

HALLOWEEN EDITION



CREATIVE WRITING
MAGAZINE
WHISPERS FROM THE WOODS

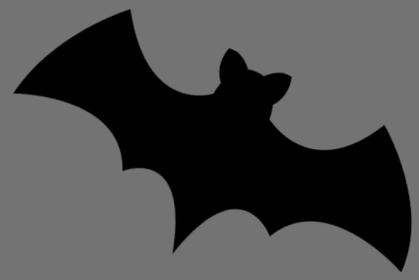
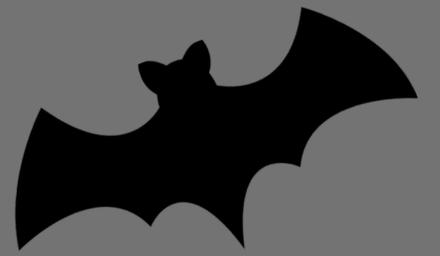


TABLE OF CONTENTS



A Deal with Death - Shelby Powell

Consumed Evil - Norah Sheldon

Fireball - Melissa Downs

Grayscale - Sundae Meze

In the Morning - Jadayah Parker

I Will Become Earth - Sundae Meze

My Halloween - Norah Sheldon

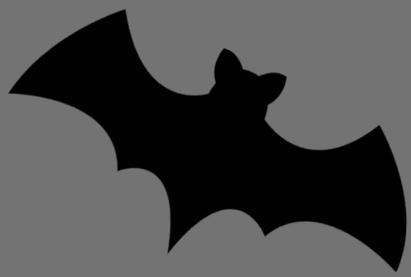
Nutmeg - Michael Webb

Pernicious Doll - Janiah Scott

Phantom - Shelby Powell

Saving Prometheus - Elisaa McAdams

TABLE OF CONTENTS



The Book or the Creature - Ayali Thomas

The Scariest Thing of All - Jadayah Parker

The Swamp - Melissa Downs

Urges - Ayali Thomas

The FallEn Grá - Michael Webb

Prom Night Blues - Elisaa McAdams

A Deal With Death

I made a deal with the grim reaper.

 sold my life for yours.

 His rusted scythe

 slid across my arm,

my blood dripped into the dirt.

 Your life was guaranteed.

 Mine was forfeit,

 but that didn't matter.

 A life without you

 Would mean certain death

 To all those you leave behind.

 Let it be my headstone,

 Instead of yours.

Consumed Evil

Run away and run far

But how much further can she go?

It felt like hours, no days since she stopped to take a
breath

Running from her fears, her darn fears
They chase her in a never ending circle.

She screamed at the candy man,
Cursed Michael Myers,
Laughed so hard she cried at Freddie,
Yet they followed.

All of her fears chasing her dreams, childhood and loved
ones

Hate running rampant

It festered.

Boiled and penetrated her skin

The hate oozed out of her pores

The constant fear turned to consistent loathing

Could this child turn into a monster?

Could she turn evil?

But really who are we to determine what a monster is?

Who are we to determine who or what is evil?

The answers are quite simple darling.

No man can determine who is bad or who is good.

Man conjures up ideas of what is evil.

We've been trained to only look once not twice.

Yet we never looked in the mirror to see who was
really evil.

Fireball

A dragon the size of your palm.
They breathe embers as big as a match flame.
Sweets and shiny trinkets
Are the only treasures you'll find in their hoard.

You can find him in a candy jar looking for a snack;
Their favorite's the atomic fireball.
Or maybe he'll be inside a grandfather clock
Trying to snatch the golden hour hand.

He's pretty tough to spot;
We've mistook him for a pest,
So he hides away for most of the day,
Wary of others and afraid he'd be caught.

He only comes out in the midst of Halloween,
In broad daylight sometimes if he's brave.
A time of the year he just can't resist.
Just a shame there isn't any gold.

Rumour goes the dragon can be coaxed
With a bag of chocolate coins.
Succeed, and maybe you'll have
A friend the size of your palm.

Grayscale

My body shook violently in the cold as I made my way towards the ocean. As I walked I brought my feet close enough to my hands to slip off my shoes, and one foot after the other I felt the sand create its new home between my toes, coating my feet with yellow. As I moved forward I took a piece of paper that had been folded up in my jacket pocket and held it in my hands for a bit. I pressed my thumb against it, soaking in the feeling of paper against my skin for the very last time. It then gently fell from my hand, landing somewhere behind my view. Perhaps it would beat all odds and it finds its way into someone else's hands. That one out of the billions of people on this planet would grab hold of my little sheet.

