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FAKULTAS SASTRA
UNIVERSITAS SANATA DHARMA**

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The Burgeon Shade in the Black Hole
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Preface

First of all, our profound gratitude is addressed to Ms. Wedhowerti, who has given the outstanding guidance and of course the splendid time for us to process and make this book of fictions. Our work of writing is published into this book with the title *THE BURGEON SHADE IN THE BLACK HOLE*.

Here, we give our idea and thought about the meaning that covers all the fictions in this book through this title. The Black hole in this title indicates the dark force and area which becomes the symbol to our fictions because it represents that our fictions mostly tell about the dark sides of human and tragedy. We also add burgeon shade element because even though it is dominated by dark, it still has an area that contains the light and value which is about the happiness. This combination of black and light makes a symbol of stability that can be seen in our personal story. We believe that in the most tragic story, we as human can find a little spot that can be a spirit and guidance in our life. We also appreciate any thought, idea and suggestion in order to develop and improve the content of the book. Finally, we hope that this book of fictions can inspire the reader as the medium to reflect the story of life and its value.

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Home

Joshua was a young boy and for romantic stuff, his spirit was so high. Young man was often connected with someone who really struggled, had much loving spirit to enjoy his love journey and yes for sure, he wanted to prove to himself that he was a perfect lover, at least for his girlfriend. His girlfriend name was Gita. Like the other couple, Joshua and Gita had their own story which this love had begun in the past. Their romantic relationship has lasted 3 years, even it still continued until now. For Joshua, love was an important thing, it was not like TV drama story that men talked romantically, kissed their girl and threw away the relationship. In the past, his relationship with her old flame was bad, it was just like playing a role and he was bored. Because of that experience, he wanted to improve his romantic personality. Now with new resolution in his mind, he kept his word that a man should treat his girl nicely, honestly. He put all his effort to seek what was actually the real reason to always stay with his present girlfriend. Now he claimed himself as a romantic lover. He had the answer, at least a symbol to represent the reason to choose Gita as his ultimate choice: to become a life mate. He has found this answer in the past, when his relationship with Gita lasted 1 year. This answer was so important, as important as like Stephen Hawking found the theory of everything, for sure, his theory of everything was Gita.

After Gita became his beloved mortal soul, he had a new ability, love-based ability. He liked to connect something with his girlfriend. He tried to emphasize the beautiful point that his girlfriend had and gave metaphor/comparison with other thing. He claimed that actually it was a good way to keep his mood and feeling toward Gita, at least he always thought about Gita. This way of think has been acquired when he found the reason behind his love feeling. He liked philosophy subject too, even he was not a master, but he tried to find the explanation about his feeling and existence of love.

"What time is it?" Joshua murmured. It was Friday and the class room imprisoned his desire and mind. In this time, that question sentence became his favorite sentence to complain his condition: now he was in class and he wanted to leave as soon as possible to go home. Joshua was a student, English letters student. A nice and well-known Yogyakarta city was his destination to achieve his degree, plus he was a native person from Yogyakarta. Giving attention to the lecturer was difficult action to be done because his present thought was about his home, obviously he loved his home. Since he was kid,

he already loved his home, but now with his way of think to Gita, he loved more his home. His ultimate decision was to go and back from his campus to his home repeatedly rather than finding and staying in boarding house. In this condition, his concentration was sharp, even he could hear his watch mechanism. Now, his casual Seiko watch was his primary object: he repeatedly saw his watch to check the time.

The windy, quiet, not too bright condition in class was distracted and this distraction was like an oasis for Joshua. It was distracted by a beautiful sentence from lecturer: "this is the end for today, I will see all of you next week". For Joshua that sentence was like a holy sentence told by his pastor in church to sign that the sermon was done, so refreshing. Suddenly his boring feeling was faded, it changed into an explosion of feeling: wanting to go to home immediately. After several walks, he arrived at parking lot and for a minute he went home.

After 1 hour and half mini journey, Joshua arrived at his home. One thing that could be seen from Joshua's house scenery was green color, everything was green. There were several, even abundant trees. The log with moss on that, banana tree which was familiar for Indonesian people and bush were like jewelry, decorated his garden. "This is what I like. The fresh air for my mind and lung", Joshua said while breathing and enjoying the fresh air. Before went to inside his home, Joshua mind was directed to his girlfriend and Joshua said "this relationship and home condition, both of them are my precious thing, yeah, can refresh my body and mind".

His home was not so big and it was "villager's home" style. There was no second floor even 14th floor, just a single floor and it had a beautiful terrace which the pillars on them were made by the stone and marble. This home had 2 main and big front mirrors. Everyone from inside can see anything outside the home through these shiny as crystal big mirror glass, everyone even can see the infinite dew on the tip of plants in the morning. For Joshua, these mirrors could see his whole appearance and existence, it was like when he saw his reflection on the mirror. He could see all his body and existence, like these mirrors could understand him perfectly. In Joshua's mind, these mirrors always saw him deeply. For another beautiful aspect, he had a comfort, calm and not too cold bedroom. The wind could easily go in and out through the ventilation, so it was such a perfect place to rest or even kill the time, enjoying leisure time. His bedroom also became his private room. For a special feature in this room, Joshua had a superb and nice mattress. The mattress was so soft, the bedcover feeling was so breezy and cool when Joshua's skin touched it, and he could feel the spring in his mattress which is so bouncy, comfortable. His lovely

mattress was his best friend, he could take a rest for a while from his deadline of task, intrigue from other people and another problem in his society. At least, because of this mattress, because of this medium to be slept, he could take a break for a moment. In his room, Joshua could reflect whole things especially about his life and love. Nobody could know what he did in this room. He had a state of mind that it could be dangerous if "other" people knew his private thing/business because no one could know his exact thought, he bravely said that even his parents actually didn't know exactly what was inside his mind. Kitchen was an important element and place that must be constructed in home and for sure, Joshua also had a kitchen. Kitchen was a sensitive place for Joshua. Emphasizing the symbol of women, kitchen had a special handling from Joshua, he was a lover, women were so important for Joshua and he always gave attention to the trifles, things that perhaps were not important for majority people outside there, but this was a symbol for women and Joshua liked that. The ordering of kitchen stuff was so neat, even he could know exactly where the spot for storing salt and sugar. There was no leftover food, no rotten fruit and it was totally clear, not a messy kitchen like in detective movie scene that could be the evidence of killing action. "This home has characters, even its own appearance and those characters are so familiar for me," Joshua said.

One thing that was always done by Joshua after he arrived at his home was cleaning the home. One of his favorite act was sweeping the floor. Wall clock and the position of the sun showed that now it was at the middle of afternoon, with the windy and dusty condition, it was a suitable time for Joshua to clean his home. After coming home and washing his feet and hands, he took the broom. "This tile should be shiny" Joshua said while he made a smile. Affected by the spirit of love, what he did in home represented his way of think about love. While cleaning the floor, Joshua thought that he was not only sweeping the floor, but also cleaning his mind and love, trying to maintain the relationship with Gita. After sweeping, he touched, felt and stroked the tiles, it was not because Joshua had abnormal/odd sexual preference, but he just admired those tiles like he admired Gita's skin. For a moment, he glimpsed to the condition of tiles which were now clean, looked shiny.

All things were now perfect, this home condition even was better, thanks for Joshua's hands and act. "I really appreciate this cleanliness and it should be celebrated, just for this day in a week, I feel so excited, I should invite my special guest to enjoy this scenery of this home interior," Joshua murmured. He grabbed his smartphone quickly, texted Gita to ask her to go to his home. The good news was Gita approved that invitation and for a second, he thought that perhaps Gita didn't consider how long the distance from her home until

Joshua's home, but Joshua took this condition for granted, "it should be okay for Gita". For men outside there, Joshua could be assumed as little bit cruel young man because he let his girlfriend to come to his home alone, it was such unmanly action for other people, but Joshua thought his girlfriend should enjoy the short journey from Yogyakarta to his home. "God, I hope Gita will be fine. I hope she enjoys the scenery and the breeze of wind along the road, amen". All he could do just praying, at least Joshua tried to "rescue" Gita spiritually, through his pray to God, he just hoped that Gita will be fine and could touch this home happily.

She took approximately one and half hour and arrived at Joshua's home. From the front house mirror, Joshua's eyes could see this beautiful girl, parking her automatic motorcycle.

"Finally you can arrive in here, but most of all, you have a safe ride, isn't it?"

"Obviously, you can see that your girl is fine, let me say, I am just a little bit tired because of this ride."

"Tired? I think your spirit today is splendid."

"My feeling is fine dear, but it is different with this body."

"You should take a nap, I will play your hair while you taking a nap, will you like it?"

"Completely."

After a little conversation, both of them entered the home. For Joshua, it was not an usual occasion to ask his girl to go to his home. After serving an iced lemon tea to his special guest, with his romantic look of eyes saw directly to her girl's eyes, he began to tell the reason why he asked her to go here. So, he asked Gita to postpone her nap time to listen to him carefully, passionately.

"Do you know that this is a special occasion? I would like to say something, I think this is a romantic approach or something, let we see."

"What is that? Is it your problem in Campus? Your morphology issue? Or another philosophical thing?"

"This is about my way of think to this relationship. The way I look this love, look into you. Actually I found this answer when our relationship age was 1 year but I want to tell to you about it now."

"Do you want to tease me Josh? I have enough resistance to defend myself from your words," said Gita.

“Can I tease you with a confession that actually my love grows bigger time by time? At least, for this last months, I have my answer, my basic explanation and mind about our love.”

“I love the way you say it,” Gita answered quickly.

“Git, do you know that you are my home? This is what I think about you. For a cool reason, it is like in my prose class about symbolism that you symbolize this home, my home”

“This home always reminds me about your existence, your physical appearance and.... My love to you,” Joshua added.

With mixed expression, curious and impressed, Gita felt that words. She totally didn't know about what was the meaning behind Joshua's words, but she could feel even sense that those were the most beautiful sentences that she wanted to hear right now.

“Do you know that women are special? Of course I don't want to make a generalization to you with other girl, but since you are a woman, you should know the way I look my girl right now.”

“Can I guess? Nope. For romantic reason, you should tell me about that,” said Gita

“It is all about the relation between this home and you. Let me explain it like a teacher explains about history, systematically. First, this home's features are same like you. No, it doesn't mean that your shape of body is big like my home main mirrors size. You are similar with my mirror. Your eyes, those assets are sharp and clear, your eyes can see my existence even my personality. All this body and aspects, you can see it deeply because you understand me. That understanding comes from your sight, more than a sight, it is a lovely attention from you that you can understand me very well after this 3 years.” Before Joshua continues his word, he see Gita's eyes which are shiny.

“Second, it is about my mattress, of course my mattress is just an object, but the feeling from it, the meaning of that thing is like you. The different is you are not an object, not a thing. You are an organism who gives a place for me to take a break, a meaningful rest to my feeling. Yes, this mattress is a kind of a nice choice for me to rest, this softness and comfortable, rested pleasure are the same like the feeling that I can obtain from you. Git, you are more than a beautiful object, specifically you are pier in dawn, a place for sailor to end his journey and take a rest, even if the pier is not comfortable enough, it can be like five star hotel for me. Yes, this sailor is me, not fully like Jack Sparrow I guess. I can dock my ship which is full of future hope and tie it in pier. Third, there is a

reason why we always learn in this relationship, because we need to unite our mind, choosing which values are better for our future. For me, it is like sweeping, cleaning the asset from the dirt. Learning make our relationship clean, we can eliminate all problems. Even for extreme case, not extreme actually, those tiles, as beautiful as your case, errr.... I mean skin," Joshua added.

"Back to symbol, perhaps I fall in love with symbol in prose, but I also love you, I love both of all. Gita, I know your feeling and mood are good after this years you are with me. I am glad that I can deliver my happiness to you. You know, I love cleanliness and that is the factor that I keep for my kitchen, my kitchen is always clean. Have you read about story about the relation between kitchen and women? I love this connection. Even in this era, kitchen can be a sensitive, meaningful place for women and I know you like cooking and your kitchen. For additional information, I keep this kitchen clean to remember you, you are like a bright and clean kitchen condition, your mood is so well arranged and good, like those kitchen stuff. For me, if you are in kitchen, you will cook me something with your hands and heart."

After that long explanation, without any word, Gita saw Joshua, now even deeper. Joshua continued to talk, "Women are special for men. If vegetables are given to them, women make it into food, if men give sperm, women give baby: a fascinating present from a birth, if we as men give women a building, women will make it a home for men to live, enjoy a family life and spend their laugh and time until die". Passionately, Joshua added: "Whatever I do with this home, whatever action that I do in this home, my way of think to this home, I always think about you. These actions and mind have a reason. I am mad because I always think about you even I compare you with this home, but this madness drives me to a conclusion, most beautiful conclusion that I ever made about a journey of love: I want to leave with my own home, the place that I want to spend my life, spend my money and enjoy our meal. You are my last place, my destination of love, for sure, you are my home."

With a little smile on her face and a big happiness, Gita replied, "It is not a proposal right?, I just want to tell you that I love you so much and now with the way you look at me right now, it makes me a complete woman: A woman who knows the reason why she is special."

"I will propose you if I already have money. Ring and catering for marriage also need to be bought with money but for now, that's all that I want to tell," said Joshua.

"I prefer to choose enjoying every meter of journey to go back to home rather than find and stay in boarding house. Every meter has its own scenery, right? After I see those sceneries, I can meet and find my home, find you

through that beautiful journey. That's why I love to go back to home repeatedly. There, you wait me," Joshua added.

There was no kiss, just a stared. They looked each of their eyes deeply, tried to communicate and tell that their way of think now was visible. In this time, they didn't need to prove her love physically. No kiss, no romantic scenes after all of that intense conversation because now all were already romantic, they knew that the state of mind about home told them everything.

LAREDAD

A woman entered a not really big room with dull light. Strange smell but strong dominated the air especially when the door was just opened. There was nothing lay there but single bed in messy bed sheet covers it. A man followed her into the room. Silence. If the movement when the zippers were opened and unbuttoning could be heard, it was the sound effect until screaming and moaning turned up.

#

I hated this place, but mom always insisted me to go with her. She said I had to study here. Of course I couldn't because here was almost dark and I hated darkness. When it was almost dark, I felt that I could see monsters, and those were so various. Big, tall, small, mustache, distended stomach, bleary-eyed, wrinkly, black feather, pale, all that I cold remember. They stole my mom, came to the room every night and I only could see mom again after coming back from school. It came up to my mind that those monsters hurt mom, but she did not mind it.

One day I said that I wanted a big brown teddy bear and a box of crayons, she promised to buy it when I turned six. She said those monsters would help her to bring my teddy and she would gave a box of crayons with the most colors I ever knew. Sometimes, I felt envy when mom preferred to sleep with monsters rather than with me. She said monsters produced happiness tickets that could be changed by food, clothes, jewellery, and more fine stuffs and things, while I just produced sorrow and sadness.

Our house was quite small, as small as our family members. Grandma lived with us, grandpa died when I was a baby and I did not know where dad was. There was no clue whether he was still alive or not. Mom always did not want to talk about it. Even grandma was always mute. But I hoped dad was not one of the monsters, I hoped he was the otherwise, because mom always loved what I hated.

One little thing about dad was revealed when I was very angry and scribbling on the wall with color pencils, caused mom infuriated so that she seized my pencil case and said, "You're like your father, painting for nothing!"

My teddy finally arrived this evening, it was not as big as I imagined every time and I really disappointed. It was only as tall as my arm, so I cried a lot that time. Instead, mom showed me her new underwear sets and admired as those

were beautiful, as the colors were brighter than our lamps. Mom had an obsession to collect the underwear sets. She often complained about underwear that ripped or something. At the end she embraced me, kissed me, told me that next years the teddy would grow over my height. She also gave many kind of pastry that made me feel better even if I had to twitch the moldy side before eating it. Had to find more monsters she said. And it became my... I was not sure how many times that I could remember, she slept beside me, embraced me from my back.

#

It was cloudy, the rain had just stopped. A little girl was running and putting her hand covered her eyes at the same time. Her name was Lara. She might be fall, but she kept running, then stumbling a wet big stone. Shocked, put her hand down, but kept running. As had been discovered her special place, she stopped in front of the veranda of a house, sat and released her shoelaces reluctantly. While her eyes were wet and sobbed, an old woman came close to her.

Under the woman's arm, Lara told that her friends mocked her, said something bad about her mother and her unknown father. Even her close friends made a distance from her. Every sentence she made was ended with sob. That was very bad for a little girl who always came home cheerfully, now came with her wet eyes. The woman rubbed the girl's head softly, replied what she complained about that she did not have to think too much. The woman responded calmly that made Lara felt better, but deep inside this girl's mind, she promised to herself that one day she would find her father, so she would never be mocked again.

Few years later, it was a gloomy day. There were not so many people around them. One by one was leaving that place. It was only few people and Lara who stood beside an older woman but still looked young, her mother. They wore all black from top to toe. Sad faces were looking at the grave, the new one. It would be the farewell for both Lara and her mother to the lying body beneath the earth.

The death of her grandma made her sure to leave this city, because she had lost the one who was care about her. She had planned to leave and migrate to London as soon as possible. Her desire to pursue her dream was bigger as she wanted to forget the past. Something that made surfeited was because everyday Lara and her mother always quarrel whether it was about her passion in art, her mom who would never quit from her job struggling with monsters, or her effort to ferret out the truth about her dad. More than that, she

looked that there would be a brighter future in Brunel, one of the towns in London after she definitely received scholarship from one of the universities there.

“It’s okay to go anywhere, but not to London! It’s where your father was. You both are leaving and will never come back again,” Her mother tried to hold back the tears.

Then it was a long silence, with thoughts on their own minds.

No matter what happened, Lara would still go even though it meant that she would start everything from the beginning. She asked her friend, Dan, to help her prepare the things that would be needed there. Dan had become her close friend since they were not careful to play around shirtless. And two years ago, he moved to work at one of the companies in Uxbridge, a town near Brunel, then he offered Lara to apply for a scholarship in Brunel University that had one of the best majors in arts, as it was her passion.

#

When she got in Heathrow Airport London, Dan was waiting for her there. She had prepared everything that might be questioned by the immigration officer. Dan said that she must have convinced face and answered the question steadily, so the officer would let her go. Lara had prepared the answers of the reason why she moved, how much money did she have, and so on. Surprisingly, the immigration officer just made sure if it was her first time went to London, she nodded and the immigration officer just said to her to enjoy her day. After being allowed to go, Lara and Dan went to London Underground Station. It was only about 50 minutes to get to Uxbridge. It was such a nice place, much more tranquil than her previous place. Nothing special there, but it was quite enough for her.

Dan had found a house near campus to be rent by three people for Lara. The other two had already occupied by the students also from Brunel University. While Dan lived only 2.5 miles from Lara’s place, so they often visited each other place and Dan sometimes accompanied Lara when she needed to buy something that she did not know where to buy or just explored the city by train.

One and half months before starting campus life, Lara had accustomed to the situation and condition there. When it was a week before she officially became a student, she began to feel uneasy and twitchy. *If it will be hard for me?* She asked to herself. And somehow she wanted to go to the university as soon as possible, meet some new friends who had not know about her past. Or she might make different stories about things in her past in case her friends

would ask about it. Who would know the truth? Everything could be told not based on reality if there were replacement stories.

In campus, Lara met someone who impressed her. He was her lecturer, Ed. He was around 40 and still charming, in Lara's point of view. His chiseled face was comfortable to be looked for a long time. She felt his face reminded her of someone she was not sure who it was and it made her curious every time she looked at his face. Lara always compared his hair with the color of fallen oak leaves. It was not exactly that same, but because Lara really liked autumn, so she just wanted to make it same.

Day by day Lara became closer to Ed. He was so indulgent, fatherly yet had young spirit inside him. Ed was pleased to know Lara, thought that she was lovely, ambitious, and smart girl, then made her his assistant. Sometimes, Ed engaged Lara in art exhibition and discussed about painting. He also had his own gallery beside his house. Lara thought it was so great to have some works from around the world and even his own works to be placed at a building he owned.

One day Lara got dinner invitation from Ed himself at his house in London along with some other students. She was so happy and presumed it was an honor. Ed also offered to pick Lara up, even though Lara rejected that offer, because she did not want to charge him over again by saying that she would go by herself, he still insisted to pick her up. His house was dominantly broken white. Lara thought that Ed had a wife or at least children because his house was big enough to be lived alone. After that, Ed told that he was married once and had a son in Lara's age, but he lost his family due to plane crash several years ago. But Lara did not see any picture of his wife and son. Lara braced herself. *Maybe those are placed privately in his room only.*

That was a great dinner, Ed had prepared everything well, even cooked all food by himself and it was savory. They were drinking some glasses of whiskey and felt drunk. All other students had already gone home. Ed offered Lara to stay that night because it was too late and he was not sure can drive her home with his head whirled. Lara had no choice, she followed him into guess room. Ed also provide her his shirt in case she wanted to change her dress because it would not be comfortable to sleep in dress.

When Ed was about to exit the room, Lara grabbed his hand as if to prevent him to go further. Her head dropped onto his stocky shoulder, then he rubbed her hair, made sure that she was okay. There was no respond. He thought Lara might fall asleep, so he tried to lifted and laid her on the bed. On his arms, Lara opened her eyes slowly, put her hands around his neck, kissed his suddenly. Ed

who was stand still for a moment, kissed her back, flung her on the bed, denuded her and her did the same to him.

#

Their relationship began more and more closer than Ed asked Lara to move in his house, so she had to not pay for rent. But, there was a gap between her relationship with Dan, they were rarely communicate each other since he knew that Lara had unusual relationship with her lecturer. He might feel jealous that Lara was not his anymore.

On the other side, Lara also had quite close relationship with Ben, Dan's friend, who worked in same company with Dan. He was gentle, calm, and taciturn. His yellowish-brown hair reminded her about the color of oak leaves in autumn. They went to the cinema and had dinner together for several times. But she was not sure yet, whether it was dating or just wasting their times together. The fact was Ed did not know about her relationship with Ben and vice versa. And in some case when Lara had an appointment too with Ed, she would not approve Ben's invitation using fake alibi but seemed natural as much as possible in order not to arouse suspicion. Similarly when Ben made an appointment first. So, it was basically depended on who made the appointment earlier than another, but Lara would be more grateful when the appointments were not at the same time. She was interested with both of them, but she felt more comfortable with Ed, but she also could not leave Ben.

One afternoon, letter from Lara's hometown surprised her. It was her mother's handwriting, addressed to Brunel. Lara opened the seal carefully. Why her mom had to sent her a letter? The letter was not too long, told about her mother recent condition that she might have cervical cancer, also she gave her one clue about her father. He might become a great artist in London. *Find him! Find Edward!*

#

That evening, Lara was sitting next to Ben. They sat facing the lake. They rarely made conversation, mostly quiet and stared straight ahead.

"What major did you take?" Ben broke the silent.

"How many times I've told you, Ben," Lara replied impatiently.

"Arts, right? I'm just.. remembering something." Lara who was looking down to her legs, turned her head to Ben.

"I don't want to remember it anyway, because it makes me stupid, but maybe I can share with you," He continued. Lara raised her eyebrows, ready to hear.

Ben told that he and his father had not regarded each other since he gave up of art and left what his father wanted he to be. He thought that art was not his passion, so he decided to move out and lived independently. He also said that his father could not move on from his first love. His mother found a picture of a woman in his father's pocket and his father confirmed that he was still thinking about that woman.

"Can you guess who is that guy?" Asked Ben, Lara shook her head.

"Mr. Grey," He said calmly but in aversion tone. Lara was surprised, but not really shocked. She realized something that she was not realizing before. Their hair, their shady green eyes, their structure of faces. Their images were now compared in her thought.

"Ed Grey is one of your lectures, right?" His remarks suddenly awakened her from her daydream. "Can't believe that he has already had a son same in your age, yeah?" He added.

#

At the end of the year, Uxbridge was filled by snow. It was such a nice view to see people did snowboarding in a small town in west London. Lara who was never tried snowboarding before, found herself very happy when Ed asked her to try it. Falling for several times, was not make her tired to try, instead she became more excited. Occasionally they stopped for a break. While brewing hot chocolate and seeing view round the hills, they talked about anything from trifling to serious one. Lara braced up herself telling about her past, start from how was her condition without a father, what was her mother do for live, how was her feeling when her friends mocked that her mother was a prostitute and she was unexpected child, and her mother recent condition which made her did not know what to do. Ed felt sorry to hear her stories then hugged her.

Lara reached into her bag, wanted to show the letter from her mother. After a while, she realized something. *Find him! Find Edward!* Those last sentences unmoved from her head that made her freeze for a moment then squeezed the letter.

#

A woman entered a sizable room with dull light. Smell of wood furniture not too strong but could be smelled especially when the door was just opened.

There was a complete set of bedroom furniture such as bed, wardrobes, dressers, nightstands, vanity, and mirrors. A man follows her into the room. Silence. If the movement when the zippers were opened and unbuttoning could be heard, it was the sound effect until screaming and moaning turned up.

The Struggle of Being Multi-Racial

Winter 2020, Sendai, Miyagi Prefecture, Japan.

The ceiling was white and light blue curtain surrounded me. Medical equipments were surrounding me. I was laying on a hospital bed, but what happened to me? Why are pain felt all over my body?

“Hey, are you awake?” A voice behind the curtain on my right side said. “I heard your sigh, I’ve been waiting to talk to you, oh I feel so lonely.” He added.

It was a voice of a young boy maybe around 13 or 14 years old.

“Hey, yeah I’m awake.” I answered him

“You’ve been unconscious for several days, how do you feel? What’s your name?” the boy said.

“Several days? I can’t remember why I was brought here. All I remember was seeing my friends celebrating New Years Eve and all the sudden I woke up here. I feel pain everywhere, I answered him.

“I know what happened to you, I hear the doctor and the nurse’s conversation every day. You’re going to be fine, I was waiting for the day I could talk to you! but as soon as you get well, you’re going to leave and I’ll feel lonely again. I’ve stayed here almost my whole life, I’m Kenji, I’m 14, an orphan, Higashi Nihon Daishinsai (Great East Japan Earthquake, Tohoku, 11 March 2011) took my whole family. Introduce yourself to me!” He talked with a cheerful voice, he was a spirited boy, but I just smiled.

“Oh I see. You still feel languid, don’t you? It’s alright, take your time, I’ll always be here to talk to you. You see, my only entertainment here is only seeing the park outside this window. It’s interesting and fun seeing kids around my age or even younger children playing at the park. They come to the park with their parents, friends and sometimes their family. I also see people walk their dogs every morning and afternoon. They’re really cute. I just feel relieved seeing the great affection in the park. There is also a beautiful lake in the middle of the park combined with the green scenery, it’s just so beautiful.” Kenji explained in detailed explanation.

“It’s good to know you, you’re such a spirited boy, Kenji.” I said briefly, I wanted to talk since I had never talked to anyone much. But I had no power.

“Nice to know you too, I know a part of your story from the doctor and the nurse’s conversation, but I’m not sure whether what they said was true or not. What’s your name? Though I’m younger than you, I could be your good friend!” He said, again with his spirited intonation. I wondered why he was at the hospital, he sounded fine. I felt really happy because it was the first I had a friend to talk to.

“My name is Dheera.” I smiled, it was my first time to smile sincerely after a long time and then I slept again.

My name is Dheera. It is not a Japanese name, because I was born multi-racial. Otousan was a real Japanese man, he was one of the superior of the Nuclear Power Plant. As one of the superiors, most of the time he worked at home, therefore he had plenty of time spent with me and Okaasan. Otousan often went on a business trip for few days and in one of his business trip, he met Okaasan.

Okaasan was a really beautiful Indian Woman. Okaasan was a really kind and sincere-hearted woman she was also the greatest mother to me and the greatest wife to Otousan. They met in India, when Otousan had a business trip, Otousan was impressed since the first time he met Okaasan, she was a beautiful Indian tour guide who was able to speak Japanese fluently. They had no problem with communication. Several years passed and Otousan finally proposed Okaasan, and so, they married.

They had a hard time dealing with both sides of family, but they went through it well. Okaasan’s family finally gave Otousan the permission to take Okaasan to Japan. Their love was pure, they did not differentiate race, ethnic group and culture. Instead, they accepted the differences and tried to blend it together.

A year after their marriage, I was born, I was energetic and spirited average sized baby. Otousan gave Okaasan the opportunity to name me, therefore, Okaasan named me Dheera. In India, Dheera meant courageous. Dheera was the other name of Lord Hanuman, a Monkey God who represented strength, intellect and sincere devotion. Lord Hanuman was worshiped to attain mental peace, knowledge, strength and power. Otousan agreed.

My physical appearance was a mixture of my parent’s. I had Otousan’s slanted eyes, but also followed by Okaasan’s beautiful eyelids and thick eyebrows like. I had Okaasan’s pointed nose, but my face was shaped round, like Otousan’s. My hair was straight like Otousan’s hair, but it was thick like

Okaasan's hair. Last but not least, I had a skin tone between my parents's, it was not as fair as Otousan's but it was not as dark as Okaasan's as well.

Some people thought it was interesting, but believe me, born as a multi-racial kid growing in this country was a great big challenge. I had no problem with my family, they accepted my mixed physical appearance and loved me so much. I felt like I was the happiest and most loved kid in the universe, Okaasan and Otousan took really good care of me and taught me many things. Everything was great until Higashi Nihon Daishinsai followed by Tsunami hit our city. I lost both of them. I lost my cheerful and happy life. I became an orphan.

11 March 2011 was the scariest day of my life. I was 7 years old that time and was ready to attend primary school the next month, on April. 15:00pm was my favorite time of the day, because it was snack time and Okaasan always served me and Otousan delicious snacks. That day, everything went fine as usual I was waiting for snack time while I played with my lego in the living room. Otousan read books in the living room, and Okaasan baked cookies at the kitchen, I remembered that sweet smell of Okaasan's cookies.

Several minutes passed and we felt a small shake. It was a small earthquake. Several minutes passed and again, the ground shook, it was not a normal shake, it was shaking really bad, the frames on the walls, the vase, and all the other furniture were not on their actual position anymore. Otousan quickly grabbed me and went to the kitchen, he also quickly grabbed Okaasan and protected us under the dining table. The ground shook hard and the ceilings started to fall off, Okaasan hugged me and said that I was a courageous boy and a courageous boy doesn't cry, so I held my tears.

I was afraid, my body was trembled badly, Otousan and Okaasan held me really tight. The earthquake shook harder and harder every second, then suddenly, the automatic Tsunami warning alarm rang. Otousan then went out from the table, took the life vests, and he put it on for me and Okaasan. He hugged us really tight, that was the last time I felt the warmth of their hugs.

When I woke up, I was at the refuge with all the other victims. I found out that Otousan and Okaasan were not saved from the disaster. My life changed that second.

I enjoyed my kindergarten year, nobody rejected me and I blended in with all the other kids. The case became different when I entered my new home for the first time, the orphanage. I was different. Everybody stared and teased me. They teased about my skin color and my physical appearance. Even the caretakers of the orphanage treated me in a differently, I was not

loved and cared like the other kids. I was commanded to do the chores and they would hit me or dismissed my meals if they were dissatisfied with my work. The other kids never talked to me, in fact, I was invisible to them. Life became difficult.

Hard times at the orphanage passed by, it was April when primary school started, I felt delighted because I thought school life would be much better if I attended school. I remembered the fun times I had in kindergarten; I wished that it would be repeated

However, I was wrong. I was also rejected by everyone. They called my names, teased my physical appearance, insulted my skin color and they said that nobody loved me, even my parents, that is why they left me alone. Some teachers were good to me, but most of them didn't really care even though they knew other kids treated me bad. Not only kids from my class, but also seniors bullied me. School life was as difficult as my life in the orphanage. Even when I became the senior in primary school, my juniors would bully me. Nobody accepted me, I had no friend, no body to talk to.

Okaasan always told me to not to cry because I was named after a courageous Lord, so I never cried, I never gave up, I always tried to face my day toughly, even though it was difficult being rejected everywhere. 6 years of primary school went roughly. I couldn't imagine how bad secondary school would be. I wanted to quit school. The condition at the orphanage also got worse, the older I grew, the more chores the caretakers commanded me to do. I really wished to get adopted like the other kids. But I understood that nobody would want me.

Secondary school also went bad, I was no one to everyone, I had no friends not even one, none of them accepted me. Thankfully my grades were great since primary school, therefore the teachers had no excuses to give me punishments, like what they do to the naughty kids. I wanted to join clubs, but again, none of them accepted me as their member.

On my secondary school graduation day, nobody came to congratulate me. No flowers, no photos, no nothing. I passed with the highest score, but the day before graduation, the headmaster approached me and said that he would like to give the honor to the kid with the second highest score because she was more active in all school activities and well known by all the students as well as teachers. It didn't matter, I didn't want to go up the main stage and gave the speech anyways.

With a satisfying score, I thought I would be able to get a scholarship to attend an international high school, where many foreign or even multi-racial

students would attend. I thought I would be able to have friends in that school, so I tried to apply. The school needed few requirements, one of them was an approval letter from the board of the orphanage, because I had no parents. I talked to the board of the orphanage, but he did not believe that I achieved the best score in secondary school, so he called my secondary school. Unfortunately, the data had been updated, therefore on the data, the girl with the second highest score was considered as the student who passed with the highest score. I showed my score transcript, but he did not believe it as well.

It drove him angry because he thought that I lied to him, he hit me, kicked me and threw things at me. That moment I thought that I would give up with my life, but I remembered Otousan and Okaasan. I didn't give up with my life.

Finally, I attended the high school just down the street. Not a well known one, but it was okay for me as long as I could gain knowledge. High school was pretty much the same, I was a loner, I did everything by myself, I was also rejected by the school clubs and got beaten up a lot of times by the seniors because they just felt superior, but nobody cared. The caretakers at the orphanage didn't care as well, even though I had bruises, wounds and blood all over my clothes, I still had to do the chores.

I tried to find a job so I could rent my own flat, I couldn't bare the orphanage anymore, but none of them wanted to hire me. They didn't believe me because of my wounds, bruises as well as my clothes. I had never got new clothes, the clothes I wore everyday were clothes from the donators, the caretaker would only give me old and dull clothes. Unlike the other kids, in some occasion, the caretakers would bring the kids to the clothe store and let them chose new clothes, but that never happened to me.

I didn't enjoy high school as much as the other kids, who felt how wonderful it was to fall in love, who enjoyed the glamorous night life and who enjoyed hanging out with friends. I felt none of them.

It was New Years Eve and soon it would be 2020 which means I that I was going to face the final examination in 4 months. New Years Eve had never been special to me, there were no special essence of it. The orphanage held a feast and everyone had fun, but I was never invited to the feast. That night, one of the caretakers came to my room, I was relieved, I thought, I was invited to the feast. Yet, I was wrong, she came and ordered me to go out to get some diesel fuel for the room heater. I felt disappointed, it was already dark and really cold outside. It was snowing badly. Where would I find a diesel fuel? It was already late and everybody would be celebrating the New Years Eve, no store would be opened, but she forced me to go out, so I did.

It was freezing cold, the caretaker only gave me one sweater and a scarf. No socks, no boots, no gloves and no winter hat. I watched from the window how all the kids and the care takers, as well as well as the board of the orphanage enjoyed the feast, I started walking, the street was dark and empty. Only the street lights lit up very dim in the middle of the snowstorm. All the sudden, I felt like my body was freezing, I couldn't feel my hands, my nerves, my breath. I couldn't feel anything and everything became dark.

The next day, I felt much better, the doctor explained about my condition, I suffered Hypothermia and was unconscious for several days. A snowplow driver found me laying down stiff on the sidewalk and brought me to the hospital. The hospital could not contact anybody because I had no identity card or anything.

"Good morning Dheera! How do you feel today?" Asked Kenji

"Hey good morning Kenji, how do you know that I am awake?"

"I could feel it Dheera, finally I could talk to you!"

"I'm sorry about yesterday, I didn't feel good yet, but I'm really happy to finally have a friend to talk to, I've never had any friend before."

"What do you mean? You've never had any friends before?" He asked.

So I explained briefly about my family and my life. We both lost our family during the Higashi Nihon Daishinsai disaster, therefore we prayed for them together that moment.

"Dheera, I like your name its cool, and I think you're such a strong and huge-hearted person, you have to be thankful for everything you have, because no one else has the opportunity to be you. You are you and you should be proud of yourself and all your achievements Dheera, I understand you've been through hard times, but you have to be able to prove to everyone that you have the right to be accepted in the society." Kenji said wisely. It really touched my heart and I started to sob.

"Dheera, I understand everything has been hard for you, it's alright to sob, but remember, your life must go on, you are much much much more luckier than me. You have the final examination coming up in several months, have you decided which university you want to attend and what major you want to take?" He asked kindly. Kenji is much younger than me but he seems to be much wiser than me.

"I'm aiming for a full scholarship in America or Europe, and my dream is to achieve a double degree university title majoring Business and Engineering. I want to be as great as Otousan, Kenji." I answered, still with a sobbing voice.

"Then go on! It's time to leave your nest and fly high to chase your dreams Dheera! After you leave this hospital, you must be the new Dheera with full of spirit and confidence alright! Go back to the orphanage and show the doctor's receipt, they have no reason to beat you up or anything. Just keep doing the chores as they want and prove them that you are going to be a great person, one day; they are going to regret what they've done to you. For sure." Kenji said again wisely.

"Thank you for supporting me Kenji, I'll always remember what you said to me, you're such a wise boy. Yesterday, you mentioned about being in this hospital almost your whole life? What happened to you?" I asked. Kenji hasn't told about his condition yet.

"My condition is fine Dheera, Look! Many people are starting to play at the park, it's just beautiful for me." Kenji said with his spirited voice and he explained every detail he saw outside the window. His explanation made me imagine how beautiful the park was.

Kenji didn't want to talk about his condition, but tried to understand him, maybe he didn't want to talk about it yet. We continued talking about many things until midnight.

"Sleep tight Dheera, remember, you have to accept everything sincerely, you are you and no one else is like you so always be proud of yourself! Good night!"

"Once again, thanks for supporting and motivating me Kenji, you mean a lot to me, can't wait to talk to you again tomorrow! I think I'll be much better tomorrow, so could I meet you and sit next to you?"

"I don't think that is necessary Dheera, I'm afraid that you will get disappointed, but I promise that you can come to my block on the day you're leaving this hospital!"

"Well, okay then, good night Kenji."

The next morning when I woke up, the doctor was busy at Kenji's block, it didn't look normal, something must have happened to Kenji. The doctor then opened the curtain, the boy was gone, there was no sign of Kenji.

"Doctor, where is Kenji?"

“He's gone Dheera, here's a note for you, from Kenji. He was holding this note this morning.”

What the doctor said just hit me really hard, Kenji was gone. My only friend. I started to sob again. I took the note from the doctor, but before unfolding the paper. I said to the doctor, “Doctor, could you please move me to Kenji's bed?”

“Sure, yesterday you talked a lot with Kenji, he sounded really happy, I am sure, he left peacefully.” And the doctor moved me to Kenji's bed. I wanted to see how beautiful the park Kenji described. I peeked outside the window, all I saw was the busy city of Sendai, no park at all. I unfold the note, the note was not written in alphabet, it was written in dots. The doctor saw my expression.

“Are you confused? Kenji was a really bright and spirited boy, he had great imaginations. The park he described to you was just his imagination. Kenji was born blind and was also born with leukemia. He was only 3 years old when the disaster happened he lost all his family, and since that day, I volunteered to take care of him here at this hospital. Unfortunately, his condition was getting worse day by day, I've tried my best, but there is no cure for leukemia, and today, he went back to his family peacefully. Let me read the note for you.”

“Dheera, you are you and no one else is like you. Fly high. I'll always support you.”

Kenji was my little angle who made me realize everything about life. I closed my eyes, and from deep inside my heart I said, “Thank you for being my little angle Kenji, I will fly high.”

Magnificent Thorns

That was July and the world suddenly smelled of roses in the moment I opened the large window in my room. The sunlight shone like powdered gold over the dewy grass in my backyard. Oh, this fragrance—dear sweet red roses of mine. Yeah, I imagined that the people close to me would bury me in fresh red rose petals on the time when I passed away. It must be very exquisite of me lying on a coffin which was fully piled with red rose petals. Red roses infinitely represented both the bitterness and sweetness of my life.

One cloudy morning before my mother went to work; I saw her watering the red roses she had planted in our backyard. Oh, when I saw my mother, I seemed to see life. I could feel its pulses by staring at the eyes of a compassionate and affectionate mother like her. I stared at her once again when she put down her water pot on a table made of wood in our backyard. She looked very skinnier on her red loose shirt that morning. Red always meant courage for her; there was no doubt to take a final decision just like the way she dropped the blood of the animals she slaughtered at work. Ah, by the way, my mother worked as a butcher in a rich widow's butcher shop called Mrs. Pitt. My mother usually arrived at the butcher shop before eight in the morning and came back home before four in the afternoon. Consequently, she left me with my father who was unemployed and useless just exactly like a bundle of garbage alone.

Yes, my father was like a bundle of garbage. I wondered why my mother had the willingness to marry that old rat, but my mother was always sure to decide whatsoever she wanted. From this point, I knew then that my father, no matter how he was like, was the one my mother ever wanted.

