney. When the neighbors heard the gunshots they called the police but by the time they got there, they were already dead and the fan had told them that he did it because he loved you and that they were the reason why you guys couldn’t be together. He meant to kill all of us, and it’s why he waited around, to see if I was coming home. When the police finally got to you, you were covered in blood and not saying a thing. You were like that for about 3 months until one day you looked at Aunt Gwen and said your name was Adeline and asked when were you and her going home.” William started digging in his pockets for something; “It took us about a week to finally realize that you had taken the identity of one of your characters, the one that you based yours and dad’s love on,”

“No,” Addie whispered out as more hot tears streamed down her face, “I am Adeline, and it is 1898.”

William simply stood from the wall and walked over toward the security gate, Addie jolted her foot against the door and William raised his hand in a non-threatening manner.

“I just want to show you this, it’s my cell phone. It’s a video of you at your book signing of ‘A love that will inspire fairytales’. All you have to do is tap the screen,” William said as he waited patiently for Addie to grab his phone. She grabbed it and after staring at the picture of her smiling down at a table she tapped the screen and watched as the picture came to life.

“Hey Katie,” she heard Joanna’s voice say, “Tell all of your fans that your inspiration of the character of Addie was from me,” she said as the phone turned towards a bunch of people standing in a line holding varies copies of her book.

“Now you know I can not tell my fans that lie,” she said teasingly as the crowd burst into a fit of laughter.

“Yeah, that’s right honey, Addie is based on you and her smoking hot leading man Anthony, is based on me,” a man who looked strikingly like William did now but with facial hair said coming to stand beside her before capturing her mouth in a passionate kiss.

“Awe,” sighed the crowd while Joanna booed and walked over to pull the two apart.

“Get a room, you t,—,” the phone said before it went silent again.

“Slide your finger to the right,” he said and Addie did as she was told. Soon the screen was filled with a family portrait of her, Joanna, William, Whitney and the guy from the video. They stood in matching Christmas sweaters and looked… happy.
She could feel the heat of the fire behind them and the sounds of laughter and squeals of delight float around the room. Her heart swelled at the memory and she could even smell apple and sweet potato pie cooling in the kitchen. The young girl in the picture, her daughter, Katherine, sat on her lap smiling big and grasping her little hands onto hers as she snuggled deeper into her. She looked up at the man behind her who was not staring at the camera but staring at her with such love and admiration, she could feel it pouring from the phone. Her thoughts brought her to dreams of a man caressing her shoulders and neck with soft, wet kisses. She could feel the beat of his heart against her ear when they slept naked in each other’s arms, the rush of panic surge through her when they were in the throws of passion and the door to their bedroom squeaked open, followed by the pounding of little feet.

Adeline gasped a cry as her memories flooded back to her. Then her nightmare resurfaces.

She walked into the house, holding Whitney’s hand. A figure on the couch caused her to stop singing whatever song she was singing with her daughter and the man stood. He wielded a two-barrel shotgun and before she could even think to run back outside, he aimed the barrel at her daughter and the sound of thunder boomed around her. A scream erupted from her throat and she ran to her daughter, cradling her now lifeless body in her arms. Blood poured from her and pooled around her knees as she sat shielding her baby from the man. Her husband ran in and saw the gunman, the man pointed the shotgun at him and pulled the trigger, another sound thunder boomed and she jumped. The man was talking to her but she couldn’t hear him. Her ears were ringing, his voice was muffled and she was now sitting in a river of blood donated by her family. Her husband’s name weighed heavy on her tongue and she made herself remember it, she made herself say it.

Her memories kept coming in flashes, their first date, her wedding, the birth of her daughter, the birth of her son, the long nights in bed, the romantic dinners, everything came rushing back as she stared at the man in the picture. She stared at the man who was her husband and forced herself to remember... until finally his name came rushing out of her mouth in a sob.

“Walter, my husband’s name was Walter and my sweet baby girl... she died in my arms,” she cried as she dropped her foot and fell to the floor crying. She looked at her reflection in the now blackened screen and finally saw her face. Her hair was streaked with gray, her eyes, mouth and nose showed the weathered signs of age. Her hand, for the most part, looked the same but her veins were more prominent. Visions of what happened earlier replayed in her mind, the woman she had hit was her sister Gwen. Her sister had pretended to with her, lived this delusion with her and now she was lying somewhere bleeding if not dead and her heart just fell apart again. She was a selfish and horrible person to miss out on her only son’s life and then steal what was left of her sister’s life from her.

So she wailed, she wailed so loudly and so raw that she hadn’t even felt William grab her. Her body shook with pain as William whispered soothing things in her ear.

“Where had I gone? How could I have forgotten about you,” she said looking up at him and placing her hand on his now purple and black face. “I’m so sorry I am a terrible mother,” she sobbed.

“Not to mention a horrible sister as well,” a voice said from in front of them.