I walked a few more paces forward before pressing my shoulders back and allowing my jacket to effortlessly slip off of my body. I could clearly feel the waves of dust brush against my ankles but the sound of my jacket dropping to the ground was lost over the deafening sound of the wind. Or perhaps I just couldn't hear it over the screaming ocean as it crashed over rocks. It felt like it was calling me. Yelling at me to let it hold me in its freezing cold arms and stay in its frosty embrace for a minute... Or an hour... Or eternity.

I kept going forward. It was all I could do. Even if I wanted to stop, my body would never allow me. It was like some force outside of my control was pulling me forwards. A limp suddenly replaced my normal walk cycle. I didn't feel what caused it, but I could feel blood trickling down my foot as my steps became sluggish. Perhaps a piece of glass had cut my bare feet on my way to the ocean, or maybe my tired body was simply falling apart with each step I took. Either way, it didn't matter, and it never will. The red bits of sand will disappear by sunrise, and so will all traces of this pathetic monster called "me."

I took my first steps into the water. I expected it to be cold, but to my surprise I felt nothing at all. I could only feel overwhelming darkness engulfing me. The water didn't feel like water, but a void that I was simply slipping into. Slowly from my bloodied feet, to my ankles, my calves, and then my knees were swallowed by the feeling of nothingness. What used to sound like howling wind and crashing waves now sounded like chanting.

"Do it," The nature around me cried. Glorious cries of joy as the void was up to my chest. The wind cheered as my neck was swallowed and the ocean laughed as it took hold of my mouth. I could no longer see the beach. Just a giant vacuum trying to swallow me whole.

And who was I to stop it?

I slowly closed my eyes, accepting it all. Thoughts of my life, regrets about everything I did and said wrong, all faded to static as I floated within the abyss, sinking into the darkness. Now all I could hear was my heartbeat. It filled my ears and racked my brain. It was deafening. It was panic inducing. I was panicking-.

Panic replaced what was left of the oxygen in my lungs and I internally screamed at the thought of my existence being wiped from this mortal realm.

Then the cold forced my calm. It reminded me of the work I put in. How much effort it was to vanish. How hard I worked to disappear.

My instant thrashing stopped in an attempt to not let my efforts go to waste. A wasted attempt to save pitiful efforts that washed with the tides. The sea, the terrible beast that she is, took hold of my fading life and climbed into me. Oxygen was suddenly forced into my unsuspecting lungs. My chest violently rose and fell as I unwillingly breathed in the salt scented air and I was forced to live.

How could someone be so cruel?

In the Morning

It's dark and early,

Everyone's dead in the head.

Sleep covers my neighborhood in a blanket of silence.

Except for the humming of a few flickering street lamps,

And the chortling of insects underfoot.

The sounds of jangling keys,

And the footsteps of a few pedestrians.

Except for the bloodcurdling scream of a young girl,

With her last gasp for air.

And the scuttling of leaves on the sidewalk.

Other than that,

Everything seems quieter at 5:30.

I Will Become Earth

One of these days,
The Earth will reclaim me
My petty flesh
Consumed by fungi
Birthing pretty mushrooms
My marrow
Becoming feed to the worms
Who become feed to the birds
My existence
Soaked in-
Drunk up by the soil
And you,
My Boy,

My pretty Boy,
My beautiful, ignorant Boy,
Will step over my bountiful burial ground
Decorated beautifully by flowers
And laugh
With Her

"So what are you gonna say at my funeral, now that
you've killed me?" -Beyoncé

My Halloween

Creepy crawlers
Candy on the cement
Smiling kids, Terrified kids

But me,
Too old to dress up, says mom.

Kid at heart wanting to dress up as my favorite anime
character.

too old, too young.

Which is it mom?

Stay a kid and stay within your boundaries?

Or take on the responsibilities of an adult?

Why must I please you when you can't even decide
whether I am worthy of your respect?

Halloween, a time to cover up and be someone else

A time where I can pretend to be someone else

A time where its okay to be feared

A time where where no one is normal

A mask and cloak hiding my real face

Covering my identity

Oh what a day to live in someone else's shoes and be
different.

Nutmeg

Who am I to predict the future?

These thoughts.

If I were to dwell on them,

Nothing would change, right?

Deja vu tis nothing but a spice

Yet it affects the taste of the food extraordinarily.

Interesting really.

If I must grab a spoon, or fork,

May I grab only the portion that I want?

The best part of the dish?

Who am I to say?

All the ingredients speak for themselves anyway.

Pernicious Doll

Pernicious doll sits on my shelf
With her thoughtless eyes and her pretty pink
dress

Porcelain, her skin, like cream
She's made her way into my dreams

Deep inside her hollow head
Conjuring phantoms of dread
Glassy eyed she'll grab your lungs

Capture your breath

And tie your tongue

I hear the creaking on the wood floor
The little footsteps upped and locked my
door

The presence of danger I feel is near
I've found myself drowning in a deep wave
of fear

Phantom

You left us all behind,
Existing only in the
memories,
In which
there will be no more.
If not here
anymore
at least
be with us in spirit.
Our phantom.