It was one o'clock after my school was all over—I studied in the third grade of Hawk Ridge Elementary School. I walked alone through the sidewalk with one leafy tree stood every five meters on the left side of it. I walked faster—all I thought was only the baked potato my mother had made me. In the moment I opened the dusty door, I could hear her voice indistinctly. As I got into the kitchen, her voice was getting louder and clearer—uh, that trembling and doubtful voice. Her breath was short; she was a bit groaning. It sounded odd, but I also wondered what I was actually hearing. Yeah, well, but no..., it couldn't be true, for my mother did never have that kind of voice—her voice was always convincing. I walked silently to hide under the table outside the kitchen where I could take a peep by seeing the big mirror across the place

where I hid. It made an obtuse angle that it was approximately 112° of the obtuse and 248° of the reflex angle. I saw Mrs. Pitt—my mother's employer. My bare eyes saw them close their eyes, but mouths were half-open. She held the small cabinet where my mother usually saved her spices and he was behind her while rudely grabbing her small waist. Their sappy skin touched and he let his sweat drop on her brownish back skin. It was a kind of silent noise which made me condemn him until the tremendous death separated me with life. Oh, let the hell swallow him with its loathsome blaze!

Well, time went on and my mother still didn't know anything. Everything seemed to be alright. An affair happened, a miserable betrayal. My mother told me so much about Mrs. Pitt who behaved very kindly to her. She gave my mother extra money and clothes. Oh, creep; it was an irony that the kindness, the money, the clothes, everything she gave was actually to pay off my mother's husband's spittle over her crotch. To be worse, there were still two or three other gimcrack women who did it with my father.

One breezy day when I was in the fifth grade, it happened again and I locked my door as usual until I heard someone was coming over my room which suddenly made me feel insecure. The handle of my door moved slowly—someone tried to open my doors. When that someone realized it was locked, he harshly tried to open it still.

"Open up, Jane!" My father shouted. I kept silent, held my breath, and didn't even move. He continued, "Jane, open up!" that old rat said in high tone while trying to open my door handle. I still made no noise, but I thought I would just open the door. What could he do to his own daughter? He wouldn't have the heart to do anything harm, would he? I opened the door and faced him without any expression on my face. He abruptly laughed at nothing, but then his face significantly showed anger.

"I know you know everything!" He yelled again.

"What? You and those sluts fuck?" Still I answered calmly.

"Oh, fuck? A fifth grade infant and you know what fuck means?" He said while pushing me away. I fell down.

"You guys groaned. I heard everything and learned!" I yelled.

He opened his zipper jeans and asked in seducing tone, "Learned? You learn this now!" he stuck something in my mouth and I asked somebody to help. I tried to shout very loudly, but I couldn't make any word. Suddenly, I heard a woman laughing at his back. That was Mrs. Pitt. They both schemed.

I was broken. My light became dull; every dream entered a field that was full of fallen leaves. It was so sick of me to feel the endless poignant in all over my body. This scourge went on, but I couldn't tell my mother and I had no idea why I didn't even want to tell her. All I thought was only her feeling. She would have been torn into pieces if she had known the bruise, the thunder storm in my soul.

It was an easy morning in 1998. My father didn't come home last night and I was bleeding greatly. Well, that might be too much of him doing the sin and that might be too much of me keeping it all up in a thousand years of silence. My mother was trembling—did she know?

After arriving at the hospital, she questioned, "Tell me, Baby, what someone did to you? Tell me now!" She cried and regretted for leaving me alone with an untrustworthy father, "Was it your father who did it or friends of his? I'm broken down, Jane; you know that and let me know who did it now."

I simply and briefly answered, "Father," she was dying and I continued, "He stuck something in my mouth and..."

She cried louder and interrupted me, "Oh, what a devil! How could I be sure to marry that man? My Jane!"

I cried and started telling her the whole story, "Mother, he has five different women and he fucks them all."

She interrupted, "Where did you get that word from—fuck?"

"They guys groaned. I heard everything and learned, Mother," She continued crying and I could feel her breath was almost lost—eaten by the wild wind outside the old roof, "I'm the witness. Mrs. Pitt and he schemed to do it all," my mother's mouth was half-open, couldn't believe what I was telling her, "I have known the fact that my father isn't a normal father since a long time ago, Mother. It always seems that he doesn't love me. See this scar on my head? I fell down from the bed because he didn't get his eyes on me when you left home for work. Mother, I saw him and all of his girlfriends did that, up to one day, he knocked my door. At first, I didn't open it because I was afraid something bad would happen to me, but I thought what he could do to me because I was his own daughter, right? I thought he would never do anything harm to me, but I was wrong.

"He did that all, yes. In the first time father did it, I saw Mrs. Pitt was following him. She knew it, Mother, but she laughed at it. Father is also bestiality—I read a book talking about bestiality divergence in the town library two months ago in summer. So, he has the tendency to do it with the cattle

Mrs. Pitt has too. He, once, ever taught me to do it all with Guesser, Mrs. Pitt's dog. I didn't want to do it. I was very disgusted, but he forced me with all of his threats. I couldn't do anything at all because two adults were holding my hand very tightly."

"His father and mother killed eleven girls, Jane, just in order to remove the traces of the crime they committed—the crime was similar like what Fred did to you. His past was dark and deep, but I, at first, didn't want to think any longer about it since I believed that every kind of crime couldn't be inherited. That your father was different from his parents was all that I thought. Oh, Jesus, Jane. I'm sorry for leaving you at home with that crook. I'm so sorry," She explained and apologized.

"Were granny and grandpa jailed? I never meet them."

"They were executed, Darling. I was crazy to marry a man with dark background like him," She shook her head, "Jane, you need to go to Morelia, Mexico. It is the place where my father and mother live. You can stay there to keep yourself safe because your father has never visited that place before—he doesn't even know that my parents have moved to another area. He ever visited my parents' previous house in Texas, not the one in Morelia," Said she and I just nodded my head. I felt sure that she could save me and that she would be able to keep her own self safe as well.

The world suddenly felt like blank space with its hollow-sound. There was no police to arrest my father and Mrs. Pitt for what they had done to me. It seemed like my mother didn't report them to the police yet, but she was always certain of what she did—she would report them later, I believed. My mind wandered about a kid who did what his parents had done just because of a nonsense thing—they had the same substance of blood which flowed within their bodies and souls. Lethargy took away the finest nerve of my soul. It was all about the inward emptiness of mine—so callous.

Yeah, it had been three years I lived in Morelia with my long-lived grandparents without any communication with my mother in order to keep this secret tightly. After home schooling for some years, I finally got into a college in Morelia named *Universidad San Nicolas de Hidalgo*. I took psychology as my major because I supposed I could help myself to get rid of my own pressure.

It was Christmas and the snow was sprinkling beautifully outside the window. I was watching some kids built a snowman in front of my grandparents' house in the moment I heard someone rang the bell. Granny had opened the door when I went downstairs. She looked shocked.

After some hours waiting for everything to be settled, my grandparents appeared with their swollen eyes after crying a great deal.

“They went to South Carolina two days ago. Actually, your father was trying to look for you. For the one last year, he started questioning your whereabouts because your mother told him that there was a very kind man inviting you to work with him in his company so that you went along to Dubai with him. Your father insisted still, Jane, he knew that your mother told him a lie. To make it all convincing, your mother lied about another thing. She said that you were actually in South Carolina—you left her a letter saying that you left Oklahoma for South Carolina because you wanted some freedom. She said that she was afraid if Fred worried about you so that Kylie had to lie about your whereabouts. Yeah, she pretended that she didn't know anything between you and that old rat. Fred forced your mother to come to South Carolina and pick you up.”

“Your father couldn't stop threatening her that he would just kill her if she lied again to him. You were gone for three years and your father couldn't believe it happened without your mother's interference. Arriving at South Carolina, they went straightaway to Hilton Island—Kylie said that you had an apartment in that isolated countryside which was full of apple plantations. She agreed to go to Hilton, but she must have been out of her mind. She..., well, Jane, took a deep breath. She scattered his skin with the knife she usually used to slaughter the fresh flesh of the animals in the butcher shop. She sliced his two knees with it. Blood was everywhere, Darling, oh, I'm so sorry to say this all to you, but I have to. After that, she hung those two stump legs in an apple tree with the hooks she had already brought until Fred ran out of blood. He died. Your mother..., she got botulinum toxin wrapped in a sheet of tree bark and she poured it into the water she had at that time. She suffered muscle paralysis and her respiratory tract was also attacked. She died.”

I was paralyzed and my grandpa hugged me so tight. It was exactly Christmas and I lost my mother. Botulinum toxin with $C_{6760}H_{10447}N_{174}O_{2010}S_{32}$ formula must be harmful when it got into humans' digestive system, but how could she get that? How could my mother hang my father whose body was much bigger than her own? No matter what, that was how my mother was like. She was always sure of what she did. If she chose to murder him, it meant that he couldn't be handled any longer. My grandpa also informed me that before my parents went to South Carolina, Mrs. Pitt had died because of her heart attack. The first person who insulted me had died and only one was left at that time. My mother must have thought of vanishing the other one—before finally

going to South Carolina, she had prepared everything to kill Fred and it happened.

It had been the seventh day I cried over my mother. I swallowed the agony all alone that wail would never be enough to express my grief. Fortunately, Jose was there to accompany me all along the hard times.

Jose's a college companion of mine. Whenever I saw Jose, it's like when I saw my mother—the one I was truly in love with. Well, the man I have been dreaming of is Jose—Josephine Anne. It isn't a man that I fall in love with, but a woman. Jose's always there whenever I remember my mother. She gives me strength, tenderness, and love that no one else can ever give.

That rainy season, she came to the house which my grandparents bought me in Hidalgo, Mexico. I asked her, "Is it wrong to love the one with the same kind like us?"

"Love has no boundary, Jane. We are bittersweet, sly, and uncontrollable kind of creature. Can I tell you about something related to this?" She answered.

I nodded and she went on, "There are two stockades about LGBT, Jane, my sweetheart. The first one is nativist and the other one is nurture. The nativists believe that LGBT is caused by gen and basic characteristics which someone has, but nurtures believe that it happens because of the process of life that someone has gone through—well, experience. It isn't a sexual abnormality that we can avoid."

"You said basic characteristics?"

"Look, Baby, LGBT is also because of the imbalance of our hormone. A man has testosterone, but also has hormones that a woman has: estrogen and progesterone in very little amount, but if the amount's too much, that's what makes the sexual development of a male's almost similar to the one that a female owns. Psychodynamic factors can also influence—well, sociocultural factor, for example. It's like, um, bad experiences we had in the past, yeah, stuff like that."

"We don't want to go this way, right, Jose? I feel like we only make that explanation as our excuse to commit sin," I said.

"Sin, excuse me? What do you know? I just don't want to pretend until the day that I die, Jane, it's all. You hush now," She came closer and bit my lips. That day was finished with a warm blanket over our souls and a closed curtain.

Her parents didn't want their one and only daughter to be a lesbian, but she always says that whenever she saw me, she's ready for a war. I knew that she's trustworthy. This summer, I felt so energized to arrange the red roses I had picked from my own garden on a vase made of glass. Anyway, Jose and I didn't have any plan to come over her house to meet her parents yet, nor to marry, but the bond of this love grows. She's my noble and sensuous delight that whenever we both were undressed, she came up like magic—she's absorbing the air of my soul. Ah, right, this feeling for her had been like a flooding river—abundantly, it flows through my pulse.

She finally came to my house after a hard week that we didn't meet each other since we needed to take care of our own business. She opened the front door and puts something on a table near the door. I stood next to the dining table while arranging my red rose. I greet her first, "Hi, Honey."

She answered, "Oh, hello."

"Finally, we meet! I miss you much. How are you doing? Great?"

She nodded her head while smiling nicely, "I'm okay."

"Baby, I need to tell you this one: I had a nightmare last night. You were dancing in the moonlight with another girl, Honey, and I was just shocked. After it, in that dream, I killed you by poisoning you—just like the way my mother did to herself. Fortunately, I didn't cut off your knees like what she did to her husband," I laugh at my own story and consider it as something absurd, "After you died, I buried you in my backyard with red rose petals, Honey, the thing I have been dreaming of in reality—to be buried in red rose petals. Because you used to be the one I loved, I gave you my last honor by piling your body with those red rose petals."

"Honey, what are you telling me about? I...,"

I said to her, "Nothing, but it's clear, Jose, that love's the most satisfactory answer to the problem that humans can ever have. If I committed the crime like what I did in my dream, the root of it would be love, right?"

"Yes, right, Miss, but I'm now in a hurry, Darling, really. My parents need me to pick them up at the airport. How is it? Are you okay?"

"It's okay, but then why do you not ask me to join with you? Come on, I'm getting ready."

"They have already arrived, Jane, you don't have to accompany me to pick them up. It takes more time for you to get ready," Jose answers.

“No, I’m only taking off this apron and we go. Come on!” I finish it very soon, grab her hand into mine, and walk by her side, “You dropped something on that table, Honey, what’s that? Let me take it.”

“No, it’s actually nothing, Jane,” She answered quickly and tried to block me from getting the thing she left on the table.

I insisted to get it still and I was finally able to grab that. It’s an invitation—a wedding invitation. I stared at it for thirty seconds and my eyes slowly rose to look at her eyes sharply, “What’s this? You are really with a man?”

“They insist me,” Whatever she said, it can’t be like this. My heart recounts a lament that’s very hard to ignore. Love’s like grudge, it needed reprisal. I had ever been tortured for years by my own father; I lost my mother who had killed my father. I just got the happiness for some little time, but everything starts fading away. This world’s hell and I’m the demon.

“My dream has come true, Jose, my Darling; my last night dream.”

Sleep Paralysis

Howard was a 13 years old boy in the 8th grade. For most children his age, bedtime was a happy moment. After doing all sorts of activities all day, they could finally get some rest. The same couldn't be said for Howard though. Howard was always a timid boy. His timidity often made him a target of mockery, earning him a nickname "Howard the coward". It wasn't until in the 8th grade that he had his own room. After his friends made fun of him because he'd been sleeping with his parents, Howard decided that it was the time for him to sleep alone.

Howard's room was just an ordinary room. The room was painted mostly in green and partly blue. They were running out of green paint when they painted the room, so they had to use some leftover paint to cover the rest of wall that hadn't been painted. The room had one bed covered with a blanket with some kinds of superhero picture on it. It also had one desk beside the bed with many kinds of textbooks on it. The time was 3 o'clock in the morning and Howard was still wide awake. Having to sleep alone for the first time made Howard nervous. He got a math test tomorrow and he couldn't get a good night sleep. Math never was his strong point so he should've at least had a fresh mind and body for the test. He didn't know why he couldn't fall asleep even though he already felt very tired. He looked at the clock again and estimated that he had four more hours remaining. He knew that he had to make good use of the remaining time, so he tried to sleep again. He closed his eyes tightly. He laid on his back, chest and side. He tried every position that he could think of to not avail. He checked the time again and said,

"Oh sweet mother" he muttered, " Is it 4 o'clock already?"

Frustrated, he grabbed his phone and tried to play some soft and slow music with the lowest volume possible. He hoped that it could help him to fall asleep. He opened his music library and chose some music from his playlist. He set his phone on speaker mode and put it beside his pillow. The music proved to be effective as Howard started to fell into slumber.

He was about to sleep when he suddenly heard a weird noise. The sound was like something scratching the wall. If it happened at any other time he would've ignored it, but it happened exactly at the moment he felt something. There was an overwhelming sense of malicious intent filling the room. It was hard to describe, a sensation like when you were scared because of something scary might suddenly jumped at you. Although Howard couldn't

see anything other than himself in his room, he definitely felt a presence of something evil. He was still in the state of semi consciousness, what could only be described as somewhere being awoken and asleep. He couldn't move any part of his body. It was as if his mind was awake but his body wasn't. He never felt so scared like this; the sheer terror was engulfing him.

He tried to scream calling his parents but nothing came out of his mouth. After a few failed attempts at screaming his lungs out, he gave up. He noticed that there was something that tried to open his door. He saw the door knob slowly turned until the door was slightly ajar. From the gap of the door, there was a hand coming in followed by heavy breathing. The room was so dark that Howard couldn't see anything clearly but the hand he saw right at this moment was real. It appeared to be a small hand with bloody finger and sharp nails. It continued to wrap its finger around the edge of the door, leaving bloody handprints. Eventually, it started to push the door open.

In the darkness of the room, the figure stood before Howard's half opened eyes was vague, but it was definitely real. It wasn't just his eyes played tricks on him. The figure appeared to be like a girl about eight year old, wearing a red dress and had a disturbingly blank, mask-like face almost completely obscured by long black hair. Her hands and feet were red by some kinds of red substance which appeared to be blood.

Having seen the scary girl, Howard tried to scream. Still not a single sound came from his mouth, but with each attempt the evil being proceed across the room leaving footprints of blood on the floor. She approached the scared Howard slowly but sure. She finally climbed Howard's bed and sat on his chest. She wrapped her bloodied fingers around Howard's neck. As she started to strangle Howard, she moved her face near his ear and whispered something inaudible. Howard didn't understand what she whispered but he knew that it was something sinister. Howard desperately tried to move, focused every last bit of energy he had left to move any part of his body, be it just a finger or anything. He felt that if he was able to do that, he could resist this evil entity. The evil girl was crouched down and hunched now. She was crushing his ribs and pressing his lungs. Howard thought, how could it be that a small child like being, weighed so heavy? Her hand was tightening her grip on Howard's frail neck. Howard couldn't breathe; he was struggling to gasp every bit of air that he could get. In the heat of the moment, Howard strengthened his resolve to not giving up. He tried once again to move, but it seemed that everything he did was useless.

Howard had not ounce of strength to resist anymore. He started to give in as his life is being drained out of him. As he closed his eyes, he slowly felt that

his consciousness faded away when suddenly, it all stopped. He opened his eyes and sat bolt upright on the bed. Cold sweat dripped from his chin while he breathed deeply than ever for air that he desperately seek earlier. He drew his hands up to feel his neck, he felt nothing wrong. He grabbed a small mirror on the desk next to his bed and checked his neck on the mirror. It seemed that his neck was still intact. He quickly looked around the room to find any traces of that little girl, but he couldn't find anything. He was so relieved that he was still alive. It was very bizarre experience, he thought. Just a moment ago he was about to get killed and now he was fine. It was too real to be dreamt. Howard ran to his parents' room and jumped to their bed. They were surprised and didn't expect to see their son on their bed. Howard told everything to his parents and they tried to calm him down. It seemed that after that scary night, Howard wasn't going to sleep by himself for a long time.

A Small Regency: Called Wamena

Long and silent night had passed. The morning sun in Baliem valley appeared as glowing red giant ball that was driven terrifying strength and bounced slowly into the sky. Thin fog wrapped around the township of Dani tribe such as a flowing chiffon fabric, soft, and chaotic. The sunlight made it appeared as fog curtains that kept moving and eventually disappeared altogether. The township of Dani tribe was located in the area of Wamena, Jayawijaya, Papua. These areas required a travel more than 45 minutes from Jayapura by the plane because there had been no road so that it could only be reached by air. The ambiance and the condition of the society in this area were practically very cultured. It was caused by the local culture here was still very strong and they maintained that culture. The culture meant that the people still used honai as their residence or place of refuge. Honai was a Dani tribal house shaped like a mushroom with wooden walls and thatch roofs. The people called man's honai as *Pilamo* while for woman's honai as *ebe ai*. Meanwhile, to protect and cover their bodies, people of Dani tribe should used Koteka (a traditional clothing for man), or Sali (a traditional clothing for woman).

In the township of Dani tribe, there was a small family living in a honai. They were Obet and Magda. They both recently decided to tie their love through a marriage custom of Dani tribe. In a customary marriage of Dani tribe, if a man wanted to marry a woman, he was entitled to pay the woman with 20 pigs as a sign of dowry and woman would be entitled to follow the man. The duties of a wife were giving a living for her husband later, feeding each pig, working in the farm to plant potatoes, cassava, and nurture the children. This was actually different from the life of society in general. The people of Dani tribe entrusted everything to the woman, while a man only silenced. That was because in the process of traditional marriage a man had bought the woman through 20 pigs and that meant woman were ready for to give a live for a man (husband). Everyday, Magda usually went to the farm to look for food supplies in order to provide for Obet (her husband), because if she did not prepare for the food, Obet would definitely angry and hit her. Magda usually did that without the help of Obet.

In the situation of being pregnant, Magda should keep to provide food supplies for Obet. It did not need a long time for their first child to be born. Their children name was Agnes. Agnes grew into a very beautiful young girl. She was so concerned with her mother, so that she accompanied her mother to go to

the farm. Magda looked very happy, her daughter could find supplies of food to be saved in the Honai. Food supplies should be in the Honai, if not Magda would be scolded by Obet. One day, Magda and Agnes went in search of food supplies in the farm and Agnes met a man named Agus. From then on, Agnes fell in love at first sight with Agus. Magda was not certainly happy about it because her daughter was still too early to know about romance. Finally, Magda prohibited Agus to see her daughter. If you dare to meet my daughter again, I would not hesitate to scold and beat you. However, Agus had a way to get to meet with Agnes. He already knew exactly when the time Magda and Agnes went to the farm. He was hiding in the corner of a tree to monitor the condition. Agnes knew about that thing and had seen the gestures of Agus behind the tree, but she was only silent so that Magda did not know that thing. Finally, Agnes lied to her mother about to leave for a while, but it was the intention to meet Agus. Magda kept running into the farm without suspecting another purpose of Agnes.

It seemed there was a strange thing in the scrub. There was a sound of voice and the shout which was not heard yet. The sound was like a couple that were hit by romance, the moans ahh..ahh..ahh..ahh! It made a deep suspicion in the face of Magda, especially as she knew that Agnes was not with her, she began to think the strange thing. Magda already knew the location where the sound was coming and she was quickly in a rush to get there. The voice grew louder and Magda began to recognize the voice. It was like the sound of my daughters, Agnes. Oh my God, Was it really her? Magda was shocked and surprised. It turned out to be Agnes who was alone with Agus. Magda looked very angry and slapped her daughter as soon as possible. Moreover, she knew that the man turned out to be Agus, she added furious again. Magda brought Agnes to return to the house because the sun was almost gone. She gave a final warning for Agus to never see her daughter again. Agnes began to think of ways to be able to convey it to Agus immediately. Tomorrow afternoon she went into the farm alone to meet Agus. Agnes told that, if you wanted me, you should marry me by giving me 20 pigs. Agus just bowed because he was very confused from where he could collect that many pig. Finally, after thinking, Agus told his parents to immediately propose for Agnes. His parents strongly agreed and eventually they married.

Lastri was a physician who graduated from the oldest university in Indonesia. She had a beautiful face, long hair, and fair-complexioned. In a mission, she wanted to heal her patients in isolated areas in Indonesia. She decided to go on a mission in Wamena, Papua. Lastri was a native Javanese woman who wanted to devote herself to the people in Papua, especially in Wamena. She told all the wishes to her parents. At first, her parents did not

allow Lastri to go so far in an isolated area in Papua. However, Lastri tried to convince her parents that this was one of her missions to be able to provide the recovery for the people there. By pondering it, both parents agreed and allowed Lastri to go to Papua.

The trip had to be taken by air and it would take a long time of flight. Departing from Yogyakarta to Surabaya using Garuda plane, the next flight was from Surabaya to Jayapura. It had to transit in Jayapura for 3 hours. Jayapura-Wamena flight was ready to take her to a small area, desolate, and quirky. There were no crowds like in other big cities. She, just looked at a few motorcycle and pedicab passing on the highway. Before her flight to Wamena, in the plane, she met a tall man, straight-hair, and muscular body. It turned out that the man was also about to go to Wamena. They sat side by side on the plane. Unfortunately, they had not had time to get acquainted with each other because this was her first experience of visiting a place so far, and Lastri chose to take a silent and did not take seriously the words of people, especially the man who she first met on the plane. Once Lastri planned to go to the market to look for food, she heard a voice that addressed her from the side. It seemed like she knew the voice (whispered in her heart). Turned out it was the man she met on the flight Jayapura-Wamena. Finally they were acquainted, that man was named Herlambang. He was a military who served in Wamena. If there was an empty time, Herlambang visited Lastri at her home even though Lastri never told about her home address. Herlambang turned out following Lastri from behind, because Herlambang felt a vibration of love so great when he first met with Lastri on the plane. Occasionally he visited Lastri, delivering food and giving flowers. Apparently, it had not allured Lastri's heart, she still thought that it was mediocre.

The morning was came. Lastri had to be rushed to the hospital to see the situation of her patients there. She was surprised by a patient whose smell, quite old, grizzled, and using *Sali*. She asked what the disease suffered by that woman? That woman infected with Scarlatina and Malaria, in a state when she was pregnant. It made a more attention from dr. Lastri for that woman to as much as possible getting the cure. That woman named Agnes. Agnes told that this was the eighth child in her womb. Dr. Lastri was surprised to hear it. On her mind, it would be dangerous for the mother if she had giving birth in a condition of scarlatina and malaria. dr. Lastri predicted that any possibility that child would be born in a period of 10 days. Fortunately, before the birth, Agnes had recovered and was in a good condition. So that the process of childbirth later was no worries happened. Dr. Lastri told to Agnes that she gave birth twins. Agnes was shocked and told that there must be one that was discharged into the river. It was a customary of Dani tribe that if there was a mother who gave

birth to twins, the first child who appeared to be still survive, while the second who appeared to be discharged into the river because it violated a customary of Dani tribe and the child should be thrown into the river. The rule was if there were someone who found the baby, which people might take that child, but if I were not then that child was presumed to be dead. Hearing that, dr. Lastri immediately rushed to the river waiting for the baby. She found that baby and took it and then nurtured as their child.

Herlambang wanted to visit dr. Lastri because it was a very long time for him to never met dr. Lastri. Herlambang was surprised when he saw dr. Lastri was holding a baby. He immediately asked, "Whose child is that? This was my daughter, a mother who gave birth yesterday gave the baby to me, and it was because her children were born twin and a customary law of Dani tribe, when a baby was born twin it should be thrown into the river. Dr. Lastri did not have a heart to see that baby thrown into the river so that she waited the baby in the edge of the river.

Herlambang was so excited to hear the explanation of dr. Lastri, he railed every word by word. Herlambang told that the political situation in the country was not conducive. The liberation of Timor-Timor from The Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia had impacted for Aceh and Papua. Aceh also wanted to break away from Indonesia so it made all the Indonesian to be vigilant. That thing was added again with Papua that it wanted to break away from Indonesia as well. The situation in Wamena at the time became an alert status. Herlambang recounted that he was given a new assignment from his head to help to keep the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia in Aceh. Herlambang could not decline and could only say READY! That was certainly slicing the liver of dr. Lastri when she heard that. She would split again with one of those who really care and love her. The next morning, Herlambang already left to Aceh using Hercules aircraft, dr. Lastri could only see and hear the sound vibration from the corner of the house. He released Herlambang departure to Aceh with a mournful face.

It had been almost two months waiting for news from Herlambang, but it never came. One day there was a letter that coming to her. That letter was brought by one of the military to dr. Lastri. However, dr. Lastri did not immediately open the letter, she just put it into the cupboard. It was a sense of disappointment to Herlambang who never gave her the news. dr. Lastri used to spend time at the hospital with a variety of patients with various pain they were experiencing. Not to forget also, she played with her daughter who named Kania Larasati. Her days were so happy together Kania until she forgot

who the figure Herlambang is. She never heard again about the news of Herlambang.

There was a very big rain, thunder, and lights off. The condition of Wamena town was filled with heavy rain and hurricane so that nobody could go out of the house. People could just stay in the house with a lantern. At that time, at 8 pm, the military came to dr. Lastri's house, that military brought an army clothes complete with shoes, weapon, and hat. dr. Lastri did not know the purpose all this. The military told that Herlambang had been killed in the battle field, he had struggled to maintain the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. It was fitting for Herlambang to receive an award from the country. At that time, dr. Lastri was straight to her room to take a letter who given by Herlambat in the cupboard.

Lastri,

kalau kau membaca surat ini, maka aku tak yakin,

apakah aku masih berhak akan kehidupan dan

merencanakan hari esok bersamamu setelah tugas

berakhir, atau aku harus meneruskan kehidupan di

tempat lain, pada sebuah alam yang tak dapat lagi dikunjungi.

Satu hal yang tak pernah berubah dari dua kemungkinan itu adalah,

bahwa aku selalu membawa namamu dalam hatiku, kemanapun pergi.

Situasi di sini lebih mengerikan dari yang pernah kubayangkan.

suatu keajaiban, bahwa aku masih dapat menulis surat dan

keajaiban pula apabila engkau dapat membacanya.

Ingat pesanku, apabila engkau merasa tak aman pada posisi sekarang, berkemalah.

Seorang akan lebih menghargai kehidupan setelah kematian mendekat.

Aku tak berhak menyesali jalan hidup yang kutempuh,

karena pernah berkeputusan memilihnya.

Keputusan yang menyebabkan aku dapat pula mengenalmu.

Aku tak pandai menyusun kata-kata, tapi engkau menjadi kekuatan,

terlebih pada situasi seperti ini

Secepatnya balaslah suratku.

Herlambang.

dr. Lastri read that letter word by word, every sentence she could only cry and remembered again about Herlambang's figure. All regrets appeared in her, she was sorry for what she had done, ignoring the letter. She did not care about Herlambang's situation until one day she heard that news from Herlambang's friend that Herlambang had been dead in the battlefield.

Breakeven

It was 2 in the morning and when another late night customer was stepping in. For no reason, I automatically turned my head from my stove and I saw her walking to one empty table for two persons in the corner, her usual seat, after ordering. She was one of our regulars at Waffle House, but none of us actually knew who she was.

The girl, we simply gave her that nickname because we had no idea how to call her, she always came alone. She spoke very little and the only thing that she did here after ordering her usual plain waffle and a cup of black coffee with no sugar was just sitting there for hours until the sun was up and just left. She never finished her waffle and coffee, sometimes she was not even touching it.

“You know what, Cas, I wonder if she understands the important of clothes changing.” Chuck’s eyes was on the girl when he elbowing me. He was one of the cooks like me and also one of my good friends at work. I just smiled at him as a response. He was sarcastically commenting on her outfit because she always wears the exact same outfit for every single visit. It is always the white dress with blue flowers prints at the bottom part that goes right above her knees, a pair of nude flat shoes and the black leather jacket. What made her look somewhat different was just her blonde locks. Sometimes she put it in a bun, pony tail or very rarely she would let her hair fall to her back freely.

Most of my friends in Waffle House simply thought that she was a freak and ignored her, but I didn't. I didn't know why, every time I saw her all I wanted was to get to know her. I wanted to know her name, where she came from, what she was doing for life. I wanted to be her friend.

Only one thing that I had not figured out. I had no idea how to come and talk to her. Actually, I never understood how to talk to people in general, small talk and all of that. The way our social system running in this world was never my thing. However, the girl was an exception.

My work shift ended the next morning at 6:30. As usual after having my morning coffee I went home by feet. This morning the weather was chillier and I wondered if fall would come anytime soon in Atlanta. It only took me around 10 minutes to reach the front door of my house. For almost 30 seconds I only stood there with a blank face.

"Please don't wake up yet." I whispered to myself before I unlocked the door and opened it slowly. The house was in full silence and I almost pulled out a smile until my ears caught a sound of heavy step from kitchen.

"I'm home will do, Pussy." I immediately cursed when I heard my father's voice. Seeing him first thing in the morning was really a bad start of my day because that only explained one thing. He was not coming home drunk last night.

"Glad to know you still alive." I answered him coldly while climbing up the stairs to check on my little brother and sister.

I went to Reagan's room first and I couldn't find him there. He had to be sleeping with Devon. He always did that when he got scared by father. I shook my head in front of Devon's door because I hated to think about what George possibly did to my baby boy last night.

George hated Reagan with all of his heart. Never in one day he did not blame Reagan for Mom's death 8 years ago right after delivering him. He was so mad and got into depression forgetting the fact that he was a father of 3 and abandoning us ever since. He turned to alcohol and his new behaviour ruining his own blood and flesh and I hated the fact that we still had him as disfunctional single parent.

I was only 10, Devon was 8 and Reagan was a newborn when together we lost both of our parents. Daddy was gone with mom and that was how we liked to think. Me and Devon did our best taking care of our baby boy despite we were too young and still needed adult to take care of us. I remembered it was so hard for us, especially me as the eldest because my siblings relied on me and I had to be strong for them.

"Casey, you're back!" Little Reagan was jumping off the bed and ran to hug me right after the door was opened. I kneeled and hugged him back.

"Good morning! How's your sleep, Little Man?" I lifted his small figure with one hand and put him back on the bed.

"Good. I was dreaming about riding a dino and I had so much fun." He answered cheerfully. He was always very happy and energetic in the morning.

"Morning, Dev." I smiled at her.

"Morning, Cas. Father yelled at him last night because he was accidentally turned off the tv. He was scared and started to cry and George got angrier. He told me to shut his mouth before he left the house. I had carried

him for hours before Reagan got tired and fell asleep." Reporting to me about things that happened at home when I was away was one of Devon's tasks.

"Did he hit Reagan?" I really concerned about that.

"No, he didn't. He was just left. Is he sober?" I nodded.

"Well, go play with Reagan. I'll make breakfast." I smiled at my siblings before I left the room.

George was still in the kitchen sipping his coffee while leaning on our refrigerator and as always I ignored him. I could feel his eyes following my every movement while preparing food.

"You'll be a great parent I see." My eyes rolling at his words.

"Thanks for your ignorance, but your words are truly unnecessary." I said coldly with my back still facing his face.

"I envy you. You got the love in this house, even from the murderer of your mother." I heard the sound of his step getting closer to me.

"How can you do that?" and just now he whispered to my left ear and I turned my body to face him.

"Reagan is not a murderer. He is your son and you don't blame him for mom's death! How many time should I tell you about that? HE IS A FUCKING INNOCENT BOY!"

"Oh, the mother hen is angry now." George said that very calmly and this time he totally set me on fire.

"I wonder what kind of sin I did on earth that I deserve a bastard like you to be my father. You're definitely the most useless man I've ever known. Here's one thing for you. Mind your own business because this family is no longer yours. We're no longer think that we have parents, we're orphans. I'm my own, Devon's and Reagan's parents. If you live here that's because this place is yours and we owe you every single penny that you wasted on us." I made sure that I was firm to him rather than spitting out emotionally. I was really mad, but I tried my best not to lose it in front of him. I would not let him beat my emotion that day.

I didn't want this man keep looking down on us. We were not weak as he thought, he had to realize that he was the weak one in this house because he never fought for us. He was so selfish that he was only though about his own misery. He was helpless all this time. After saying all of that I turned my back on

him and continuing what I was supposed to do at first. I could still feel his eyes on me for a couple of seconds before he was gone.

Things went pretty good today after George left this morning. I finished some home chores after Devon and Reagan went to school and went to sleep for 5 hours before I got myself ready for work tonight. I was pretty much just said earlier to George that I was the parents in this house. I'd been taking care of my family for years except the part of having a permanent job. I started to work full time and quit school 6 months ago for a better life because George barely gave us money.

Before I was eighteen my source of money excepted begging to George was helping the neighbours around my house to do few things. I started at 12 and really I did almost everything that I could for every dollar my neighbor gave to me. Cutting grass, babysitting, changing a bulb, selling things, and many other things. I used to work after school up until I finished junior high school. I was so lucky because my neighbourhood filled with kind people.

Sometimes I wonder what would it be if my family were exactly like how it used to be. It had to be really nice and our life wouldn't be this ugly. Mom would still be here taking care of us and father would still be a great daddy for all of us. This house would be filled with love and we could be a normal happy family. I wouldn't be in Atlanta right now, probably LA or NYC for studying photography or sculpture at a university and having a social life with actual friends. My life could be so perfect.

I didn't blame mom for being so weak at that time when she delivered Reagan, I knew she did her best and maybe it was just her time to go. I wouldn't blame Reagan either for taking away mom's life just like father did. I shouldn't blame anyone really, but I couldn't help myself not to keep blaming my father. Probably I should forgive him and try to understand him, but I couldn't. I should give him another change. Moreover, I knew things could be different. He would be different if he tried but it never happened. He was so full of himself so, he didn't and I believed he would never. Our dad gone with our mom 8 years ago and we had no choice but survived by ourselves.

I was on my way to Waffle House when I saw a familiar figure walking a bit far in front of me. It was The Girl. What she was doing here? Did she live around here? I slow downed my pace so I could watch her. I didn't mean to be rude but, I just, I wasn't sure if I was ready to approach her or just to say hello to her. She kept walking and somehow I felt like she was speeding up

her pace because our distance was getting farther and farther every minute. After times, I realized where she was heading to, Waffle House.

It took me by surprise because it was only 6:45 and she had never been this early for her Waffle House visit. I got the answer a moment later after she stopped and just sat there before taking the last turn where the Waffle House was. Then, I realized that I got no choice. I had to walk passing her or I'd be late to work. I was being indecisive for 10 seconds before I started to walk again. I would pretend as if I didn't see her.

"You're one of the worker in there, weren't you?" Her question was getting into my ears. Honestly, I'd like to ignore and keep acting like I was in hurry, but she caught me and I knew that she knew I tried to avoiding her so, I just stood right in front of her without turning my body to face her.

"Yes, I was and you're one of our regular." I turned my head and I realized I sounded robotic.

"I'm Meredith and you can call me Mere. Tell you friends that too. I don't like it when they address me as The Girl. Got it?" Her voice was very soft and soothing, but the way she spoke was flat and distant. She sounded pretty much emotionless for me. I didn't know what to answer so, I just walked away.

That one short and awkward conversation turned into a new start of my new friendship with Meredith. All I did was following her instruction to make the other workers stop calling her The Girl. It was awkward at first and my friends somehow made fun of me, but in the end it was alright because for the first time in my life I actually had a friend just like billion other people in the world.

Though, I had to be honest that Mere was not the best person ever to start a friendship with because her personality was way too bright and cheerful for me. There were moments where I found her act like someone else. I thought my first impression of her having a cold personality was one of her personality, it wasn't.

"If you ever found me being distant with other people, emotionless, and statue like, you have to remember that she is not me." She said that to me once after in the 2nd week of our friendship. I did ask her what that was supposed to mean, but she did not give me a single word in return.

Slowly, I found the answer myself. I realized that she was right. The girl I used to know, it was not her. The girl who spoke to me first, it wasn't her. The girl with no emotion and distant voice was someone else but Meredith. She called herself Lane and her personality was completely the opposite polar of

Meredith. Meredith was bright, friendly and full of compassion, while Lane was a loner with dark personality and she could be violence at times.

“I’m not sure when this thing started. All I know is that she was always there watching me in distance and then all of sudden I have to share my body with her. It’s never be pleasant.”

“Come and go with me somewhere else, Casey. Let’s make our life together. Leave your father and give yourself a chance to be who you want to be. You know that none between both of us who will have the chance here. People think I’m insane and your life is miserable. What keeps you holding back?” I already lost count how many times Mere asked me the exact same thing for the past 2 months. She never gave up to persuade me to leave Atlanta and re-start our life together.

Honestly, her invitation was very interesting for me. I wanted to leave this place to pursue my delayed dream. I still wanted to change who I was. Moreover, I thought her idea was just great. It was just Devon and Reagan. I couldn’t leave them. They were too young and both of them deserved to live a happier life away from George. If my life was about to change to a better one, so were theirs.

“No, you can’t! What were you thinking? It will be hard of both of us to support ourselves and now you want to bring your brother and sister with you? We’re running away not moving away. Don’t be so stupid!” It was Lane who talked to me the other day.

“I know, I know, but I can’t leave them just like that. I need to take care of them. Reagan especially since my father hates him the most.” I replied. Lane stayed silent for 2 minutes.

“Ok, then. Take Reagan and leave Devon. Deal?”

“Give me more time then. I need to talk to them, especially Devon.” I couldn’t say anything else but agreed.

I spent almost a week trying to talk to Devon about my plan running away with Reagan but I had to leave her behind. Of course she was not agree at first, she was mad at me and didn’t talk to me for 2 days and I was about to running out of time because both Mere and Lane kept pressuring me to make a decision faster.

“I know it’s hard for you, but leaving you with father is the best thing I can do. He will still abandoning you, but at least he won’t harm you. He can’t harm

you because you're his favorite. It's different between the three of us. He hates me for replacing his function in this house and he even wants to kill Reagan as revenge. The house is only safe for you." This was my last night and I tried my best to convince her.

"But, I'm scared of him and what if I need a help? You know I can't deal with him by myself. What if I want to run away just like you?" Asked Devon in between her tears. My heart broke to see this. I should not hurt my little angel like this.

"Listen to me, Devon. You're a strong girl and I taught you many things for years. You're also really smart. It will be hard at first, but you'll figure it out. If you need help you can go to Chuck because he is your big brother now and he will protect you." I put my hands on both of her cheeks and gave her a kiss on the forehead.

"Will we ever meet again, Casey?" Asked Devon for the last time.

I didn't have the courage to answer that. I didn't even have the answer. Her question almost brought me to tears but I stayed strong for her, I had to. I realized I hadn't thought about that. Would I go back to Atlanta one day? I hugged Devon to sleep.

"We'll see."

The Gate

I'm Irving Zickman. There were many mysteries that yet to be solved in this world. The thing that always linger in my mind was the simple fact that every human, every living creature on this world, would die one way or another. What would happen after people die, where would they go, does the afterlife even exist? As a scientist, those questions stimulated me to do a research to uncover the truth about afterlife. After 25 years of research, none of them came to fruition. In my desperation, I stumbled upon an ancient book of necromancy. It was called Liber de Morte, the Book of Death.

This was a journal of my research, may God forbid what I was going to do.

~December 24th~

A month had passed. I finally understood the content of the book. The book contained the description of a dimension where the conscious of a man, very well known as a soul, resided eternally. After cross referenced it with the text from Greek, Egypt, and Christian mythology, I came to the conclusion that before reaching the final destination, the conscious or the soul travelled through the place that connected this dimension to other dimension called Limbo. The recent studies about near death experience, where the conscious leaves the body was also proven in this theory. From the data collected by the expert, the brain wave of the subject showed a peculiar activity that did not exist on normal state of mind. In necromancy, the experiment conducted by calling the conscious from another side. In theory, if we could create a device that could reconstruct the atom structure in our body matching the frequency that shown on the test subject brain wave, we could reverse the process of necromancy, creating a gate, a portal to other dimension.