They turned to see Joan— Gwen standing with a cloth pressed against the side of her head, her eyes filled with tears, “I am so glad to see you,” she said as Katherine stood and walked over embracing her sister, “Even if it is only for a little while.”

“I called the ambulance, a few minutes ago,” William said, “There will be here in a
while.”

Gwen pulled away from her sister, her eyes pooling with tears, “I’m getting worse, and I’m afraid,” she whispered.

Katherine felt a few more hot tears run down her cheeks as she lifted and hand to her sister’s wrinkled face, “I am so sorry, I’ve lost my husband and daughter, abandoned my son who is now a man, and now I will lose you as well,”

Neither Gwen nor William said a thing. They knew that constantly telling her that it wasn’t her fault wouldn’t do anything but upset her so they just let her cry until the ambulance came.

Gwen and Katherine sat holding hands in a hospital room. The doctors had told William that it would be better if they stayed overnight before they could find a fitting place for them. After the nurses came and checked over each woman and then administered meds and a bath they sat on Gwen’s bed just staring at the white walls and stale furniture. The room although clean and bright lacked any kind of emotion and the cold air surrounding them didn’t help.

Katherine looked at the room around her and although she lived her delusion for a long time a few of the items around her did look familiar although, she couldn’t remember their names or uses.

“I am scared Katie,” Gwen whispered as she tightened her grip on her sister’s hand, “I don’t like this place and I want to go home,”

“I know but were together now and I will take care of you, I will never leave you, just like you’ve never left me.”

A tear fell from Gwen’s eye as she looked at her sister who she hadn’t really seen in years, “I don’t think I can stick around much longer, my mind is fogging up and even right now, I can’t remember how I got here.”

Katherine’s breath hitched as she stared into her sister’s eyes, she missed so much and her sister had made the ultimate sacrifice and now that it was her turn to return the favor she didn’t know what to do.

“I’m afraid Katie, I don’t like this place and I want to go home,” Gwen repeated again as she leaned her head on her sister’s shoulder, “I want to go home Katie, I want to go home,” she heard her sister mumble as she sat staring at the wall. She had truly lost everything and everyone. Her son was a grown man now and her sister sat beside her talking like a scared child and repeating herself as if trying to get the message to her own brain. Katherine looked at the room around her and realized she didn’t want to live like this, an old woman, when yesterday she was 28. She liked being Adeline because she hadn’t experienced any of the earth shattering sadness in her life that Katherine had.

She ran her fingers through her sister’s hair and watched as nurses and patients walked passed the room. She didn’t know this world, this reality, she’d liked her own. She wanted to go back there she wanted to be Adeline again, a young writer hoping and wishing for the prospects of love to swiftly come. Sharing a home with her best friend and housekeeper Joanna, who played silly games and forgot to give her things. She didn’t like looking at the woman beside her as the sister who sacrificed her life for her. William’s face came to mind, his soft delicate and manly face. He didn’t need her, he hadn’t needed her, she had lost her mind and he had survived without her. She brought her hand up to her cheek when she felt something tickling it and realized she was crying. Her only child had grown up without her and she knew that he would give up everything to be with her, just to reconnect with her. She couldn’t let that happen she couldn’t let another life be sacrificed for hers. She had read the letter Gwen wrote to William,
they didn’t believe her mind would stay whole forever and from the sounds of it, she has been having moments a clarity and the she sinks back into the abyss of her mind.

   She looked down at her sister and leaned to kiss the top of her head.
   “No, it won’t end this way,” she said as she grabbed ahold of Gwen’s hand, “I won’t let this end this way.”

   She closed her eyes and focused on a memory. Any memory and tried to remember that day. The memory slowly came to her, the sweet smell of dew in the air, the sunlight warming her face. Laughter rang out behind her and a laugh was belted to her right. The soft morning wind caressed her face and as she drifted further into the memory. Her Husband and daughter’s face filled her mind, and then Gwen’s and then her baby boy.
   “I love you, so much,” she whispered and a single tear slid down her face.

   The next morning, William, came by the hospital with a bouquet of Lilacs, his mother’s favorite and a bouquet of white roses his aunt’s favorite. After getting directions from a nurse he walked into the hospital room, where Gwen and Katherine were eating breakfast.
   “Good morning, how do you guys feel?” he asked walking over toward them.
   “Fine, thank you,” Katherine said looking over at Gwen who continued to eat in silence, “Don’t mind her she’s still a little groggy from the doctor’s visit. We must have been sicker than we thought, for them to bring us all the way out here,” Katherine said looking at William.
   “I’m sorry forgive me, my name is Adeline and this is my best friend Joanna. Your face looks awfully familiar, have we met?”
Warning

The follow story is part one of a 6 story series which will be added as soon as I can finish editing them ^_^ . This story involves teen driving, neglect and drunk driving. This story also ends with a death, so if you don’t like stories please read another one of my stories.
The Girl With The Green Eyes

The only thing I can remember fondly of my childhood was the constant smell of stale beer and vomit. As she lies there passed out, I remove her stinky clothes and vow to myself, silently, that I will never become her. I learned fast that with a mother like this, it was either survive or die. The only meals I was able to eat were the ones my neighbors threw away as garbage.