Saving Prometheus

Frankenstein's monster wonders where their feet have
been

The miles and miles without knowing
Feeling like they aren't theirs,

They aren't

Disgusted with this heart that beats for none

Thumping and thumping

Their master's smile keeps coming

Gleaming his rotten teeth

The monster sending their own in return

The master winces

Monster covers mouth and hides their face

Master turns away

Seem to seam the monster looks

Finding all their loose threads

Pulling one by one

They lie in pieces

Happy

The Book or the *Creature*

Shards of glass covered the floor. You're hiding, out of breath, breathing heavy. You know you're taking a risk stopping because running is the only option. You get up and start running again, as you do you look back and see it's gaining on you. It's on its hands and feet coming at you faster and faster and you push harder and harder until it stops, and in response so do you.

Slowly, It starts to stand up twisting and turning its body finally coming to a stop, looking you dead in the eyes. The creature was tall and lanky but stood hunched over like if it moved from that position everything in its back would break. It had rough looking skin and black dots for eyes that sunk into its head.

It opened its mouth wide, almost splitting its face in half, right then a shrill sound was released from it. You dropped to the ground and screamed in silence, tears streaming down your face, and clawing your ears. Suddenly the sound stops, you try to move but you can't, you're paralyzed. You want to shut your eyes, block your hearing, and end this but you can't. There, it is looming over you, it was like looking death in its face.

The creature crawls down your body disappearing from sight, you go to scream and as you do you're dragged into a darkened hall, your scream fading from existence as you go deeper and deeper never to be seen again.

I sigh, putting down my book. Reading horror stories before going to bed is not the best decision, but it's said that people watch and read fake horror to escape the real ones, but that's not me. I read it because of the thrill, suspense, but mostly cause it is fun.

After getting dressed for bed I slide under my blanket and try to go to sleep, key word TRY, usually I can fall asleep easily after reading or seeing something horror, but tonight was different it was like I was being watched by someone or thing and no matter how hard I tried to shake that feeling I couldn't.

Slowly I crept out of bed, opening my door with ease to see a pitch dark hall. Still there was a strange feeling that I couldn't shake and as I walked the hall it only got stronger reaching the end.

I now stood in the living room and that's when I saw it. It was like the demon in my book came to life. It stood by the back door looking me right in the eyes, both of us unmoving, this continued for three slow minutes, and as soon as I made one move it went crazy.

It opened its mouth and let out a deafening sound and started scratching at the window trying, almost aching to let itself in. In time the glass started to crack that only made it go faster as if it knew it almost broke the glass, I did the first thing I could think of, I ran. Just like in the story I ran, I ran for my life after a minute I finally heard the glass give.

I heard the pattering of its feet before I saw it. Just like I read it walked on its hands and feet, bent backwards, and contorted. I could tell it was searching for me so I took this time to dive behind the couch and hide out breathing heavily. I know I'm taking a risk stopping because running is the only option. I get up and start running again, as I do I know it saw me and I look back, it's gaining on me with its hands and legs moving faster and faster, so I push harder and harder until it stops. I pause to watch as it slowly starts to stand up, twisting and turning its body finally coming to a stop, looking me dead in the eyes. I think back to what happened in the book knowing no matter what I do I'll lose.

It opened its mouth wide, almost splitting its face in half right, then the shrill sound was once again released from it, making me drop to the ground and scream in silence, tears streaming down my face, and clawing at ears just like in the story. Suddenly the sound stops and I try to move but I can't, I'm paralyzed, I try, want, need to shut my eyes, block my hearing and end this, but I can't.

It stood there just looming over me. It was like looking death in its face and it's telling you this is the end. The creature crawls down my body, the feeling of its body pressed and slides over mine forever engraved in my memory.

As it disappears from sight I go to scream and as I do I'm dragged into a darkened hall my scream fading from existence as I go deeper and deeper, never to be seen again.

Jolting up, I wake from that terrible nightmare breathing deeply and sweating I felt around my self feeling a bed and sighed in relief and laid back down closing my eyes but before they could completely close I them shot back open.

I was looking at the ceiling, and slowly I shifted my head to the side and widened my eyes in horror I saw a gate, but right outside the old rusted metal gate was the creature from my dream staring straight at me, all I could do was scream.

The Scariest Thing of All

I don't feel like Halloween,
No ghosts, no goblins, no demons, no trolls.

I don't feel like Halloween,
No candy corn or pumpkin-shaped bowls.