~December 26th~

Showing my research to the board of World Scientist Federation was a huge mistake. They mocked my research, laughing at it as if it were a big joke to them. They had no idea what my research could accomplish for humanity. They would pay dearly for the insult they gave to me, mark my words.

~January 3rd~

It had been a week since the meeting with the board. I was taken aback when 3 people that famous for their work, came to me proposing to work on my research. Dr. Julius Octavius, an expert on Quantum Physics, Dr. Robert

Sanchez, a Master of Engineering, and the last is Dr. Alexander Stockman, a Biochemistry expert. They also had similar theory about another dimension aside from this dimension that somehow correlated with each other. It was almost unbelievable that there are people on the board who interested on my research. With their help, I believe that my research would be successful. We would begin our preparation as soon as possible.

~February 4th~

The day had come to construct the portal. The calculation had completed and all the resources that needed to make this project came true had being moved to underground research facility with reinforced wall that could withstand nuclear explosion to prevent unwanted accidents considering the materials that we are going to use. According to our calculation, the estimation construction time until it ready for the test is about 2 months at the most. The idea is to construct an atom reconstruction device to match the frequency of the soul, the device that could pin point the right coordinate of Limbo that connected our dimension to another dimension, and create a tunnel between two dimensions.

~February 5th~

First day we built the portal. As expected, it was not as easy as on the paper but the project run pretty much on the schedule. If the progress was smooth like this for the rest of the project, it would be done in less than 2 months period of time.

~March 14th~

It's half way until completion but unfortunately, there was a problem with the power reactor. Dr. Octavius miscalculated the amount of plutonium used for the main source of the energy. Sadly, the sub reactor exploded and killed 5 worker including Dr. Stockman. A major setback for us. It was needed to be recalculated the right amount of power so the portal could work properly. We also need to recalibrate the transformator to produce the perfect and stable frequency to open the portal. Hopefully there would be no more unfortunate accident until the construction is over.

~April 20th~

The construction of the portal had been completed. It had been 2 days since the portal activated and it was working properly. The test subject also had returned from the other side of the portal. The physical and psychological of the test subject is in normal level, same as before he entered the portal. After the interview with the subject, the portal connected to the place where the

sky was red and the color of the water was red blood. He claimed to have met Dr. Stockman on the other side with others who got killed in the accident. The subject was reluctant to provide more details about his journey to other side.

~April 21st~

The incident happened at 4 am. Dr. Sanchez was found dead on the table at the cafeteria. Blood was all over the place creating a symbol that familiar in my eyes. They found the test subject unconscious on the floor of his room, covered in blood. We suspected him as the murderer but after checking the security camera, he was never at the cafeteria. The video showed Dr. Sanchez alone at the cafeteria and in the blink of an eye. He was lying dead on the table. For safety measure, the test subject was put into solitary confinement with camera monitoring his every movement and guard was placed in front of his cell.

~April 22nd~

The subject was showing peculiar behavior. He gazed at the empty wall and muttering strange language. The language seems came from ancient Rome and we were unable to understand what the subject was trying to say. There was something happened to the portal. The activity from the portal was increasing simultaneously with the subject's peculiar behavior.

~April 24th~

More dead bodies had been found yet we still could not identify a single suspect. The test subject was never leaved his room and the body of Dr. Sanchez was missing from the morgue. The same symbol also carved in every dead body, similar with Dr. Sanchez. God only knows what was happened to them. One thing for sure, the test subject was not the only one who came out from that god forsaken place.

~Unknown date~

This would be the last entry of my journal. I could not remember how long it had been since we opened the portal. Everyone is dead. I was the only one left on this facility. After reexamined the book carefully, the world might be destroyed as we speak. The portal was leading to the purgatory where the impure soul rested. Those who were not cleansed became a demon. I was playing with the thing that beyond my ability to control. My desire had doomed us all. The test subject that returned from the portal was the incarnation of the devil himself. He who had the power to control all, banished from above with only one purpose in mind, killed the God's creation. They who had died became the living dead. Soon they would get me too. Before that, I

would blow the entrance of this facility. Nothing came in, nothing came out. Whoever found this journal, for God sake, never open this place ever again.

Irving Zickman, the man who kill us all. May God have mercy on our souls.

Abiandra

I clearly remembered the way he looked. He had that cute but a little bit crooked smile. He was tall, tan and handsome with freckles all over his face. His eyes were something odd, as if he didn't know where he was for a moment. He seemed a little bit shy and awkward.

**"Ni hao! Ni jiao she me ming zi?"*

"Abiandra."

***"Ni hui jiang hua yi ma?"*

"I understand what you are talking about but sorry, I can't speak Mandarin," he smiled.

"Oh sorry, my English is bad, but I will try what I learned in High School," I smiled and he chuckled.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Oh! Oh, haven't I told you my name? I'm sorry, my name is He Yu Rou."

"Hello, Rou. Nice to meet you."

He was a very pleasant man to talk to. I asked him how he could come to our community and other small talks between strangers. From our short conversation, I knew that he was an immigrant from Indonesia and lived in Hongkong for ten years. His family embraced Taoism since they moved here seven years ago. Our conversation was simple, but it didn't end just like that.

We communicated a lot. Abiandra often contacted me for brunch or simply walked to the park. I could see how he started to trust me, so I dared myself to ask him about his life. He told me all those basic things about his life. His family, what's his favorite food, where he saw himself in five years and else. His dream was so humble, yet somehow intriguing. He wanted to make his parent happy. He was dying to make his parent proud of him. That was the first time I ever saw him looking vacant and far away.

The more I got to know Abiandra, I could feel there was something hidden. There was something diverge in him. He always chuckled and I got discomfort by seeing his laugh. It sounded desperate and pathetic. The time amount we spent together had me knowing that behind his handsome face and dashing body figure, he had a low self-esteem. Abiandra looked down at himself. I

didn't like it. I hate it when he started to say that he could never do anything, that he was useless.

I always tried to be there for him. A part inside of me wanted to save him and be a hero. I told him about the greatness of God. His grace was flowing upon His children, none other than Abiandra. I knew that he can be saved. I believed that. What had not across my mind was that not everyone wanted to be saved.

Winter came and on a one fine day, Abiandra told me something different.

"I heard voices, Rou"

"What do you mean?"

"I heard voices when I'm alone" he said. I started to notice that his eye bags were darker than before. He was thinner and tired.

"What voices?" I asked him

"I can't.. I can't describe it clearly.. But it kept saying stuff I don't want to hear. I heard screaming and yelling, door banging and plates crashing. I can't sleep but terrified," he chuckled like he usually did.

Once again, I was worried. No wonder he couldn't sleep properly.

"I have that thing.. the thing that makes me scare of myself."

"What's that?" I whispered.

He stopped for a while, looked uncomfortable and gazed vacantly. Finally he opened his mouth and I didn't expect the answer.

"I think I have schizophrenia"

"Isn't that kind of like splitting personality?"

"No. It is a mental illness. I might be a sociopath, Rou."

"But you are not!"

"I don't know, Rou. I'm scared of letting down my parents. I always have been a failure to them."

"Calm down, Abi.. Please tell me since when you can hear voices and why you think that you have that mental illness!"

"I.. I can't say anything. I'm sorry. No more" he stuttered.

I smiled and held his hand. I wanted to save him so badly.

"You can trust me, Abe."

He looked deeply into my eyes and sighed heavily. It took about twenty minutes before he finally opened up. He whispered in despair.

"I was once broke one of the taboo in Taoisme, Rou. I can't tell you what it is, but I broke it. Since that day, I feel like something is wrong. I am wrong, Rou. I heard voices every time when I'm alone. But I don't believe in unscientific data such as spirits or devils. So I searched what is wrong with me and I found out I have some of the symptoms of schizophrenia."

"Have you told your parents about this?"

"There is a moment when I was a kid, I heard my parents quarreled. I asked my parents and they said they didn't do anything and I hallucinated. They looked at me as if I was crazy. I hate the way they look at me, so I never tell them again."

Abiandra continued to talk with anxiety and fears.

"Am I crazy, Rou? I once saw a hand trying to push me down the stairs. I also saw glimpse of body in my room at night. I convinced myself I was having delusions but it seems so real."

I tried as hard as I could not judge him. I knew I had to be careful when it came to Abiandra because he was extraordinary.

"Why don't you talk to psychologist?"

"I have no guts. I'm afraid I will let my parents down. I can't just show up and handed over the test result and say, *"hey mom and dad, look. Your son is crazy"* Do you expect me to do that?" he chuckled again.

"You have to try, Abe. You have to. Otherwise, you will get worse and I don't want that to happen. I don't know what happen in your past, but this is serious. I can only pray for you."

"I don't need any prayers, Rou."

"But God loves..."

"Stop, Rou. I don't need your freaking preaches. I just want someone to listen. It is getting dark outside, you have to go home." He politely asked me to leave him. I hesitated for a moment but then I left. Maybe he needed to have time by himself.

That was the last memory I had of him. I always blamed myself for the day I acted like he needed to be helped. Along the way, I started to realize that sometimes people just wanted to be listened and accepted. I regret that it was the last time I would ever see him. Yesterday, I found out he hung himself

in his apartment. The police found his online diary, he wrote that he heard voices that screaming he had to die, so he did. I cried so hard and recalled every chance that I let slipped out of my hand. I could have saved him and he could have been saved. I looked at his name at his gravestone. "Abiandra", a man intervened between what's real and what's not, just like his name. As I watched his coffin buried in at his funeral, I knew he had lost his own battle and the devil won.

*what is your name?

**can you speak in Mandarin?

The Unseen Thing

I woke up and felt limp that morning because several days of overtime made this head felt heavy. My new job was made me a little bit tired. Well yeah, I was a manager of a reputed company at that time. I live alone, my parents died because of the same thing. They killed themselves. Hang their neck on the knotted rope on the ceiling of the room, but that's okay, at least it could reduce the burden. I just needed to feed myself. I sold out the house and all the legacy of my parents and I used the money for my school's fees till I graduated and was accepted as a manager. How proud I was to myself.

Another story of my life, I've had a romance story with a young lady. Like roses, she had a beautiful face while in the other side she gave a sense of extreme pain. We were in a relationship for more than 5 years but all ended sadistic. She left me for the sake of another man who was far more established than me. I never blamed her, anyway. It was a good choice if she chose to leave me for her good in the future. And since then, I decided to focus on the success of my life. To me, love did not come suddenly, it needed process and took time. Till I met a woman was who able to escort me to fall in love again...

Her name was Joy. Just as the meaning of her name, she spread happiness to everyone near her. She always gave positive energy to all people. And again, she was a compassionate person. I guessed that Joy has one of the perfect character. I did not even see negative gap on her. It was just, me.

"Joy, could you please contact Mr. Harris to cancel the meeting today?"

"Yes, sir, I would, but I think this is important and.."

"Just cancel it, Joy. I feel unhealthy today. I think I need some rest."

"Yes, sir"

Anyway, Joy was my new secretary. After a long time doing my work by myself, Kim suggested me to look for secretary to help me. I didn't want to honestly, but then I changed my decision after I met Joy. The first time we met, I interviewed her by myself and I saw something different from her. Her innocence. Such a kind person and the sincere one. Well, I never imagined this person came to my life before. I didn't know...

"Excuse me, sir."

"Come in, Joy."

"Um.. I bring you a cup of tea and some vanilla cake. I heard this two combination can make someone feel better."

"Really? Nice. Thanks then." I appreciated her for her kindness but Joy just stared at me. Her body did not move at all, I thought she was thinking about something else at the time like indulge in fancies.

"Joy? Hello?"

"Ah.. yes sir?"

"Are you ok? For you stand here with a blank stare."

"Oh! I'm so sorry, sir. Nothing. Please ignore it all and just think this never happen."

I just amazed to see her and it was one of the things that made me tingle.

"Sure. Don't worry about it."

She turned her body without answered me and left me with the tea and vanilla cake. I stared at it for a moment, there was a little white paper titled 'J'espère tu iras mieux que très vite'. Oh.. What a sweet lady. Unconsciously, a small smile etched on my lips.

('J'espère tu iras mieux que très vite' : Get well soon.)

We were getting closer to each other day by day. Joy often went to my apartment and brought me dinner. One day, I did not go to work because I had to attend a seminar. When arrived at the apartment, I found her asleep with the lighted candles at the dining table. I thought she waited for me to have dinner together. I was not sure if I woke her so I decided to move her to the bed. While I was carrying her to the bed, who would guessing? She suddenly woke up and looked at me for a few time.

"I'm sorry. I saw you asleep and just move you to the bed."

She put his hands around my neck, without said a word, swinging melody of love around me that made me lose focus. Yes, we kissed and made love that night. My lechery hooked by her touch and soothing aroma. It was an unforgettable night.

"Hey, how's your day? Is it good? "

"Yes, everything good. There are only a few jobs that I have not been completed yet. How about you?"

"Very well, Mr. Dean. All your schedule for next week has been set. "

"Thanks." I said.

"Um .. Actually, John invited me to come to the reunion show tonight. Do you mind if I.."

I put my spoon and fork and rotate both my eyeballs. John was one of the popular man at her senior high school. She told me that everyone liked him and no one would ever deny it.

"Great, it will be a good party. Just go"

"But, you?"

"Me? Cool." I said.

"Besides, I have to finish my job. This week will be very busy. Do not worry about me, Joy."

We had a little laughed as if everything was fine even though I did not want her to go with John. I felt annoyed when I heard she would go with another man. However, I did not want to hold her. I let her go because I knew she really loved a party.

One another day, I got the good news. Know what? Our company was collapse. Ah.. A-ha-ha-ha.. I can't stop laughing. We were forced to close the company to cover the remaining debt. I used the rest as severance pay to the clerk.

Long after that, I and Joy decided to stay together in my apartment. Almost every night Joy had experienced a harsh treatment from me. I don't know, sometimes I felt unstable and confused where did I had to wreck it all. I'll tell you some stories. That night, when she fell asleep, I came with a bottle of whiskey in my hand. I looked at her body from the corner of the room. I stepped my legs slowly and sipped the whiskey. I touched her and stroked her smoothly, I turned her body and she was surprised. Without saying a word, I swung my hand to her cheek. She was sobbed but did not fight me at all. What I had done? I was crying looking my Joy after that. I swear, I could not resist my lechery for sex that night. I took off all her clothes and start hugged her. She did not refuse me but served me even better. Occasionally, I lashed my belts to Joy's body. Oh, poor Joy...

Sometimes people asked her about what was happened to Joy. Why was her body bruised but she did not answer. Still, she gave her sweet smile from her mouth that began to dim because of me. Why did she not tell the truth? I would be very happy if people knew that it was all because of me. They would report me to the police and I would be in jail. I did not need to think about my life and I would not bother Joy. Let the cops who take care of me. Anyway, just to mention, Joy worked in cafe and earned money so that we could eat and sometimes I grabbed it from her only to buy whiskey.

I hated myself. I hated that why should I hurt someone I love? On the other hand, I often asked myself, did I love Joy? I realized that I've done a lot of harm to her. I did not want it getting bad for me and for her.

The day before my engagement day with Joy, I chose to walk away. I was not ready for that, I was afraid to hurt her for another time. Foolishly, I did not think the impact that would be felt by Joy at that time. How she really hoped for that day. I could see the happiness shining bright from her face and her enthusiasm in setting up our engagement day.

I did not know what happened to Joy after the day when I left her. Selfish, indeed. I just needs time for everything, like what I said before, love did not come suddenly, and it needed proceed and took time. If only Joy was able to be patient and waited for me, I would be very happy to see her in my arms. I just wished she could be with the new of me, the man who was able to love her as well as she loved me.

I spent my time to work as a laborer in a secluded village. Life in there was quite good. I did not need more money to feed myself. Mrs. Petters often fed me. They treated me like their own son. But still, they were not my parents. I was born from a prostitute woman and my parents were not a good person.

Every day I had to go down to the field and plowing fields. The sweat dropped down on my face and covered all of my body. Whenever I leaned my body, I looked at the pictures of Joy in the necklace that I wore around my neck. I always remembered that she was the purpose in my life at this time. I had to change for her. I felt much better during the time I stayed in this village. Many things could be learned and bear in life. Occasionally, I regreted everything that has happened in my life so far.

"Dean... Dean...."

"Hey, what's up Mrs. Pete?"

"Here, I bring you some food. Don't push yourself too much. You have to take a little rest and continued it later."

"Oh.. Thank you Mrs. Pete. I will finish it now and take a rest later. It almost done.

Mrs. Pete then went over to her beloved husband. Seeing the two of them together, made me think of Joy. Someone who might waiting for my existence. I was sure of it.

One day, I decided to go into town and see Joy there. I brought her a bouquet of red roses that still had thorns and hoped she liked it. I knocked on her door but no one answered. I've to get in and found out that the door was not locked. I could not found her everywhere. I called her name as a child lost his mother. Then an elderly woman came out of the room which we used to sleep together.

"Oh.. who are you young man?"

"Why are you asking me? Who are you?" Where's Joy?"

"Joy? Why do you asking about her? She is not here anymore. Joy was gone."

"Don't play with me, old lady. Just tell me, where's my Joy?"

"Pardon me? Why did you say 'my Joy'? Are you her boyfriend?"

"Yea, I'm Dean. I am her fiancée who had gone some time to prepare everything. I love her very much and now I want to pay for all the mistakes that have done to her. Now tell me, where is Joy?"

She looked grim. Her head was bowed as she stepped toward the couch, not far from where we stood right now. Near the sofa, there was a small table with one shelf. She opened the rack and took a white envelope.

"Joy just left this right under her body." She showed the white envelope to me.

"What do you mean?" I started to worry. My breath began irregular. My mind was already disoriented.

"After you left Joy, she was getting frustrated and depressed. She became a loner in her bedroom, she was even difficult to communicate with others. I took care of her all this time and I found her getting worse day by day. One day, heavy rain fell. Joy moaning, screaming. She was like a woman who saw the ghost. She sat in the

corner of her room and wrapped in a blanket. I felt really sorry for her, poor Joy. I accompanied her to sleep in her bedroom, until she felt asleep and then left her alone. The next day, I wanted to give her, her breakfast. But unluckily, I found her body hanging on the ceiling of the room and her life was not saved. I couldn't even say anything. I put my tray down on the table next to her bed and then watched the body of that poor child. I saw an envelope was just below her hanging. I took it and I saw there was a name there. I took the initiative to save it and waited for someone to come looking for her. Until finally you came here... It's for you, Mr. Dean. "

I took the envelope with trembling hands. Then I opened and readed it ..

Dear Mr. Dean

I never expect to meet you and fall in love with you as fast as lightning strike Sahara. I do not care what you've done to me, the thing that I know is that I love you from the deepest of my heart. The pain that I felt when I'm with you, is the thing that I considered as the way you love me. Forgive me if my efforts are not enough to make you happy and stay with me. However, I thank you because you left me a day before the day of our engagement. At least I can feel the happiness that actually was not real. I understand, I was not a priority for you. When you read this letter I'm sure you've been with other women who are much better than me. I'm so happy for that, Mr. Dean. It was just me who are not able to be with anyone else except you. I chose this way for the sake of me. Please forgive me .. I love you.

With Love,

Joy Thompson

"That's the letter.." Mr.Dean said to the nun who looked after him.

"All right, Mr.Dean. I think today's story is enough. Now it's time to take medicine and rest. Tomorrow we will continue the story. "

"Story? What is the story? Oh I remember, I did kill my father because he always hurt my mother."

"Oh, really?"

"Yes, but she is too stupid to realized that my step father is not good for her and then she became angry with me and kill herself."

"Ow, enough Mr.Dean. Get some rest then. Doctor Jane will control you tomorrow."

"I don't need to be controlled. I'm not mad! Hey! Wait! You crazy lil bastard! Hey!!"

"Ohh.. Joy.. When will you come here to take me out from this scared place....."

Half Of Me

The evening sky was very dark like it was night already. Outside of this building, the water was falling hard like a waterfall. I was sitting alone in the school lobby waiting for my Mommy to pick me up. I looked around and found nothing. The students had already left an hour ago. I sighed for the umpteenth times already. If I knew that my Mommy were late, I would've come home by myself. Shall I call Mama?

I put my phone in my pocket when I saw a yellow car stopped. I walked to that car. Fiuhhh! I was happy. Finally, I could leave this resentful place.

"Mommy, where have you been?"

Mommy gave me a motherly smile and pinched my cheek. "I bought your favorite cake before picking you up. Don't you see it?" Mommy pointed a blue box in front of me.

"I thought you forgot to pick me up." I was grinning to her. "Anyway, thank you for the cake."

She nodded her head. "Hey! I will never forget to pick you up, dear. You have to remember that in your head!"

I smiled happily. I felt proud of my parents. They always saved their precious time for me. Although they were busy, still they were always there for me.

The rain had stopped when we arrived at home. The smell of food embraced our noses immediately. I greeted my Mama first before going to the bedroom.

Mama greeted back and hugged me. "Take a bath first and we will have dinner after that." I nodded my head and left the kitchen.

I did not need much time to clean up my body. I hummed my favorite song while I was walking into the dining room.

"How was your school going?"

"Nothing special, Ma. It was same as usual."

"Are they still bullying you because of us?" They gave me their apologetic smile.

I just kept silent. NO! NO! I did not like it. The memories from the first time my parents enrolled me to school and the memories when I was in junior high school always haunted me. I closed my eyes to banish those memories away. The memories that always appeared whenever I saw violence or I heard harsh words.

“She doesn't have a father.”

“How do you know it?”

“I had never seen her with her father like our other friends.”

I looked at them and shouted. “I have a father! I have a father! I HAVE A FATHER!” Tears poured down my cheeks.

“Look! Who's just coming? We have a bastard here.”

One of the students added with hatred. “Why the headmaster lets someone like her in this school?”

“For this 3 years, I never meet your father at the school events. I doubt if you have a father. Or is your mother a whore?”

The laughter became even louder. “So, you are the daughter of a bitch.”