The girl that lived a trailer down from me always left a burger and fries on the porch. She would watch me from the window getting the food. I would see her staring at me with those rare green eyes, just watching peeking with curiosity.

I started high school with her three years later, and we became the best of friends. We did almost everything together, mostly because I hated going home.

I made it a personal goal not to become my mother; I never drank and never did drugs. My friend and I made a pact that after prom we would drive far away and never look back.

Three months before prom I took a chance and asked the guy I had been crushing on for a year if he wanted to go with me. He seemed a bit hesitant but he said yes and my heart just exploded into a thousand bubbles and floated away. I was on cloud nine and there was no way I was coming down.

My friend and I went to the mall to pick up our dress. She picked out an ivory green dress to match her exotic green eyes and soft red hair. My dress, however, was royal blue to balance my purple eyes and raven black hair. We modeled our dresses and turned the heads of every guy and girl in the store. We pick our favorite dresses and head straight for the cash register.

As we walked out of the store I see my crush wrapped around some THOT. Her short jean skirt was short enough to show that she wasn't wearing any underwear and that she had a bumblebee tattoo under her right butt-cheek. When I approached them, they laughed and he said agreeing to take me to prom was a joke and he couldn't see himself showing up with a piece of trailer trash on his arm. My whole world began to crumble and still to this day I can't remember how I got home.

When I opened the door my mom was lying on the couch clutching a bottle of Jack Daniels in her right hand while a half a bottle of vodka sat on the coffee table in front of the TV. The light from the television illuminated the bottle making it shine a hue of blue as if God himself opened the heavens and touched the bottle personally. I grabbed the bottle and smelled it. Strangely expecting this strong and overwhelming smell but I received nothing. My inner thoughts were clear, I could drink this and forget all my troubles and everything would not be but feel okay. I shook my head, no, knowing that once I did this there was no turning back but the words that my crush said replayed over and over again in the back of my mind and I need it to stop. So I placed the bottle on my lips and swallowed hard. It tasted like a ball of heated nails and as I swallowed it clawed it way to the pit of my stomach. I coughed several times, so much in fact that I knew that in any moment my palm would be covered in blood. I don’t know but I just assumed after my first gulp I would feel better but I felt nothing, so I took a deep breath and put the bottle to my throat and swallowed again. This time, I didn’t top until the darkness came.

When I came to I sitting up in one of my neighbor's lawn chairs, clutching the empty vodka bottle and trying to block the sun from burning my corneas. Vodka and any drink I could get my hands on became my poison of choice to escape the problems of my life. After a few days of not seeing my friend around, I thought, screw it, fuck her, I didn't need some perfect little
nobody making me feel any worse about myself than I already did. What kind of friend was she anyway to not even come check on me? So since she kept her distance I kept mine. The night of our prom I watched as she and her date got into his car and drove off.

I gave a courteous flick of whatever I was drinking at the time in her direction and message of “Enjoy your fucking self,” as the tires screeched down our street and out of my view.

As I sat there nursing another vodka bottle, I was filled with the overwhelming feeling of anger and in that moment, I had had enough of playing the victim.

I stormed into my room climbed into my prom dress and decided to crash the prom and then run over my date. He broke my heart so I was going to break his fucking face. It took me forever to find the building where our prom was being held but it was kind of expected since I could barely make out the blurred street signs. Trying to peer through the glowing yellow and white eyes that followed and chased behind me was difficult too.

By the time I got the prom everyone was on their way out. I had missed it but as I took another swing from my bottle, I realized I was here for a person, not a party. I drove slowly around the parking lot honking and growling at all who blocked my view.

Ten minutes had passed and still hadn’t spotted them but as I was about to give up looking, I finally saw him, with that skank who stole him from me no less. I took another swig of the burning liquid and as they leaned in for a passionate kiss my foot suddenly hit the gas pedal.

I was having an outer body experience; the only sounds I heard were the engine’s acceleration and screams of partygoers. As the car got closer and closer to him I found myself second-guessing and I swerved to avoid him. I managed to avoid him but came into contact with a wall. My head hit the horn and I lay there for at least ten minutes or until the metallic aroma of blood woke me. I grab my face instinctively, causing the horn to stop screaming as well. I can now see the blood but I can’t feel a cut. I look up out the window and against the shattered pixel windshield glass were those familiar green eyes and ivory green dress.

As I slip into the world of unconsciousness a voice unfamiliar to me says she's just like her mother, and the weight of the vodka bottle hit the floor.

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Author’s Note

Hello reader, you have reached the end of my eBook. I hope you enjoyed the stories as much as I loved writing them. Now that you have finished I would love it if you could leave me a review at your favorite retailer and spread the word about my book.

Thank you!

Christina L. Marrow