No Spooky Scary Skeletons,
Or Trick-or-Treat galore.

I'm turning off my driveway light
So no one's at my door.

I'll be Satan's Scrooge and Grinch,
Rude and old and grouch.

Steal your joy in just a pinch,
No candy in your pouch.

I'll make you scream and cry and poop
Your nightmare on repeat and loop.

There's no escape from my tight grasp
You'll leave in a cold sweat and gasp.

No cool costumes or fake blood
I'll make your Halloween a dud.

The Swamp

A light fog rose off the stale waters of the swamp. It was the only place in town where you could look up and see the stars clearly.

“Careful where you step; it’s muddy over here.” Marlee called from the top of a bald cypress.

“Everywhere I step is muddy,” Lawrence complained. He stepped like a lynx in the snow, trying to keep the soles of his shoes above the muck. Anytime he felt himself sinking he would jump out onto a patch of grass. Marlee watched on in silent amusement. Eventually he made it to the foot of the tree. Toads and cicadas began their symphony as the moon rose higher above the canopy. Marlee was picking bark off the tree in search of beetles until something caught her eye.

“Woah, look at the ground!” Marlee said enthusiastically, pointing down at the pool below them. Lawrence had already started climbing the trunk and was struggling to turn his head around. Once he was able to sit down on one of the branches, he saw a bright, ethereal glow off the surface of the swampwater, which filled the misty sheet across the swamp with light.

“What is that, algae?”

“Let me go see,” She said. Before Lawrence could respond she had already jumped down off the branch. Her shoes sank a few inches as she hit the ground. He winced a bit.

“I could never do that; I paid way too much for these.” He said, rocking his legs back and forth like a kid sitting on a swing. Marlee scooped a bit of water off the ground.

“Huh, I guess not.” Marlee said. The water in her palms was clear, if not for a bit of plant matter.

Lawrence continued to rock back and forth. At one point he gained a bit too much momentum and fell off the tree backwards. He made a startled noise mid-air before disappearing into the pool of water below.

“Lawrence?! You okay?!”

Marlee waited a few seconds. He still hadn't resurfaced.

“Oh no. Oh no...”

Panicked, she dove into the water to look for him.

It was like hitting a thin sheet of rain streaming off a roof. She fell for a short amount of time before landing on some grass.

“Ow... what?” She said, lifting herself back up.

“Marlee! Ok, good. You're here too. I thought I was crazy.”

“Did you see what just happened? What was that?”

“I have no clue. But look.”

Lawrence pointed at the sky, which was a deep shade of violet. Marlee also noticed how blue the grass was as she stood.

“Just give it time. Our eyes might need to adjust.” she said.

“You think it was that glowing stuff? Maybe it got in our eyes or something.”

They were surrounded by swamp, the same as before. Even the stars looked the same. But there was something different about the air - whether it was a smell or how the wind was blowing, they couldn't really tell. In a way it was kind of heavy.

“Why don't we head home?” Lawrence suggested. He went to wring the water from his jacket, but it was completely dry.

“Sure, I guess. Just one more thing.” Marlee said. She stepped into the pool.

She could actually step in it this time. She didn't fall, and it only went up to her knees.

"Is it really... only that deep?" Lawrence said. Marlee only shrugged.

As the both of them headed back, they started noticing a few differences. The most noticeable of them came as they moved past the forested area into a clearing. There were still plenty of trees. But you could also see right through them.

"Huh. Okay..."

Marlee maintained her cool and calm demeanor, but it waned as they grew more lost and more confused.

"What would you call this?" Lawrence said. He reached out to touch the trunk of one, only for his hand to phase right through.

"Plasmatic? Incorporeal?" Marlee answered, disoriented.
"Where are we?"

"It looks like Harrier Swamps. Kinda. Actually, did you see either of us actually swallow the algae? I can't remember."

"What's that noise?"

The sound of a radar echoed in the distance. They both stood still in anticipation. Appearing out of the shadows was a lady holding what looked like a metal detector. She was wearing boots and overalls fit for traversing the mud, unlike them. She was totally engrossed in her work and almost walked right past them.

"Um.. hello?" Lawrence said quietly.

"Ahck! Don't scare me like that." She said, shuddering. The lady looked at them attentively, though in a hunched posture.

"I'm sorry. Do you know where we are?"

"You two lost? We're about 5 miles from Galoshville."

Marlee and Lawrence looked at each other.

“We don’t know where that is.” Marlee said worriedly.

In the moment before she replied, the two of them noticed the woman had odd-shaped ears like those of a canine.

And a tail.

Urges

He walked into the room and sat on the couch, legs crossed, hands folded, head high. He opened his mouth but only released a sigh shaking his head, he started over. Trying again, he opens his mouth and words are finally spoken.