I walked fast to my table. Didn't dare to look at their faces. I hate them. They acted as a group, mocking and treating me like a trash. I had to control my emotion.

~~~

*Bugh...*

I knew someone had pushed me. My right knee felt hurt. Blood started to drip down. I turned around and saw all of the students laughed at me. In minute I was about to stand, I felt someone poured a bucket of water over my head. I clenched my palms and looked around with loathing face. *'Acelin, they will still make fun of you if you retaliate them. Just get off from here.'*

*'NOW!'*

*'Acelin, give them a lesson, so they cannot disparage you.'*

*'Do not listen to her, baby! Leave this place, now!'*

I shook my head. It was strange, I heard so many voices inside my head.

“Acelin.”

“Acelin?!”

“Acelin!”

“Acelin, are you okay?”

I gave them my smile. “I am perfectly fine, Mom. You and Mama do not need to be worried about me. They are not bullying me. Yeah, at least for this week.”

Mommy sighed. “Bullying and violence have become a kind of life style among teenagers these days. Mommy thinks about changing your school into homeschooling like your elementary school.”

“You do not have to do that. I am strong. Do Mama and Mommy remember the meaning of my name? I am Acelin Gricelle, a noble heroine.”

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Did you get confused with the situation in my family? I bet you had been questioning yourself where my father was. To be honest, I did not know where he was either, how his figure was and what his name was because I had never seen him. Both Mama and Mommy had never shown me his photo nor told me about him. Mommy said that Mama was my father, but a father should be a man, right?

For 17 years I had suppressed my inquisitive to ask Mommy about who my father was. I had trained myself to ignore what they said about me. It was not easy to deal with a bunch of dope students who liked to bully me every day. Impersonating as if there were nothing happened in front of my parents. I once had thought of self-destruction to lessen my pain, yet I had never done that. Sometimes there was a voice who asked me to let the bullying go and sometimes the other voices would ask me the opposite.

One night, when I wanted to go to the kitchen, I accidentally eavesdropped the conversation between Mama and Mommy. In that conversation they mentioned my name several times. I froze in front of their bedroom. I knew there was something fishy. I could not catch what they said clearly, but I knew that they had mentioned about sperm, a tube, a certain process and my name. I decided not continue to eavesdrop their conversation until they finished.

“Nara, what is disturbing your mind?”

Mama was sounded solicitude. Mommy just kept silent and snuggled with Mama. She closed her eyes and hugged her waist. Mama caressed Mommy's hair softly. She gave butterfly kisses to her face. "Tell me, dear."

Mama continued while giving kisses on Mommy's earlobe. "Although we have been married for 18 years and have Acelin, I still cannot read your mind. For your information, I am not a mind-reader."

Mommy let out a chuckle. She cupped her face. "I want to know something and you have to tell me the truth. All of the truth about Acelin."

"Acelin? Why? What happened to her? Is anybody making her suffering? Mommy glared at Mama to shut her up.

"Okay! Please, go on!"

"Whose sperm that you used for the insemination process?"

Confused, Mama looked at Mommy. "I was checking everything about the sperm at that tube. The sperm didn't have diseases at all. The man who own the sperm also has a good reputation. So, what is wrong with it?"

"Who is the name of that man?"

"He is Reynand, but I forget his complete name. Wait a minute! Why you ask it now? Do you know him? Do you have a relationship with him?"

Mommy shook her head quickly. "You know that I only love you, right? Why do you still doubt me? I am just curious because Acelin's face is similar with someone from my past. The one that I had told you before we started our relationship."

"Do you mean your ex-boyfriend?"

Mommy nodded her head. "Yesterday, I accidentally saw his face on the news article in the internet and somehow her face is similar to him."

Since that night, their conversation always lingered on my mind. I wanted to ask them about it, but my guts were not that big. So, I chose to seal my mouth for a while.

I inhaled deeply and prepared myself for today. Weekdays had always been a long day for me. '*You will be okay, Acelin. If someone tries to mess up with you, you can beat them.*' I shook my head. Why I always heard that voices?

I walked to my class. Thankfully, I did not meet those thickheaded girls.

"Acelin! Good morning!" He greeted me, but I just ignored him.

Since the first time I entered this senior high school until now I was in the last year, he was the only one who wanted to have interaction with me. I didn't know his reason and I did not want to know either.

"Acelin, why do you never greet me back?"

"What do you want?"

"I just want to get closer to you. Am I wrong?"

"Nope, not at all. For your information, I don't want to make friends with anyone. I bet you have known about me from those students, right? So, why do you still want to do it?"

"I do not care with your family background if that what your concern is."

"Still, I do not want to be your friend."

"Aharon and Acelin, if you two still want to talk, get out from my class!" I glared to the guy next to me. He always troubled me.

I tried to focus with the lesson today, but the conversation between Mommy and Mama remained on my brain. I could not wait any longer. I had to know my identity.

Talking about Aharon, I had to admit that he was a nice guy. I pity him. I just could not show my good attitude to him. What happened to me in the past had shaped me into the new Acelin.

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"Do you want to say something important until you gathered us here?"

I nodded firmly. I stared at Mommy and Mama. "Since I was a child, you had never talked about my father. Mommy only said that Mama is my father. I tried to believe it. I erased the bad thoughts in my head because I trust you both. Now, I want to know who my father is. I have to know the truth. I know that a woman cannot produce sperm."

"Acelin, we think that you need to know about it, too."

I begged to them. "Please, tell me everything."

Mama moved beside me before she started. "25 years ago, Mama met with your Mommy when we were still undergraduate students. We had become closer and closer each day. At that time, your Mommy was broken hearted and I was the one who listened to her sadness. One day, your Mommy told me that she fell in love with me. I was surprised for sure but happy at the same time. I did not answer her. In fact, I left her for some

months. I needed to make sure that it was not her way to release her pain. Mommy had never been weary to contact me. After that, we decided to be a couple. I had never supposed that your Mommy would fall in love with a girl."

"Was Mama fell in love first with Mommy?"

"Yes, I was. I had never told her because I knew that she was not a lesbian. That was why I was so surprised when she said that she loved me."

"I also did not know the reason why I loved your Mama. Call me crazy, but I cannot deny that feeling."

"How could you marry Mommy? We know that it is illegal in this country, right?"

"We went to USA and held a wedding in there. We decided to live there for two years."

"How can I be born? Was I adopted?"

"NO! You are our own child. We had never adopted a baby. We had you from the insemination process. It was a tough process, but everything is worth in the end."

"Insemination?" I had heard that word, yet I did not know what the meaning was.

"Because Mommy wanted to have a child, Mama went to a sperm bank to find a tube of sperm for the insemination process. That was not easy to find the right one. Wait a minute. I still have all the files about the insemination process."

"Can I see it, Ma?"

Mama went to her bedroom. "Acelin, are you disappointed with the fact that you were born in the family like us?"

"I am not disappointed with this condition. I'm just angry because they always said that I am a bastard, a girl without a father and that you are a whore."

Mommy caressed my back while hugging me. "Forgive us, dear. Mommy knows that we should not come back to this country."

I cried silently. I could not hold it anymore. I wiped my tears when I heard Mama was calling me.



“This is the map which is contained the files about the insemination process. There is also a photo of the man who owned the sperm inside. You can read it.”

I put the map on the table and hugged both of them. Although I was born from a family that far from normal, I still proud of them.

“Can I see the photo of that man? I need to know who he is.”

Mommy suddenly spoke. I could see from her face that it was not finished yet. “Let’s see together then.” I opened the map and took the photo.

I sat in there, froze. That voice started to speak again in my head. *‘Acelin, you have met this man at school. Do you remember Aharon’s father? Yes, he is Aharon’s father.’*

“Is he... is he the one t- that-?”

“Nara, do you know this man?” Mama was startled when she saw Mommy’s shocked face.

“He was my ex-boyfriend. The man who treated me like a trash in front of his friends. He had even said that I was a bitch because he saw me with my uncle at the hotel lobby.” Mommy’s voice was filled with anger.

*‘You should meet that man, Acelin. He has made your Mommy suffering. He has to get his gift.’* I shook my head rapidly. I didn’t want to hear that voice. I clenched my palms.

“Acelin, what happens to you?”

“I... know... him...”

“You know Mommy’s ex-boyfriend?”

I inhaled deeply and nodded. I did not know why I could not control my emotion. “He is the father of my friend.”

“Have you ever met him?”

“Yes. At school.” My voice sounded so cold. It was not my usual self. I never used that kind of tone to talk to my parents.

“Mama and Mommy prohibited you to meet or to talk to him and his child, too.”

I only nodded my head. I could not talk much. Too many secrets that had been revealed tonight. I could not accept it. How could the life be so cruel to me?

Three months had passed so quickly. Behind my Mommy's back, I had collected data about that man. I also befriended with Aharon. I felt sorry for him because I just used him to help me, to hide my plan to destroy his father.

The first thing that I wanted to do was took over his company. Hey! I warned you not to underestimate me. Mama had prepared me to be her heirs, so, I knew a bit about how to manage a company. I knew from Mama that his company was on the brink of bankruptcy. I talked to Mama and persuaded her to buy all the stocks of his company. I told her about the reason why I wanted to buy that company. Thankfully Mama agreed with me. The first plan was succeeded.

I could see how the students in school gave bad treatments to Aharon after his father's company collapsed. Most of the girls were mocking him and the boys did not want to hang out with him. I felt satisfied. At least, I could give him a small revenge through his only son. Now, Aharon's life would never be the same.

The final exam was in the blink of an eye. I was sure that I succeeded in making Aharon's life dire. I always found him more quite than Aharon that I knew before. His grade was slowly decreased. Honestly, I was tired of pretending to be his good friend, but I should keep everything in place until the final exam was ended.

It was the day when I should give him the next gift. I bought a motorcycle and I sent it to Aharon's home. Before I sent it, I borrowed the phone from stranger and called Aharon's father. I told him that there was a foundation which wanted to give him a motorcycle. I knew the news would make his heart rested forever because of heart attack.

My phone rang when I was about to enter the car. I answered the phone and tried to hide the happiness from my voice. Aharon told me that his father was dying because he was too happy. I told him my deepest condolence before I ended the call.

The day after tomorrow, I and my parents came into the cemetery. We attended the burial ceremony to complete my plan. We set aside our time to have a small talk with Aharon before we back to home.

"Your grudge was paid now. That man's son had paid of what his father had done to you."

Mama sat beside Mommy and put her hand on Mommy's shoulder.

"Tell me how can you kill him behind my back? Especially you, Acelin. You have killed your own father."

“You are so wrong, Mom. My own father was here with me. I do not want to have a father like that whoreson. He has made you feel the pain for a long time and he should pay for it.”

“And... our daughter was planned all of these. She was the one who worked and I just provided her the breads.”

Mommy was amazed by the story. To think again about it, I never realized when I made those plans.

“That’s impossible for Acelin to do it.”

Mama grinned to myself. “I know that is not our Acelin who do all that things. That’s her other half.”

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# Let Me Love Her

The morning came and the sun shone in the sky. However, a woman was still lying on the bed. Her name was Krystal Nadine, a beautiful name which was given by her parents.

A 24 year old beautiful woman who had perfect life which made everyone around her felt envious. A loving family, beautiful face with pointed nose and red lips, a healthy body, nice personalities, good career and intelligent. She was not able to sleep last night. She listened to a song repeatedly and thought about what had happened to her.

It started three months ago when she felt bored with her boyfriend, Jonathan who was a manager in a well-known company. She thought that he had no enough time for her. Her curiosity and loneliness made her decided to join an online chatting site.

After she had joined that site for one week, she met Jerry. His profile picture showed that he was a tall and handsome man. He had captivated Nadine's heart. They'd been chatting all day long to the point when they felt they had a special feeling to each other.

Nadine fell in love with Jerry although they had never met before. She felt that she got the love she had never received from Jonathan. Jerry's compliments, attention, gifts made her days happier. She did not care about Jonathan again.

It was a beautiful night when the couple was going to meet for the first time at Mochi Café. Nadine wore a pink dress and black high heels. She was waiting nervously for Jerry. She remembered Jerry said that he wore a white shirt.

After a while, someone was approaching Nadine.

"Are you Nadine?" asked the woman who wore a jacket jeans and T-shirt.

"Yes. I am Nadine." said Nadine, confused about what happened.

"Hello Nadine, I am Jerry's sister. My name is Jessica. He is not able to come because he is sick. He really wants you to visit him. He asked me to pick you up." said that woman again.

Nadine was getting more confused. She remembered Jonathan did not say that to her.

"I was the one who replied your message" said Jessica.

Jessica asked Nadine to go to her apartment with her because Jerry was there. Then, Nadine followed Jessica to her car. Inside the car, they did not speak many words. They were in their own thought. Nadine was really panicked and sad about Jerry's condition. Ten minutes later, they arrived at Jessica's apartment. Nadine complimented Jessica's apartment because of the nice interior. But then, Nadine realized there was something wrong.

"Where is Jerry?" Nadine asked to Jessica.

Nadine had looked at every corner of the apartment, yet she did not find Jerry. She started to feel terrified. She knew something was wrong.

"Are you lying to me? Let me go home." said Nadine to Jessica.

"Yes. I lied to you. Not only about Jerry's situation but also his existence. He had never existed. I am the person, who used to chat with you, remember that, darling? I want to confess this since a month ago but I was afraid that you will leave me, babe. I'm falling in love with you." said Jessica while holding Nadine's hands.

"Do not dare to touch me. You are so disgusting." said Nadine to her.

"What? You call me disgusting? Don't you remember our love? You had said you love me. Why do you change?" said Jessica, walking closer to Nadine.

"Are you crazy? You are a big liar. Get lost!" said Nadine angrily. She tried to open the apartment's door but the door was locked. She realized that she was in dangerous situation with a lesbian who pretended to be Jerry.

"Don't come near me or I will...."

Before she could finish her words, Jessica kissed her passionately as if she did not want to lose her.

Nadine, the perfect woman who had hid her sexuality could not hide her feelings. She suddenly felt so deep in love with Jessica. She felt as if she had finally found the home for her other side. She was a bisexual. That was the fact she had hid for the past years, even her own parents did not know about that. She tried to get rid of that feeling but she could not. She always felt her heart beating fast when a woman touched her.

She and Jessica kissed each other till they were sure that nothing would separate them again.

Since that day, she and Jessica met more often. They said to their parents and even Nadine's boyfriend that they were only friends but no one knew the

truth until Nadine's engagement day. Nadine still remembered clearly about that.

"Miss Nadine, please put the ring into your fiancé's ring finger." said the Master of Ceremony

Nadine was thinking for a while then she encouraged herself. "Sorry, I cannot continue this engagement." said Nadine in front of the guests. "I do not love him."

"Are you crazy? What are you doing? Are you going out of mind" said her father.

"Mom, Dad. I am so sorry for everything but there is something I want to tell you. I have felt that I'm not like the other women who only love men since a long time ago, but both of you do not know that. I am bisexual. I did love him at that time but he is so busy and I've found someone else. That person is the woman standing behind him. Her name is Jessica. I love her." said Nadine bravely that made all of the guests shocked including her parents and Jessica.

"What are you saying, Nadine? Nadine, do not say something like that." said her mother while crying.

Nadine knew that nobody would believe her even her own parents. She could feel everyone was looking at her in disgust. She did not care. That she would be able to be with Jessica was the only important thing for her.

"Go! You're an ungrateful child! Do not ever come back again to my house. You are not my daughter anymore. My daughter has died." her father said angrily.

She cried every time she heard that song because she could not understand why people were like that. Why she could not choose what she wanted.

Jessica comforted her. For Nadine, Jessica was a home for her and she felt comfortable with her. Since she was kicked out from her house, she lived in Jessica's apartment. The fact that they lived in a country where LGBT was still something taboo made them could not express their feeling freely outside home or else face in disgust would be shown to them.

She did not cry anymore. She went to kitchen to prepare lunch alone because Jessica went out to meet her friends.

While she was cooking, she suddenly heard someone opened the apartment's door. She thought it was Jessica but before she could say

something, someone covered her mouth with handkerchief. She lost her consciousness.

"That stupid girl wakes up." said Jessica to her friends.

She just realized that everything was planned by Jessica and her friends. She was wrong, Jessica never loved her. All that she wanted was her wealth. Her felt hurt, tears rolling down from her eyes, she had never imagined someone whom she loved so much would do something like that.

She tried to reach a knife near her but Jessica saw it. Jessica asked her where she saved all of her money but she did not want to tell Jessica. Although Jessica threatened her, she was not afraid. The sincere and deep love had turned into hatred. She regretted the decision that she had made. If only she had not followed her lust at that time, everything would've been different. If only she did not follow her feeling and ran away from home, if only she had chosen her family instead or her love, if only...

The sharp knife had pierced her stomach before she could finish the words inside her head.

"I want to ask you something. Have you ever loved me?" said Nadine to Jessica.

"No. I had never loved you. All that I ever did is pretending to love someone who is repulsive like you. Now that I will get what I want, I do not need you again." says Jessica.

They left her inside the apartment alone. She had died but no one knew.

No one knew where her soul had gone. Did it go to a place where there was an eternal life for those who were faithful to their religion like what the religious leaders said or to a place where a bisexual like her would be judged and damned in hell? No one knew but God.

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# I Love You...

## 11 years ago

*"Hello, Princess. You look so beautiful today." He firmly said.*

*"Thank you, Prince." I shyly answered.*

I still remembered the way his cute face and beautiful eyes stared at me for seconds. It showed how pure and innocent the thing that would happen. It was the very first time I was acquainted with love. I knew I was just a six year old kid, but this feeling was so true and it kept growing that I couldn't even handle it. His gaze kept me silent till he tried to make a conversation again with me.

*"Does the monster still bother you?" He asked.*

*"Yes, Prince. It still bothers me especially at night. I'm scared, Prince." I murmured.*

*"Don't worry, Princess. I will always be here and protect you from bad things." He warmly said and hugged me.*

*I asked him to make sure "You promise?"*

*"I promise." He certainly answered while still hugging me.*

Today's subject was so boring that it unconsciously drowned me in my memory of eleven years ago when I realized that I loved him so much. The time when I knew that love actually could be that simple. The time when I knew exactly what I wanted in life. To be honest, I could easily get another guy. A lot of my friends said that I was actually beautiful, I had straight long black hair, pointed nose, bright skin and a cute smile. Getting a guy to replace him would be a piece of cake for me, but my feeling was more than just a physical appearance and getting rid of someone. I drowned deeply to the memory of me and him that I didn't even want to see the surface until suddenly I heard a shrill voice whispering my name and pulled me out to the land.

"Jenny! Jenny!" The shrill voice apparantely came from my pretty bestfriend, Pita.

I was caught off guard, I knew what would happen next. She would just chase after me with so many questions just like what she usually did.



“Daydreaming? Again?” she said. “It has been so many time I caught you daydreaming, Jen. Can you at least give me a hint about the guy of your dream? Who is that?” She insisted.

“I told you it's secret, Pita. We have to be quiet or the teacher will scold us.” I whispered.

I could see Pita was a little bit unsatisfied with my answer. I felt kinda bad not to tell my bestfriend about that guy. I was just not ready. I felt that this was not the perfect time to tell her or even everyone. Besides, I thought it was always fun to tease Pita.

*Krrriing....*

The bell rang, meaning to say it was time to go home. I always loved the sound of my school bell. It was not because I would go home and rest. Well, it might have been true, but there was something more important rather than going home and resting. It was my precious 45 minutes when I would spend my time with the man of my dream during my way home. He was a little bit busy lately so that I had to use the every minute wisely to get to know him better and recreate our memory together. I couldn't hide my excitement that appearantly I left Pita behind and rushly ran to see whether he was already there or not. I was waiting for couple minutes until I saw a black sedan car stoped in front of me. The window slowly opened that finally I could see the owner clearly. He was about 23 year old, young and very attractive. I could see he was wearing blue shirt, black pants, and his hair was combed neatly. His look slightly reminded me of the young Leonardo Di Caprio though a little bit oriental.

“What are you doing there? Come in!” Said the guy inside the black sedan car.

“30 minutes, Bama. You are late for 30 minutes.” I said while getting in the car.

“Sorry. I had a thing to do before I pick you up. I hope you are okay with that?” he could clearly read my expression that I didn't like him being late. He tried to get my attention back by changing the topic.

“It's your first week going back to high school, right? You are in a third grade now. Here, I have a present for you,” he said while handing a cute pink small box to lap.

I was so touched and felt guilty for being mad at him, “Bama, I'm so sorry. You should have just told me that you were late because you prepared a present for me, then I woudn't be mad at you. By the way, can I open it?”

"Sure." He said cheerfully.

I rashly opened the box and found a beautiful silver bracelet and immediately thanked him "Thanks, Bama. I love it very much."

"I know my girl will love it." He said.

My heart is suddenly pumping and my thought was full of questions. 'My girl' he said? Did it make me become his? Was I truly his girl? Arrhhh... Please stopped hanging my feeling and just making a move on me already. I couldn't resist my own thought. I ended up being annoyed of it.

With a hoarse voice I nervously answered, "Yeah, you know me."

We spent most of the time talking about our memory together and then burst into laugh. I didn't realize that I had spent 30 minutes. It meant that in 15 minutes, this intimate time would be over. I tried to use my time carefully. I deeply looked at him. I saw everything from him was still the same, his cute face, his beautiful eyes and smile, and even the strong feeling to protect me. Protecting me as his little sister. The fact that we were siblings slapped me all the time. I wish I could love him more than just a sibling. I wish he belonged to me utterly.

I lived with a believe that love couldn't be wrong. This feeling was so true and it kept growing whenever he was around even though this feeling made me happy and scared at the same time. I couldn't let people knew this pure and innocent feeling that I had for him only. I was scared of being judged. A lot of poeple said that we could love whoever we want. Then why couldn't I love him? I might have been very naive, but I just wanted to be honest with what I actually felt. This feeling was beyond philia love. It was much more complicated, this was the love between man and women, between Adam and Eve, between Bama and Jenny. I love you, Bama, my older brother, my first love, my Prince...

# Le Récit de la Mort

He had been around for a long time and he would remain here after everyone long gone. He settled next to God, they began and ended the creation side by side. But he had never been either a part of hell or an angel of heaven. He was the biggest fear for almost every human. No matter what you did, who you were or where you were, he would come to take the very core of you when its your due.

He did not remember the beginning of his existence. He did not know where he was from or where he would be back to when his duty had done. All he knew was that there must be someone to put an end to every start. He was there when you were breathing for the first time and he would be there when you draw your last.

He was Mort. He owned a number of names and depictions. He was the antagonist for some and he was the protagonist for the others. He did not discriminate nor could he be bribed. He would still take you with him no matter how well you hide.

He had always been the obedient servant of God. He took mortals' life and ushered their souls to the afterlife. Yes, he was that till Sévérine Le Blanc. A woman who lost the desire for life. A mortal who made him temporarily cared about mortal life.

He was there when she was born in Antwerp, Belgium during the World War 1. She breathed the air for the first time inside the small hidden chamber of Le Blanc family's big house. She came from a nobel family who had to let their home country to be destroyed by Germans after the government refused to give free passage for Germans in Belgian territory. Her crying was drowned by the sounds of cannons and merciless bullets rain. Her mother died giving birth to her. Her father lived long enough only to prepare her for an escape. He then died from an accidental headshot on his way to the evacuation team, leaving her safely wrapped in fabrics on the ground with a note containing the name of her and the address of her uncle in France.

She was evacuated and lived for 3 months with the evacuation team till one of them brought her to her uncle in Savoie, France. She grew up to be a lively girl until Mort took away the rest of her family through the Second World War. She moved to Toulon and live a lonely life of a nurse in the Navy.

She treated the wounded till they healed or lived long enough to face their death. She was not emotionally demonstrative, but the deaths of her friends changed her. She grew quieter than ever. She was continuously trying to find something for her to fight for. Though so, she gradually losing herself and her love for life.

She used to love her job, now she grew tired of it. She used to feel delight when she saw family reunite after a long separation from war, now she only looked at them blankly and got on with her life. She used to be careful in everything she did, now she barely avoid the danger. She started to lose herself and constantly asking when her turn to die will due.

Mort had always been there with her. He still continue doing his duty, but he always stopped for a while for Sévérine. He visited her at least forty times a day. He had always been there to watch her doing things. She had never seen him for he always hid himself under the black cloak and the different dimension between them helped him to remain invisible to mortal beings. He was there when she wrapped a bandage around a marine's wounded thigh. He was there when she ran back and forth in the battlefield rescuing casualties. Even now when she was in her bedroom facing the open window, sitting on the edge of her bed wearing her short satin night gown and her wavy red hair danced with the gentle wind. Her skin was pale, it made a visible contrast between her skin and the gown under the moonlight ray from the window. She sat there with her back slightly bend with the palms of her hands covering her face. She was almost crying, he remained there standing next to her. He was always there every night she did this.

“Why am I still alive?” She asked. “Everyone is dead. Why can't I be dead too?”

He shifted position. Now he stood in front of her looking at her hidden face through his charcoal black eyes. He stood afloat in the air, barefoot and holding a wielded scythe. His skin was as white as paper with no sign of veins. His body was hidden beneath a long black cloak. For once, he wanted to communicate with a mortal being, with her. He had been around her long enough to understand her lack of living desire. He wanted to tell her that her turn will come eventually and that she must continue living now for God still gave her the chance to breathe.

He did not do anything for some time even though he wanted to. Not because it was forbidden for Mort to talk to mortal beings, but it would be rather queer for her to see him or to talk with him. He hesitated for a while. He watched her crying till she curled herself into a ball. She looked like a fetus when she did it since she had a petite body. He did not know why, but he

finally decided to make himself visible for her. He moved to the window before he did so, so she would not see his face.

She did not notice him at first, but she gradually did. He was standing tall with his back facing the open window, hindering the moonlight to enter her room. She was shocked. Her green eyes opened wide and she stopped her sob immediately once she was aware of the occurrence. She did not scream, she stood on her feet and came closer to him. He stopped her by shielding himself with the scythe. She stopped few feet away from him.

"*Mon Dieu...* Are you coming to take me?" She calmly asked. There was no sign of fear in her eyes. She seemed to have been prepared for such moment since a long time ago.

He drew his scythe back and looked at her green eyes. She did not shiver at all. Her feet remained fixated on the ground. Her night gown and red hair was blown gently by the wind.

"I am not. I am here to remind you of how valuable your life is.", Mort said. His voice was otherworldly gentle and clear.

She did not say anything. She simply observed his appearance. Her lips pressed into a thin line and her green eyes moved from Mort's head to toe. She noticed that his feet did not touch the ground, there were no veins in him, no sign of blood flow, not even skinpores. His skin was white as paper, even for his lips. His eyes were charcoal black, there were no scleras framing his irises. He stood tall before her eyes. His right hand was firmly holding the scythe whereas his left hand holding an hourglass. The scythe looked so sharp. It gleamed slightly in the touch of the moonlight ray. He had the appearance of a man, but not earthly man.

She startled when he draw closer to her. He put the scythe between them. He looked at her as she struggled to look at his eyes.

"Why? You don't need to, do you?" She asked Mort.

"I don't have to, but you evoked something in me. You stir my curiosity. Every other mortal being is afraid of me. They want me to come and take their soul with me as late as possible in the least painful way possible. And then, there is you. You keep asking me to take you with me almost everyday." Mort answered. "Live your life first before you die. There is no guarantee on how or when you will die, but it is certain that each creature will meet its due. I will come to tell you when yours comes. There is a reason why you still wake up every morning and survive every moment near death. You have been granted a good life. Don't abuse it."

“You took everyone I love throughout these wars of human interests. You gave them painful deaths as if their wounded heart and body did not suffer enough. Do you know how evil that is? I used to curse you when someone I love died. But now that I have no one else to care about, I see the reason why people expecting you to come early.” Sévérine said while staring right through his eyes.

“Sévérine, there's timing for everything.” Uttered Mort as he disappeared.

After Mort's visit Sévérine continued her life. It took her years to find something to hold on to in life. She found Pierre La Grande and built a family of four. Mort kept visiting her, invisibly witnessing everything she did till her very last moment of life.

She had braved the wars that made her lose the desire of living. Now she was old and laid weakly on her deathbed in her silky white night gown. Her hand was held by her grandson and her hair was caressed by her husband. Mort made himself visible once again only for her. She smiled at him for she knew it was her due. She closed her eyes as he took away her soul with him. Her family cried in deep sadness after she died.

Mort continued his duty. He flew across the earth collecting souls to be ushered to the afterworld. He knew there would be other Sévérine's from time to time, there would be mortals who lost their life desire for one reason and another. But he was Death, he did not discriminate nor could he be bribed. He was neither the protagonist nor the antagonist. He was God's counterpart in continuous process of creation. He would always be the one who puts an end in every start.

## The 13

It was 9 pm when I entered my new room in my new apartment. It was neat, clean, and live. I didn't see any gray aura of this monochromatic room. The tables, bed, chairs, and mirror were placed and organized just like my apartment before. Besides, the air was just like the desert in the morning. It was cold yet warm, more than the lamp for an egg. My room number was 13 that is located on the ninth floor of this building. I could be daddy's little girl when I felt strange but not in this room, my room, Louis' room. Yes, it was mine.

As the day was pleasant in the next morning, I strolled around and got some pleasure from a book store in front of the apartment. The book store was old. The wall was made by a very dark brown wood which brought a scent that I couldn't describe. The smell of the bookstore, which was sweet and fragrant, I closed my eyes to feel the sensuous atmosphere, made me walk to the old woman who sat like a sack in the rocky chair. Her name was Madam Sarah. She dressed with a white lace dress, round glasses, gold earrings and pearl bracelets. I've never seen an old woman wearing those kinds of clothes these days. Her long white curly hair turned into silver when it was covered by the sunlight. She looked at me in a glance.

"In what guts you came here young girl?" said Madam Sarah in a husky voice.

"I just came here last night, in the Amityville Apartment I live now. It's a nice little town. "I love your bookstore anyway." I answered briefly and sheepishly.

"What books do you want to read? Reading a book represents your real life. It may be come true." She didn't even smile and gave a cold face full of nothingness. I felt discomfort and left her in the rocking chair to look around in the book racks. All the books were magnificently aged yet well taken care of. The red blood colored book with the title "THIRTEENTH" which was typed in a gold ink for the cover caught my eyes. I read the synopsis on the back that told about the thirteenth murdering scene in Amityville many years ago. I came to Madam Sarah to pay for the book. I eagerly took my wallet on my little yellow bag.

"You don't have to pay for that book." She answered in a monotone voice.

“But, why? I thought it was about \$82.3. I have money for that. I work and I live in front of your old bookstore. In Amityville Apartment, who doesn't know Amityville Apartment? It is only for the rich. I left the money to you. Have a blessed day. Thank you.” I felt insulted with her answer for not paying the book.

Before I came out, Madam Sarah shouted “What is your room number?”

In a great mad I answered “Number 13. I colored it blood. You can find it when you can get up from that old rotten rock chair and walk through the stairs into my room.”

“Have a long live, you there.” Madam Sarah yelled and laughed afterwards.

I was sure that she was insane. I slammed the door and walked crossing the Thirteenth Avenue Road. I entered the main door of my apartment.

“I will not go back there again to see that old lady who dresses like an insane ghost.” I looked back in a glance to the bookstore through the glass main door. She was there, Madam Sarah, looking at me with the scariest smile that I had never imagined.

The night came, I lit the candle. It gave the aromatherapy scent in my room. The light was dim. I read the book that I had bought this afternoon from an old woman who was very strange. I felt guilty for mocking her in such rude words. Sometimes I could not control what I want to say. Not thinking about it again, I read THIRTEENTH in a delightful mood. I love new novel. I created the new imagination of a world through the novel.

Then suddenly, I heard something annoying my ears. The sound of the iron stairs was just too loud and it sounded scary. I became the daddy's little girl. It stopped; the scariest sound of that night was stopped on fifth floor, I guessed. I wore my sandals and went to the door. The fastest heartbeats just disturbed my breath. My hands were shaking and my legs felt nothing except the beats of the blood vessel on the bottom of my feet. Before I touched the door, I heard a very terrifying scream outside of my room.

“What the hell is going on out there? Isn't there any security that always stays in every floor? Whose scream was that?” I said.

I slowly opened the door. There was a little light outside in the corridor. It should have been brighter because it was a modern apartment. I walked into the stair barricade and looked down. There was nothing but the light from the room number thirteen on the fifth floor that was open. I could not move my eyeballs from that door. My feet became stiff as a stone and it turned cold. There was nothing until a shadow came out from that room. The shadow was



not calm. It was like someone who was dancing. The shadow was clear. It was a woman with a long hair and had something on the right hand.

“Who is she? Is that a knife? In the name of God, it is a murder. I should call 911 and the officer down there.” I planned.

I had the chance to do those things, but it was late. The shadow turned vivid. She was the old woman that I saw this afternoon. Unfortunately, she, Madam Sarah, saw me. She did nothing but smile. I saw blood on her white night dress that she wore this afternoon. She saw me like I was her best friend. Unexpectedly, a gesture that I would never forget was done by her. She just pointed and counted the floor to get to the floor where I stood. The tremor of my feet got greater. Without any further thought, I ran back into my room and locked it fast. I took the sharpest thing that was the closest too from me on my room, a scissor. The hideous sound of the iron stairs began to play. I cried and had no power to call the police, even my dad. Sixth floor, seventh floor, eighth floor, and the last was ninth floor. I waited in the very edge of my room where I could still see the door clearly. She stopped in front of my room. The sound of an iron knife scratched my door made me lose my faith. I forgot how I should pray. I forgot the words. The scratching sound of the knife was not heard anymore. I could still see the shadow that someone was still standing in front my door through the light below the door. It was like a thriller movie or horror movie that I watched when I was in my senior high school. Suddenly, she knocked the door three times.

“Would you mind if you open the door for me? I just want to color the number of your room in red, as red as your blood!” She laughed and kept trying to open the door. She was strong enough as an old lady. She kicked, she threw something, and she just kept knocking at the door too. I just cried as hard as I could. The moment I lost my beats came. The door was opened slowly from outside. The lock was broken. She let her fingers came into the room first. The fingers looked very old till I could see the blue river on her hand. Then, her head came in with her smile, a very wide smile. I didn't know why she killed my neighbor. I didn't know why she came to my room. I would be killed; she had planned all of these. She ran onto me and grabbed the book that I bought this afternoon and she landed her knife on my hand. Blood suddenly came out and I felt like Jesus whose hands were nailed until a hole was made. It hurt so much that I couldn't feel my body. She punched my head with the THIRTEENTH book which was 340 a paged book with a hardcover. The edge of the book was designed with sharp accessories that embed right on my left eyes. I tried to scream but her old hand was fast to cover my mouth and glued it. My mind was lost. She was old but fast and strong. The blood was running out from my

body. I still didn't know why she did this to me. She kept stabbing my body. Strangely, the stabbing knife stopped at the thirteenth stab. I said nothing. I looked into her face. She was happy and kept smiling at me.

"You said that you colored your room number with blood. You lied. It was gold. After this I will color it with your blood as you wish. The last, I don't care about the money that you gave. Do you know that I'm actually a kind lady? No one respects. I gave the book that the costumer wants without paying it because I just like to do it. I love it when my books are taken by costumers. I need no money but respect. You are the thirteenth costumer who did this to me. I killed them all. Hahaha. I feel no guilty! Life for respect! You die!" She said in a very fast mood and she stabbed my neck for the last time.

I saw her body dancing through my room door. I closed my eyes.

The sunshine touched my eyes, I opened my eyes. I was awakened by the scent of the aromatherapy from my candle. I startled.

"Oh My God, I'm still alive! My hand, my hand there is nothing wrong. Thank God. It was just a dream. I need to say sorry to her. But, where is my book?" I took a glimpse of my room door that was opened.

## My Secrets and Me

*"Why do you always avoid these questions about your family or your secrets?"*

*"Tell us your secrets! We are your best friends."*

*"Tell us..."*

*"...your secrets..."*

*"Tell them your secrets, Cherry. So that you can see, they don't care about you. Nobody does!"*

"Hey!" Natalie suddenly came and woke me up from my daydreaming.

"Oh, hi! Wussup?"

"What are you doing? Wait, is that you in the photos?" she asked me.

"Ugh, what? Uhm, yeah. These are just.... It doesn't matter." I laughed awkwardly and closed my phone's gallery.

"You looked so happy in those pictures. I cannot remember you showing them to me. Let me see!" said Natalie and tried to grab my phone out of my hand.

"Hey!" said Jane and Rina. Then, I quickly put my phone in my bag.

"Hello Jane! Rina! Finally, you guys are here! You all finished your classes, right? Let's go home now, then." Said Natalie who seemed to forget that she was about to take my phone.

My name was Cherry. My Mama said that I was cheerful, sweet and I completed my Papa and Mama's life. Just like in a cake, a cake would not complete without a cherry on the top of it. I really loved my Papa and Mama. They always listened to my stories about my friends, school and even my crush. I loved telling them my secrets besides to my best friends at school. I thought my life was perfect just to have them in my life. I always wished it could have been last forever.

Times went by, I became a college girl and I had three best friends. There was Jane, the smartest one between the four of us. There was Rina, the funniest and the laziest in the group. Then there was Natalie, the wisest one.

Anyway, it was another Saturday night. I spent my time alone watching movies in my boarding house as usual. I could have spent the night with my best friends. However, they all went out with their boyfriends, except Rina. Rina had a Long Distance Relationship with her boyfriend, but she had a different way of hanging out than me. Therefore, I would rather choose to watch movies alone.

Suddenly, my phone rang and it was Natalie calling me.

"Hello, Natalie?" I stopped the movie I watched and answered the phone.

"I just had a problem again with Jimmie. I should have known he would break his promises! I should have listened to you, Cherry." answered Natalie while she was crying on the phone.

"Again? Ugh, why can't Jimmie ever take his mistakes as his lessons?! Where are you now? Didn't you go out with him tonight?" I got worried.

"Yes. We got on a fight and I still cannot believe that he yelled at me again! He cursed me in front of his friends and then I went home, alone, with a taxi! It's all my fault for giving him a chance." She continued her story.

"No, it's not your fault, Natalie. I think you need to calm yourself first. Now, make a hot chocolate and go to your room alone. I know you love hot chocolate. Talk to him about this when you feel better. Call me again when you need me, I will always pick it up." I said.

"Ah, yeah. Hot chocolate. Okay then, thank you so much, Cherry. You're the best! You're always there when I need you! I love you, bestie! Remember, you can always tell me your secrets too or anything. Don't keep it yourself! I am going to make a cup of delicious hot chocolate now. Bye..."

"Haha... I have nothing to tell you... Nothing... It's fine. Okay, bye Natalie! Hope you are will feel better soon!" I ended the phone call.

*"...you can always tell me your secrets too or anything. Don't keep it yourself!"*

*"...tell me your secrets..."*

*"...your secrets..."*

*"Will you tell her your secrets, Cherry? Will she care? You're never important for her! She will laugh at your miserable life!"*

"MIND, STOP IT! Please, I don't want to remember that again! Please..." I said to myself. I closed my eyes. My hands were next to my ears as if I tried to block the voices that actually came from my head. I always hated the nights like these, especially when I was alone. I could not stop it. I wished I could.

I always loved hearing stories. Many of my friends said that they liked to tell their stories or secrets to me. They said that they believed me to keep it and I always gave good advices to them. I was very happy to know that, actually. Especially, I was happy to know the fact that I could be there for them when they needed someone to talk to. However, I hated it when they started to ask my own secrets. I would love to tell them only if I could. I just did not want to repeat the stupid mistakes I made in the past.

I remembered, when I was still in school, I was very cheerful. Every time I experienced something, I told the story to my Papa and Mama or my best friends at school. I was happy to know that I always had people to share my

stories, even my secrets. They made me realize that I had people who cared about me. It was perfect.

I had a happy family. I was the only child. I loved my Papa and Mama and so did they. There were almost no fight in my house. We loved each other. We were also like best friends. I never felt afraid to tell everything to them. They listened and I trusted them as much as they trusted me. Until one night, I heard something from downstairs. It sounded like my mom... crying. But... Why did she cry?

"No! Why do you not trust me? You need proofs! Stop crying or Cherry will hear it!" I heard my Papa's voice. I knew it was an angry voice.

At that time, it was probably a bad idea for me to come out from my room and go downstairs. However, there were no reason in my mind to stay in my room besides trying to find out what was happening. I took my steps quietly, so that I could avoid my Papa and Mama' attention.

"Just tell me, who is she? I have always wanted to talk to you about this. Now, I cannot take it anymore. So, tell me!" said my Mama to my Papa while she was still crying.

"What are you talking about? Don't talk about something stupid! I want to go to bed! I'm too tired to talk about stupid things tonight!" said my Papa and left my Mama in the living room.

I could have come to my Mama that night, but I was scared. I did not know what to do. It was my very first time to hear and to see them fight. I came back to my room and tried to go to sleep. It was hard. I hoped it was all just a very bad dream!

The next day, it was another fun day at school. I could not wait to tell everything to my Papa and Mama about it. Moreover, my Papa did not go to work that day, so I did not have to wait for him until he came home from work. When I arrived, I saw them in the living room. Their faces looked quite tense.

"Papa, Mama, I'm home!" I said while I walked to the living room.

"Hey, honey." My Mama answered with the most beautiful smile that she always gave to me.

"Mama, Papa, I want to tell you something fun about what happened at school today! You know what, today in..."

"Cherry, how can you not change your uniform first?! Oh, you also need to know that sometimes you don't have to always tell people about everything! If you think it isn't important to tell, then don't! You are wasting your time! Understand?!" said my Papa cutting my story.

"Why do you say something like that to Cherry?" said my Mama.

"I want her to know that!"

"Cherry, honey, I'm sorry, but go to your room. Everything is okay. Your dad is probably just tired right now. Go get some foods in the kitchen and take

it to your room if you want. Okay, honey? Mama loves you." Said my Mama to calm me down because probably I looked shocked at that time.

I did not understand why my Papa said that to me. Were my stories not important to him? Did I annoy my Papa and Mama every time I told my stories to them? I thought they cared.

I thought those two days were the worst days of my life. First, it had never even come up to my mind that my Papa and Mama would fight with each other. Second, I never thought my Papa would be angry just because I told him my stories about school like what I had always done. He had never been angry to me. Ever.

Then, another worst night came. I heard my Papa yelled at my Mama for the second time in our house downstairs.

"Why do you always think that I am cheating on you? Huh?!" said my Papa.

"First of all, some of your friends at work told me. Second, I came to your office's cafeteria the other day and I saw you holding hands with the girl whom I still don't even know the name! Do you still want to lie about that? Why can you not be happy as I am with our little family, Bryan? Why?" answered my Mama and I could hear she had been crying for quite a long time.

"Okay, if that's what you want. I admit that I'm cheating on you. I've always tried to be happy with this little family. I was happy. But, you never give me a child! Is it wrong for wanting to have my own real child? Your mother told me that adopting Cherry could be our way to have our own child. We never have that."

"Bryan, honey, can you see that Cherry is our own child right now? She is our child! It doesn't matter whether we adopted her or not. Why can you not just be happy about that?" said my Mama.

"I'm not you. I'm so sorry. I still want to have my own real child. Cherry isn't my child. We adopted her. It is still different!" my Papa continued.

I could not believe what I had just heard. Was I adopted? Why didn't anyone tell me about this? Suddenly, I felt my tears falling down from my eyes. I could not hear their quarrel any further. I felt something that really painful inside my chest. I did not know that my Papa did not love me as much as I always did to him. I did not know that he was never happy for having me as his child. Why did they keep this from me? Was the story about they adopted me not important? I ran to my room. I closed the door quietly, so my Papa and Mama could not know that I heard almost everything they said that night. I wouldn't not stop crying. It hurt so much.

Several days later, I always kept playing what happened that night in my mind. I really wanted to tell someone about it. I just wanted to let it out of my chest. I could not tell it my Mama or even my Papa. I could not trust them

anymore. My thought was only to tell my best friend at school about this. It was probably the best idea so far at that time.

"Hi, Cherry! You looked sad lately. What happened to you?" said Julie, one of my best friends at school.

"Hi, Julie. I want to tell you something."

"Then, tell me."

I told her everything what had happened to my family and me, including the fact that my Papa and Mama adopted me. I used to tell her my secrets too, so I was guessing that I could also trust her about this. She was my best friend and best friends were supposed to keep each other's secrets. She looked shocked just like what happened to me when I knew that for the first time. She told me that everything would be fine and I did not have to worry about that. I trusted her.

Next couple of days, when I was at school, one of my classmates came to me and sat next to me.

"Cherry, is that true?" he said.

"True? What is it about?" I answered.