“I killed them I shouldn't have, but it felt so good the feeling of blood dripping down my hands and arms. The look of pure terror as they looked me straight in the eyes was so sensual and alluring. Even then I just couldn't get enough. I wanted more... I needed more,” he stops for a second taking a breath, looks straight at me, smiles and continues. “but that was just the first one. It became something like a hobby, the euphoria I got from feeling these people dying by my hands. The knife is my drug and me killing them is using it and I shouldn't but I just can't stop. What about you doc? What have you done? Have you ever killed someone?”

As I take in his question I breathe out and simply shake my head, “No I've never killed anyone and nor do I plan to. So, tell how have you been lately? Having any urges?”

Taking a moment, he looks me straight in the eyes. Never making an attempt to break it

“Well not really but now that you mention it I actually do but it's just one person,” he says smiling.

“O-oh and who might that be?” I asked wearily.

“Oh I think you know” and with that he smiles and lunges.

The FallEn Grá

Multicolored leaves fell from the sky. It was a chilly day out like anyone would expect during the slow transition from a mild season to the full feeling of the next. I was always a fan of the pumpkin winds breezing every now and then. It felt especially nice on my face. I wish I could have that same feeling through my hair and on the rest of my body, but alas, I must endure the burden of a hat, gloves, a scarf, and an overbearing blue jacket because of my mother.

Nevertheless, it was still a lovely day in the autumn stricken park. I was sitting on one of the many black benches along the park path. Surrounding noises made it even more exquisite: The howling kids playing, the oohs and aahs of wildlife photographers, and the sipping of a Starbucks Pumpkin Spice Latte by my best friend/personal bully, Laci.

"*Siipp* ahhh. It has extra extra extra pumpkin with a shot of hazelnut. You sure you don't want some? I got a venti for more than one reason," she asked.

"No, I'm fine," I responded as I twiddled my feet.

"Hmph, more for me then." She took another sip.

I took a deep breath and looked up at the American flag hung on the pole about twenty feet from us. I stared intensely as if it had owed me something. I couldn't take my eyes off of it for some reason. Not until I heard someone calling my name. It was faint, but it was pulling me towards reality.

"...Ashley..."

"...Ashley..."

"...Ashley!"

"Huh?" I was back in it.

"Something's up," Laci determined as she took another sip.

"N-no, I'm fine," I responded.

"Nu-uh, I know my best friend, and when you zone out like that, something's up. You were staring at the flag over there, and I know how you feel about this country. Is it that you're upset about your dad while he's somewhere in Europe?"

"No."

"Is someone being mean to you in school?"

"Nah."

"Is it the stupid winter clothes your mom's making you wear?"

"No, but they are making me super hot." I took some of my winter clothes off, realizing that my mother wasn't here to enforce anything.

"Ugh, you know I hate guessing. Don't you just wanna head back to my place so I can do your hair and makeup so you can look all pretty?" Laci suggested while setting her drink down in between us to fix her long brunette hair.

"Maybe later," I replied nonchalantly.

Laci grabbed the palm of my hand and looked at my fingernails.

"Come on, Ashley, I know you're tired of having these colorless nails," she complained as if it bothered her more.

Ashley wasn't even my real name. It was just a name that I told my friends to call me. It's not that I hated my real name. It's just...I had a preference for this one. Although, yeah, to be honest, I did really want my nails painted orange.

"Alright, sure, Laci," I giggled.

"That's my girl." Laci let go of my hand and grabbed her drink again.

"We can head there once I finish this."

I sighed quietly.

Suddenly an old couple walked by us. They were holding hands.

"Good afternoon," the old lady said as she continued walking down the path with her husband.

"Afternoon," both of us greeted back.

Laci pulled out her phone and started scrolling. It looked like Instagram from the corner of my eye.

As she became focused on her screen, I glanced at the backs of the couple. They were a few feet away from us.

"Aha! I knew it!" Laci shouted.

"Huh?"

"You want a boyfriend so bad," she concluded with a victory smirk.

I stood up dramatically.

"OK, fine, you're right. I do want a boyfriend. Superduper bad, in fact. But you know how my mom is with that kinda stuff."

She laughed.

"Haha, true! I doubt she'd even let you have the chance to get the b-word out before summoning Satan to pull you down to hell."

I sighed and sat back down, putting my face down in my hands.

"Yeah...you're right."

"There there, bestie, you'll get to express yourself one day. You just gotta wa-"

"I just gotta wait. I know. I've heard that one before." I cut Laci off as I stared at the ground in despair. I felt her rub my back as she took a long sip.