"Is it true that you were adopted? I'm sorry to say this, but I ever had a thought about that when I saw you and your parents at school last year. You didn't look like your parents. So, I just thought maybe you look so much more like your grandparents." He said.

"Huh? Why do you ask me about that? Who did told you about this?" I said angrily.

"Julie told me. She's your close friend, right? So, I know she would not lie about it."

I left him. I went to my school's toilet. I cried. I thought I could trust Julie about this. This was probably my biggest secrets about my family at that time. I hated Julie. I thought she was my best friend who cared about me. I was wrong. I wished didn't tell her about that.

After that, I went home. I saw my Mama sitting in our living room and crying. I came to her and asked what happened. She said that she got divorced with my Papa. I felt so broken hearted. She said my Papa gave the house for her and me. I could not believe that he left this family. He did not love this family as much as I thought he did.

At night when I was in my bedroom, my mind was in chaos. My life was over. I was too afraid to go back to school, the next day, to meet my friends. I did not want to meet Julie at all. I did not like to be at home either. Even my Mama had not told the truth that I was adopted. I hated my Papa. My mind abruptly felt empty, besides to end my own miserable life. I could feel my feet walking to the bathroom. It felt as if I could not control it. I picked up my Papa's razor. I looked at my wrist, and then put the razor closer to it, and suddenly... I

heard my Mama screamed my name and came inside the bathroom. She held my hand and then threw the razor away from me.

I still remembered it all even though it happened nearly 4 years ago. Until this time, I kept playing those worst memories inside my head. It haunted me every time. I had the fear to tell people about my secrets since those awful days. I kept everything to myself since then.

Sometimes, there were days when I missed my old happy family. I still had some of our pictures in my phone. I missed when we still lived together in our house. I missed being cheerful. I missed when I could trust someone to keep my secrets. I wished I could have had my old happy life just one more time. Unfortunately, I could not.

I could feel a bright light shining straight to me. I opened my eyes. The bright Sunday morning sunshine went through my boarding house's window. It turned out that I fell asleep last night. It was already 8:00 am. I checked my phone and there were some chats from my best friends. They wanted to hang out this afternoon. We all agreed.

In the afternoon on the same day, my best friends and I met at a café around Seturan. When I arrived, all my best friends had been there. It was a little odd for Rina to come that early when the four of us planned to meet.

"Uhm, Cherry..." Natalie suddenly started to talk after a quite long silence between the four of us.

"Yes, Natalie?" I answered.

"Can we talk about something serious, now?" she continued.

"I guess. What is it? Is there any problem?" I said while I kept thinking about any possible topics that they wanted to talk about.

"So... We are a little bit... Uh... This is harder than I thought it would!" said Jane.

"Okay! Let me be the one to start, so it won't take too long. Cherry, are you hiding something from us? We've been friends for almost 4 years and we almost know nothing about you. We are just curious. You always avoid the questions about your secrets, your past life, we don't even really know about your family. Is there any problem? We just think that maybe we can help something about it." Said Rina who started to sit closer to me as she wanted to interrogate me.

"Huh? But... Why do you guys want to know? Does it even matter? I... I just can't. What is important about that, anyway?" I answered anxiously. To be honest, I hated that situation.

"You're important to us, Cherry. If you have any problem about your past, you can tell us. We are your best friends. We care about you. We will always be there for you just like what you do to each of us here. We probably can help you." Said Natalie.



*"We are your best friends."*

*"We care about you."*

*"...about your secrets..."*

*"Are you sure you want to tell your secrets to them, Cherry? They don't care! Never! You are not important for them!"*

I did not realize I had closed my eyes and bended down my head for a few minutes. I tried to avoid the voices in my head. I opened my eyes and started thinking that I did not want to be this Cherry anymore. I wanted to, at least, start to believe my best friends this time.

"Okay. I will tell you guys everything..." Then, I started to tell them everything about my past. I told them about my broken home family, about my Papa and Mama who adopted me, and about the reason why I was always afraid to tell them my secrets.

"It's okay, Cherry. We all have our own bad moments in our life. We understand that. Sometimes you still need to share your feelings too, so that it won't be a burden for you." Jane said.

"Jane is right. You don't have to worry. We will keep your secrets. From now on, you can trust us and when you feel like you need someone to talk about anything including your secrets, you can come to us." Said Rina to continue Jane.

"Thank you so much, guys!" I smiled.

"So, is there any possibility for you to have your family back? I mean, maybe your Papa is missing you and your Mama right now. We can probably help you to make him regrets about what he did and make your family complete again. Right, guys?" Natalie said to me and to my friends.

"Haha... Yes, that's right! I actually have a few plans in mind right now." Rina answered Natalie with her teasing face.

"No, guys. You don't have to do that. You cannot do anything about it. In fact, I've made them together already." I said.

"Really?? That's great, then! But, why are you still sad when you see the pictures of you and your family on your phone?" Jane looked curious.

"I just miss them. A lot!"

"Where are they now? Oh, wait! You live in a boarding house. Your house is probably far from Jogja, right?" Rina asked me.

"No. They died. I killed them."

I knew that they were shocked at that time. I heard them calling me crazy and blaming me for what I did. The voices inside my head were going crazy at the same time. I could not control it. I thought I could believe them. It turned out they were calling me crazy. I thought they cared about me. I left them and I cried on my way back to my boarding house.

Then months passed by, I worked in Bali after I graduated from college. Finally, I could accomplish that. I loved Bali. I remembered telling Natalie, Jane, and Rina about my dream to work and to live there. I already forgave them for what happened at the café. I wished they could have been here to celebrate it with me. I wished they were still alive.

## Till We Meet Again

A beautiful girl with brown hair and dark blue eyes ran to her house. She was Anastasia Lynch and everybody called her Stacey. Stacey had a fair skin and slim body. She was eighteen years old and she graduated from High School a week ago.

Stacey looked very happy, and she wanted to tell everybody that she had a good news. Yes, a good news that would make her parents proud of her. She opened the door and met Lily, the only maid in her house. Lily was 25 years old, and she was admitted as Stacey's own sister.

Stacey told Lily that she got accepted in a very famous university in London. Stacey got accepted in UCL (University College London). Lily looked happy, and then hugged Stacey. She said that she would cook Stacey's favorite food, chicken cordon bleu, to celebrate it. Stacy was really happy to hear that. She thanked Lily and kissed her cheek.

Then, Stacey asked Lily where everybody else were. Yeah, everybody else meant Stacey's parents. In her home, there's only her mom, dad, Lily, and her. Yes, it's because Stacey was the only daughter.

Lily's face frowned and that meant what was going to say was not a good news for Stacey. Lily told to Stacey that her parents already went to airport hours ago. She continued to tell Stacey that her parents were going to go to Seattle. Stacey's happy face became sad. Tears fell from her beautiful eyes. Lily hugged her warmly, because she understood her more than her parents. Lily knew Stacey just like she knew her own little sister.

Lily told Stacey that everything's going to be okay. She also said that Mr. and Mrs. Lynch would come back to New York as soon as possible. Maybe they would only stay in Seattle for 5 days.

Stacey couldn't stop crying. She, then, ran to her bedroom. She tried to soothe herself. She told herself to be strong. She realized that it was not the first time he parents left without telling her first.

She took her hand phone from her pink bag. She called her mom, but there was no answer. She tried again and again. After three times she tried calling her mom, finally her mom answered her call. Stacey asked her mom why they didn't tell her that they were going to go to Seattle. Her mom told her that they had a project to build a hotel there. She also told her that tomorrow they would

have a meeting with their partner. Stacey was speechless. She hasn't told her mom that she got the scholarship, because suddenly her mom hung up the phone.

Stacey looked very sad. She was not only sad, but also angry and disappointed. She put a photo from her study desk. That was a picture of her parents and her in the past, a picture which was taken about twelve years ago, when she was five years old. The time where everything was fine, when her parents had a lot of time of her.

Stacey then put her phone again. She wanted to call Richie, her boyfriend who had been dating her for three years. Unexpectedly, her mom sent a text to her.

*"My dearest Stacey, we're sorry that we didn't tell you about this. We have a meeting tomorrow, so we have to go to Seattle this afternoon. I'm sorry. I'll call you soon."*

Stacey pretended to smile. She called Richie. Then, Richie answered her call in a moment. Stacey asked Richie to meet her as soon as possible. She wanted to tell everything to Richie. She tried to hold her tears, but Richie understood that Stacey was now sad and really needed him.

Knowing that Stacey was not okay, Richie intended to go to Stacey's house, but Stacey refused his intention. Stacey asked Richie to meet her in an ice cream shop close to her house. She needed ice cream to boost her mood. Richie agreed with her, and said that he would arrive in that ice cream shop in 30 minutes.

After phoned Richie, Stacey prepared to go. She washed her face and put make upon, which made her look fine. She thought by wearing makeup, she could hide her sad. She was also wore pink t-shirt, pink shoes, and pink bag. She felt by wearing in pink, her favorite color, she would looked cheerful and happy.

Stacey went downstairs and met Lily. She asked Lily that she would go out to meet Richie. Then, Lily permitted her. She gave a little hug to Stacey and smiled.

After thirty minutes, Stacey arrived at the ice cream shop. She ordered strawberry ice cream, her favorite flavor of ice cream. She walked to a table in the corner of the shop. There was Richie who had been there five minutes before her. She hugged Richie and she cried. Richie asked why and tried to soothe Stacey by giving a kiss on her forehead. Then, they sat face to face. Richie held her hand and looked into Stacey's eyes.

Stacey started to tell Richie. First, she told the good news that she was accepted in UCL, and would go to London a month and half later. Richie looked very happy to know that one of Stacey's dreams came true. Then, Richie asked why she was sad. Stacey pretended to smile and told Richie about her parents who went to Seattle without telling her.

Richie, who knew really well about Stacey's condition and family, wiped the tears in Stacey's eyes that started to fall. He changed the topic, so Stacey would forget her problem for a while. He also told her about his excitement that he would also go to German to continue his study. They both were thanking God that their dreams came true. They would have a long distance relationship, but they were ready. Stacey would go to London in a month and half, while Richie would to German in a month.

It's already evening, so Richie asked to drive Stacey her home. At home, they still continued to talk about so many things. Now, Stacey seemed better. They talked in the living room and they didn't realize that they had been talking for an hour. Richie said to her that he wanted go home and they said goodbye. Stacey walked to her room and checked her phone, only if there's a message or a call from her mom and dad. However, the reality was not like what Stacey's hope. There was no message and there were no call.

Stacey, then, typed a message for her mom and dad. *"Mom, Dad, I know that you guys are tired. If you guys have no time to call me, I just want to tell you that I got accepted in UCL. I'll go there in a month and half. I hope to see you soon. Good night. I love you both,"*

Stacey removed her makeup and slept. In the morning she woke up earlier than before. She checked her phone whether or not her parents replied her message. Actually, there was no message but there was a missed call from her dad. Stacey called him back.

Her dad answered her call so fast, but he was in hurry, so he only congratulated her and said that he was proud of her. Stacey said thank you and said goodbye. She tried to smile and she hung up the phone. She texted her dad *"Dad, it is okay that you are busy. When will you be back from Seattle? I already miss you so much."*

Her dad replied the text. *"I'm so sorry my little girl. Mom and dad have to stay here for a month, because we have a big project here. Stacey, I'll text you later, we have to go to the meeting now. I'll see you soon. I miss you too."*

Stacey looked very sad and she turned off her phone. She ran to Lily and hugged her. She told everything to Lily. Lily also looked sad, and then Lily said

to Stacey that everything's going to be okay, because Stacey had her and Richie.

Stacey went back to her room and took a piece of paper and started to write. She wrote a letter for her parents.

*"Dear Mom and Dad. I'm happy that I could make you guys proud. One of my dreams came true. I'll go to London in one and a half and a month. Thank you for loving me. I hope we still have time for three of us like when I was five. I hope you guys still loving me even if we are apart. I always love you my heroes."*

She put the letter in a fancy pink box. She also put her photo too. She gave the box to Lily, and asked her to give it to their parents if Stacey already arrived in London.

For a month, to kill the time without her parents, Stacey only spent her time with Lily and Richie. She cooked together with Lily and went to watch movie, bought ice cream, went to book store and elsewhere with Richie.

She didn't have a lot of time with her parents. Her parents were rarely called her, but she tried to be okay. She enjoyed her time with both Lily and Richie.

A month passed. It was the time for her parents to come back home. It was also the time for Richie to leave to Germany. Stacey felt sad that Richie was going to leave, and her parents weren't home yet.

The day when Richie had to go to German, Stacey accompanied him to airport together with Richie's parents. He said goodbye and gave a hug and a kiss to Stacey. Stacey smiled and gave him a gift, it was a watch. She wrote a little message in the gift box *"To remind you about me wherever you are."*

Richie looked very happy. There were tears of happiness in his eyes. It was time for him to go onboard. They said goodbye, then Stacey went home by taxi.

When she arrived home, her parents were already home. She hugged them. They gave her a gift. They gave her a rose gold iPhone 7+ and a rose gold Mac book. Stacey looked happy, and then they had a dinner together in a restaurant near Brooklyn Bridge.

It was half month full of happiness. Stacey was happy, really happy that they could spend time together, and laughed together. Yeah, even if Stacey's

parents were still busy, but they tried to give more time for Stacey, before she went to London.

A week before Stacey departure to London, her dad got a phone call from her partner in Seattle. They had to meet five days later. It meant two days before Stacey departure to study abroad.

Knowing that her parents couldn't accompany her before she was leaving to London, Stacey was not sad. She tried to show to her parents that she was okay. She just asked her parents to spend two days for her. Two days without disturbance and her parents agreed her.

They spent two days only for three of them. They went to beach, watched movie together, went to church together, and did so many things together for three of them. Stacey felt really happy. They took many photos of them.

Two days seemed so fast and it was time for Stacey's parents to leave to Seattle. Stacey hugged them and asked them to always keep in touch. Stacey didn't accompany them to the airport, because she was afraid to cry or make her parents sad.

She stayed in her bedroom. She took a piece of paper and wrote a letter for her parents.

*"Mom and Dad, thank you for those two days. I was really happy that I could feel the same thing the way I felt twelve years ago. It is okay that you guys can't accompany me to airport before I go to London. I hope we can still have the moment like this. Till we meet again my lovely parents. I love you."*

She gave the letter to Lily and asks Lily to put the letter to the box that Stacey already gave to her a month ago. Stacey also printed some photos of three of them and gave it to Lily. Stacey thanked Lily and gave a gift to Lily. She gave a unique photo frame with a picture of Lily and Stacey. Stacey made it by herself. Lily smiled to her. Tears of happiness fell from her eyes, and then she hugged Stacey.

Lily helped Stacey to pack and prepare everything Stacey needed to bring to London tomorrow. They laughed together and shared every sweet moment they have together. They remembered not only sweet moment, but also sad moment and everything.

The day that was waited by Stacey was come. She was happy. Lily intended to accompany her to the airport, but Stacey refused her willingness. She told Lily, that she didn't wanted to be sad, so she didn't want to be accompanied by anyone. Stacey decided to go to the airport by taxi. She

went to an ice cream shop before she went to airport. Unfortunately, when she was about to get on the taxi, she got hit by car, and she was gone. Her head couldn't stop bleeding.

Knowing the bad news, Stacey's parents came back to New York. They were really sad and couldn't stop crying. Richie also came back to New York and couldn't believe that her lovely girlfriend was already gone.

The day after the accident was the funeral of Stacey. So many friends came to see Stacey for the last time. After everybody left Stacey's house, Lily gave the box that Stacey asked her to give to her parents.

Stacey parents seemed sad and their heart was broken when they read letters from Stacey. They were cried so hard, but they only had a regretful feeling left. Stacey would never be back and they've lost Stacey forever.



# Another You

It was Monday morning and a day off work for Callia while she was sitting and listening to jazz music at the corner of the coffee shop. She was contemplating and staying longer. Callia was a beautiful woman with her long unraveled curled-brown hair was. Many guys were actually charmed by her beauty. Unfortunately, she was an introvert and distrustful. She wore her mother's favorite black scarf and brown furry boots.

"Such a proper weather to wear suitable outerwear and furry boots." She talked to herself.

After she finished her *latte*, she looked outside the window and talked again to herself,

"What a sweet couple."

With all of sudden, tears came down from her face. The bartender was looking at her. Apparently, she was recalling the good old times she had with her parents nine years ago when she was fifteen. She still could not forget the pain which afflicted her. Callia was in deep sorrow because her parents could not see her grow and reach her dream that she finally became the owner of an online fashion business company. She missed her parents badly.

The tears dropped inside her empty cup. She opened her wallet and saw her family picture with her mother conceiving her six months brother. It made her hurt more, her mother was going to deliver the second child in three months right before she got killed by two men who stabbed both Callia's parents when they were home after celebrating their eighteenth wedding anniversary. She just could not stop thinking why they died tragically in front of her eyes when her age was just fifteen.

After she wept for quite a long time, she gathered her consciousness, wiped her tears up and started to check her cell phone.

"Ok I must stop all of this; I cannot stay longer in this way. I will go somewhere to forget this pain and finally be happy. I deserve to be happy." She said while she was texting to a travel agent.

She planned to travel around Asia and Europe since she had her uncle and auntie in Amsterdam. Not long after doing the reservation of the flight ticket through her cell phone, she finally went home and packed all her stuffs.

Ten days later, Callia finally arrived at Ngurah Rai International Airport and was ready to fly to Schiphol Airport after traveling to Hong Kong, China and Indonesia. She felt her heart a little bit happier than ever before.

She was listening to *David Benoit's* songs with her laptop for half an hour then she got up to the check in counter. While waiting for the long queue, she paid attention to a guy who was also queuing before her. He was tall, blonde and tanned. She looked at him again and suddenly their eyes met. *Oh geez!* She averted straightaway. She felt stupid and didn't want to look again.

Only after she got her boarding pass, she went to the waiting room and sat at the corner, knowing that she was alone so she thought that the corner would be a good place for her. She stared at her black screened cell phone, the she was startled because someone sat beside her. She looked and it was that guy. She was trying to be calm.

Ten minutes passed with silence but suddenly,

"It's really cold here." He started conversation as he was rubbing his shoulders.

"It is and since you are wearing a sleeveless shirt." She said frigidly and he took his sleeved shirt.

"Are you going alone?" He asked.

"Yes, I'm planning to have a Europe trip by myself. Are you going home?"

"Yep, after visiting some great places in Indonesia. Well anyway, I'm starving but I don't really like the food on the plane tho. I'm gonna have a burger later at the transit airport. Wanna join me?" He offered.

"Yeah sure, I don't know where to go at the transit airport so that sounds good."

Five minutes short conversation ended, and it was finally time to go on board so they went to their seat number.

After the seven hours flight, they arrived at the transit airport and only had an hour to eat at the Burger King.

"I'm Ryan anyway. And your name is..."

"Callia."

"Alright Callia what would you like to have?" He asked.

"I'm gonna have that." She said while pointing to the fish burger picture.

They finally got their burger and ate it. They had conversations but Callia did not have any feeling towards Ryan. After they finished, they walked back to the waiting room and had to queue again.

"Well here is my number and I hope we can meet again Callia." They exchanged their phone number before they finally walked to their seat number.

After another seven hours of flying, Callia finally arrived and her uncle picked her up from the airport. She stayed at her uncle's house before going to Paris. She did not really remember Ryan anymore for she had been enjoying her time in Amsterdam for three days and she started to get free from her sorrow.

The next morning, she took the first flight to go to Paris. After she arrived, she visited the Eiffel Tower and took many pictures there. It was a very beautiful city and such a touristic place full with international people. She was so happy to feel the real Paris city's atmosphere.

The next night, she went to Montreux Jazz Café, she wanted to know the taste of coffee they had in Paris and there was *Snarky Puppy*, her favorite ensemble in that café. When she was enjoying *Lingus* song, a guy came toward her.

"May I sit here?" He asked.

Knowing that the café was crowded,

"Yes sure you may." She replied.

After they talked about many things, she got acquainted with this guy, Rob. They had been chatting about their life, hobby and Callia started to like him. He seemed to be different than any other guys she had ever met. Apparently, Rob was looking for traveling companion and he thought that Callia was alone too so he asked her and she agreed with that.

The next day, Rob and Callia went to Disneyland. They had a great time. She gradually forgot her sadness about her parents and grew love toward Rob.

"I'm so glad to meet you." She said to Rob.

After the whole day at Disneyland, Rob walked down to Callia's apartment and he said,

"Thanks for today, you've made my day, Callia." and started to kiss her.

Feeling comfortable with him, Callia did not reject him instead they ended up making out the whole night at Callia's apartment.

The next morning, she woke up at a very luxurious and comfortable bedroom. She was half dizzy and not sure where she was. She tried to open her eyes she was shocked and afraid that she was naked with nothing covering her body on the bed. She grabbed her bag right away and looked for her cell phone while started to cry. Unfortunately, Rob came inside with two guys and threw her phone away. She could not say a word, she was still dizzy because Rob hypnotized her. Gradually, she realized that the place was a prostitution. Her heart broke at once, she could not move and she knew that her life was now over.

Three days had passed, she had been sleeping with guys who were guiding the place. If she did not obey the command, she would be whipped throughout the body and banded with a stick. She looked at the other prostitute but they were not able to talk to each other. It was a nightmare to her. It turned out that Rob had been following her since she was arrived at the airport knowing that she was alone.

Day by day, she could only cry and got wept inside the room every day, Callia could not do anything because there were guys that kept their eyes on her. Suddenly, one guy came inside.

"Slut, what are you crying for? You've been pleasing to us all so stop weeping. And your honorable guest is coming. Rob wants to meet you." He banded her for a while and whipped her to make her stop crying.

Callia was walked with all her body showered with sperm and when she got to Rob's room,

"Put this clothes on! He is our new guest. And I want you to give him the best first impression." Rob said harshly and continued, "Now go clean yourself!"

She was shivering to death because every time Rob said a new guest it meant that the guest was insane, rude and rough that would hurt her mentally and physically.

It was seven o'clock pm and there came the honorable guest with his two guards and Rob walked Callia down. Showing fear, she was bowed her head. When the honorable guest finished his transaction, Callia looked at him and realized that it was Ryan! Ryan looked at her too, both of them pretended as if they did not know each other. However, still Callia was afraid because Ryan might be the same like any other men or even worse.

As they walked to the room to start their business, suddenly a gunshot startled all the people there. The two guards of Ryan had killed all the 5 men there and they were rushed out to the car and headed to the airport. Callia and Ryan were leaving to Ryan's house in The Hague immediately.

At Ryan's house, Callia shuddered, cried, and wore clothes that Ryan bought for her. Ryan could not stand seeing her cry so he finally hugged her.

"It's ok Callia, you are alright now. You are safe here."

"No I'm not. You came to the prostitution, I know you are no more than them. Just kill me now. I'd rather die and if you wanna have sex, you can do it with my corpse as long as you pleased!"

"Shhh.. Hey Callia, don't say that. Why do you think I brought my guards with me if not to kill them? I knew you were there."

"How did you know?" She was confused.

"From your phone number, I called you. I was looking for you but then a guy, Rob answered it and said wrong number. I got curious then I checked on my thing."

"What thing?"

"I'll let you know soon." He replied and they were both in silence.

A week had passed, Ryan wastried to heal Callia from the sorrow. She was living in Ryan's house and she began to feel safe with him since he was also twelve years older than her. She thought Ryan treated her as if he was her father. Ryan never kissed Callia even after a week she has been staying with him. They had been spending a lot of time together, they went to the good places in the city and enjoyed a lot of things there. He wanted to make Callia happy. It turned out that Ryan started to like her since they met at the airport but did not tell her.

The next morning, they went to the Ooievaart and rode on the canal.

"What a beautiful city." Cailla said with a smile and started to recover.

"Thank you Ryan. Thanks for all." She said while she was looking at him.

Thinking that it was a proper time to finally decided to say his feeling to her, Ryan said,

"I'm glad that you are happy. Honestly, I love you, Cailla. Will you be mine?" She was shocked. She did could not believe that he also loved her because she knew that it would not happen.

"I love you because you are special. I saw it since the first time we met. You were being distrustful and that's what I like about you, you are different." He added.

"But I am disgraceful; you don't want to be with someone who had slept with a lot of strangers. You can't love me, I have a bad past and you deserve someone whole lot better than me." She answered with sadness inside her heart.

"I don't care about your past. Everyone has bad past. I did have one but I no longer live in there anymore." She was overjoyed by what he just said. Then she finally said,

"I love you too Ryan. And I want to be yours."

After six months of relationship, they finally got married. They lived happily together as a newlywed. Callia's love grew toward Ryan. She moved to Ryan's place and continued her job there. Almost a year passed, Ryan brought Callia to his house that he used to live. It was a splendid wooden lake house. Callia entered the house and was astounded.

"Here honey, this is what I used to track your number when I got suspicious when Rob answered the phone." He showed his computer lab full with its great technology.

"Wow this is awesome! How did you get all of this?" Callia asked excitedly.

"Here's my place 10 years ago. I worked under this voice machine where I receive commands and get a lot of money out of it."

He saw Callia speechless and he added,

"But that was a very long time ago when I started to realize that I'm no more than an evil person. I don't want to shed blood to those whom I don't know. Then I look for another job as I have now. See? Everyone has had a bad past."

After a few silence Ryan walked Callia to the basement where he stored all his weapons and the important data he used to have for work. Those were neatly arranged.

In the afternoon, when Ryan was taking a nap, Callia sneaked to the basement and looked for a map where all the data were placed. She read all the names carefully until at the very end of the page, there she stiffed like a phantom. Callista and Tyron Edgwin name were there with her parent's picture on it, she could not believe what she saw. The one who killed her parents was actually her loved one. She almost gone insane because she actually had forgotten about her parents' death and she grew deeply in love with Ryan. Then she put all the data back.

It was time for dinner and Callia made a roast chicken while Ryan was decorating the living room with candles and flowers. They had a great time as they were celebrating their first wedding anniversary.

Then the night came, they kissed each other and ended up with the intercourse hoping that they could have a kid. They rushed into their bed and enjoyed the night. After a few minutes,

"My turn honey." Callia said.

Then Callia was on top of him. As Ryan was enjoying himself with his eyes closed, she grabbed the gun under the pillow she put the other day. She was cried and said,

"I love you Ryan. I love you so much." And when Ryan was about to open his eyes, Callia shot him right on his head.

# Are Doctors?

*Time reminded me, somehow, although it was not much, just a small part,  
time took me on a great desire. Whoever I was, I'm a Doctor.*

*Yogyakarta, 12 November 1960*

I always thought that I was a man who was against the impossibility and darkness. Heal, the best name given from my dad and mom. Being an ordinary young boy from a poor family made me strong, brave, and full of respect.

This afternoon, my mom came back to Permata Ibu hospital for she had a high fever. It was one of the best private hospitals in Yogyakarta. This fever was always too high and my mom always had to return. My dad was out of looking for our meals and I waited for him in front of my mom's room.

Suddenly, "No, you cannot!" A doctor said.

I saw my best friend, Ziel begged to the doctor for his mom. Ziel would do anything so that his mother would be treated well in this hospital. Ziel's mom also got high fever. Her condition perhaps, was far worse than my mom.

*"It was definitely a mistake, this hospital wasn't be the right place",* I thought.

I heard the doctor say that they had to get out because Ziel could not pay the bill of her mom's room. I was shocked, I wanted to help him.

Dad pulled my hand, "It's enough, you do not have to go there, and this is not our place, Heal".

I ran towards Ziel and helped him. We explained to the doctor that there was another part of our life that we were fighting for.

"Rules are still rules!" The doctor said.

Dad approached me and Ziel, "Please, forgive us, sir, I am so sorry, they are just kids."

"Mind your own business, or I mind your business", the doctor said brusquely.

We were surprised that the answer was too rough for a doctor to say. He looked cold and then he turned and left.

*"Health is always valuable and worthless",* I thought.

—

Night came, I saw my dad had already slept so tight because he was too tired of working, and I could not stop thinking about my mom. Dad and I waited in a separate room from my mom, this was again because of the rules. I hated this moment, especially, when my mom had to sleep in a room full of wires and monitors. The door where I stayed was opened, I could see my



mom's room from my door's space. I noticed that there were some nurses and a doctor entered her room.

"Ah, they would definitely give another fever lowering cure to my mom, like every other time," I thought.

But, after a few minutes they came out, I heard something from my mom's room. She was shivering from the cold, I ran to get my dad, but her condition quickly became severe. Something wrong must be happening to her. My dad ran to call a doctor in and he told me to get out while the doctor in was inside. My mom looked limp that night. I tried to peek, this was the first time I saw my mom's condition very pale. The doctor finally got out of my mom's room and my Dad followed him.

I came to my mom. "Please, lay down near me, Heal", my mom whispered.

I looked into my mom's eyes, "I wrote a poem for you, mom. *Every second cannot be repeated, too quick to change, we cannot say this is the right time, to be together and all of a sudden gone.*" I heard my mom followed me reading the poem.

"Mom? Mom? Mom..." I cried.

My mom closed her beautiful eyes and she was gone, forever. I tried to explain to my dad that this was not fair for us, but he just smiled. He did not want to talk about things that could make him remember about mom.

"Do not do anything stupid," said my dad.

When I was born, I did not cry, I just smiled, and mom smiled at me.

—

A few years later, my dad died because of a high fever. Since then, I thought that I should do that stupid thing, but I was no longer bound with my word.

Now, I would have to do everything by myself.

The warm night brought me to a special place, where dad always took me. Tonight was the first time I came back to that place without him. It felt so different.

I met a man while I was eating at the Angkringan. He saw me and smiled.

"Who is this guy?" I smiled and ignored him a little bit.

"A wise man, need to be smart to do something stupid", he said.

—

I continued my study and became one of the students at the Medical University in Yogyakarta. I was welcomed with all my luck, scholarships and dormitories, but my life was so difficult. It was too hard for me as a new student who covered life all alone. I had to think about my own life when the other

students began to miss their home, which meant their dad and mom. I can only rely on the scholarship that was so limited because I could not work yet. I had to choose the most inexpensive food to keep me from morning to morning. If I was caught working, my scholarship will be revoked. So, it was better to finish my study based on the rules.

Finally, I finished my study in 3, 5 years with great academic achievement, S. Ked title added on my last name. The first gratitude was for my dad and mom, and the second one was a gift from God with my efforts and hard work.

I did not need to know what God has written, but this made me feel so blessed. I got a full scholarship to continue my master degree in the Pharmacy Department at the same university. My life was better and kept improving.

—

I have finished my master degree and got an offer to work at one of the private hospitals in Yogyakarta. It was the Permata Ibu hospital.

"This is a good time for me to pay my dad and mom's death. I need to be good first to do something stupid, and then break it down.... "

The cold night reminded me of my Dad and mother's death, I miss them, so much.

Angkringan had always been right place for us. We were the poor and traded. It had been a long time I did not enjoy the warmth. At least, my feeling always brought me back to the Angkringan.

I saw a man sitting next to me, and smiled.

"Who is this guy...?"

He shook my hand and smiled at me. We ordered some meals and ate it together to enjoy this night which was not so long. I remembered, he was the friendly man who saw me at this Angkringan long time ago. He was Kenji, a wise man who was a year older than me.

"I was also one of the doctors in that *"market"*. But unfortunately, I was too rich to join the trade", he said.

"What? What did you mean by saying that?"

"Nothing."

"Then, why did you want to survive there?" I asked.

"I save those who I have to save", he said.

His Dad died at the Permata Ibu hospital when he was five. It was because the doctors did something wrong to his dad. He couldn't do much, but he thought by going back to the hospital, his dad's death could be paid off.

Deep in his heart, he realized that there were so many things he could have done rather than revenge. Many souls suffered every day and they ended with a fever.

"I'm a Doctor, not a seller," said Kenji.

I was wrong, I never thought as wise as him.

"Didn't you think that a wise man who are supposedly clever were reluctant to act stupidly, Heal?" Kenji asked me.

"I got you now," I replied.

—

We broke a lot of rules by eliminating some of the patients' cost. We made our hospital's financial turmoil. So, we were sent to the hospital that was quite little in a suburban area. Even though this hospital was quite little, Permata Ibu hospital could still control it by sending their medicine subsidies.

We were threatened in the name of regulation.

Today was the first day, I was sent to this little hospital and we got a lot of patients.

There was no patient with fever today.

There are so many elderly people, women and children. Most of them had a serious skin disease and should be transferred to the Permata Ibu hospital because the lack of equipment and medicines here.

"This is an emergency! Fast, her heart is bleeding! Give the first aid!" said a doctor to the nurses who were there to help him.

I was shocked and ran to see what was happening. I saw a boy begging the doctor.

"Doctor, could you please help my mom, please doctor, I would do anything to make my mom taken care here, I would find a job", said the boy crying.

The doctor rubbed the boy's head and smiled gently to ensure that everything would be fine.

The boy was almost my age when I lost my mother. Ziel and I, fought for the same thing, our beloved mother.

*"Ziel... I miss him."*

Wait, I knew his face, the face of struggles and courage. Ziel. Yes, he was Ziel. A little boy's mom, who dared to risk his life for his mom.

*"Ziel..."*

I could not wait to see him. Yeah, I missed him so bad. I had been waiting for him.

He came out from the room after he rescued the patient. Now, they were treated well by nurses in a decent and comfortable room.

I smiled at him. Ziel also smiled at me.

"Heal?" He guessed.

"Ziel, my best friend!" I shouted.

I ran and hugged him tightly. We hugged each other tightly as if we could go back to our childhood.

We talked about our best moments in life as a medical student, our own life that was so hard and we talked about many things, including his mom.

I never thought this meeting could happen at this place.

God was never wrong in choosing stories.

—

Death was the worst loss in my life. I thought I could go back and take control of that hospital in order to break it down, but a wise man made me realize.

I could see the other ways to avenge my mom's death.

This morning, the regular meeting was held. I expressed my opinion there. I stood up and said firmly.

"Our beloved country, not only built by those who are rich and their money. More struggles and tears had to be paid off. We all were fighters, fight for ourselves. I saw this darkness in Permata Ibu hospital with my own eyes", I said clearly. "To create justice and equality, we need to fight against impossibility".

"Everyone also need to seek their prosperity, including us", Yenom, one of attendants, answered.

"The doctors destroyed our country. We should open our eyes and see, see the reality. Don't do something stupid", I argued.

The meeting finished with the applause from all the attendants as a sign that they all agreed with my opinion.

I packed up my papers after the meeting, until Yenom approached me.

"You are not allowed to do anything stupid against the rules, Heal," said Yenom.

"Why? Is that because of money?" I snapped.

"No", said Yonem.

"Were you afraid that our beloved hospital could not be the greatest hospital in this country?" I asked.

"Because it was the only thing that made us survive so far and if you dared, then everything would be chaos," said Yonem.

"So does it mean that you could choose who will live and who will die? Everyone has the right for a healthy life equally", I said as I passed away from the meeting room.

Yonem seek justice only in his own way.

I did not want to fight for justice with a stupid thing anymore, it would be better with thoughts and actions.

*"I was wrong so far"*.

---

I did things against the rules to uphold the poor. It was the stupidest thing that I did.

Dr. Kenji, Dr. Ziel and I were sent to another hospital which was far from city center. I realized that to get a goal, something must be sacrificed.

Here, I saw that we were needed more. I remembered my mom and dad, also my childhood when the health must be paid off.

*"Health is always valuable and worthless"*.

Every day, many patients came in with severe disease, not a high fever, which attacked my mom many years before. I could not let this happen. In fact, not all doctors need to be paid for the recovery of each patient.

As time went by, I was chosen as the head of this little hospital.

"I stand in front of you all, to say a doctor's appointment in accordance with the regulations of the hospital for election as the head of this hospital. Before I enter and work in the room of the head, the question of the poor people's rights is considered equal," I said.

---

"Our deposit is limited Dr. Heal," said Dr. Ziel. "If our deposit decreased, the Permatalbu hospital would immediately reduce their subsidies, there is no way, but still collected fees according to the rules, Dr. Heal".

"If you do this, there is no way to come back Dr. Heal", said Dr. Kenji.

"I know," I said. "I was trying to save those in need", I said.

The next morning, I held a meeting with a brief preparation for all doctors. We were all in the meeting room for a single purpose.

"If this was about betting their life, then let the purpose happen," I said in the meeting. "If this was a fight for those in need, why don't give a purpose for them to get justice?".

---

The days went on as usual, patients came and we were a Doctor.

Suddenly, Dr. Kenji came to me, "Dr. Heal, this is a chaos, the patients would not survive with the minimal care subsidies. If they could not be cured, their condition will be miserable",

"The head of the Permatalbu warned us clearly, we must not do things against the rule", Said Dr. Kenji.

"We have to spend our own money if it is necessary", I said.

*"If this fails, then my father and mom's death will be in vain..."*

Dr. Ziel suddenly entered with a letter in his hand, "Dr. Heal, we received an arrest warrant from the police because we did things against the regulations by neglecting our patients".

"It must be from Permata Ibu hospital, they have known our condition now," I said.

*"I realized that to get a goal, something must be sacrificed, so far I was wrong"*.

—

### *Gurowinan jail, Yogyakarta*

We were permitted to end our detention time. It had been two years after we went against the possibility.

"We need to add our deposit and build our own clinic," Kenji said.

"We are a Doctor," said Ziel.

"We are no longer a Doctor, but we save those in need, health is not always valuable and worthwhile, right?" I said.

"Life is not supposed to be traded," Kenji replied.

Together and again, the three of us started our lives from the very beginning. Herbal Clinic that we built was available for people who could not pay for their recovery. It started to be crowded from mouth to mouth and it spread all over the other cities.

*"Dear dad and mom, everything had been paid off, do I still seem stupid and did I do something stupid?"*

Life was the most beautiful gift I've ever got, but life and money were two sides that could not be separated in our life. Life, became worthless when the money was able to beat it. Money, became worthless when ones had been able to buy the life arbitrarily. Then, could we split it between money and life equally? Then, how could we decide someone's death if we were not the One who create their life?

We were not doctors, we were a Doctor.

*Time chose a story for the doctors, chose justice than wealth, amplified the voices for equality, while noted the debate and ignored the dispute.*

*Yogyakarta, 12 November*

# The Missing Identity

Blue... sky... nothing... that's what I felt and saw when unconscious in the shore for a night. A lifeguard wake me up, but I couldn't remember anything. Then I saw a chopper passing by on the coast and it might be looking for something. Hold on a second, I remembered something.

"I was on a boat, and it was going to Montenegro. The boat is just leaving from a harbor nearby. Suddenly I saw a chopper, it looks the same as I see right now. The chopper stopped beside the boat and inside the chopper, they were shooting at me. I didn't know why, so I jumped out from the boat and they kept chasing me with the chopper." Arrghh... my head!

I awoke up again inside a house, not a really big house and it seemed it's a lifeguard house.

"Hi, my name is Alicia. What's yours?" the lifeguard says. For that such simple question, I couldn't answer it. I didn't know why. What is my name!? I really didn't remember anything since the incident.

"I can't believe it, your head must be hit by a rock or something, and you're still survive. But it seems you're having an amnesia." she continued.

An amnesia? How it could be happening to me? She gave me a key that she found from my pocket. It has a number 608 and it lead to the Northwest Bank in downtown. It must be it, the deposit box key, perhaps there might be something that will help me to get my name back.

I've heard a chopper closer to the house and a gun cocking sound outside. The lifeguard then took a look outside and she made a mistake. I jumped out of the bed and shouted to her.

"No! Don't open the door!"

But it seemed like she didn't listen and open the door and they killed her after she opened the door. What is this? A war? Quickly, I ran into the balcony and I saw two men with a revolver entering the house.

"He's not here! Find him!" said one of the man.

They're looking for me and it must be the same guy who were trying to kill me in the boat. Then the chopper left and one of the man reached the balcony and I had to defend myself. I pushed him from the balcony and he

was falling to his death. His revolver were dropped – a Colt Anaconda, .44 Magnum revolvers, powerful in its class – the whole cylinder is still full.

“Chuck! What's going on?” cried the last man who was trying to kill me.

This time, he was checking outside and saw his friend died. Now he was a bit desperate and trying to find me.

“Ah, it makes my job is getting easier.” said the man.

*BANG! BANG! BANG!* Until he emptied all of his bullets for nothing. I put my shoes outside as a bait and he catches it. Now, it's my turn.

“Hey, up here!” and then I jumped out from the roof and take him down.

He had an unfair advantage; he took a stone nearby and hit it to my head. Ouch! It makes me dizzy. He tried to escape from me but the revolver that I got able to stop him. I shoot him in the leg and he was unable to run.

I interrogated him by asking “Who are you working for?”

“Hahahaha! Nobody!” and then he died from cyanide that he inserted in his hollow tooth.

I came back to the house and take the car key of the lifeguard. Sorry Alicia, you had to involve to this case that you shouldn't involve. I had to move on to the bank in the downtown.

It was almost 1:00 PM and I arrived to the Northwest Bank. Before entering the bank, I kept my gun in the car in case there was something happening. I entered the bank and asked the security officer about the key that the lifeguard found in my pocket.

“The deposit box service is over there” the officer said.

I went there and it seems the customer service already known me before by explicitly addresses me.

“Mr. Champions! It's been a long time.” Mr. Champions?

Who is he? Is it me or someone else?

“Can I have your key?” he continued.

I gave him the key and he asked me to follow him the deposit box room. I entered the room and I saw something that I remember. He lead me to the deposit box number 608, the same number as the key that I found.

“If there is anything more that I can help, I will wait you outside” the deposit box guy said and left me alone in the room.



I opened the deposit box and found a briefcase, there must be some passport, ID card, and money that I can use. But when I opened it there is a bomb and the timer is set for 45 seconds. Wait, I remembered something again.

"I was on a mission with someone to set the bomb inside the briefcase. The bomb timer will be turned on when the briefcase is opened. We put the briefcase in the deposit box number 608." My head is aching again.

I'm stupefied of it and I realize that the timer lasts for 10 seconds left. I dropped the suitcase and ran into the other side of the room. KABOOOOMMMM!!!! The sound of the explosion was very loud until the whole room was shaking.

"Mr. Champions! What's going on?" the deposit box guy shouted to me.

I knew that the whole bank was in lockdown exactly after the explosion, I had to run away from this place. I saw a perforated wall that created from the explosion lead to the backstreet. I had to back to my car before the police arrived. I jumped out from the bank to the backstreet. It seemed I was running out of luck, the police already blocked the whole road and they knew that I did the explosion.

"Put your hands in the air or we'll shoot!" the officer said.

I had to obey them for this time; I wished they're able to help me to get my identity back.

Then an old man came out from one of the police car and introduced himself.

"I am Colonel Newhart, I've been assigned by the agency to administer your case of Double Eagle."

Double Eagle? What was that? I've never heard about that before. Since I lost all of my memories I didn't remember anything, even I didn't remember my name at all!

"Bring him to my office, there is something that I need to clarify." said the Colonel Newhart to the officers.

They locked me inside the car and brought me to somewhere near the city. They drove me into a garage? A garage? What for? After that, they brought me to his office inside the garage. I couldn't believe that a garage becomes a base of a government agency. But what agency? FBI? CIA? Or maybe the agency who wanted to kill me back then?

"Please have a seat, make yourself comfortable" Newhart said to me.

It looked like he was pleased to let me sit in his office.

"Let us begin with one point that confused us through this entire investigation. Who are you?" he said.

"I know that you won't believe this, but I've been asking myself the same question and honestly I was hoping you could tell me"

He was chuckling and took a sip of his coffee. *SLAP!* One of the assistant slapped me in the face. What's wrong? I was telling the truth!

"I don't care with your argument, I may not know your name but I do know what you did and who paid you for the Double Eagle," he responded to me.

"But listen, a few moments ago I sustained a major head injury. I don't know how it happens, because I had total amnesia. I came here to find out who I am" I continued.

"Well, want to play dumb? Sure, I will help you to get your memory back, even" he said.

The light turned off and a projector turned on to shows me a film.

"In case you cannot remember, in the approaching car is Lawrence Whittaker, President Lawrence Whittaker. Recognize him?"

Mr. President? What was he doing in the picture? Then I saw the President was shot down.

"Mr. President was shot down right in his chest. President Whittaker finally died in transit to the hospital." Col. Newhart continued while smoking his cigar.

"And you're trying to tell me I was involved somehow?" I said.

"Oh, I will tell you exactly how" he said.

Colonel Newhart's assistant replayed the film and freezes into a certain scene, then he magnified it and I saw myself in there!

"That is you with a rifle that was found on the scene – Walther WA2000 –, with an empty cartridge and the bullet is found in the President's body."

"Do you mean that I..."

"...assassinated the president. Correct!"

I was shocked looking at the film that showed me myself assassinated the Mr. President, I still couldn't believe this.

“Well, I will see you tomorrow for more information. Take him away boys.”

They wanted me to get inside the cell and interrogate me tomorrow. I couldn't take this anymore, I had to do something.

“HEY! We're on third floor!” the assistant shouted.

I jumped out from the window to escape and landed to a pile of garbage, it still hurts you know. I couldn't rant for hurt right now, I had to escape. I called a taxi in and came back to the house near the coast where I was conscious.

When I was back to the house, something was going wrong. It was too quiet and so suspicious. I sensed that there must be someone in here. I entered the house and I greeted by a middle-aged and bald man with his two henchmen.

“Welcome back, Champions.” the man said.

Who is he? How could he address me as Champions?

“I heard that you lost your memory. Is it true?”

This must be it, he must be the one behind this mystery.

“Who are you?”

“Ah, you have really forgotten didn't you. Well, I will re-introduce myself. I am Monsieur Leclair, I am the leader of the A.G.E. – Anti Government Enforcement. And you must be JackChampions the famous assassin who killed the President.”

JackChampions? Was it really me? I was kind of uncertain about it, there must be something that they want.

“What do you want?”

“You're getting tougher right now huh? I should have killed you back then inside the boat.”

The henchmen were ready with their guns.

“Kill him!” Leclair said to his henchmen.

Whoa... take it easy, it's a live round. I ran away from the house and they started to shooting at me.

“Idiots! Don't let him get away! I want his head now!” the Leclair shouted.

One of the henchmen was going outside and fight with him hand-to-hand. I was able to steal his gun and shot him to death. Another henchman was equipped with an AR-15 assault rifle, he bursted me with that gun. He emptied the whole magazine for nothing, what a fool. While he was reloading his gun, it's the chance for me to rush him. I managed to drop his assault rifle and a fight happened in the small kitchen. Ack! He was very tough, I thought I would outpowered.

"Come get some!" the tough henceman said.

He fought with me like a wrestler, dammit! I was really outpowered. But bullets might befinish him off. I didn't have any guns in me, I had to find something else before I was running out of power. I saw a knife near the stove and I have to pick it up. When I wanted to pick it up, he beat me down and then strangled me. Arrgh.... I'm running out of breath, I *really* have to take the knife to finish this. I reached the knife and stabbed the knife straight to his skull.

Leclair escaped with a car and shouted "I *will* find you again, Champions! You cannot hide from us!"

He shouldn't run away from me! I took the assault rifle and loaded the magazine that I found in one of the henceman's body. I aim to the car and looked like the 5.56mm bullets was not enough. He managed to escape from me, so I came back to the house. What a mess! On the floor, I found a photograph of myself. It might be dropped by Leclair when he was trying to escape. I saw in the behind of the photograph, there was an address that will lead me to a photo studio. But it was pretty far from here since it is located in Coeur d'Alene, I had to take a train to go there.

I went to a train station, looking for a free ride to Coeur d'Alene. Luckily, I found a barn carrier that will leave to the same city. Inside the carrier, I found a farmer that warmly accepts me. "Get in, make yourself comfy." the farmer said.

"Hey, *watcha* name?" I had to change my name for a while, or maybe not.

"I'm Jack, good to see you."

"Mine's Dale, *howdy*."

We had a small talk inside the carrier, until I arrived in Coeur d' Alene. I was still wondering, what is A.G.E.? What did they want from me? Who was Jack Champions anyway? Why he killed Mr. President? And the most important one, who am I? Am I Jack Champions? Did I kill Mr. President? If yes, what was my purpose? The journey for looking my true identity has just begun.

I arrived in the Coeur d'Alene, it's a small town in Washington state near Spokane. It was almost 8 p.m. I called in the taxi in and went to the address that is written in the photo. It lead me to a photo studio, Bob's Photo Studio. I entered the photo studio and met a woman in there. I gave her the photo that I found and I ask

"Do you know who is the photographer of this photo?"

Looked like, she was a bit confused then she asked me to wait and went upstairs. Later an old man was going down the stairs and looking at me. There was a small pause and he was looking at me like a haunting ghost. He might be shocked looking at me.

"No! No! Get out of here! Right now!." the old man said.

"Sir, I only need some information."

"No informations for you, you scum! Get out!"

Looked like he had a bad memory about me. On a sudden, two men and a woman came inside to the photo studio. The woman came and asked me

"Are you Mr. Jack Champions?"

I thought I shouldn't lie for this time, I thought that they will help me..

"Yes, what do you want."

"We wan't you to come with us. Relax, we're on your side."

I was still unable to trust them for a while, because those two men was ready with their guns. I had to get away from them. I punched one of the man and leaves the area.

"Jack! Wait!" the woman said.

I didn't realize that there was another man that was waiting outside with a taser gun. He shot me with the taser and I got tranquilized.

I became conscious again inside of the car, besides me sat the woman that wanted to help me in this case.

"My name is Jones, Major Jones Barbara. I'm here working on the Seventh Sentinel, an independent government agency, specialized for *espionage* and covert operations."

Another government agency, oh please god no.

"Where will you take me then? Electric chair?"

"No. To somewhere that you might remember."

They took me to their base, pretty far from the photo studio where I was unconscious. Looked like what she said was right, I remembered something again.

"I was on this place, the Seventh Sentinel base. I was assigned to espionage to the terrorist group named A.G.E. Yes, the one that mentioned by Leclair." Arrghh... my head was aching again.

"Jack? Jack? Can you hear me?"

"Uh, yes..."

"We're here, the Seventh Sentinel Command Ops Base. Remember something?"

"Yes, looks like I remember something. This is where everything is started."

I was walking with Major Jones to her office and she said that she would give me my true identity. Finally, after a long waiting, I could reveal and know my true identity.

"Have a seat, Jack."

"So, what is my true name."

"Not right now, but now you should do another mission."

"What mission? For whom? CIA? FBI?"

"No. For America. Remember, you're actually belong to Seventh Sentinel. Not the others."

"Seventh Sentinel? What did I do back then?"

She gave me some documents relating to a mission that she said that I did back then.

"You were disguising as a member of A.G.E. named Jack Champions, an assassin who killed President Lawrence Whittaker. Your mission was to find and capture an information relating to Monseieur Leclair and A.G.E. terrorist group itself."

"I am disguising? So, I'm not Jack Champions?"

"Well, you will see it yourself in this new mission."

Later, she explained the mission that I should do soon.

"Now, your mission is to sneak out the A.G.E. base in the Mount Chilliad and stop Leclair's plan."

"Whoa.. whoa.. hold on. Leclair's plan? What is his plan?"

"Our intern agent said that his plan is to launch ten missiles to the Middle East. So the Middle Eastern will blame America for destroying their homes, and they will attack America as their revenge. So your objective is cancel the missile's launch and kill Leclair if possible."

"Understood."

"My team will escort you by plane in five hours. Get prepared, agent D."

Agent D? What it will stood for?

I equipped with a SIG Sauer P250, complete with some special attachment such as silencer, EMP device, and red dot sight. I entered the plane and waited until I arrived in the Mount Chilliad, where A.G.E. is based.

"Two minutes. Ready to drop the package" pilot said.

A red light had been turned on, I had to prepare myself with a parachute. I didn't know why, I felt like I was already well prepared and ready to do this mission. Because I was actually an agent perhaps?

"Green light! Go! Go!"

I jumped from the plane and *diving* in the sky. It was very fast and after a certain height I deployed the parachute. Ack! Arrghh! My 'chute was stuck and unable to deploy, and I was losing out of control! I reached for a knife in my pocket to cut my jammed parachute. I successfully cut it and deployed my secondary parachute. Gosh! That was close! I finally landed in the Mount Chilliad safely. In front of me, there was one security guard with an assault rifle, and he was going to my direction. I had to neutralize him to prevent any alarms.

"Psstt..." I whispered.

The security guard was confused with the sound and getting closer to my direction. As soon as he seen me, I shot him with my silenced pistol. *Good night*. I saw a truck was standing by near there and it will entered the main base of A.G.E. I sneaked and got into the truck. On the way to the main base, I saw the surroundings back here. I thought I know this place before. This place was heavily guarded by mercenaries hired by Leclair. I arrived in the main base, exactly in the inner parking lot. I came out from the truck and continued to sneak to the launch area.

Near the launch control room I heard two mercenaries were talking about something.

"Hey, do you know something." the first mercenary said.

"Yea?"

"This base once infiltrated by a government agency."

"How come? What's his purpose?"

"I don't even know, but from the latest news he is dead."

"What's his name?"

"Umm.. wait a second. Dawson! His name is Steve Dawson!"

Steve Dawson? I remembered something in my past.

"Steve Dawson, you will do a high-risk mission. Do you really want to do this mission." a General from the Seventh Sentinel said to me.

"This is a suicide mission, do you really want to volunteer yourself to become Jack Champions?" he continues.

"I will do everything for my country, Sir!"

"Very well, our medical team will prepare you to change yourself as Jack Champions."

It's real, I was not Jack Champions. I was not the President Lawrence Whittaker's assassin. I was Lieutenant Colonel Steve Dawson, a high-ranked operative agent of independent government agency Seventh Sentinel! Major Jones was right, I would find myself once I came here. But there were still something that I have to finish, it was to stop the evil plan of Leclair.

"Five minutes to launch." a sound from the loudspeaker came out.

It's only a few minutes left before the missiles launch, I had to think fast. I thought it's for me to rush in without considering about my stealth anymore. I entered the transit room and kill the two mercenaries in there. Then, I picked up their assault rifle and rush in to their base.

"Intruder alert! Intruder alert! Complete lockdown sequence activated." sound from the loudspeaker said.

It mean I have to act even faster, like a supersonic. I rushed in the launch control room and kill everyone inside of it.

"Two minutes to launch."



Inside the control room, I found a switch for the missile control. But it required a keycard to disable it. I didn't know where the keycard is. It might be has been destroyed to prevent someone to stop it. I was not running out of my mind, I kept looking for something more. There must be another switch for it. Or maybe... the power panel. The power panel was inside the launch control panel room, but it had been locked down. What should I do? I just remember that I also equipped with a C4 explosion device to breach a door. I thought it must be it. I stick the C4 into the door and blast it away, and it works!

"Thirty seconds to launch"

Only a few seconds left, I had to destroy the whole power panel to make the system failure and the missile launch was cancelled. I shot all of the power panel using the assault rifle and finally the power fails.

"Power failure, missile launch has been cancelled."

Thank god, the missile launch was cancelled. It was the time for me to find the bad guy, Monseieur Leclair. I was going to the missile room to get across to another room using a horizontal lift. *SWOOOSSHHH!!! BOOOOM!!!* A rocket hit the lift and made me fall 60 feet away.

"Do you think you can outsmart me, Champions?"

"LECLAIRE!"

"Correct! And now you have to pay with what you've done."

Then about a platoon of mercenaries came surrounding the missile room, I couldn't escape in this case.

"Prepare to die, Champions!"

Suddenly, a door were breached, and there were Major Jones and the reinforcements. They came to help me and they knew that I will really need some help. The reinforcements shot all of the mercenaries, left Leclair by himself.

"Dawson! Are you okay?" Major Jones shouted and came at me.

"I'm okay, thanks for everything."

"Now, you know everything, didn't you?"

"Hey, Leclair is escaping!" one of the reinforcement said.

He should escaping for this time, I must finish my whole mission as a Seventh Sentinel agent as Steve Dawson, not Jack Champions anymore!

Leclaire entered a car and left the facility with no more help from his mercenary.

“Goodbye, Champions!”

I was unable to catch him because there was no car in this area anymore. Major Jones came to me and brought a FIM-92 Stinger heat-seeking rocket launcher. She wanted me to finish the Double Eagle and A.G.E. once and for all. I opened the heat-seeking lens and aimed for the Leclaire's car. *BEEP... BEEP... BEEP... BEEEEEEEEPPP...* The long beeping sound has sounded, it mean the target locks.

“LECLAIRE! TERRORIZE THIS!” and then I pulled the trigger and the rocket launched.

The rocket directly hit his car and made his car explode and rolling, he still survive the explosion. Me, Jones, and the Seventh Sentinel squad was going closer to Leclaire.

“Hahaha! Curse you Champions! I shouldn't trust you for a long time.” Leclaire said while dying.

“My name is not Jack Champions, the President Lawrence Whittaker's assassin. I am Steve Dawson, the operative agent of Sevent Sentinel. And you are under arrest for terrorizing the national security!”

Suddenly, he pulled out his pistol and pointed it to me while I was going back to the A.G.E.'s base.

“Dawson! Duck!” Major Jones shouted to me.

Reflectly, I jumped to the left to prevent the bullet and *BANG!* He missed me. Quickly, I draw my P250 from my holster and emptied the whole magazine to Leclaire. The gun ran dry, Leclaire was dead, A.G.E. could be stopped.

“Rest in peace, Leclaire. Rest in peace.”

Finally, the extraction helicopter has came. Me and Major Jones going inside of the helicopter and having a small talk while we're going back to Seventh Sentinel base.

“Welcome back Dawson.” Jones said.

“Yeah... it's good to be back. But there is still some more things that I need to find out.”

“Yes, you will find out as far as you progressed again with us.”

After we arrived in the Seventh Sentinel base, we were welcomed by the whole Seventh Sentinel base. Also, there was Colonel Newhart from FBI who accused me as Jack Champions.

“Welcome back, Lieutenant Colonel. I’m very sorry with what I did back then. I didn’t that you’re...”

“...Steve Dawson, Lieutenant Colonel Steve Dawson.”

“Well, in this case, the Double Eagle case is solved. We will no longer disturb you and the whole Seventh Sentinel team anymore.

“Not a big problem, it’s good to be back though.”

After a long journey looking for my identity, well this is it. I was not the Mr. President’s assassin, Jack Champions. Even my face was the face of that assassins, actually I was an operative agent of Seventh Sentinel team, Agent D, Steve Dawson. And I was ready for the next mission.

# When Santa Claus Coming to Trench

December 24, 1914.

The battle has raged on in *No Man's Land*, where two opposing forces contested for long-stretched unhabitated land, in this muddy land mixed with little bit snow, both sides sheltered themselves from each others in a lengthy line of trench.

Big man with green darkish climbed the stairs, emerged half of his body from the trench. He was a man which his fellows called him as "captain". As a man with high rank, he tried to be more dominant among the others, as he striked a dignified pose. A chance to get shot was completely ignored by him, as long long he could be an example figure for his fellows to charge and die before him, to slightly increase his hope of survive.

He gulped his saliva as he sound a small metallic tubular thing on his mouth, let out a loud screeching noise reverbrating across *No Man's Land*.

"Charge!!! Charge!!!", The captain moved his hand back and forth.

"HRAAAAAGGGGGGGGGGGHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

Hundreds of men below the trench, yelled in response, sprung out and climb their way atop. Sounds of machinegun fire explode from opposite side. Hot sharp lead spit out from its muzzle, piercing trough bodies of unlucky men whom didnt even managed to reach the edge of trench. Those men who manage to reach it however, met their direst experience in their life: A long line of barbed wire, rifle and rains of heavy artillery fell upon them. For King and Country they fought, yet those men died for naught.

First wave of troops charged, yelled with such a deafening voice that could broke sky apart. Soldier from the other side, took a steady aim with his *Maxim*, and hurled down a stream of bullets toward them. They stormed bravely like an ocean wave, yet after brief moment, they fell away like a dominoes, as they proned with fear and digged ground deeper to avoid any machinegun fire.

Another screeching whistle sound rang behind the trenchline. Second wave of troops began their advance, and of course, rains of bullets "greet" them properly as they charged in. British machine gunner tried their very best to supress Germans's counter fire when soldier charged toward them.

“Quick lads, give me another *bandolier!*”

Shouted man with brown coloured tunic hat. His beard grew wildly like an wild growned weeds, now black-brownish colored with the micture of mud. Men was not allowed to cut beard they said, beard is a symbol of honor and pride for king and country, they said.

A young soldier responded to him, gave a quick salute and rushed upon ammunition depot far behind the trenchline. He's 7 feet tall man, a height that stood above above an average englishmen with well bulided bulked body. This particular person, however, had his own characteristic which distinguish him from any other soldier: his red nose. His nose was so red like a well growned cherry, made him a centre of attention for every person who passed him by. Nobody knew who his real name, but due to his characteristic, people on his battalyon used to call him with various kind of nicknames such as “Rudolph, Cherry Sneezzer, Stunged Nose, Beet Nose, but he's famous as *The Red Nose* .

Red Nose with an unwavered will, kept moving forward run in such crampy trenchline, Ignoring bodies of all his fellows lays below him. Smells of blood, burnt corpse, black powder and earthy mud mixed in this damp, narrow trenchline. He had to be careful though, beacause small clumsiness in trench such as brief stumble would affect the movement flow in trench greatly.

Shrieking sound came from above, followed by loads of slamming sound and spark of debris flying everywhere. He saw a piece of hot pieces of shrapnels hit soldier's eyes on the edge of the trench, he slammed to the trench floor, roll around with agonizing scream of pain.

Red Nose, without showing any sign of symphaty whatsoever just jumped over him.

He only fixated in one goal: “To bring bandoliers of ammunition for his machinegunner”.

Ammunition depot. A dim lighted room with thick plank of woods were placed structurally to be able to survive against artillery bombardments. Variant kind of firearms and ammunition were placed and organized neatly, just like small *warong* but with weapons and ammunitios. A strategical infrastructure such as ammunition depot was built since the early stage of war, and no wonder that some ammunitios already covered in dust and dirt. Man in 30's, an ordnance officer with his assistant, a *gurkha* soldier are the one who taken a charge in this ammunition depot since war begun. He just realized that someone already barged in to his 'holy place' as he turned his head in anger.

“What?! No more ammo for you, ammo begga---

“Ah! It’s you Rudoph nose !Please Come in!”

Remain silent, Red Nose just walked into ammunition depot. The ordnance officer didn’t ask more questions toward Red Nose.

“Let me guess, bandoliers of .303, right?”

Red Nose just gave light nods, and the ordnance officer directly proceed rummaging if there’s any remaining bandoliers from last week stock in black wooden ammunitionbox. Although newly and fresh ammunitions were available to Red Nose, he deliberately gave the old stock instead. Red Nose on the other hand didn’t raised a single voice nor protested with such treatment given to him.

“Well, here you go. Last bandolier of .303 for today. Make sure you tell Mr Smith not waste much ammo. We are on shortage until replenishment next Thursday.

Red Nose gave several small nods in response.

“You did great job, son. Now Go.. For King and Country”

After traded salute, Red Nose went directly toward the machinegunner, gave the bandolier as ordered, and he would stood idly behind him until him ordered Red Nose to fetch another one.

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Night fell

*No Man’s Land* was never been so quiet like this before. A cold night at december pierced trough the bones. Soldiers gathered in a small group around, telling each others stories about their experience today to kill boredom, Red Nose however, remain silent, sitting in the corner of the trench, listening to their stories .

“Tough day, lads? How many *huns* did you got today?”

“Look at mine! 10 heads and a nice *Luger* from them!”

One soldier was waving his ‘trophy’ as profound expression drawn on his face .Men on that group shout an astonishment, followed by each soldier showed off their achievement during this day. Each soldier got various amounts of ‘kills’ that day. From 3 kills, 4 kills and 7 the most as being able to score more than 5 kills in one day was considered as great achievement during wartime. Only on this kind of event, taking away someone’s life could be considered as profounded achievement. Later on, they would wrote down their kill counts in small notebook, whether they were able to survive

this war, they could tell their wife and child their heroic story about 'good guy' killed 'the bad guy'. Before going to bed, each soldier would write a 'killmarks' on their notebook, admiring a group of straight lines which define their 'contribution' toward their king and country.

Deep silent, all soldiers who fought bravely at noon now sleep soundly, left some whom in charge of night guard. On that silent snowy night, a melodic tone from nowhere was heard. Sounds like a group of choirs sing together in church. But whom? Where? Obviously there were no way a church or group of chorus existed in the middle of battlefield.

It was 11 pm at night, two soldiers young and old ones and Red Noses were on charge doing night guard. They wore their standard black-furred trench coat which covering their whole body as they gathered in small lantern, kept the fire as small as possible in order to leave marks on German artillery. While they were busy to rub their hands to keep themselves warm, that mysterious song became a small pep talk for them.

"Hey, did you hear that?"

"Hear what?"

"Oh hell no, listen closely, this rhythm, this melody... isn't this 'O Tannenber'?"

"You sure? There's no way our boys would sing German song."

"No, what I mean is---"

"Don't tell me, you implying that those *huns* who sang this?"

"Well sir, that's the most possible guess for now"

"Let them be boys! That means they also missed Christmas same as we do! Aint this nice?"

The young soldier only gave a small wry smile, Red Nose however, remains silent, but inside his heart he was being thoughtful and pay a serious attention toward this 'unusual' event and though a crazy idea that he would commit tomorrow.

---

25 December, 5 a.m in the morning

Droplets of snow fell upon the earth, covered the scars from yesterday's battle like a sea of cottons. No artillery nor machinegun fired. Both sides remain unmoved, but steady if either side dare to start the fray.

Suddenly, a ruckuss could be heard from Red Nose's trench. Red Nose, did something which is unthinkable for most of people. He wore heavy trenchcoat and stuffed himself with cottons to make his belly looks bloated. He took some cottons adds some sticky glue and put it in area over his mouth to make it similiar as beard. He lend red paint from ordnance officer and paint his brodie helmet red. Then, he emptied one sandbag and use it to make similiar as rucksack, shoving all kinds of sweets such as chocolate, candies, crackers onto it. Now, he was more resembles with a figure known as Santaclaus.

Astonishment filled in British trench as Red Nose wore that kind of get-up and about to climb the trench. Some of his friends were against his idea. What he was trying to achieve? What was the point? One by one, they tried to warn Red Nose.

"Hey! What are you trying to do!

"This is suicidal! Come back at once!

Red Nose raised just ignored them, raised his right hand upward, an international sign of neutrality and his left hand holding rucksack full of sweets. He ascended upwards, slowly, steps by steps. Germans on the other side also astonished by this particular scene. However, they just stood there, aimed down their rifles but no one dare to fire any shot, at Red Nose's bloated body with his distinctive body part very exposed toward them. In battlefield where word such 'mercy' known, a compassion toward same human being hinder them to pullthe trigger.

When his whole body was fully visible, he walked toward Germans trench. Steps by steps, slowly but surely, crossed the sea of snows. Sometimes, his feet were stucked in the depth of snow, but he managed to get back and kept moving, as he focused his sight to the front.

Yard by yards passed, as he moved more closer toward German trenchline. A pointy stell helmet was visible for him. Right on the middle of *no man's land* he stopped, as he put down his rucksack to the ground. They aimed at him more deeply, in case what he dropped on the ground was an explosive materials or such.

Red Nose remain calm and composed, as he opened his rucksack in front of hundreds of rifles pointed at him, unravel whats things inside toward them.

"Merry Christmas!"



He spoke. This particular scene brings shocked both sides who fought at that war.

Then, he leaned down took one bar of chocolate from his rucksack and offered it toward Germans.

Tension raising in two fronts. Will Germans accept this offer as sign of hostilities?

At first, Soldiers of kaisers still felt cautious about that sudden act. But, one of the soldier unaimed his rifle, and braved himself to meet this "mysterious" santaclaus.

"Fröhliche Weihnachten!"

Said the German soldier as he received that chocolate. Both Red Nose and german soldier smiled and hug each other, followed by both sides emerged from trenches, met each other, traded goods and photograph and they sang Christmas songs together with their own language. Although their language diverse each other, feelings of understanding could be understood toward either sides.

Suddenly, an airburst of artilleries explode from afar. This moment of peace only lasts for brief. After that, rains of heavy shells rains down *no man's land* . Heavy smoke resulted from explosion filled up the battlefield. Both sides back to shelter on their sides from times onward, fought against each other like what they did before. Although how brief it seems, but will last as forever, from the time they live and troughout generations.

What happened with Red Nose in the end? Nobody knows.

" He just dissapeared as smoke of wars dissipated from *No Man's Land*", said one of the soldier.

# FLIPPED

6102 September 14

"Hey! Here!" said the man in black suit while he was waving his hand to me. I walked approach him.

"Do you really need to make the whole cafe to stare at you?" I said and smile.

He was looking around but no one inside the cafe except us. "Perhaps." he smiled and pulled my chair. "Please have a sit." he continued.

I sat and not so long after that the waiter came to serve the food.

"I see that you made the order. Good job, Mr. Smith." I said with a big smile on my face.

"Rainbow Fried Rice as always, right?" he asked and gave me a frown face.

"Yeah. It's a secret that this is the best food here." I said and smiled.

"So Agaya, what is your answer?" he asked and started to be more serious.

"Do we really need to talk about this right now? Can we just wait at least until we finish the food?" I stared at him.

"I've been waiting for this 4 whole years to finally had the guts to reveal my feelings towards you. Come on, I can't wait." he smiled but then put his serious face back.

"Well, that just lose my appetite." I leaned back on my seat. "To be honest I can't be with you Jack. I know that we've been trying things for this whole 4 years but I don't think it will work out." I continued and stared at the table, did not have the gut to look at his face.

"Why? You seem so happy, I am happy too." he asked, sounded more like demand for clarity and more explanation to me.

"It's so hard for me to explain" I said. I could felt that my voices started to tremble.

"Stop looking at the table and look at me! At least tell me why. Could you?" his voice was raising.

"I can't." I said with my trembling voice.

"What make things so difficult to say? You don't like me the way I do?" he sounded to become more impatient.

"It is hard to tell you." I said and looked at him hesitantly.

"Come on, just say it. I can't wait any longer." he said with anger, seems like his patient has finally empty.

I crossed my hands on the table and moved my head forward so I can be closer to his side.

"I like woman." I paused to take a breath. "I found out since I was in Junior High School." I whispered hesitantly and still seemed like my eyes couldn't stop staring at the table for coming out like this.

"What? What is this bullshit? If you like another man you could tell me, you don't have to build this whole lie. You know how cruel society could do to someone like you who like a woman. In our world? You know that is not the right thing to do, aren't you?" he looked at me with angry eyes.

"I know." I paused trying to control my emotion. "That's why I've been denying myself as long as I could remember. I thought getting close to you will make me forget about my unusual and abnormal sexual preferences people said." I said still in whisper voice.

"So, that's it? That is all of me in your eyes? Your cover? Does this thing even true? " he asked angrily but sounded hesitant.

"Yes. It is true, Jack. I was scared to admit this. My friend did suicide cause people stare at him like some kind of disgusting disease. You know it is not easy. You know that it is scary." I said and looked at him. I am scared.

"Then don't be like this. It is true. It is disgusting. You aren't suppose to be like that your friends." he said madly. "Why are you even telling me this, you better give me some fake reasons, like I wasn't good enough for you perhaps or even you are in love with another man. Not this kind of bullshit trash words!" he continued. He breathed heavily and looked like a bomb that just explode.

"I thought this whole 4 years we're being friends I could finally have someone to trust. Until that day came, you said you love me." I paused and looked at him. "I supposed to be happy because someone love me, but I

can't Jack. Man is not my preferences. That is just not the way I feel." I continued and froze.

Nothing I could do except just stared at him, there was a long pause between me and him. And that seemed like the time didn't even tick.

"You are wrong. I am not the one you should trust. It is right that a human being like you is a disgusting."he said, now without sounds hesitantly.

I looked down, squeezed my hands, tried to not get mad.

"You also think it's disgusting, right?" I raised my voice, demanded for his common sense.

"Because this just isn't right. The way you choose is gross."he replied.

"Do you think I choose to be like this?" I said and looked at him. This time my heart was beating faster, like a whole horse racing was happening inside my body. "If I can choose, I'll love you. But we can't choose to whom we fall in love. Never. This is not what I want. This is who I am!" I snapped.

"No. Don't be." he paused and took a deep breathe then looked at me with disgusting judgments. It felt like for him, I was another trash of society now. Then he continued "Don't be who you are. People like you will root in hell." he cursed.

"You don't understand. Just like other people out there. You choose to not understand and believe what we have been believed in." I said calmly and faked a smile.

"Because this is what we have been taught about." he paused and looked at me with confusedness. "That what you do and what you are is something that doesn't fit with us." he said. "Don't ever talk to me again. Pretend that we never know each other." he continued and stood up from his chair.

"Why? Why someone like me doesn't fit? Why that I can't be who I am and in love with someone as my preferences want. It's not like I kill someone." I replied.

"Christian No Agaya! Don't you realize? We live in a gay world, that a man should love a man and woman should love a woman. Not the other way around. Not like what you do. You are a man and you suppose to love a man. Me. Not a woman." he said and took a breath. "What you do and feel is wrong! Go! Be with your dead friends. You are the shame of society! You live a different path with us." he continued angrily and walked away. He left

me sitting in my chair, felt so disgust to myself and regretted about telling him who I am.

I am a man who in love with a woman in the wrong world. In my world, a man suppose to love a man and a woman suppose to love a woman and in my world, things are flipped from yours.

## The Nerd Scoundriel Boy

Ignatius Budi Sartika, an ordinary boy who lives in the rogues family. His father was killed by gunshots after fleeing from police while he was distributing drugs. His mother was an Indonesian Migrant worker who worked in Taiwan, but since Budi was kid until now, he doesn't know about her news anymore. Now, Budi lives in a densely populated neighborhood with aunt Evi in the heart of Yogyakarta city. Aunt Evi is Budi's mother sister.

She is a middle-aged woman and works as a pimp. She managed a lot of prostitutes. Her business is one of the biggest prostitute business in Yogyakarta. She has remain royal customer every month that come to enjoy the sexual pleasure. When there is a delegation from other country or government officials that come to Yogyakarta for doing something business, she is always asked to send her best prostitutes to serve the delegation. Not only the government officials that become her customer, but also lot of students that still studying in the collages involve to enjoy her prostitution.

Although Aunty Evi is rich through her forbidden business, she is not defray Budi's live and for Budi's school. Aunty Evi does the opposite towards Budi. She always does something harsh and treat him as a slave. Aunty Evi said that Budi has to work cleaning up all the rooms, trash and all things in that prostitute house everyday, and then Budi deserve to receive the money from Aunty Evi. Because of that, every day Budi has to wake up early and clean the trash overnight such as condoms, ciggarete butt, and beer bottle. After he collects all of that things, he throws away the trash in to nearest garbage dump.

Everyday Budi has to do that job; wakes up early, collects garbage, throws it, and after that he goes to school. From that money that he earns by working to his aunty, he can go to school. Aunt Evi doesn't want Budi to make mistake in his job as a forced cleaning service. Aunty Evi always wants her business place clean everywhere. Aunty Evi assumes that Budi's work is the easiest work in the world. Just cleaning all the stuff inside the house. If Budi cannot do that, she always beats Budi's head with vodka bottle and pointing a glock in Budi's face.

Live in rouges, bastard, and scoundriel environment like that made Budi becomes as bastard as them. Budi's life is really close to the harshness and alcohol. Since in the childhood, fighting is his main hobby, because he always sees it in his neighborhood. But Budi's face impression is shown that he is nerd and cute. Budi likes fighting, Budi always finish all of his problem with his friend

in school and in his neighborhood through fighting. For him, fighting shows how man deserve to be called as a man or gentlement. Budi also join the Taekwondo and Jujitsu fighting club in the town to support his hobby, fighting. After the time goes by, his fighting skill is improving in that 2 fighting club. He always win the street fight. People that see Budi will just think that Budi is nerd and cute boy, but actually not.

In the Neighborhood, there is a famous and most feared gang named Marginal. The gang is mastering and owning Budi's Neighborhood territory. The gang member is the group that responsible distributing drugs and alcohol in the City. They also likes do something bad like pillaging, robbing, ect towards people that don't have any fault. For them, who strong, they will lead. One day, when Budi came back from school, the gang was being hang out in the entrance of Budi's neighborhood. Budi was looked like a nerd boy.

"look at that guy! That's a cattle comming!" said Tadashi, the leader of the gang.

They stand up to seize and confiscate Budi's money.

"Hey ladyboy! Where will you go?" asked Tadashi.

" I want to go home, let me pass " said Budi.

" Wow, not that easy boys. You have to pay retribution money first" said the geng leader.

" Retribution for what? I'm living here. Everyday i pass through this way " said Budi.

" Hey you! Son of a bitch, don't talk too much. Give us your money! " said the other member.

They started to examine Budi's pocket.

"Dont touch me !" said Budi.

Budi started to feel angry. Budi reflectly pulled Tadashi's hand and slam Tadashi's body easily. Because Budi was trained well in Taekwondo and Jujitsu, to slam the opponent body wasn't a matters for him. See their leader was being slammed by Budi, the 8 other member started to attack Budi. All of the Taekwondo technique of kicking and punching was used by Budi to defend himself. One versus eight. Budi could beat all of them. He knocked out all of the 8 gang members in their face by kicking. Tadashi's hand were broken because pulled and slammed by Budi. The other 8 members was unconsciused because kicked in their face. After Budi beated them all, he ran away to the home and scared that the gang member will be revenged to him. He realized

that the people who he had beat is the most scary provincial gang in the city. He locked all the window and the door of his room. He was confused and scared if the gang member will kill him because the gang was so famous for doing like that. Budi kept thinking about it all the night. He couldn't sleep. He was cold sweat lot. His hand were shaking all the night. He prayed to God that Marginal don't kill him. He realized that he had done something wrong. He thinks that if he could rotate the time, he will just wanted to give them his money and the problem finished. But unfortunately the problem was going to be bigger. Because Budi were too fright, he decided to bring a double stick with him to anticipate if the gang would make a revenge or even killed him.

Two days later, The marginal was hanging out again in the entrance of the hood. Now the gang member was much than before. They also carried weapons such as knife and stick. In the same time as the previous day, as usual Budi came back from school to his home. Budi walked alone. In the distance, Budi saw them. His hearts begin to beat fast.

“ Oh shit, what should i do,” said him in the heart.

He was already prepared to this condition and then he took the double stick out from his school bag. After inhale and exhale for a moment and dare himself, he walked toward the enterance neighborhood gate. He dared himself to do it.

“look! Its him!” said Tadashi.

All the Marginal gang member stood up and looked at him. Budi stopped walking for a moment.

“ what do you want? You want to fight again?” Budi said.

All of the member laughed.

“ Fight? You said fight again? Don't you look at yourself? You are alone!” said Tadashi.

“ I saw yesterday that you could beat all of us. That's amazing” Tadashi added.

“ Now we will give you 2 choices, join us or we will finish you here, just to remember you, you are alone here but we are many” said Tadashi.

“ You could be one of the leader in our gang, we will do something like drugs business together. Well, don't you also want money? I know that you works in your aunt prostitute business and paid less. Poor you boy!” said Tadashi.

“ Now, answer me! You want to join or not?” asked Tadashi.



Budi was thinking very hard about Tadashi's offerings.

"Of course I want money. I have to work hard cleaning the house to earn money from Aunt Evi, but now there's a good offering for me. Drugs business! It will earn a lot of money! hmm..." said Budi in his conscience.

Without thinking further Budi said "Oke I will join you".

"Hmm.. good decision boys. I promised to you that you will be rich for joining us" said Tadashi.

Now Budi has joined the Marginal gang. His job was as a drugs courier now. If there was a client that needed drugs, now they just easily call Tadashi first, and he will ask Budi to deliver it. To hide his gang's drugs business from the police, Tadashi just sold the drugs to the client that he really-really knew their profile. And also Tadashi had a special code to order the drugs. The customer had to say the code that Tadashi gave to them, and then Budi's job was just to deliver the drugs to the customer. The Marginal gang sold many kinds of drugs such as ecstasy, crystal meth, cocaine, marijuana, and heroin. But the best sellers of drugs that usually ordered by the customer were cocaine, marijuana, and heroin. To order the drugs, the customer had to say the name of the drug type that they want. For example, if the customer wanted to order cocaine, they had to tell Tadashi "niakok" and if they want to order heroin, they had to say "nioreh". If they want to order marijuana, they have to say "anaujiram". This system was valid for all the types of drugs. After ordering from Tadashi, now Budi's job was to deliver it to the customer. Normally they will meet in a hidden place like in a small gang, or near a trash dump and etc. If Budi could deliver the drugs successfully, he would get 40% of the selling.

In a week Budi could deliver drugs to the customer 5 times. He could get more or less Rp. 7.500.000 clean in a week. That was a wonderful price of money that he could earn. From that money, Budi could fulfill all of his needs, eat 3 times a day, buy anything that he wanted, and also pay his school until graduated from senior high school. Budi felt so thankful to God for the job that he has right now. Now he felt very lucky compared with his job to clean his aunt's prostitution home. Delivering the drugs to the customer was not as easy as people think. Budi had to make sure that the environment for the drugs transaction was clear from the police's spy, because the job had a high risk. Also, he always tried to be careful and make sure that the customer said the right code that Tadashi gave. The first thing that Budi did was to ask them "tell me the code that you got from my boss". If the customer said the correct code, he would ask the money to be transferred to his bank account first and after he got the notification from the bank, he gave the drugs to the customer. If the customer didn't tell the correct code, Budi would call Tadashi first to confirm if the

person is the right person or not. Budi always very careful delivering the package. Tadashi has told Budi that the police has tried to investigate this drugs business.

“ You have to be very careful. This is a high risk business. If the customer seems not seriously will buy our drugs, just left them. If they are a police, run or fight them. Kill them if necessary. Here, i give you this glock” Tadashi said.

“Use this glock if necessary. Only in the urgent condition” Tadashi added.

Budi actually had a kind of trauma with the glock because his aunty in Budi's childhood always pointing the glock if Budi did a mistake. He were very scared with the glock. He thought that the glock could kill him just by pull up the trigger. If he saw the glock, he would remember his aunty pointing a gun in his face when he was a child.

“ No, thank you. I better to fight and use my martial arts than i have to touch that gun,” Budi said.

“Why? This is simple to treat the person that messing to you by this glock. You don't have to waste your energy to fight them,” Tadashi said.

“No! I said no! whatever you say about me, i dont want to use it,” Budi answered.

“Oke just up to you,” said Tadashi.

Time goes by and the business were become bigger. The number of the customer was increasing time by time. The bigger business was, also the bigger the obstacle could happen. That was what Marginal gang business face. The first enemy for the business was the police that tried to investigate it. Many ways that police did to reveal Marginal's gang business. The police knew Marginal gang and its business but the thing that police didn't know was how to find the evidence. Police always found that the Marginal played the game cleanly and no trails to be left. The police already knew the Budi identity. They know it because of Budi's aunty.

One of the police officer that involved the investigation named officer Sigit. Officer Sigit were one of the Aunty Evi's prostitution customer. He always came to the prostitution place every Saturday night. He became closed friend with aunty Evi.

“Ahh... you come here on time like usual” said aunt Evi.

Officer Sigit entered and sat.

“ Do you want the previous girl or want to try the new one? I have the new one, freshly come from the village 2 days ago. Do you want to see her?,” offered aunt Evi.

“ No thanks, I prefer the previous one” said Sigit. “Hmm... you look so tired. What makes you look shabby like that?,” asked aunty Evi.

“ Now I was assigned for a new case of drugs trafficking. They are really difficult and hard to be revealed. We the police already know their existence but we don't know how to find the evidence. We also don't know the member of them,” said the Police officer.

Aunty Evi was shocked. She knew the gang that the police search was Marginal gang. And what made aunty Evi's heart beated fastly was her nephew, Budi, was one of the gang members.

“Do you know them? I think that you little bit know them. I think that one of the member also often here” asked the officer.

Nervously aunty Evi said “ No, of course, I don't know,”

“You looked so nervous, what's going on?,” asked the officer.

“Nothing!,” said aunty Evi and she walk left the officer.

The officer felt curious and guessed that there was something wrong with Her. Officer Sigit thought that Evi knew the existence of the gang and their activity of drugs trafficking. Officer Sigit come and sat beside Evi.

With the serious face officer Sigit asked “ Tell me what you know about Marginal gang”.

“I don't know nothing about them” said Evi.

“I know that you know their activity. Just tell me that you know” said officer Sigit.

Aunty Evi's heart beated fastly.

“I swear to God that I don't know them” said Aunty Evi.

“Let's make a deal. You tell me what you know about the gang, or I will close your prostitution place and send you to the jail” threat the officer.

“ No! don't do that! You are my close friend! Please! Don't do that!” begged Evi.

“ Just tell me now, or i will call my friend to close it now” officer Sigit threat her again.

“ Promise me not to arrest me and close my prostitution business, and promise me not to arrest my nephew” Begged aunty Evi.

“ Your nephew? “ asked officer Sigit.

“ Just promise to me first” said Evi.

“Okay, I promise” said the officer.

“ I know every single activity of Marginal gang. All the gang member live here in this hood. I know their drugs trafficking. They always supply the drugs here also to my guest. Is that already answer your question?” asked Evi.

“ What about your nephew that you told to me before?” asked the officer.

“ My nephew is one of their courier” said Evi.

“ You have promise to me not to arrest me and my nephew” Evi added.

“ Well, thank you for your information. As you know, I will not arrest you, but sorry, i lied to you that i will arrest your nephew. “ said the Officer.

“ No, please! Don't do that! “ begged Evi.

“ Once again thankyou for your information.. Ha ha ha.. “ said officer Sigit while he was walking outside the house.

“ Go to the hell son of a bitch! What do you get if you can reveal this cases? Reputation? Or job promotion? You will get the revenge soon or fast! I swear you! “ said Evi loudly.

Aunt Evi felt guilty for telling the Police officer about the gang. She fastly grap his handphone to phone Budi.

“ Helo, where are you now? Be careful, the police officer already know your gang existance” said aunty Evi in the phone.

“ How do they know?” said Budi.

“ Someone has tell him. Be carefull” said Aunty Evi and closed the phone.

Aunt Evi didn't tell Budi that herself is the person who told the officer about the Marginal gang.

For the police, the information from Aunty Evi was enough to reveal the case. From her the police already know where the gang lived, and knew one of the member. The police started to investigate. First thing that they wanted to know deeper was the leader of the gang. The officer started to ask local

people in the hood. Officer Sigit asked the street vendor along the road. He disguised as a ordinary buyer.

“ Sir, I want that, one portion please” ordered officer Sigit.

While the street vendor making Sigit order, Sigit started to dig information about the gang.

“ Sir, do you know Marginal gang?” asked Sigit.

“Of course I know, who is the people in this hood that don't know about the gang? they like a grup that hold the authority here. We all the street vendor have to pay retribution money every week. We don't know that money for what purpose, I think the money is just for their prosperity. “ explained the street vendor.

“ Do you know how big the gang and who is the leader sir?” asked officer Sigit.

“ The gang is very big. They are the group that responsible for drug trafficking in this City. The main leader named Tadashi, and one of his right hand is Budi,” Explain the street vendor.

“ So, is Tadashi the nephew of Evi? The one that has the famous prostitution in this area?” asked Sigit.

“ No, not Tadashi, the person that you mean is Budi. Budi is the courier. “ explained the street vendor.

Officer Sigit thought that he couldn't go to catch Tadashi if he doesn't through Tadashi right hand first.

So officer Sigit asked to street vendor.

“If I want to buy the drugs, how can I meet Budi sir?” asked Officer Sigit.

“ Budi actually just want to sell the drugs with the customer that he already knows their profile, if someone that he doesn't know want to buy the drugs to him, he will not sell it”. said the street vendor.

“If you want to buy the drugs, you can buy with me. I can met you with Budi if you want. But you have to give me little money. how?” asked the street vendor.

Without thinking further, officer Sigit agreed the street vendor offerings.

“ Oke sir, I will follow your steps” said the officer.

“ Come back here again tomorrow. I wait you here” said the street vendor.

“ Here is your food, it cost Rp. 5.000. “ said the street vendor while giving Sigit the food.

“ Thankyou sir. “ said Sigit. He walked home.

Officer Sigit hold a meeting with the other police to trap Budi. The plan would be like this; while Officer sigit masquerade as a drugs buyer and do the drugs transaction with Budi, the police will came out from their hiding and case Budi, including officer Sigit. All the procedure was well prepared, the police just need to wait until tomorrow. Time goes by, here came the day when they will do the plan.

Officer Sigit come to the street vendor and said “ sir, I'm ready”.

“Oh you, young fellow. Wait, I will call him.” Said the street vendor.

After waiting for about 5 minutes, Budi arrived alone. All the other police has standby waiting the order to catch Budi.

“ You want to buy something?” said Budi to the street vendor.

“ No, here is my friend, he is the person who want to buy” said the street vendor. “ Hello, what do you have? I need a kokain” greet Sigit.

“ I just sell to the person who I know, not to the stranger like you” said Budi.

“ Maybe we can acquaint each other first.” Said Sigit.

“ My name is Sigit, I live in the apartment 2 blocks from here, I know you from him.” said Sigit.

“ What do you want?” asked Budi.

“ I want a kokain, oh, hey, what about if we go somewhere to talk about this?” asked Sigit.

Then they were going to the place where the plan will be held.

After arriving to the place, they were talking each other. They were discussing about the rules of how to buy, and also the prices. While they were seriously talking each other, suddenly the police raided them.

“ Police officer! Don't move! Keep your hand behind your head!” said the other police.

Seeing the police, Budi reflectly defend himself by kicking all of the police with his Taekwondo. He kicked the police in their jaw. Several police get knocked out.

“ Stop it or i will shoot you! “ said officer Sigit.

Budi unfortunately kept kicking, beating all the police. To paralyze Budi, officer Sigit shot Budi in his leg. Budi fall, and he couldn't stand up or even defend himself anymore.

“You are under a rest! “ said Sigit while handcuff Budi's hand.

All of the police brought Budi to the jail. In the police office, they investigated him deeper.

“ Tell me what is your contribution of this gang?” asked Sigit.

Budi just kept his silences.

“ I don't want to use violence way to make you say something, so don't force me to use it!” said Sigit.

Budi kept silent. Officer Sigit smacked Budi's wound.

“Aaaaahh! It's hurt!” said Budi.

“ Tell me everything about your gang!” asked officer Sigit.

Budi started to tell all the things about the gang. Budi told about how to buy the drugs, how big the gang, who is the main leader of the gang, and where is the place that they usually gather.

“Okay, just give me about 2 weeks to meet you with Tadashi in this prison” said Sigit.

2 weeks latter, The police commisioner successfully catch Tadashi and bring him to Budi in the jail. They were no longer fight against the police because Budi's leg still wounded, and Tadashi didn't have any idea again to escape from the police. Now that's two drug kingpin has been caught by the police. They were suspected for the drugs trafficking and illegal gang activity in the town. They two had to be ready to responsible their deed. After several court in the state high court, Tadashi and Budi were sentenced to death by the judge. They recieved the punishment gracefully. They were sent to Nusakambangan, Cilacap for processing the Death penalty. After isolated from the outside world for 5 years, The execution day was comming.

In the one side, Budi was so scared with the glock or the gun. Again, he thought that it could kill him. Of course! He would be killed by the law now.

In Budi's mind, he kept saying " I will die! I will die! Today i will meet Jesus in heaven. "

But in the other side Budi said, "oh God, the bullet would pierce my chest, make a hole in my heart. It will be hurt, really really hurt!".

Budi and Tadashi were placed in the different isolation cell. Not longer after that, the priest come to Budi and give him a counsel.

" You have to be patience, whatever that will happend, it is already arranged by God. Let's pray for a moment." Said the Priest.

They were praying together for 5 minutes.

After finished the priest said, " Good luck boys, Jesus is waiting you there, don't worry," said the priest.