As I was in my feelings, I noticed a pair of black shoes appear before my eyes. I looked up. It was a boy with lush brown hair, a blue shirt, and black pants. He had light freckles on his cheeks and black eyes complimented with a warm smile.

"Hey d'ere," he spoke in an accent that seemed familiar, but one I've never actually heard before.

"Sup," Laci said back.

I realized I had been staring at his face for too long.

"H-hi!" I frantically said, sitting up on the bench.

He blinked kindly with a slight chuckle.

"Sorry to bo'her yeh two, but aye was whondering ef you guys 'ad any idea where deh transet station was."

Laci answered since she knew my sense of direction was horrible.

"Oh yeah, if you head down West 92nd street that way," she explained with a point, "then you should get to Columbus Avenue. Go left and you should see a Bus Station there."

"D'anks! Et really means ah lot since me class es 'ere from Ireland on ah field trip an' et's ah bit scary askin' fer directions aroun' 'ere."

"Oh interesting. Well, Ashley and I can help you with anything you need if you'd like," Laci offered.

“Huh?” he asked in confusion as he looked at me. He didn’t seem to comprehend, but his brain figured it out after a moment.

“Oh, well d’anks. I’d really appreciate et. ‘Ere’s me number.”

The boy pulled a red phone from his pocket and recited his phone number to Laci, who added it to her contacts.

“D’he name es Mason,” the boy said.

"Laci," said Laci.

“Nice ta meet ye bouf. I hafta catch up to me class. Talk la’er.”

“See ya,” Laci waved as Mason walked away from the back of our heads.

I got up and sat on the bench with my knees as I watched Mason cross the street and go along the sidewalk.

As I went back to sitting on my butt, I noticed Laci grinning ear to ear.

“What?”

“Oh my gosh Ashley, you were totally blushing and drooling over him every second of that!”

“What? N-no I wasn't!” My cheeks lit bright red at Laci's assertion.

“Ashley and Mason sitting in a tree,” Laci teased musically.

“Stooopppppppp,” I begged with my flushed face.

“K-I-S-S-I-N-G. Hehe you know I gotta bully you after that.”

I gave in.

“Haha OK, yeah. But can you blame me? He was so hot,” I adored Mason.

“Heck yeah he was.”

Laci took a huge sip of her drink, only to realize that the cup was empty.

“Aww man,” she complained as she threw the cup into the green bin that was conveniently across the path from us.

“Gotta get another one later, but for now, you wanna head back to my place?”

“Sure,” I replied, then remembering I couldn’t.

“Wait no, I gotta get back home. My mom said I have piano practice earlier than normal.”

“Oh dang, that sucks. Well, maybe we can hangout tomorrow since it's Saturday?”

“Definitely bestie,” I responded as I got up. “See ya tomorrow.”

“See ya.”

After enjoying a thirty-minute bus ride and elevator ride with a screaming toddler on both, I walked into my apartment door. The lights were on, and two women were sitting on a white couch drinking tea in front of a fake fireplace. The one closer to the door was my mom. She wore a blue shirt, black leggings, and a golden necklace with a cross on it. Sitting next to her was an old, short, slouched lady wearing a gray overshirt, circle glasses, and pink pants. That was my piano instructor, Mrs. Pané.

They noticed me staring, after a moment of me standing in the doorway.

My mom stood up and dauntingly walked over.

“You’re home late,” she said with her hands on her hips.

I checked the owl clock on the wall. It was three minutes after six PM.

“Sorry,” I responded as I walked past her.

“Is that all? No reason? I was worried sick!” she complained. I turned briskly.

“I was with Laci at the park and I didn’t notice the time,” I explained, going back to walking away from her.

“Ugh, her. She’s such a bad influence and I thought I told you to stop talking to that girl.”

I rolled my eyes and continued walking into the room with the piano in it.

“Don’t you ignore your mother young-” I cut her off by closing the door.

Mrs. Pané came in a few seconds behind me and closed the door behind her. I sat at the piano bench.

“Let’s get started.”

~~~~~

I woke up the following morning to the sound of the shouting of my name outside.

“ASHLEY! ASHLEY WAKE UP!”

I slowly got myself out of bed, rubbing the tiredness from my eyes as I walked over to the window and looked down.

“ASHLEY! HEY!”

It was Laci. She was jumping and waving up in the alleyway. I opened the window.

“You know you can just text me right?” I yawned.

“Yeah but this is important. Get dressed quick!” she yelled.

“Alright!” I stretched and closed the window.

I checked my phone. It was six AM, an hour earlier than we got up for school. What could Laci want this early in the morning?

I put on a purple shirt and some jeans, brushed my teeth, and washed my face. Before heading out, I wrote a note for my mom, who was snoring in her room. I then exited the room and locked the door.

Once I made it outside, Laci ambushed me from the side, hugging me tightly.

“Hey bestie!” she squeezed my body.

“Hey Laci haha,” I greeted, trying to break free.

She let go right before I was about to suffocate.

“OK so guess what!”

“Chicken butt,” I replied, adjusting my hair and clothes.

“Mason wants us to come to breakfast with one of his friends!” Laci cheered.

“Wait really?” My eyes widened.

“Yeah! I was texting with him last night and suggested that one really good brunch restaurant in Manhattan and he said he wanted to check it out.”

“Oh you mean, Zae’s?”

“Yeah, the place with the god-like french toast.”

“Cool, let’s go then,” I said.

“Wait, you’re just gonna go like that? With no makeup?” Laci questioned, looking at my natural complexion.

“Well, yeah I guess?” I answered half-confidently.

“I just thought you would wanna...y’know, look and feel your best when having breakfast with your future boyfriend,” Laci said.

“Maybe, but right now I’m really hungry,” I responded.

“Whatever you say, darling. Let's hurry there though since Mason and his friend are already waiting there for us.”

I nodded, and we headed to Zae’s, which was luckily only a few blocks away from where Laci and I lived.

We arrived at Zae’s. It was a decent-sized restaurant with a bar, booths, tables, chairs, and access doors to a kitchen and bathrooms. From the entrance, I could see Mason sitting at one of the booths.

We walked down the aisle towards him.

As Laci and I got closer, I noticed Mason was sitting across from a girl with blonde hair and a purple shirt. That must be the friend Laci mentioned on the phone.

Mason noticed as we arrived.

“Oh hay,” he said.

The girl looked up from her phone.

“Ello,” she smiled.

Laci and I greeted back as we sat down. I sat next to Mason, and Laci sat next to the girl, whose name was found out to be Emerald, thanks to Mason’s introduction.

“Soh whut’s good ‘ere?” Mason asked. “You whe’re pretty insistent about us eatin’ ‘ere.”

“Yeah ‘cause like everything tastes good here. I’ve had literally everything on the menu and it’s all so good,” Laci said as a waitress came up to our table.

“Welcome to Zae’s. My name is Mandy and I’ll be taking care of y’all. Can I start y’all off with something to drink?” she said as she clicked her pen.

Laci and I got sweet tea. Emerald ordered water, and Mason decided on Coke. The waitress giggled at the accents before leaving to retrieve the drinks.

As we waited for Mandy to come back, we began talking about the special field trip that brought Mason and Emerald across the ocean.

Ya soh we're learnin' about American government an' the school thought et would be ah good opportunety fer ah trep," Emerald explained.

"Why would you ever wanna learn about American anything? It's all boring," I said.

"Haha, true!" Mason chuckled, along with the girls. His laugh made me feel warm inside, though.

Emerald and Mason then went on to explain how life was like in Ireland. Very rainy, apparently. Every sound of every word of every sentence that Mason said caught my attention. I could feel how warm and red my cheeks were getting.

I'm pretty sure Laci noticed, too, since she pressed her foot against mine. I shifted my glare of Mason to Laci and her smug expression.

She then pulled her phone out and typed something, to which I then received a vibration in my pocket.

I quickly took my phone out and checked the message. I then put it away and nodded at Laci with a slight smile.

“Hehe,” Laci softly responded as she tapped Emerald’s shoulder as she was mid-sentence. Laci then whispered something in her ear. Emerald looked at me. She then whispered back to Laci. They then whispered back and forth with giggles in between.

Mason blinked confusedly but still with that friendly smile.

“What do ya think they’re talkin’ about?” Mason turned to me.

“Girl stuff probably,” I lied with a laugh.

“Haha, yah probably,” he responded.

Mandy came back with the drinks and set them on the table. That’s when the giggle twins decided to inquire with the waitress about something.

“Hay Mandy,” Emerald said.

“Yes?” she replied.

"You mind if Emerald and I sat at that table right over there?" Laci pointed at the two-seat table two feet away.

"Oh sure I don't mind," she grabbed their drinks and transported them there.

"D'hanks, hehe," Emerald said as they got up and moved.

After they sat back down, Laci winked at me. I took that as a sign. I moved to the other side of the table to face Mason, who was bewildered at the sequence of events that had just taken place. Mandy, on the other hand, figured the whole situation out almost immediately after the two moved. She handed out menus to our two groups and smiled.