Budi was touched and finally he cried.

"Thank you sir, " he said.

The priest left Budi alone in the prison.

One by one, the prisoner were called by the warden. The first prisoner that called was Tadashi. Budi saw Tadashi face were very pale, when Tadashi was walking pass Budi's isolation cell, Tadashi was waving his hand to Budi, and at the same time, Budi replied it.

In Budi's mind, he kept saying that " I would meet Jesus today! .

Now was Budi's turn, the warden opened Budi's cell gate and said " Ignatius Budi Sartika, your time is limit in this world, we will send you to the hell."

" Do you want your hand handcuffed and your eyes blindfolded use scraf or not?" asked the warden.

Budi answered him with his last guts,

" No sir, I want to see them finish my life. I want to feel my last fear in this world. Let me welcome the bullet that will take me to Jesus."

Hearing Budi's answer made the warden thought that Budi was a brave boy, the warden admitted it.

" Oke son, come on, follow me." said the warden.

" Stand up here," said the warden again.



Suddenly there was the white light highlight towards Budi. Budi couldn't see the firing squad because of the light. Budi's mind still saying that " I will die! I will die, it will be hurt!" .

After 5 minutes, someone there said "Fire!" and then a loud sound of gun firing heard. Budi felt something has enter his chest and pierce his heart. At the first he didn't feel anything, but after 3 seconds, his chest is begin to feel hot and wet. Yes, it was wet because of the blood. He screamed, "Oh it's a bullet!".

He was bleeding very much. He fell down. He could not feel his legs and his body again.

With his last energy, Budi said, " Jesus, forgive my sin. Please accept me in your kingdom."

After that Budi died.

That was the end of the great kingnap that in his childhood, he always treated like a slave by his aunty. Budi had already feel his last fear of the gun that resulted from his child hood traumatic. The nerd boy who was mastering many martial arts now was dead because of the firing squad. It was the law that send him to the God.

## Second Chance

"Hoamm... What time is it?" he looked at the clock. It showed 8 A.M.

"Ah, still 8 A.M."

"What! I must hurry up now."

Joshua took a bath and prepared himself to go to his office. Working in a well-known company made him stressed even though he already had a good position and worked in one of international corporation, ExxonMobil Oil Indonesia, as a financial adviser. This did not change the fact that Joshua felt depressed with his life.

"Come on, not again," he complained about his broken car, "Huh... Should I ride this motorbike in this rain condition? If it is not about the money, I won't go to that horrible office," Joshua could be categorized as a hard worker. He was the one who always went home late from the office. In his early 25 age he had already got everything that he wanted. Good career, position, salary, and also success in very young age.

At the office, Joshua should face his daily routine and daemonic boss.

"Again?!" said the boss.

"Sorry, Boss, but I..."

"Stop it Joshua, I'm bored to hear your excuse. Now, just go back to work or I'll cut your salary for this month".

"Aye Captain," Joshua immediately went to his desk and as usual, he kept complaining about the condition.

"Smile, Buddy! Haha... What happen with you? You look so mess up," stated Andrew. He is one of his best friends since they were in college. Different from Joshua, even they were in the same position; Andrew was an optimistic and grateful person.

"I don't know, Bro, but I feel like... I'm bored with this routine."

"It feels like I'm going to make my own system," complained Joshua.

"Ha...ha... What are you talking about?" asked Andrew.

“We are shaped to follow this system, so just be reasonable, Man...”

“Yeah, I know, but I feel like something is missing in this life of mine,”

Joshua replied.

“I know what you need, Buddy.”

“What is it?”

“It must be a party, of course.”

“You’re right... Come on, let us finish this work and we are going to party till morning,” Joshua agreed.

“Absolutely,” Andrew closed the conversation. Both of them tossed and laughed together. It could be said that Joshua is a party seeker. Wherever he went, he always looked for party. Sadly, he never feels satisfied. Party never made him happy. Sleeping with many different women was also not a secret. Joshua was free to choose with whom he wanted to sleep because he had money to pay them, but this thing couldn’t answer the thing that he was looking for.

Day by day, month by month, year by year, until he reached 30 years old and he was still searching for the answer. Until one day, everything has changed.

On the way home, he decided to stop at a park. He sat on a bench to enjoy the atmosphere. In the same bench, there was an old man sitting alone. “What a beautiful life,” the old man said.

“What a terrible life,” Joshua answered with scorn face.

“Ha...ha... Actually, you just see the world with the wrong perception.”

“What do you mean, Old Man? I have everything, I am young and success, but look at yourself now. You are only an old guy and you have nothing. You waste your time sitting here alone and suddenly you say I see the world with a wrong perception. Fuck off,” he said angrily because he felt underestimated.

“Young man, I don’t need to have what you’ve mentioned to enjoy this life, to see how beautiful this life is, I just need to be here. Right now, right here; my mind and my body are all here to enjoy this very moment,” the old man answered wisely.

“Bullshit... I keep searching for my own real happiness, but I couldn't find it, and how come that you say just want to be here and enjoy the moment without anything?” angrily Joshua answered the old man.

“Because like what I've said before, you have a wrong perception, the real happiness is created by yourself, you choose to be happy or not. Your happiness does not stick with something material.”

“Hah? What do you mean?”

“Even though you have everything in this world, but your mind worries about losing it. Remember some of your bad experiences in past and just deal with something out of your expectation that makes you unhappy. You are here, but not with your mind”.

“Hah? Who are you?” Joshua was surprised because of the old man's words.

“You don't need to know, I'm just an old man.”

“But, how can you say my bad experience in the past?”

“Change, Kid. It's never too late,” the old man stood up and left him alone at the park that he left many questions to Joshua, but that afternoon really changed his life.

After the conversation, Joshua became more relax and enjoyed his life. There was no more grumble in his life. He did the rest of his life with a meaningful life. He wanted to say thanks to the old man, but he did not know who he was. He tried to find the old man in the same park bench, but he never made it.

One day, while Joshua was driving his car, he suddenly saw the old man. He stopped and ran after the man. He almost lost his trace, but the way old man walked; led him to an old house that he knew well, “Haaah?” Joshua was shocked. It turned that the house was the place where he grew up. Step by step, he came in to the house and when he opened the door, something came up in his mind. He cried and felt deep regret to her mother, “Sorry, Mom, I didn't mean to do that,” grievously, Joshua entered the house.

It was Christmas 1982 when he decided to run away from home. Her mother was really mad at 18 year-old-Joshua because he did the most embarrassing thing in his life, the biggest sin he ever did. Joshua impregnated a preacher's daughter. Joshua left his house without any guilty feeling and made his parents so sad. At that time, he realized his mistake and cried so hard, but it is too late. He already made his family in a big trouble. Spontaneously, the old man came from behind.

"Hey, Kid," greet the old man.

"Who are you?" Joshua asked hesitantly. The old man was just smiling and he disappeared.

"Aaarghhh! If I had a chance, I wanted redeem my mistakes to my parents," Joshua scream out loud.

"What happen, Son? Wake up!" his mom came to him.

"Mama, I love you," Joshua hugged his mother with tears running down on his face.

"I love you, too, Son. It is okay, it's just a dream," his mother tried to calm him down.

"I promise, I will be a good boy. I am so sorry because I always make you in trouble, well, especially when I was in high school. I even forgot it all, Mama, as if nothing had happened to me, to our family, to that preacher's daughter at that time."

His mother smiled and hugged him, "I just kept silent after all this time because that girl has married with another guy. I cursed you for your being a loser and now if you have realized it all, why don't you just get up and meet your son? I can give you the address."

"Yeah, Mama, I was definitely sinful. Really? You can give me that?"

"Why not if you have become a gentleman like this?" his mom answered calmly.

## Een Verbetering (A Betterment)

Karl was a Dutch boy who lived in a middle class family in Germany. He lived with his father who worked as a lawyer and an activist of Lutheranism. His loving mother who devoted much time for her family took care of the family nicely. Karl had 8 siblings which made him become the oldest son after his brother died when Karl was just 1 year old. Karl was privately educated by his father until he was 12.

When he was 12 he started to join a public school namely Trier. His life began when he finally realized what happened outside his house. He learned a lot. He felt blessed to be born in such a good condition of family. He became the smartest in his class. He grew up with diamond soul, kind heart and a brave manner. He had helped a lot of people on the age of fifteen. He never overbore his family class.

One fine afternoon, when he was doing his homework under a tree in his school like what he did daily, he heard a voice of someone.

"Mmm.. excuse me sir, I apologize for bothering your thing but would you move it a bit, I need to clean the dirty for a while" she said.

"Oh sure"

"What is that the book you're reading?"

"Philosophy. Homework." He answered while scratching his head with a pencil he held.

"What is that?"

"A lil bit lost by a question"

"What is that if I may know?" asked the girl with pony tailed hair and yellow skirt.

"Ah... I will just do it later"

And suddenly the girl took a peek to the blank side of the question sheet.

"How do you think a thing is right or wrong? How do you find that it is the truth?" she read the question.

"Hey!" said Karl taking the book away from her

"Isn't it simple? There is nothing exact for right and wrong. It's all depends on our perception"

"What do you mean?"

"Mmmm" the girl looked around, "Ah! What is the color of those orange?" she asked, pointing at an orange tree.

"Orange of course"

"For me it's yellow" she raised her hand to the shoulder expecting Karl would understand.

"I know you are color blind, huh?" said Karl.

"What? No. Okay, let's change the question. Do you think I am pretty?"

"Huh? Mm you're fine" He suddenly lost his manner.

"Hahaha for me I am pretty yeah since I am a girl, which girl isn't?" she was holding her laugh

"Now, which one is the right one? am I fine or am I pretty?"

"Both of them." said Karl.

"Which one is the truth?"

"Both of them."

A moment after Karl answered the question, someone called the girl.

"Ginnie! What are you doing? Don't disturb the young master Karl. Go back to work!"

Without any excuse she turned back and ran scared. Karl watched her disappear until she really could not be seen anymore

"Ginnie....."

Karl was impressed by the way she explained. She was just worker but her way of thinking was far beyond from the educated one. The next day Karl tried to find this golden brained girl. It was in library when he finally whispered to someone.

"Hey Ginnie!", but she didn't noticed him.

"Ginnie! Ginnie!"

"Uh oh, Hi Karl. I will not do your homework anymore unless I am the one who will get the mark."

“No. No. I was just wondering, where did you get such an answer like the one you told me yesterday? I mean you don't go to....” His voice faded out.

“School? Yes, I don't go to school. It's okay to mention. And if you ask me where I got such an answer, we are exactly in that place now.” She said.

He finally continued to talk with this girl while she was cleaning every row of the library. They started to continue to know each other. He discovered that she often read books when she got to clean the library. They also talked about religion, philosophy and they talk about the girl's boss. Until it was the time she had to move from the library and say goodbye to him

“My name is Jenny anyway not Gennie, My Boss is not really smart at remembering name.” Karl blushed holding since he was shy.

Time went by Karl and Jenny met each other more often. They could talk about anything for hours. Sometimes, Karl shared his lunchbox with her. Sometimes, Jenny brought him flowers or fresh fruits. They knew that their meetings would go on a serious matter. Then Karl introduced her to his father. Her father gave warmth welcome to his son's friend at once. After the meeting, Karl encouraged himself to tell his father that he was in love with this girl. Surprisingly, his father who was a courageous person ignored his choice for the first time. Karl asked for the reason. His father said,

“I am sorry my son, it is impossible for you and her. She is not a protestant. We are different. I mean her family background.”

At that time it was an absolutely impossible for two people to be together when they were from different classes. All the way he explained to his father. He told him that every religion is good. He said that he would be responsible to make her life become the same to his life. However, it was not his father's will. It was a customary law of his family. From that point, Karl started to change. He didn't like to pray anymore. He seemed to blame religion because of this. He started to prove that he would be fine without God.

Worrying about his son, his father tried to separate his son from Jenny. He moved his son to other school when he was 17. He continued his study at Bonn University. Bonn University and Trier were in a different city. However, He and Jenny kept contact by letters. In the University, he took philosophy and literature. He joined Poet's club which talk about radical politics.

Karl was a faithful person. He kept struggling for Jenny no matter what. For Jenny, he tried to write about religion, about social class and working class. He sent those writes to newspapers and printing companies. He tried to change the common point of view. He started to care and had an aim to



equalize all classes. On his first presentation, a person named Freud seemed interested with Karl's idea. They, then, worked together. From the moment, Karl told Freud what made him so ambitious about this. Karl told Freud about Jenny. Surprisingly, Freud had the same reason too.

Once a month, Karl went to Trier to visit Jenny. Every visit was a wonderful time. They couldn't be separated. Seeing his son's struggle, Karl's mother tried to convince her husband to give Karl an approval. She started to know Jenny more and more. Finally, she was impressed with Jenny too for she was able to do anything and everything Jenny said was outstanding.

At the end, Karl and Jenny got married and had seven children. As a result of his ambition, Karl also succeed to make a betterment not only for himself, but to all people, by his theory he made with his friend about working class, "*Communist Manifesto*" by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.

# Dream Lover

The weather was dreadful. There was heavy rain on the last three days. People avoided going out in the evening. Mothers were getting fidgety because the laundry was piling up every day and so. However, people seemed to find positivity (supposedly advantages) of the heavy rain. Kids were able to wear their kangaroo blankets around without their parents yelling at them. Thanks for the weather also, now that they had had reasons for cancelling appointments and getting horny.

He had fixed dinner at the moment the rain poured down. Chicken soup and hot chocolate would do, he thought as he reached a frozen chicken breast from the fridge. Well since that was all he got in the fridge, he might adjust the supply until the weather got better. A moment later, a girl appeared from the bathroom. She covered with thin towels with her brown wet hair fell down across her shoulder. She froze as he approached her to undo the towels and exposed her wounds and bruises in her skin. Her face was senseless as he examined her body.

“Does it hurt?” his fingers still running through the bruises.

She stared at him with a fierce look and with a raspy voice she let out the words, “You did this.”

You did this. You did this. You did this.

And there was a slap. She could feel the warm sensation itching down her cheek but still manage to stand, not trying to run or attempt any force to fight back. He stared at her again, this time with his grasp hardened against her wrists. Then he slowly rubbed her belly with his lips before covering her body with the tiny towel.

“I make you some dinner.”

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It was also evening, as far as he can remember. How could he forgot that day? Even if he supposed to have a car accident and injured his brain badly he suffered of a great case of amnesia, those day would be the first shattering images that run inside his head. Smell of old cigars, wet shoes, ahh.... he started to recall it. His cup of black coffee, the cream painted walls, and there was her, sitting in her peach blouse and white trousers. When he approached the image, he can quickly sense the smell of her vanilla perfume swirling around. And just within a second, he became madly around her.

It was evening when he reached the Depot. He parked his bike and put off his wet jacket as he entered. There was a lot of people too, mostly waited

for the rain to stop. The good thing was the crowd made it warmer for him inside. He usually didn't stop in the middle of the rain but this time he felt that the weather was unbearable to get through. He approached the cashier to place his order (black coffee as usual) while he rubbed his wet face with his handkerchief. The place went more crowded as more people came in to stay out from the rain.

He quickly ran to any available space since most of them were occupied. And that's where he laid his eyes on her. A brown eyed girl in peach blouse. Her hair ran wildly within her shoulder and there was a speck of water in its corner. Of course at the moment she was just a girl in his eyes, another random girl. And she was just as same, didn't react to his existence either. They both were swelled up in silence, until the waiter gave his cup of coffee, until he finished half of it, and the crowd got more hectic. He didn't bother her at first, let alone this little girl in silence. But then her hand accidentally slipped on her unfinished glass of tea and the liquid poured down on her lap. He was too, came to surprise as the cold liquid sucked in his jeans. Quickly she ran to the waiter and apologized to him for her carelessness as she offered tissue to him.

"It's nothing," he took a play and start rubbing it, hoping that the tissue absorbed the rest of the tea.

He took a glance at her and there just how their eyes met. She drew a smile on her lips,

"What an adorable face you have, sir,"

She took the plates and cups after they finished and wash them. The weather might be wild but dear God, if only they knew just what happened inside. After she finished the dishes, she would walk downstairs to her room, put off her clothes, and waited for him to get her. This time, she got lucky because some other days, when he wasn't feeling well or under weather, he didn't bother to feed her first before he shagged her on the kitchen floor. He went everywhere. Once she screamed every time it happened, but as days gone by she started to feel helpless. Soon as her clothes were falling down past her knees, she saw another part of her life was taken away, forcefully. She smashed her face in the mirror, choking and shouting at her. Still, no sounds were heard from her widened mouth. All she could see was just the image of her sorrow. She torn apart and they started crying together.

People said time will heal a broken heart. But if you waited any longer, it only destroyed you entirely. At least that's what she felt. She was frightened no nights until there was him. Hell, her young soul supposed to fear nothing. Her reckless heart was just too hungry for adventure and too pompous for adventure. But now she felt as if she was just a walking flesh. Supposed she

died but her heart still pumping inside. Demanding more oxygen as if it were her new drugs that kept her alive.

It was all about having fun, yes, she thought at the beginning. It was supposed to be a game. When he walked in and they were flirting, she knew that grownups like young girls and there she was. Open and unalarmed. She replied his words with flirty pickups because she knew he would love it, like any other boys she had been with. He was there, with messed up hair and demanding eyes. She laughed at his longing. Then, she played the trick and he just fell right into it. So many desperate grownups picked on young hearts, but she's no fool. No, she smiled a little. I'm more than that, she thought of herself as he talked to her. I know what you're playing and I won't fall on this one. Nice to meet you, please don't bother me. You liked that? Oh yes me too, sir. Would you like playing games, sir? It was fun and everyone in this town did it. Oh didn't you know? I could teach you and we could play together. Weren't you curious? Well sir, people said it was all fun and merry, but sometimes we needed to break some legs and arms in the end.

The light sparked from upstairs, the sound of footsteps approaching, and beating heart. She couldn't figure his image since there was no lamp downstairs. He slowly closed the door and the room was now in darkness.

"You smelled nice," she could feel his breath touching her earlobe. Her heart was beat faster. Just then, he fiercely traced her skin with his teeth. He bit her skin as if he intended to tear them off. His hands started to claw and leave some scratches on her belly. He then choked her in firm grasp and started kissing her.

"I love you, I love you," he repeated those words while she's struggling to breath. She tried to breath with her mouth when he drew away his lips. Now that he took a cutter that laid near the cabinet and she had struck with sudden feeling of dreadful pain on her cheek. She could feel the tip of the cutter pressed down and drew lines to the corner of her lips, and then the other side too. She could feel the rusty edge of the cutter ripping off her skin.

"You're beautiful," he sucked the blood before kissing her. His teeth gnawed a little on her torn skin.

The bed cracked beneath her back and he just made it worse.

"You're mine. Mine and only."

You're mine. You're mine. You're mine.

She could feel her face wet and in pain. Trace of tears, blood, and sweat seemed to mix up she didn't know the difference and he didn't seem to care either. His hands were still groping on her breast. Slowly, his mouth turned from gnawing to sucking her nipples. Her mouth was widened with a loud cry.

There was no use. Her body pinned down against his and she's helpless. She tried to shaking and getting off of him but none of her efforts is working. Even when her eyes were widened, she sees nothing. She saw nothing but her body sure feels everything.

I'm sorry

The sound of the Television mixed up with the radio, not to mention that some people were receiving and answering phone calls at the same time, making the room completely chaos. A cup of coffee wasn't enough to wake his sense. His hands wandered lazily through the pile of folder, grabed on the red files, and reread it. He sighed every time he turns the pages,

"Morning officer," his breath held when another fellow was tapped his shoulder from behind.

"Oh, yeah hi too, officer," he stopped his hands from flicking pages and turned his chair.

"Any luck solving the mystery?"

"None that I know of. This crap is fucking with me over and over and I can find any speck that brings me close to it,"

"Your sense is weakened,"

"Don't make fun of me boy. This," he grabbed the red files and held it high as if he's showing off his toys to everyone,"This crap, soon or later, will revealed itself."

"Well, those years sure don't take any of your pride."

"Yeah tell me about it,"

The fellow then drew himself closer to him as he lowers the voice, "Well I got good news for you, if it's supposed to be good for you. About the case, well a girl showed up, a friend of her. She came with her parents, and told me that sAbigail Williams went no "home after school."

"Oh yeah I get that point, a lot. Thanks chief,"

"She went to Georgia and she got me her messages. She told her not to tell anyone or she'll kill her,"

"Dammit! What business she got in Georgia?"

"We'll get about the detail later. So right now, I suggest you to contact Georgia Police Department and send her picture everywhere. You may be doubt my informant but trust me, you don't want your 8 years waste for nothing."

## Blind

I could assure myself that I put my folder down on my table right after I came to class this morning. Where was it now? I'd gonna die if I couldn't find it. I put Mrs. Bullers' assignment in it and I had to collect it today. *Damn* it. Somebody must be hiding it, *again*. Arghhhhh! What happened with people nowadays? Was it just because I was different with them? What was wrong with differences?

"Okay class. Good morning. Now, I want you to collect the paper from last meeting right now. I don't want to hear any excuse that you don't do the assignment." *Oh crap! I didn't hear her footsteps. When she came into class? What should I do now?* "Daniella? What happened? You look so nervous. Do you do my assignment? Why I don't see you collect it?"

"Uhm. I... I am sorry Ma'am. I can't find it. B... bu... but I swear I did it and bring it to class today." I could feel my body is shaking. I was so scared.

"And where is it? You should collect as evidence that you did my assignment."

"I can swear to death that I did it. But I don't know why I can't find it. Somebody must be hiding it Ma'am!" I could feel everybody was laughing at me now. Their plan to make me suffer worked well. Arghh.

"There's no excuse to blaming your friend for your own mistake, Ms. Blackwell," I saw her ears were getting red. She was angry. "I want you to go to Murkiness Room until the end of the school! NOW!" *Oh noo...*

"Bu ... but Ma'am..."

"NO EXCUSE! GO NOW!" Now her face was turning red. She was absolutely mad now. I couldn't do anything now except got out and went to Murkiness Room. Murkiness room was a small dark dirty room that might be your little hell. Nobody used it anymore, but she said that it was the right place for 'disobedient' students to introspection themselves. That place was so small. There was no light at all. That place was too dark and full of gloominess. Well, that was fine. I was already familiar with darkness anyway.

I got out from the class without saying anything. Everybody in the class was laughing at me now. I had no friend here. I didn't get it why they always did this to me. I never did something bad to them. I always tried to be nice and be friends with them. But they never accepted me and they liked to make me

suffer, all the time. They said that they did those things because I was different with them.

Yeah. I couldn't see. In the other word, I was blind. But what was wrong of being blind? What was wrong of being different? Being blind wasn't mean that I was not human that all of them could do anything bad to me and act like I was not human. Every people had their own flaws, right? Kyle had thin hair. Ruby had a scar in her back. Jay's right ear was bigger than his left ear. See? Everybody had flaws but why I was the only one who got treat like this. Maybe I was blind, but good for me that I still had a heart. They could see by their eyes, but they had blind heart. Pathetic. My mind spoke.

Now here I was, in the Murkiness Room by myself. Wait, ewwww, this room was too stuffy. What was this smell? Well maybe I was familiar with the darkness, but not with this kind of smell. This was gross. Too gross. I was totally sick with this thing.

"WHYY!"

"Woaa. Hold on. Hold on. I know this place is suck, but you don't need to scream. This place is too small. Your voice makes my ears sick" I heard a boy's voice. I was not the only one who trapped in here.

"Sorry."

"Never mind. What are you doing here?"

"You thought? Of course Mrs. Bullers sent me here. What have you done that made you trapped here?"

"Well. I got 10 in the last quiz and she thought that I took her class for granted so that I didn't prepare well for the quiz. Silly reason, huh? How about you?" This guy "sounded" so friendly.

"She thought that I didn't do her assignment. I did it honestly, but my friend hides it or maybe threw it away."

"Wow. Your friends are so mean. Why they did that to you?"

"Haha," Are people like them deserved to be called as friend? I didn't think so. "They did that because they hate me."

"They hate you? Why? You are not look like a bad girl. Yeah maybe I can't see you through this darkness, but from the way you talk, you seem like a nice girl."

"I am blind."

“So?”

“Yeah they think that being blind is a bad thing so they don't want to make a friend to me.”

“That's silly! Just because you're blind, they can't just hate you and ignore you. I do want to be your friend honestly.”

“Hahahaha,” I was laughing a lot. “Who wants to be a friend of a blind girl? I'm not sure why you don't hate me and keep talking to me and wants to be my friend instead.”

“You're so funny. Why should I hate you? You're so nice. So why not? By the way, what's your name?” I felt like his hand was trying to find and touch my hand.

“Uhhh. I'm Daniella. Daniella Blackwell. You?”

“I'm Gibson. Gibson Hayward. So we're friends now. Can I call you Ella? It's lot more easier.”

“Yeah, we're friends and yeah you can call me whatever you want.” We're shaking our hands as a sign of being friend. He was the first and only one friend that I had. *I will never leave him. I will never leave him.* I kept saying that on my mind.

During the “punishment” period, until the end of the school hours, we're chatting and talking a lot about ourselves. I told him about my story and he also did. He had no parents, like me, and he lived by himself. Luckily, he didn't get any bad treatment or act from his friend. This is the first time I shared my story to the other people. Sounds so pathetic, huh? But that's true. Since I was a kid, everybody ignore me, even my parents. They put me in a charitable institution when I was 3th because they didn't want to have a blind child. It's kind of embarrassing for them. I always got ignored by others, in school or even in the dorm. Hiding my stuff, mocking at me, everything that made me sad was a normal thing that I got every day. It was like being blind was not enough to make me suffer.

Three hours being in the Murkiness Room today was not a bad thing. I was happy instead because now I had a friend to talk to. After the detention, we promised to meet and have a talk again tomorrow. Thanks God. Finally I had someone to talk to.

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“Oh God. What happened lately to you Daniella? You used to be a smart and diligent girl. Mrs. Bullers said that you've changed and never did your



homework in these past few weeks? What is the problem? Are you sick?" Well now I was with Mrs. Hamington, my teacher counselor, in her room.

"I'm sorry Ma'am. I promise that it would never happen again." To be honest, I didn't do my homework so that she'd send me to Murkiness Room, the only place I could meet Gibson. He was kind of mysterious. I never met him anywhere except that room and only if I was alone. It was so suspicious but nothing I could do. He's the only friend of mine and the only one who was willing to hear my story or random things of me. I felt comfort when I'm with him.

"You can tell me what happen, Daniella. It's so sad if you keep being like this. You're such a brilliant girl." I felt her hand touch mine. There was an honest in that hands. Mrs. Hamington was my favorite teacher. She was a care person and honest.

"Nothing happened, Ma'am." I put down my face.

"Really? Don't be hesitated to tell me if you have problem, Daniella. Take care of yourself, honey. You know, I will always be right here if you need me. You can back to your class now."

"Okay, Ma'am. I'm sorry and thank you." I put my ass up, move out the room and back to class. I did feel sorry for her that I lied.

Wait. Why the class was so silent? Like nobody's here. Uhm, I forgot that now was PE class. Everybody was in the backyard except me of course. Mr. Hawk didn;t want me to join his class and get injured because I'm blind. Classic. Ah, what should I did now? It was boring that you could only in your class while your friends were having fun in PE class and I was too lazy to go to library now.

"Hey Ella. What's up?" *It's Gibson. What he's doing here?*

"Hey. Why are you here? Do you skip class?"

"Hehehe. Yashhh beib. I can't see my bae is being alone."

"Skipping class is not good. Come back to your class now!"

"Not doing your homework is also not good but keeps doing it. It's an apple to an apple, right?"

"You know that? B...bu.. but...."

"No but. I want to be here with you and you can't force me to back to class. Now, tell me what happened today."

“Well, as usual, they work on me. I can’t find my history book and my medicine.”

“I still don’t get it why they did that to you. Just because you’re blind doesn’t mean that they can do this to you.”

“I know right? I’m so sad.”

“Cheer up, honey. Why don’t you pay them back? I saw you only keep on silent when they did those unfair things to you. ”

“What can I do to pay them back? I have no power so that they can do those things to me.”

“They will keep doing it if you don’t do anything to stop them.”

“Then what should I do?”

“Make a plan. Pay them back.”

“But pay back is not a good and right thing to do, right?”

“As I said, if you keep silent and let them to do so, they will also keep doing it.”

“Uhm, Okay. I’ll think about it. Now what should I do first?”

“Make a list for who you want to pay back to and what you want to do.”

“Okay. What’s next? But I still think that it is not the right thing to do.”

“It’s okay Babe. I got your back. I’ll help you.” His hands touched mine. So cold like an ice block. Strangely, I felt warm.

“Thank you for always be my side. You’re the only one I need and I want from now on. Don’t you ever leave me even we’re in the worst condition, promise?”

“I promise. Let’s do this.”

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“Arghhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh” Everybody in the class was looking at her.

“Whoaa. What happened, Sheryl?” Chase, our chairman in class, move quickly to Sheryl’s table and he was trying to calm her down.

“I ... I found a dead mouse in my bag an..and a le...lett... letter which saying that somebody wi..wi...will kill me.” From her voice, I could see that she was so scared. It was so pity and sad, but somehow I was happy that finally

she was scared to death. Sheryl was one of the girls that always made fun of me and made me cry.

“Ewwwww. Seriously? Who did that?”

“How do I know? How if he or she still wants to kill me? Hu..hu...huh” She started to cry.

“No. Calm down. It will not be happened. Let's talk to Mrs. Hamington and other teacher.” Chase went to the common room immediately and the other tried to comfort Sheryl. Me? As usual, I was just sitting on my chair. I didn't want to belong in this accident.

“What's going on here?” Mr. Hawk and some teacher come in the class.

“Sheryl, Sir. She got a threaten letter and kind of dead mouse in her bag.”

“Yes, Sir. The letter said that the sender wants to kill her. It scares her out.”

“Calm down, calm down. Let's call the police to fix this. Sheryl, do you have someone that you know don't like you so much? Someone that you think being the one who did this?”

“No, Sir. I haven't” she said in tears.

“Yes, Sir. Sheryl is a good girl. I bet nobody hates her.” Haha so funny. Good girl? If she was a good girl, she wouldn't leave me alone just because she's afraid of the others. Yeah, she used to be my friend in the first semester but then left me alone because she's afraid that she would be like me who being the target of bully in class. That was the reason why I choosed her to be the first.

“Okay... Okay. Sheryl, please be calm. Everything is going to be alright. Don't you worry about this. Chase, help me explain to the police and the other help Sheryl to clean the dead mouse.”

“Yes, Sir.” Haha. Everything was not going to be better, Sheryl. I could assure you that. It happened because of your own fault. If you were not being such a jerk, it wouldn't be happen to you.

Not long after that, police came and try to investigate it. But they came back again to their office because they got nothing. Everything was so clear until there was nothing left.

In the next day, Sheryl's body was found full of blood in her bed. Again, the police found nothing. They only found Sheryl's body and nothing else. Everything was well covered. They got no evidence in the case. Yeah, even I

was blind, I had brain. I planned everything well. Gibson helped me to arrange everything. He was the best of the best.

Few weeks after, there was some student who found dead in their room, just like Sheryl was. Nobody knew who did that. The police couldn't find the evidence and the suspect. Even the greatest detective couldn't solve this case. Everyone in the school was scared. The rumor spreads quickly. If they got the letter, they'll found just like the other victims.

I was so happy with this condition. I felt like it was the most peace time ever in my whole in school. Nobody care to bully me because they're too busy thinking about the mysterious murder. The only things they care about are themselves. They didn't want to get any problem for now on. They didn't want to be the next target just because they did some silly things.

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"How's the plan? Is it worked well? I've heard the rumor spreads out to the whole school" Now I was back in the Murkiness Room and of course with Gibson.

"Yeah, as you know. Thank you anyway for your suggestion and your help. Now they never do something bad to me because they're too afraid. It is the most peaceful time ever since I've lived. Nobody care to bully me. You're right that they have to get a lesson so they can stop doing something bad."

"I told you, right? Now you don't have to be afraid of everything." I heard footsteps. Somebody must be coming here. Maybe it's Mrs. Hamington.

*Knock knock*

"Daniella, are you there? I'm Mrs. Hamington. Can you get out now? I want to talk with you for minutes." See? I was right, right?

"Okay Ma'am. Wait a minute." I'm looking for Gibson's hands and holding it. "Wait for me. I'll be back soon."

"No worries. Be careful, ok? Bye"

"Okay. Bye." I let his hand go. Ugh. I more liked to be here with him. I moved my ass up and got into the door and get out of the room.

"Who's you talk to, Daniella? I've heard you're talking with somebody there."

"Just a boy from another class, Ma'am."

“Okay. Now let's go to common room. I want to have some talk to you.” We're walking to the common room. I felt something strange here. There must be something happened.

“Uhm.. I'm sorry Ma'am. What's happened? What do you want to talk about?” I forced myself to ask.

“Let's just wait until we arrive at the room.” Then we kept walking through the corridor. When I opened the common room's door, there was full of people there. The atmosphere was different Right after I was entering the room, I felt like all of the eyes were on me, see me, and watch me.

“So you're Daniella, right?” A guy with strong smell and really deep voice asks me. I bet that he's the detective.

“Uhm. Yeah. What's going on?”

“Please have a sit. We want to ask you some question. Everyone said that you always get bullied by others, is it right?”

“Uhm. Yeah. They always did something bad to me because I'm blind.”

“What they usually did to you?”

“Hiding my stuff, lock me in the toilet, burn my books, cut my uniform and such.”

“Those are so bad. Do you have any hard feeling to them?”

“No. It's a usual thing for me to get that kind of treatment since I was born.”

“Okay. By the way, whom you usually talk to when you're alone? Some of your friends saw you talking by yourself.”

“Oh. It's Gibson. I talk to him because he's the only one that want to talk to me while the others ignoring me.”

“Can we meet him?”

“I don't know. He always come and goes whatever he wants. He's just appearing whenever I need him.”

“So, you never really know him? Met him? Touched him? Do you change because of him?”

“I do know him, met him and touched him. Why are you asking me this? Is there any correlation between this and other thing? And what do you mean by change? I do not understand.”

"So, Daniella. The teachers said that you're kind of a different person lately. You didn't do your homework, talked by yourself and go to a silent place and hide yourself. Also, we found evidence that you're the only one who are responsible of the murderer case. We think that you're the murderer, you're the one who did all of that scary and terror things to your friends." No way. Me and Gibson planned anything well so that there will be no evidence.

"Is that true, Daniella?" Now Mrs. Hamington was talking.

"No Ma'am, Sir. I didn't do anything. What things that made you guys blame the things on me? Because I'm blind and everybody bullied me and then you thing that I feel hurt and want to pay back to them? Is my blindness not enough to make me suffer that you guys want to add it more?" *Play victim.* Gibson told me that if one day this thing happened, when I almost got arrested, play victim was a good thing to do because it would make them confused.

"Well, every evidence we found are pointed at you, Mrs. Blackwell."

"And also, about Gibson. He's not real Mrs. Blackwell. There's no student here named Gibson Hayward in this school. I think you should have a test to know and assure that. Plus, your friends hear that you always talk with 'somebody' but they never see anyone else except yourself." Voiced of a woman.

"He's real. How come you said that he's not real? I talked to him like every day and you said that he's not real? This is ridiculous. Do you think I'm crazy now? So, being blind is not enough that now you called me crazy?" How come she said that Gibson was not real?! How come they thought that I'm crazy?! Oh Gibson, I didn't want to be here.

"That's why we need to have a test Mrs. Blackwell. We need your understand about that. We want to investigate more about that. We're sorry that we have to arrest you. Mr. Krey and Mr. Thompson, handcuffs her." I felt someone take handcuffs over my hand.

"Wh...Wha...What? NO! I didn't do anything! Why you guys did this to me?" I tried to get myself out from maybe who they called Mr. Krey and Mr. Thompson. "Mrs. Hamington! Help me! Tell them that I'm a nice girl!" I was begging to Mrs. Hemington.

"I'm sorry Daniella. I can't do anything in this case. I don't have any power to do it."

"WHY?! WHY!! Ughhhh. Get off me!!" I couldn't move. They were too strong. I felt like they bring me into a car and taking me somewhere I don't know.

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So here I was now, all alone in a prison. The evidence was too strong to be cut down. I couldn't do anything when they pointed it out to me. About Gibson, they said that he was not real. He was just a creature that created in my mind to make an illusion that I had a friend. There was something wrong in my mind because of the bad thing that always happened to me, a kind of traumatic which rooted in me. That kind of traumatic was too strong and piled up and caused the illusion of Gibson. Then the judges decided that I have to be in asylum and prison for about 20years.

I didn't get it why they kept saying that Gibson is not real. He was real. If he was not real, then who was help me planned eveyrhing? Ugh, after I got out from this hell, I would pay back to those who sent me here, everyone. For the first was Mrs. Hamington who once I trusted so much but then she turned and sent me here. I still couldn't believe she did that to me. I thought she was the only teacher who care and honest to me. But I was wrong. I trusted no one now, except Gibson. I'll do anything that Gibson said because he was the only one who loyal to me.

"So, Ella, what do you want to do now? Do you want me to help you to give them pay back, again?" This voice was so familiar to me. See? He was real. I was not lying.

"Yeah. Let's make a plan to give a pay back to them, Gibson."

## Did You Know?

*Did you know if only by speaking out we could create lasting change? And that change begins with coming out. In the end that was the choice you made, and it doesn't matter how hard it was to make it. It matters that you did.*

I was so small, he thought as he concerned between two decorated walls.

“He’s so fragile”, he whispered to myself, as he pressed me against the small gap, trapping me.

Even though there was music bouncing from wall to wall, he could still hear my pleading for him to let me go but he saying no, he blew a piece of my stray hair to look at my enchanting eyes.

He frowned as he took a step back in disgust, pressing myself into the wall behind me. But it’s not like he can help it, he did drink a bit of alcohol.

Grunting lowly as he tried to push me off, he leaned in towards his face, the space between us evaporating like water in green canyon. Feel the way he did.

The fear in his eyes made me feel wonderful, but at the same time guilty he made me feel the way I did.

In evening, after a long day of work I had arrived home at four o'clock. I took a quick shower and clipped my nails to prepare for tonight's fun with Grey. It was our 2 years anniversary. At 5.45 I started to grill some steaks and prepared mashed potatoes and corn for dinner at six thirty.

Grey arrived home at 6:18. The table was all set with candles and wine. She took off his shoes and coat. Grey came and gave me a sweet hug and a kiss. “How about your work hun?”.

“It i in balances okay, how about you dear?”

“Yeah... you know the unusual. You ready for some dinner?”

“Of course I'm so starved dear”



“Great, so we can grab to eat now”

I prepared and dished up two plates for me and Grey. When he got to the table, he said that Grey already finished his glass of red wine.

“Have you finished yet hun?”

I didn't fell to drinking so I gave him a glass of my wine; He wasn't supposed to drink for a while.

Since we had finished dinner, Grey helped me to clean up all, and then we went to bathroom to take a bath first. We had an amazing procession of intimate fun in bath room which started with showering together, touched sensitive spot of each other and ended in a heated of hug with soaking together in a bathtub. After that we moved to bedroom and continued our sex procession.

“em...Grey you look so gentle” I tried to say something to break silence between two of us. Grey walked to me and we began to see each other more and more often, kissing and caressing like teenagers, still undressing, only building a greater and greater itch, illustrated by wetness and hardness in our romanticism.

Morning in Rotterdam The Hague Airport, we woke up early because summer holidays came. Grey walked behind of me while pushing trolley, wearing blue jeans and black t-shirt and navy hat.

“You look so pretty today ....”

“I think my mood is in good condition hun” I replied with a little smile for him.

The time to show 7 am, it's time for us to take off.

Welcome to Barcelona, the city of love. We stayed in W Barcelona where it had fresh air for me to get off fatigue. We wanted make a quality time with my beloved husband. While lying up in bed to take a rest, Grey entered to room and turned the light off.

“Hey have you stayed the light on hun?, I want to clean up ”

Grey turned on the light, walked and lied behind of me giving me forehead kiss first. While I was taking a bath he stayed in bedroom to watch movie. I hadn't finished it yet and Grey peeled off my t-shirt and my bra. He continued to explore. His fingers were continuing under panty lines, then our lips kissed and caressed. Softly, on nipples, more lips. Fingertips, his, she barely noticed, found the wet warmth between her legs.

He brushed the flesh there just like he had the rest of her body. Her fingers found his member, and my gently, barely, stroked it. I took a moment to brace him and controlled my nerves, and then followed his play.

"I'll give you something to be fucking thankful for", he breathed, and reached between my legs. I jolted at the welcome attention. Shame and excitement

"But it's not this", Grey hissed again.

Grey led me stop by touched my face and say something with really soft sound

"I want a baby because I love you"

I had become small, my shoulders shrunken and my head bowed, my cheeks warmed by a confounding mix of shame and excitement. My tears began to drip on the corners of my eyes, all ended in a hug.

He got up very late in this morning, which was not too surprising. I was drinking a cup of tea and ate some cookies at the balcony table and thought about what Grey said last night. Was he drunk some alcohol or it was the truth of his hope.

After Grey woke up, we were starting our vacation in Barcelona. One by one place we was visited. At the first days we went to the beach. The next day we prepared to visit a legendary of cathedral.

Basilica of Santa Maria Del Mar, in addition to worship we wanted to observe the building which was standing since the 14th century and still remaining firmly to stand until today. In here I did confession of sin, when I was entered to the small and private room with wire nets in front of candle, cross and rosary. I saw there a person in front of me. I believed he was the pastor.

"Father, my husband named Grey has always wanted children, but cannot have them by ourselves, or can us afford to adopt. We have always dreamed of being able to have each other's children with our DNA".

"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit"

“And the problem here before we married we didn't discuss about having a baby at first, and as you know father in physically I can't have a baby from my womb. It is not because I'm unhealthy women but I'm woman ... oh Jesus Crist..mm.but...mm.

” What sin has you done?”

“Father I do something which unforgivable”

“1 John 1:9 said If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And James 5:16 also said therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”

I was bowed and silently thinking about something that I did. Like other human being normally, I was fall in love with handsome men. We was married, and like others couple we had a house and live together. The different was i could not pregnant.

“Father how about me, is God want to forgive me? “

I turned back to my whole life, started to remember I was born from my parent who had three daughter and me as a prince in my family. I was the only son in my family, and they taught me how to be a gentle, as a feature leader, how to be a good child and hopefully i could grow up as a men one hundred percent pure of men. But me, I did the wrong way for my family, they did not accept me again. As I remember when my sister went to office or collage I was dressing up with their gown, their makeup. In my soul said that I'm women totally woman.

“I'm sorry father “I'm running out the room and looking for Grey.

“Where is Grey.....” I'm worried; someone touches my hand from behind me.

“Have you finished darling ?”

“ Of coure , let me go home soon hun”

A week went by and i was starting to gain step by step. Grey decided to sit down with me and started to talk with about thoughts and feelings from the past weeks. First question made both of me very upset. I'm angered that Grey would think that, he talked to me sternly about how his feeling about me and how much his love for me, but my heart was so breaking about all of those questions. I really wanted to say to Grey that I'm androgynous. Grey then decided to just drop it for now because I didn't want to fight, to get a baby and needed some more time to think about it.

A few days went by since our talk; it was a month until next Grey's birthday. I went to orphanage house, made consultation how to adopt orphan from there. After that I arrivde home, and made kind of surprise for Grey.

Was there someone knocking the door, I thought he was Grey and sure Grey came home early. I turned on the candle.

"HAPPY BIRTHDAY MY GREY"

Grey walk to me and hug me he said "Thank you ... you are wonderful price for me, God gives me what I need isn't what I want"

"Hun, I dont wanna hurt you in our love, if you want a baby we can adopted from orphanage house or you have marriage with other woman to get baby but if you want"

"No, I'm....uh.."

"Hun, calm down and listen to me. It is impossible for people like me getting pregnant, you know who I' am. I know you always want baby. I also know you can't have them by me. So I get that idea that we will have a baby with your DNA or only we will have a baby by adoption. I love you Grey, I love you so much, you can think about it"

"I can't believe this. Where you get this idea, Oh my god, I love you so much. I'm not going to marriage with someone else but, we will go to adoption a baby"

Grey was starting to weep in happiness. He was so relieved to know that i was loyal to him. We wereboth very happy having a baby together. Grey told everyone he knew about the good news. We started to set up at all.

A few month went by and we were gifted a baby named Fernando

“My lovely baby Fernando mom wants to say if you are born not from my womb but I will love you, we will love you more then everything.

“My son !!! Did you know who I'm”

Deep in my heart and my soul some time I would tell you about everything that happened to me. I will told to you stories about my past. If people wanted you to know warmly about them, they should've behaved better. Some instructions on life like: authenticity, genuineness, honesty, kindness, and self-awareness, truth-telling.

No one told the truth to people they didnt actually know, and if they done, it was a horrible trait. Everyone wanted something smaller, something neater than the truth, because sometimes it was really hurting your soul. You just had to know me because of you; I was what I was today.

## A Weird Disease

Narcolepsy, was a diseases which makes people sleeps without knowledge of when it would happen, or for how long. As one of people that has this unique disease, sometimes I feel worried that maybe someone can do harm to my body while I was asleep, or for the worse, I wouldn't wake up anymore. Yet, all of my worries were gone every time I opened my eyes because my husband was always on my side.

His name was Jack Johnson, a brown-skinned middle old man who had a sharp pointed nose, thin eyebrows, and had a medium body build with a bald head. He was the most kind and caring person that I had ever known and I was happy to spend the rest of my life with him. He liked to play a piano in our house. He works in hotels, orchestra, or even in an event as musician and lucky for me that he was the chef of the house.

That day, I was visiting my old friend, a famous defense attorney in the town, Mr. Christopher Wright. He had been my classmates in senior high and my best friend. He was a tall, white man with a pointed nose. I really liked his long blonde hairs which cover his eyes. Sometimes, I felt sorry for him because he's still single in his 30's.

"Good day to you Mrs. Johnson, or I should say, my cutest little classmate. Why, you are look so different with the long straight black hair and glasses. What can I do for you?" Said Mr. Phoenix

His office was a small room with so many bookcases to store his case files. Although the room was very neat, I could smell a little bit fish and foot smells which combined with perfume. I was dying just to be in the entrance of that room, and wanted to puke.

"Stop it, Mr. Wright, I need your help"

"To the point aren't we? What can I do for you today?"

"To tell you the truth, I really don't know what really happened sir, all I know is that this morning, some police drag my husband out from our apartment because they got report which stating my husband having an affair."

"Well, what is your reaction to that mademoiselle?"

"Of course I didn't believe them. I was sleeping for the last 2 days, you know my problem right? And guess what, the first thing I saw when I opened my eyes

are my husband being taken away by the police! I still couldn't believe, when I asked them why they took him, they said that my husband was having an affair with another girl, and that girl sued him. I even didn't see her face."

"And his reaction when they took him away?"

"Of course he denied the police, yet he cannot do anything since the cops said that they had a strong proves"

"Alright then, I'll do my best to solve this case madam."

After he put in some files, he drove us with his car and arrived at my house an hour later. Once again, I opened the door with my key and enter the house. It was big, but there was a giant cabinet on the left full of trophies, made the room seemed small. The first thing we noticed was the *matroska* doll with cute smiles on the top of the shoes locker at the right side of the door.

"Oh, is that a *matroska* doll? I really like it."

"Yeah, my husband got that for me when he was back from his tour in Russia. It's really cute."

"Yes it is, it really suits your personality, eh?"

Without any further ado, we started from my husband's and my room. I started with our wardrobe, a 2 feet tall cabinet made of wood where we store all of our clothes. I searched, inspect, and smell all of my husband's clothes.

"Have you found anything? And, what are you doing?" asked Christopher

"Oh, I have a very keen nose you see, and I trust my nose more than anything. By the way, I don't smell any other woman's scent in his suit. Neither any different perfume smells in it".

"Cool! One step closer to your husband's freedom, eh?"

"Well yeah, I guess."

I put back all the clothes and tried to sniff the room once more to find any unfamiliar smell before I leave the room, though in the end i couldn't find anything. The next place we checked was the music room. It is a room which size is 5x5 meters. Though it's big, it looked so small because of the piano at the center of it. We searched everything in the room, from the musical sheet collections, into the piano.

"Your husband must've loved you very much."

"What? Did you find something?"

"Yes! It is a photo with you in it, here, takes a look."

"Where did you find it sir?" asked me grinning.

"In the album 'Liebestraum' by Franz Liszt, Love Dream eh?"

It was a photo of me hugging my husband in front of the Tayto Park entrance. I found this picture very weird since that place was the last place I would like to go because I really hate and scared of potato men. Well, I couldn't doubt that it was me in the picture, but the hairstyle is very weird, I didn't usually use pony tail since I wasn't that active, but then this pictures showed me this. Moreover, I couldn't remember when I took this picture, although I felt that I had visited this place with my husband once. I didn't want Mr.Wright know this fact, since it will not help my case, so I'll just pretend I fully remembered this.

"Well, I have a hunch this photo will help me, I will look into it until tomorrow. Let's search for another clue." He said.

In the end, all we could find was just that photo alone. Well, to not find anything means good to me so I and Mr. Wright decided to call it a day. He said that took a rest was essential before a trial because trials consumed a lot of energy. Though he said that, I still couldn't sleep at that night, all this cases were still not real for me. I still couldn't believe it; they just took him away without any warning, like fire without any sign of smoke. Thus, that photo mystery, I wonder what it was."

I found myself not sleeping at all in the night when Mr. Wright came to my house and picked me up to the court. It was still hazy for me who sued my husband for all of this nonsense then I saw her when the trial started.

"Mrs. Grumpy? What are you doing here?" I said.

Mrs. Grumpy was an old poor woman which hair was white already. She lived above my room in the apartment. She was famous in the apartment and around the neighborhood for her grumpiness attitude all the time. She was the stingiest person I had ever known. Surprisingly, she is the client of the prosecutor.

The court suddenly became a graveyard, no one speak anymore, I think we all surprised because of that judge yell. He was a very old man that's for sure; I could see that from his beard which long were around 30 centimeters and a bald head. Meanwhile the prosecutor was Mr. Bansom, well, sure his name suitable for him since he was a bald and handsome man. He had that French-like moustache and always touching it, I wonder why there are many bald men in this room.



"Ahem, alright. Please proceed with the prosecutor's statement." The judge said.

"The defendant was committing an affair towards his wife for 3 years, lying to her as she didn't know about it." the prosecutor said clearly. There were no fingerprints and footprints of another people but Johnson's sir."

"And why is this old woman standing there? Who is she?" ask the judge.

"This old woman is the best friend of the victim which can't present at the time." The prosecutor replied. "I will explain it later when..."

"JUST BEAR IT FOR A MOMENT JUDGE, geez why people couldn't be patient" Mrs. Grumpy shouted at the judge.

"O...okay". The judge said with scared face. "The old lady there, restrain yourself to startled me out,, please?"

I was shocked to hear that statement, but in the same time I felt relieved. I thought my husband went nuts and having affair with a granny. It left me intrigued though, who was the actual victim other than me and the reason why she couldn't present. I saw Mr. Wright was threatened by that lion's voice too.

"Ahem, so is there any witness to this irresponsible act?"

"We actually have some witnesses your majesty, but we will only call one to present all of them. He was Mrs. Starr, the head of the apartment which lived next door to Mrs. Jackson. You see, Mrs. Jackson has this kind of unique disease when she can fall asleep anytime, anywhere, with no sign, and he can be in her dream for at least one whole day so Mrs. Starr could observe what's going on better than Mrs. Johnson."

"I see. Bailiff! Please summon Mrs. Starr into the court." The judge asked.

"Did someone call for the star? (while doing some spins entering the court), because the Starr is here!"

Suddenly, the room silenced by the awkward atmosphere. Mrs. Starr was actually a man, but he wore woman's dress and thick make-ups, using a big derby hat and fur jacket, attracting attention in the room.

"Ah,, ahem, the witness will state her.... or his identity...?" The judge state

"HOW RUDE (shouted him with bass male voice), ahem, I'm sorry. My name is Sonia Starr, I'm 35 years old and I'm still single (wink). I am the head of the apartment and only doing chores as my daily job."

"Okay, please tell us what you know about the case." Prosecutor said.

"Right away darling (wink), around 3 p.m., I witness Mr. Jackson got home with a girl wearing a hat so i couldn't recognized her hurrying into his room and not coming out until I've done my gardening at 5. That night, I once listened UNINTENTIONALLY somebody was moaning and I realized it was from Johnson's apartment. When I wanted to knock the door, I saw a pair of boots which the girl wore, and I decided not to disturb them and call the police in the morning."

"So you didn't see the girl clearly in the end?"

"Yes darling, but what I remembered is that the boots whom I saw were gone yesterday. I felt sorry for Amy since she was sleeping in her disease at that night."

"So you know her disease too?"

"All people in the apartment knew this fact, and usually Amy gave us cards in front of the door, stating that whether she was available or not, and she wasn't."

"Please give us more explanation about the girl which you saw."

"Her height was around 160 centimeters. She wore a black boots, red turtleneck and black hot pants. Brought a black bag and of course, the white hat. I guess her hair was blonde." Mr. Starr explained

"Have you find and inspect any of those cloths in the room?" The judge asked the prosecutor.

"Yes sir, but they were neatly put in the cupboard, it just seems that Mrs. Johnson acknowledge those clothes and expected them to be in the cupboard. The weird thing was those clothes didn't have any fingerprints besides Mrs. "

*"Of course I did! Those are my clothes after all, but I never recognize any weird smell from them, or that hat."* I mumbled myself.

"Since this was happened, I want to state my conclusion your majesty. Mrs. Johnson has Dissociative Identity Disorder, or in a simpler way, she has more than one personality, we can see that from the unfound prints of outsiders. Next I would like to summon Mrs. Johnson to answer some of my questions." asked Mr. Bansom.

"Oh My God, are you crazy? Just establish something so stupid like that because you guys not found any proof? What do you want me to do next? Doing somersault to call a ghost?" I said angrily while walking to the center.

"Mrs. Johnson, have you been dyed your hair into blonde color lately?"

“NO, why would I? My husband loves me how my hair looks like.”

“Unfortunately, we found some photos of Mrs. Johnson but in blonde hair in Mr. Johnson's office. When you said you never blonde your hair, it proved that you have another personality which change your hair color, that's why Mr. Starr couldn't recognize you. You couldn't detect any outsider smells too right? We heard that you have a very keen nose.”

“How did you know? This is stupid! How could you say something based only some photo shopped pictures?”

“That's not all of it Mrs. Johnson. I heard that your husband did all the cooking, correct?”

“Yes, he did. Why?”

“We suspect what triggered you to change your personality was some pepper. We could find were a little bit of pepper on the carpet. From this, we put our suspicion on that pepper. To prove our theory, we would like all of the audience witness this video. This is the CCTV of the house and as you can see, you collas after you smell the cooking your husband made and slowly your hairs become blonde.”

“NO, I REFUSE THIS MADNESS, THERE IS NO WAY THAT MY HUSBAND CHEATED ON ME”

“Mrs. Johnson, if you still dont believe me, why dont you try to take some pepper? Your whatever disease is nothing more triggered by pepper!”

“This is so silly! I won't eat that!”

“So you approve what I said before? Why are you so scared?”

“Not like that, it's just...”

“If you want to know the truth, eat it.”

After I only smelled those pepper, everything went black, I could feel that I fell into the floor. The moment I lose my consciousness, I felt being betrayed for all these years. After clinging into those hopes, I finally started to think, why my husband would be faithful to someone like me.

The next thing I knew was they took my husband away of the room and the court was adjourned. I was still blown back by all of this. I didn't know why, but I saw Mr. Wright smiled a little bit.

I shouldn't have done this, I felt so low after my entire plan had been exposed. Maybe, I deserved this, to be in jail for the rest of my life to be in this dark and dirty place. I feel so frustrated and desperate to restart all over, because I actually love Amy, not Mary, her other personality.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm really sorry for what I've done. I regret what I have done, so please come back to me. Oh God what have I done. I'm such a stupid person to treat her like that. Please forgive me."

I became insane and constantly cursed myself all day and night and I never realized that it was 3 days already. Maybe, that court was the last moment I could gaze at her beautiful face. I fell into a great depression, regretting everything. I really wanted to bring her to the country where people could have more than one wife so that this secret wouldn't become so big, yet I couldn't bring myself to do that since she had a serious illness, and this country had become a good place for her health.

"Mr. Johnson, you have a guest" said the guard calling for me.

"Who is it?"

"See for yourself sir."

When I went into the door, the first thing I noticed was that the light was so bright it blinds me for some seconds, and then all I saw was her face smiling toward me. I was very happy and longed to see her face and her long black hair again, yet I was blown back by her beautiful white outfit and a thin veil.

# The Choice of Life

Dion Arthur Rickman was thirty two year-old and he's a CEO in his father company-Patrick Rickman-, RIONISE ENTERPRISE. He had black wavy hair that's always neat because for him neatness was number one; considering he was a CEO so he must be looked good in front of his employees. He had dimples on his cheeks, and it was made him sweet when he smiles. He had fair skin. He's tall; he seemed really tall compared to his father and his brother. He took undergraduate degree of Economic and Business in Stanford University, and then he continued his education to graduate degree and took Management Accounting in Harvard University, after that he took his doctoral degree of International Business Management in Berkeley University. He decided to go to university again because he too loved to study, but there's another reason why did he want study in university again. Actually Dion's father, Patrick, wanted his son to get married soon because he thought his age didn't much longer, so he wanted see his son got married and had children. That was a reason why Dion chose to go to university and become the student again. He felt he didn't ready to have a serious relationship and either he didn't find a woman that matched to him.

In general, Dion was an introvert person. His parents almost did not know about him. Dion always be alone with himself, did his job, never made some jokes and he had difficulty in socialization with other people. He was a closed person.

Dion spent a lot of his time alone in the office. When everybody has done with their work, Dion still focused on his work although there was no work that he had to do. He felt comfortable enough when he's in his office. He hate home because it had keep a lot of painful thing and painful memory of his family. Dion had a cat which was named Squiddy that he really loved. He has trained Squiddy to do all kind of cool things and he's very proud of that.

Dion's favorite place was besides his office, it was a garden in town, that for him was the best place to hang out with his cat, Squiddy. He sometime had dreamt about his future home, he wanted his home contained a garden in the back yard, so he can spent so much time in weekends there.

More than anything else, Dion wanted to be happy person. He has been suffering from the dark situation of life. This time he wanted to be happy and hoped there would never be more painful or anything that related to sad and dark. He has lost his mother when he was five, and he should to taken care his

three year old brother alone because his father had business trip around the world that have been made Dion took over his father obligation to oversee them. Years by years pass, his father came back from his business trip, in one condition it make Dion and his brother Danniell happy because the one and only person that they had was coming home. But, that happiness came over Dion and his brother just in a moment before a woman around fifty year old appeared with his father. She would become a stepmother for him. Actually, his father has prepared this 'surprise' for Dion and his brother. From that kind of 'surprise' Dion's life has changed. His father who was known as a kind person and never did anything that related to crime have changed into a person that loved cheats in business so much. His father, Patrick, became a person like that because of Dion's stepmother. Everything has changed since her came in Dion's family. Every time Dion and his friends were talking about dream and Dion just keep in silent and smile.

"Dion, do you have a dream that you couldn't get in your life yet?" said Mike, one of Dion employees that close enough with him.

"Of course, I do have. Why?" answered Dion.

"What is it? May I know it, right?"

Dion just smiled and he walked leaving Mike with a million curiosities in his head. He thought people would laugh at him because of his dream which was too simple. But for Dion his dream not as simple as people think. Happy was a choice for him. He always imagine someday he could get to be happy, put off all the problems that he has been handled for a long time. He kept looking that kind of happiness and if he got it, he'd never be the same person like before.

Dion was a CEO of RIONISE ENTERPRISE. His life was full of fancy things; he also had real estate, apartments, and also expensive cars. Everybody wanted to be his friends; every girl wanted to be his future wife. But the problem, those kind of fancy things were not enough for Dion, as a CEO the soul of leadership streamed in his blood and he wanted own an island to rule over and did whatever, and sometime he rethought again if he owned something which was common in rich people, he wouldn't get the happiness that he has dreamed about.

In one morning Dion got a letter from his father which lived a thousand miles from him. Yes, his father was an old-school person that he prefers to send a letter that send a short message service to his son. His father said that his age was no longer anymore, considered his father had a disease and too old to survive in this life, Patrick wanted Dion to quit his job as a CEO in his company

and became a businessman as his father. Patrick wanted Danniell replaced Dion's position in CEO of the company. It was making Dion surprised because too sudden for him to leave the position and changed the direction became a businessman. But, he thought he had to obey his father eager to make him happy. Again, he sacrificed his happiness and himself for his father which has made he and his brother suffering in sad and dark life.

In the next following days, Patrick decided to call Dion for had small talk about his position in RIONISE ENTERPRISE.

"Can you see me in California today? I believe that you do not have any meetings today until the day after tomorrow because I know your schedule very well, Dion."

"Yes, I do not have any meetings or appointment today, but there is something that I have to do, Papa. How about tomorrow?"

"What do you have to do? I need to talk about what kind of business that you must handle in the next week." Patrick felt angry to Dion because this was the first time that Dion refused his words, "you see me today or you will not be my son anymore."

And Dion decided to go to California in the day which his father said. After arrived there, Dion and his father were start talking about the business. The business that his father gave to him was properties business. Dion didn't really like that kind of business, he thought it's kind of exhausted business and he knew that he couldn't have a relax time if he took that business. But he didn't have any choices, he had to take it or he would never been in his family anymore.

Day after day time passed away, Dion endures the business with compulsion. It seemed like he has worked under pressure of his father's power. He felt like a robot that had to work 24 hours nonstop. He wanted to stop and told his father that he couldn't afford to do this kind of job and business anymore. But, in the other he didn't want to make his father mad and disappointed with him. He felt that he was smarter and a hard worker than his father, so that he could control the company without any helps from his father. In fact, when he couldn't control and handle the company, his father pulled him out of the company and asked him to become a businessman. Dion thought his father was a dictator. He couldn't do anything right now, he just endure what his father said.

One afternoon when Dion has done with his tasks, he decided to walk down the street and enjoyed the bustle of people in the street. Accidentally, when Dion was enjoying his walk, he hit against a woman who the same age

like his father. That woman fell and Dion tried to help her. There was blood streaming from her shoulder, but not much. Dion couched her to sit down on a chair and he went to pharmacy to buy a pack of first aid. He cleans up the blood and put the aid plester on her shoulder.

“I’m really sorry about that, Ma’am. It is my fault that too enjoys my step.”

“It is ok young man. I’m alright, thanks to clean up this-bloody-blood.” That woman tried to miss the worried on Dion’s face. “oh, I think that I’m familiar enough with you.”

“Oh really?” Dion felt unbelievable that someone familiar with him, in case he was not a famous person. “How it can be?”

“You are Dion Rickman, a CEO of RIONISE ENTERPRISE, right? Of course I’m familiar with you. You are an inspired young man, don’t you know that?”

“Really? I do not believe that I’m an inspired young man as you said. By the way may I know your name , Ma’am? You look like my mother.”

“Oh ya, I’m Sophia Bellies. Just call me Sophie.” Sophie smiled awhile and then she continued, “so how is your mother? Is she ok?”

Dion didn’t answer, he just smiled and said, “She definitely alright in heaven.”

Sophie just kept silent and then asked Dion to have a cup of coffee and had some conversation with her in the café.

Dion and Sophie just known each other, but it seemed like they have been known each other for a long time ago. Sophie told Dion about her carrier and her life, also Dion told about his family and his job right now.

“So, you’re a businessman right now? How do you feel? Is it great to be a businessman eh?”

“No. I don’t feel great or anything about become a businessman” Dion sipped his coffee and continued the conversation, “ I feel like I’m a robot for my father. I always do anything that he wants to and sacrifice my happiness to his. I think if I did his wants, I would find my happiness, but in fact, I never found my happiness until today.”

“Why don’t you try to tell your father that it is not your passion? I can see from your face and also your eyes that you’ve tired of everything which related to hard-work. I can see that you really want the happiness, the freedom. You’re a robot also a bird for your father. You’ve been under control also you trapped in the cage that you cannot decides what do you want and what you have



to do." Sophie looked straight in Dion eyes and thought that he was a rich person who had a poor happiness.

"So, what should I do? I do not want make my father disappoint and sad of me. He is the one that I have in this world besides my brother", Dion took a deep breath and said, "I'm afraid if I tell him what I really I want, he will suffer a relapse of his illness and I know that his age is no longer."

"Until when do you sacrifice your happiness for your father? Being happy is a choice, young man. Making someone happy is good, but making yourself happy is awesome. I cannot force you, but let me give you a suggestion for your happiness"

Dion staring at her for a while and asked her, "What is your suggestion, Sophie?"

"Take the one that can make you as yourself. Sometimes person or people take of someone's happiness to become their priority without thinking about the happiness of them", Sophie hold Dion's hand and says "it's so hard to forget pain, but it's even harder to remember sweetness. We have no scar to show happiness. We learn so little from peace."

Dion gave his the best smile, "thank you for being my friend in just one day, Sophie. I hope we can be a good friend forever. I think I know what should do"

"Good luck young man, there is no wasting time to do good thing. See you and once again thank you for hitting me."

After accidentally meeting with Sophie, Dion decided to come back to his office. He was surprised that his father there, waiting for him almost three hours. His father was furious at Dion.

"Papa, what are you doing here? It's almost evening and I think there are no tasks that Papa should do in here." With furious face, Patrick answers his son,

"Whatever, where have you been? I've been calling you more than a hundred times but you haven't picked it up. Don't you know that an investor from Beijing has come here looking for you because he wanted use your merit and he will pay in high price, but you're just wasting that chance in three hours."

"I'm sorry, Papa..." Dion didn't finish his word yet suddenly his father slapped at him and it made Dion shock because Patrick never did it as long as Dion life, Dion continued his words, " Papa, you cannot force me to be like you want. I'm not robot that you can setting and force me to do anything in

order to make you satisfied and happy. I'm not a bird in a cage that cannot going somewhere because you trap me. I need my own happiness Papa; I want my happiness and my freedom. I'm just your son; I'm not your robot. If you want someone to do anything that you want, it's not me. You can find another, but not me Papa; I'm your son, not your money sources. I want to be happy like you."

Patrick just stone and kept in silence, he didn't expect that his son would expel those words. In a moment they just in their minds, until Patrick said, "I'm sorry, I know I have been too much to you, even sometimes I do not consider that you are my son, I push you to become a success man but I'm wrong. I think it's time for you to get free and find your happiness also your passion. I'm a bad father for you. I never be by your side when you need me, I always busy with my obsession to reach much money. I let you go and find your happiness, son."

Then after that incident, Dion decided to move from California to Maldives. He started work there as a receptionist in one hotel there. He thought he'd never be the same person anymore after his father realized what he has been doing to Dion. Finally Dion found his happiness in Maldives and has met so many people that made him happy too. For Dion, it was important to restart his life from the bottom, because the real happiness was coming from the bottom, he enjoyed his new life as a receptionist and Dion was a happy person also an extrovert person.

# The Angel

*Though the Eye of the Angel hast no hesitation.  
Therefore, open thy eyes and spread thy wings.*

"It's difficult to know the exact time of his death." The sergeant was saying while checking on his notebook. "We can't do anything before the result of the lab arrived."

The CSI was revolving around us, checking the crime scene busily and seeking for something they wouldn't find. The crime scene was still fresh; I was used to the smell of blood, but I had no idea it'd be all different when it was your lover's. Outside the house, our neighbors were watching; I should've been worried with what they might be talking about but I hardly had the time. Some women bent their heads closer, covered their mouth with their hands and spoke in a soft and fast tone. They were gossiping, as usual.

"Can you retell the story?" his partner added. I retold the story and started to feel bored. I could barely understand how those actors could keep on repeating the same thing over and over again. It was tiring but the Angel should act and be like one.

My husband was found dead. Laying on a pool of blood in our living room. Two bullets had killed him, they said it was .45 mm bullets breaking through his chest and hitting four of his ribs. It was neatly committed; no fingertips and no sign of torturing or hesitation. I told them I woke up at 5 and took my puppy for a walk—they'd it checked. I went back at six thirty to start cooking the breakfast and found him dead. I didn't see anything but him—no sign of trespassing or intruding.

He didn't show any unusual sign last night either, nothing about the works—no complaints, no overnight tasks, no nothing. He kissed me before I left to walk my puppy. I told him I'd come back at 6 and make him some pancakes. That was all. To make it realistic, I had to force myself to cry.

The best thing of being a woman was that you could use your untamed emotion to get their sympathy. No one on the earth could stand a crying woman. Besides, sobbing made your explanation hardly understood. I loved being woman with all my untamed emotion. I loved how men fell on their knee for every crying woman.

"Well," the two sergeants exchanged an uncomfortable look—I got them, easy as always. "You don't have to tell us now." The one said and patted my shoulder awkwardly. "You can, uh, probably come to our office anytime

you're ready with your story. We also have to wait for the autopsy result." They exchanged another look then nodded before letting me go.

I sank deeper into the cushioned armchair, sobbing and draining my tears. My heart beat calmly as I watched them moving around our living room. A woman officer draw herself closer to me, asking whether or not she could pour me something to drink. I told her the place and he nodded, patting my shoulder warmly and going to pour me a drink. I sat still as they put a yellow line, telling me not to remove anything from the crime scenelike I needed to be reminded.

I drained the last drop of my brandyand watched as they went away. The neighbors drew closer asking me how I feel, I answered them kindly that I'd be fine myself and they left me alone—*finally*.

I walked into our living room, stood near the yellow lines and looked at the blood on the floor. The strange feeling struck my heart—there was something wrong although it was perfectly executed. I watched the bullets' hole on the wall, trying hard not to remember his expression as the bullet hit his back without any warn. Then, I smiled—wider and wider before it broke into a laughter. Giggling, I went into bathroom and washed my face.

On the mirror, I faced the most mesmerizing face I'd ever seen in my life. I stared back at the woman on the mirror right on her eyes; the Angel, a gift sent from God, they said. I didn't believe in any God. I didn't believe there was someone who sent me there. My life was *mine*—no one had the rights to rule it, not even an abstract concept human made to safe himself named God. Fresh and relax, I walked to his room.

It was dark, so I turned the light on. Everything was in order. I opened all the drawers, checked all the documents on his laptop, and everything. I found nothing but my successfulness in sending all his money to my bank account. I shut the laptop down and rose from the chair. I walked to the kitchen, I should've made a call but I didn't know where to start.

*I had betrayed the Lucifer.*

It hit me like a wrecking ball; the feeling was so strong that I had to sit myself down for a while. The Lucifer wouldn't tolerate any betrayal, not from the Angel. I didn't know how but I knew there was someone who told him I'd killedmy husband and he would demand for information I barely had. It was surprisingly odd for having no call after several hours.

Dizzy, I gulped a painkiller down. In the sink, there were the dishes from last night's dinner. I remembered the taste of spaghetti he cooked for us. It sent me another hook to my stomach. The happiness we shared; he poured too much salt into the noodle, I overcooked the sauce, and still we ate it like it was the most delicious food in the world. Like we had no other chance to eat, like we had no tomorrow.*Indeed*.

I remembered his smile and laughter. How sincere his staring at me was. I wish I could see it again for the last time. The last memory about him that I kept was his shock then empty face when the Death took him away. My hand started trembling so I put my glass down before it fell and crashed. The stupid tears went out from the corner of my eyes again. I closed my eyes and let the images from last night appeared on my mind.

*"I love you." I whispered. It was so true that I myself was frightened by its power.*

*I could feel his smile on my hair as he pulled me closer. "Why it sounded as if you were saying goodbye? You won't go anywhere without me, Angel. I love you." He squeezed my arms. It was heaven for me to have him. Our legs interlinked beneath the blanket, my hand rested on his; he made me felt perfectly safe in the darkness. A kiss pressed onto my cheeks then my lips. It was a complete sadness that filled my mind last night.*

*I shook him awake at four thirty. "Baby, I heard something from the living room." I said and he yawned. "Can you check it?" Rubbing his eyes, he agreed to check. I tailed him to the living room. He turned the light on and watched around closely. Behind my pajamas, I had my gun. Its stone cold surface in contact with my bare skin. I was nervous, for the first time.*

*"There's nothing." He said as he opened the window to see whether or not there was someone trespassing our house. I stood at the door so he couldn't see my expression.*

*"I'm so sorry." I said as I brought out the gun. "I thought I've heard something and I was scared. It probably was... just, um, a part of my dream?"*

*Thou the Eye of the Angel hast no hesitation.*

*I straightened my arms, put my finger on the trigger and aimed.*

*He laughed softly and closed the window. "Easy." He said. "Now, can we go—?"*

*Therefore, open thy eyes and spread thy wings.*

*The suppressor muffled the two shots and I stood there, trembling as I watched my beloved husband choked and fell onto the floor. He fell on his stomach and the blood flooded on the floor. I lowered the gun, I still felt the adrenaline rushing through my veins like an alarm ringing loudly on my head and it couldn't be stopped.*

*"I love you, Baby," I said smoothly, kneeling down next to him. "I have to kill you. There's no one can own you but me, the Angel." I kissed his forehead and left him.*

*I faked the time of his death then took my puppy to walk to the park innocently, waving and to the neighbors as if there were nothing happened. Throwing the gun away to the river wrapped neatly inside the full trash bag*

and also my pajamas. I had to throw every evidence away. They wouldn't—couldn't find *anything*.

My door was knocked. "Yes?" I walked to the door and from the peeking hole, I saw his mother standing with a large *Tupperware* on her hand. I cleared my throat, feeling strangely awkward but I managed to control myself.

The door swung open and I faced her. "Mom." I said hoarsely. "I didn't expect your visit after all those..." I deliberately cut my sentences and she smiled weakly. She looked five years older—there was a dark circle around her eyes and she didn't try to conceal it. I'd never seen her that weak before.

She embraced me and I surrendered in her arms—she had that ability to make everyone felt secure just like her late son. It was cold and strange after she let me go. "You need to eat after all those investigation." She tilted her head and glanced at the *Tupperware* on her hand. "I've brought you some lasagna tonight. Would you like to have some, dear?"

I stared at the box and smiled gloomily. "Thank you..." I whispered.

"That's what a mother for." She handed me the *Tupperware* and I received it. I was afraid that *they* might find her with me later.

"Please come in," I said eventually and smiled, stepping backward. "But please excuse the mess. They kept the yellow lines around and..." I started to breathe hardy. "Well, they didn't even let me cleaning the blood. And it was... you know, it was..." I coughed, the tears started to fall through my cheeks and she immediately put her arms around my shoulder. I sobbed a bit, forcing my tears out. "Thank you." I said.

"You're welcome, dear." She answered. "I'm so sorry, I should've visited earlier but I had to cook first for knowing it must be hard for you. I don't want you to feel abandoned."

"Despite of everything, you have to eat something." She smiled sincerely and reminded me of my late mother.

I stared to nowhere; it was much easier to make a woman felt sympathy. "Yeah, I think he'd love to see me eating... He wouldn't like to see me sad, don't you think?" I smiled bitterly, wiping my tears away slowly.

She stared at me and smiled. "Indeed."

"Thank you for the lasagna," I added slowly. "I'll put them on the fridge." I rose and brought the *Tupperware* to the fridge.

"No," she said, putting her hand on my shoulder. "It'd be better to be eaten now. Here, let me heating it for you." She took it from my hand and went to the microwave. Placing it on the machine, she set the timer and smiled. "I'd love to hear your comment. It's my first time cooking Italian food."

I smiled and sat back to my chair, knowing that I had no choice but do what she wanted me to do. "Alright."

"I bet you haven't eaten anything today." She helped herself cleaning the plate and serving the lasagna. "Would you like to have a cup of tea?"

"It'd be great." I said and swore loudly in my head. *Why can't her just go, for fuck's sake?!*

"Sugar or milk?" she asked as she produced a pair of cup.

"I'll have both, thank you." I said, placing my hands on my lap. *Hold yourself together*, I kept telling myself as I watched her preparing the tea.

"You know," she said after serving the tea. It smelled good; she had poured the milk on the tea but placed the two blocks of sugar on the saucer. I added it all and stirred my tea slowly to calm my head down. All of my muscles were tense. "You've married my son for two years now."

I nodded without answering and absentmindedly sipped my perfectly poured tea.

*"Two fucking years, Angel, how long do you expect me to wait?"*

"And we hardly find you guys arguing about something. You were completing each other."

I nodded again, gulping the tea; I'd found nothing to say.

*"Trust me. We haven't got enough information."*

"But why..." she put her hand around the cup, gripped it tightly.

Our eyes met and instantly, I knew it wasn't only me who felt nervous and uneasy.

*"No excuse, Angel, kill him or pay for it."*

"Sorry," I said weakly. "I'm afraid I don't catch it...?"

She stared directly to my eyes. "You have to admit it, dear. It's okay. You'll be forgiven." She drew a holy cross with her hand across her chest.

My heart beat faster. Twice in a day, the adrenalin was rushing through my veins—the blood was being pumped wildly. I was dizzy and sick. I breathed through my mouth: *This whore knows!*

"I don't... understand?" I whispered softly. I put the cup on the table, afraid that it might reveal how nervous I was. "What are you talking about?" I knew it was no use. She knew I killed her only son.

She kept our eye in contact. "You know, don't you?" she said softly in her motherly tone.

The microwave blipped cheerfully, we turned our head to the engine and she rose. Efficiently, she served a piece of warm lasagna on a plate. She placed the plate in front of me with a spoon. Despite of everything, the lasagna was great. The tomato sauce smelled good. I grabbed the spoon and stared at the lasagna as she went to the sink, filling a glass of water.

"Eat." She ordered, back-facing me but I could hear her smile. "It'll make you better."

My heart was pounding. "Thank you." I said and dig a spoonful of lasagna. I chewed it slowly to have a thorough taste as she placed the glass next to my plate. I gulped the lasagna down and choked. Hardly and painfully; my body refused the food. The spoon fell from my hand and landed on the table with an irritating clank. I covered my mouth as a row of hard cough found me.

The alarm rang on my head: *something goes wrong!*

"Oh, darling!" she said as she helped me to stay on my chair. She wrapped me with her arms and rocked my body slowly as if I were a baby. "Are you OK?" she asked but I could barely hear her. My head felt like it was going to explode. Something was stabbed into my stomach painfully. I gasped for help and gripped my stomach.

"Here!" she said in a high tone. "Drink some water." the glass was urged to my lips. I gulped the water and choked again even harder then fell onto the floor noisily.

That time, she let me.

It felt like I was in hell; my body was *burning*. I lost the control to body. My animal instinct took the control and all I wanted to do was to ease the overwhelming pain. I reached for her; trying to ask me to bring me to the hospital but nothing came out from my mouth. My stomach felt like it was being twisted; my guts were burning. My body suddenly forgot how to work; I *thought* I was screaming, yet no sound produced.

"W-what—?" I choked and gripped my stomach; my mouth widely opened, no more sound. She stood there, higher than me. Her eyes were cold as she watching me begging for life. The sincere smile was vanished from her lips, replaced with an anger on her eyes. I had dozen things to be afraid of, still I was afraid of the fire on her eyes. She was here on behalf of her dead son, for a revenge.

*May God or whoever it is condemn you, whore!*

"No." Her whisper came through my ears. "MyGod will condemn you. An eye for an eye. That's the rule."

I choked hardly and gasped for air, I let one painful scream go before everything went dark and I didn't feel secure at all.

*I'm so sorry, Biggy-boo, I'm failed.*

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*"She died, sir."*

The man in a long dark branded coat stood still by the river with a phone pressed onto his right ear. Behind the sunglasses, the Lucifer stared at the surface, watching the sun slowly set down. His lower jaw was hardened hearing the news through the phone call. The cigarette was hanging on his lips, nearly fell down. He gripped the phone tightly as he digested the news. The twirling



lights reflected on his deep black eyes. The black shiny Lamborghini was parked behind him, the engine growled softly like a lion snored peacefully, ready to go.

"She kills the suspect?" he asked dryly although he knew the answer even before asking. The Angel would kill every suspect she aimed, no except.

"As always." Answered his informant. *"They were suspicious but couldn't find anything. I admit it, the Angel messed this one up."*

"Yes." The man smoked his cigarette deeply before answering. "It's because she fell in love with that bastard." He was spitting the word with more hatred than what he was planned.

"Well, uh—"

"I told her to kill the man. *To kill.* I don't remember anything about falling in love with him—playing those disgusting dramas in their little house. Had she forgotten what she was? For goddamn's sake, she was an assassin! I'd sent her to *kill!*" He eventually exploded. "I've been waiting for two fucking years!"

No answer and the man sucked his cigarette deeply before throwing it onto the ground and stepping on it. He was so angry that he couldn't think about anything. "Who's in charge to take care of her?" he asked later. A little pain stung his heart—deep down, he knew it would come, sooner or later.

God, or whoever it was, took something from him as a compensation. An eye for an eye, they said.

*"Three are going to take care of her. The mother's still in there. They have to wait."*

A new frightening anger was rising within himself. "She killed the Angel?"

*"From the information I got, yes. She has killed our Angel. Typical. The Angel didn't realize the food had been poisoned. That was amazed me."*

It was amazed the Lucifer also. The Angel he knew wouldn't fall for ridiculous trick like poisoned food. He reached for his cigarette box to lift another cigarette and fire it. The smoke filled his lung for some second before he was able to breathe heavily. He growled deeply. *What the hell are you thinking about, Angel?!*

*"They're wondering if they can do... I don't know, something?"* the caller asked after a long pause. The Lucifer caught a little hesitation on the voice and he knew he was too much. He had to manage himself; it wasn't the time for unnecessary grief. *"It won't cost you anything but a bullet."*

His mind was wondering far, far away to somewhere named Heaven which existence he had doubted. "No." He said and breathed out loosely. "I'll take care of her. Now, go. Be well-prepared, no excuses."

*"Certainly, Lucifer sir."* And the line was ended.

He stared at his phone, to the dark flat screen.

*"We have to send someone, Lucifer. We can't just sit still. Once CIA stepped in, everyone will do so. I hate seeing them sticking their nose on our business."*

He smiled as the picture of the woman in short hair appeared on his mind. Her beauty was so mesmerizing that he fell for her in the first sight. The brightest star in her group, dangerously tempting. She was quick and unnoticeable; a silver bullet—once she had been fired, it was impossible to stop her. The case had cost him his favorite silver bullet.

*"We have to be close as possible." She stared at him with the fire on her beautiful eyes. The fire was dancing wildly on it. "I'll take it."*

*"But, Angel," he heard himself spoke. "I don't want you to risk it for me."*

*"No one left!" the Angel answered at once. "Listen, they give you the information. They have been watching the suspect for several months and his suspicious movement will affect us. We have to be careful with him. I'll do this."*

*"Who the hell," he snapped, trying to catch his breath in disturbing anger. He was rarely angry—the Angel had aroused his animal instinct too often. "Who the hell has determined you to?"*

*"I do determine my own life. I ask no one—not even you."*

*Their eyes met. He knew he could do nothing to stop his silver bullet once it fired. He reached for her and embraced her with his arms closely. He breathed on her hair; the smell of hers filled his lung. As he embraced her closely, the feeling was getting stronger—the feeling that he would lose her.*

*"I love you." He whispered slowly and weakly, baby-like. "I'm sorry, I'm just scared that you may leave me." He tighten his embrace to her. He wasn't ready to let her go.*

*"I won't, Lucifer." She giggled and patted his back warmly. There was something in her way saying his name that turned him on. It sounded absolute sexy. He kissed her temple, drawing a soft kiss down through her cheek to her parted lips. She lifted her head and placed a kiss on his lips. "I love you too."*

He growled angrily and got into his Lamborghini. He moved the gear and stepped on the gas. The engine blared before rushing away. He pressed the speed dial #2 on his phone.

*"Tell everyone," he said hardly. His lower jaw got hardened. "The Angel had been killed. Prepare the funeral. Make sure no one knows. Burn the house down. We have to destroy and fake everything. I won't be there for it."*

*"Certainly, Lucifer sir."*

He threw the phone to the passenger seat and stared blankly to the road. He took a deep breath and pushed his feet deeper to the gas. "If you can't be here, Angel, then there's no reason for me to live." He pushed even deeper and for the first time in his life, he prayed to someone they called God. "I hope

they're right that in the lifeafter death, I'll be able to be together with those I love."

The Lucifer closed his eyes and faced the eternal darkness, the place where he belonged.

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# I'm Home

My head felt like it was being crushed... My chest and my stomach were hurt like hell. I couldn't move my body and I could feel blood flowing from my forehead to my eyes. You might be wondering why did I say all of this, what was happening. Ah... where should I start?

---

I had the best people in my family. My father was a strict and tough person and my mother was a loving person. Anyway, let's begin the story...

"Dad, can I get my pocket money earlier, please?"

"Huh? What for? Didn't you just get yours like two days ago?"

"P-please daaad..... I made a promise with my friends to buy the new released game tomorrow."

My dad was being quiet for a few minutes, "Fine then. However, just like what I have taught you... Nothing come for free in the real world. You have to fight for it. Come meet me in the dojo after you get home from school later. It is time to show you how the real world works."

"Yay! Thanks, dad! Mom, dad... I'm leaving!" I said that as I ran through the front door and went to school. I was still in the first grade of my junior high school at that time. My father trained me every afternoon in my family's dojo. Yes, my father was a kendo master and he was a famous one.

I was at school doing my usual routines in school, studying, playing with my friends, getting scolded by teacher because of my pranks, and stuffs. Despite of that all, I was really looking forward for school to end. DING DING DING... It has the school bell! I immediately put my books in my bag and ran all the way from school to home, I didn't want to waste any time.

It's weird, usually around this time, my father usually did his practice and his voice could be heard from the front gate. I entered the dojo and found my parents inside. They were there, on the floor. Not moving.

"Mom...? Dad..?" I walked slowly. I was still trying to understand the situation. Why was the dojo in wreck? "Mom...? Dad..? What are you doing on the floor? Isn't it cold?" "What is this?" I stepped on something wet, I thought it was water. "I... Is...Is this blood? DAD??! MOM??!" My breathing suddenly became heavy. I didn't know what to do. I kept screaming, calling their name.

A few minutes later, my neighbor, Mrs. Takeda came, she immediately called the police and ambulance. As the sirene of the police car and ambulance could be heard, some of my neighbors came. Yes, curiosity.

My parents were put into the ambulance and then they were taken to Ogenki Hospital. I was still standing in front of the dojo entrance. I was frozen. It was a very bright day. It was, but I didn't know why my cheeks are wet.

I was then interrogated by an old man from the police. He asked me a lot of questions regarding the incident. I couldn't say anything. I knew nothing and my throat was hurt.

"Thank you for your cooperation, we have called your uncle earlier informing about this incident. He said he is on his way here and you can wait for him in your house. You need to eat something, boy." He gave me a bowl of meat rice as he leaving me. I didn't touch the food. I could not eat. My hand wouldn't move. The pictures of my parents were still lingering in my head. I can't get them out.

Around 4 hours later, my uncle came and hugged me, really hard. I didn't say anything. The last thing I remembered after my uncle hugged me was that my cheeks become wet once again.

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"...Ro... Hiro... Masahiro.... Hey Masahiro! Don't space out! Eat you breakfast now, you have to go to Tokyo today, right?"

"Ah, yes. I'm sorry. I'll eat up right away. Mmm! It's delicious as always, aunty. You're probably the best cook. Haha..."

"Ahaha... you always know how to tease me, don't you. You don't forget anything, right?"

"Yes, I've prepared all the things I need last night. I'm leaving, aunty, uncle. See you later." I finished my breakfast and quickly grab my bag and jacket and then took my bicycle to the train station.

It took around half and three hours from Osaka to Tokyo by a bullet train and a little walk. I walked through the busy streets of Tokyo. I had lost count on how many times I had been in Tokyo. Despite of being in Tokyo countless time, I hadn't even once visited my home since the incident. I was scared and I thought it is about time to put an end to all of that.

"Is that... Masahiro? Is that you, Masahiro?" an old woman suddenly called my name. "It is me... do you remember?"

"Ah... Mrs.Takeda. How are you doing?"

"Totally fine and you.... How are you doing? I heard that you lived with your uncle all the past years... You have grown to be such a fine man."

"Yes. I've been thinking and I decided to come back home."

"Good then.... Ah... that makes me remember something. Wait here." She went into her house and came back bringing a key and gave it to me. "This is your house key. I was asked by your uncle to take care of your house to keep it livable. Your uncle knew that one day you will have come back. Now go..."

"Ah... thank you, Mrs.Takeda." I went to the front door of my house. My hand was shaking. I inserted the key and unlocked the door. I entered the house and the memories from my childhood suddenly flew in. I almost changed my mind, but I've decided to put an end to this.

It really has not changed at all. Mrs. Takeda really took a good care of this house. The living room, my room, my parents' room, the kitchen, and the dining room, I could still remember the location of almost each item. I went to the backyard, it seems that it was the only place that wasn't being taken care off. Those grasses needed to be taken care off.

I satt on the sofa in the living room. I closed my eyes for a little bit. I was thinking about many things and suddenly it hit me. All these years, I tried to avoid all of the things related to my parents, but now, here I am, in my old house. I started to get curious.

I went to my parents' room. I searched the drawers, the bed, and the cupboard. I could only find some weird clothes which fit my father. Found nothing special, I moved to my father's workroom. I was always prohibited to enter his room. And so, I went up to the second floor and went to my father's workplace.

Just like what I did in my parents' room, I searched every corner, every drawer, every cupboard, and all of the documents. Jackpot! I found an album. I looked through the photos.... I found my parents' wedding photos, I found the little me there, and I found my father's previous job. He was wearing the clothes I found in his room earlier in that photo. As I turned the album page, I saw more of my father and his colleagues. They were all wearing the same clothes and there is a symbol on their back. That symbol... I saw it in my uncle's

room also, in his investigation files . I remembered it was correctly a symbol of a really powerful yakuza organization.

I tried to relate all of the information... I found some more information about the organization, I found it earlier actually, but I thought it was actually the crucial point. My father apparently was really respectful person in that organization. He tried to stop from the organization years ago and he covered it up by becoming a Kendo master. As I was thinking, my blood started to boil up and anger starting to overcome me.

All of the information about the organization was right there, the address, the leader, the clans... I ran to the dojo, taking my father's best katana on the wall. The rest... You might already know the rest...

"So, what the eldest son of that cursed Kamiya is thinking, huh? Storming into our base by himself?! You think this is a freaking video game? You think the real world works just like video games? Get some sense, kiddo!"

Ah... Yes... Here I am now, tied to a chair in a traditional Japanese styled room. I might regret this, but I had nothing to lose. I had lost everything already anyway.

"Let me show you how real world works, son." He said as he pulls the trigger.

Cold... I fat cold, but the pain from before was all gone.... Mom, Dad... I was home...