"I'll be right back to take your orders," she said, walking away.

Mason took a sip of his drink and peered at the girls, then me.

I decided to say something.

"So what's it like being in a foreign country for the first time?"

"Et's pretty enteresting honestly. Like aye said at d'he park, aye was scared. But now et's starting to kinda grow on meh ah bit," he answered.

"Yeah, the cultures are pretty different from what I heard you say a few minutes ago."

"Super different, but en ah wey, similar."

"Yeah," I smiled. He smiled back.

That then spiraled into several questions, answers, and conversations between Mason and me. I noticed Emerald and Laci looking over in the corner of my eye. I admired Mason's lime T-shirt as we talked. Mandy then came back to take our orders.

"What can I get y'all?"

We didn't get any time to really look at the menu at all. That was fine with me, though, since I got the same thing every time I came here: The fancake special with a choice of two sides. I usually got bacon and potatoes with the two stacked buttermilk pancakes.

I told Mandy that exactly.

"What kind of syrup?" she asked, scribbling in her notepad.

"Strawberry please," I answered.

"And aye'll 'ave what she's 'aving," Mason told Mandy.

“Copycat,” I said humorously.

“What? It sounded good ta me,” Mason explained with a light blush on his cheeks.

The waitress turned to the girls as Mason, and I looked into each other’s eyes.

We began chatting about Mason’s life story. He kept insisting that it wasn’t interesting, but every detail was fascinating to me. Then I talked about my life. How I lived with my mom in the city and my dad being off in the military.

“Actually, aye ‘ave ah question, ef ya don’ mind,” Mason interrupted.

“Oh, of course I don't mind. What is it?”

“Laci told me over text that yer preferred name was Ashley, right?” he asked.

“Yeah. You wanna know what my real name is?” I responded.

“Ef et’s not too mech trouble.”

“Sure, I’ll let you in on a little secret too.”

Mason and I stood up. He gave me his ear, and I whispered to him. Once I finished, we sat back down.

“Ah, aye see,” Mason said.

I felt warm inside with that answer despite it being so vague.

Mandy then came back with a tray covered in plates of food.

“Foods, here,” she said, setting our identical plates in front of us, along with pints of strawberry syrup. She then turned to give Laci and Emerald their meals. I spotted that Laci got strawberry french toast, eggs, and bacon, and Emerald got waffles with bacon. All four of us thanked Mandy as she walked away to serve other parties.

Mason and I resumed our conversation while eating. It drifted back to the details of the field trip that he was on. He told me about the hotel that he and his class were staying at and the places they had and were gonna visit...and the day they were going to be back on the plane to go home.

“Wait, you’re leaving Sunday night?” I asked. My smile from before turned into a slight frown.

“Ya, we can only stay fer so long,” he said while putting a last piece of pancake into his mouth. He noticed I wasn’t so happy about him having to go so soon.

“But hay, we can keep en touch ef ya want, Ashley,” he proposed.

“Yeah, that would be nice,” I said, fiddling with bits of potatoes with my fork.

“An’ hay, we can hang out again Mondey evenen’.”

“What about Sunday?” I asked, even though it wasn’t any of my business.

“Gotta be wif me class all day,” Mason sighed.

Mandy walked up with the bill.

“Hey y'all, how was it?”

“Amazing!” Mason said.

“Good,” I added in a slight dismal voice.

I could tell by Mandy’s disquiet eyes that she wanted to say something, but she couldn’t.

“Well...that’s good to hear,” she finally said while putting the bill on the table and turning to Laci and Emerald.

I sighed and took out my credit card, putting it on the listed paper.

If I'm honest, yesterday morning, I don't think I could fathom what 'My type' was. It was just apparent that I liked boys more than girls. I was bisexual for all of middle school and the first year of high school. I didn't find that to be good enough, so I decided to just pick a side: The straight side...kind of. After three and a half years of being friends with Laci, I was comfortable with myself. And now the universe brought me this opportunity...this amazing thing...Mason...into my life, and now it's just snatching it away like it was a free trial I now had to pay for. Who was I to say that it was meant to be? But still, I wish it were evident that it was.

I just wanted a scripture written somewhere or said by someone to tell me that Mason and I could be something. Maybe I should be going to hell for even daring to pray to a deity after the sins that I have committed. I'm pretty sure my mom keeps a journal as well. Aristotle said everything happens for a reason. Sorta like a novel. Now that I think about it, I've wished to skip chapters my whole life. Alas, I can't, and I must stay in the present, just waiting as fate turns the page. I also wanted to read Mason's novel to see if it referenced me for more than just one page. Who even wrote this mess of a story anyway?

After paying, we thanked Mandy again and left outside. I checked my phone. It was noon. Mason tried to cheer me up again, but I told him that I was fine. He gave me his number and Instagram and said we could always be friends online. But...I wanted to be more than just friends. I had genuine feelings for him. I think he knew this. That's why he hugged me tightly before walking down the street with Emerald. I think he had feelings too, he just didn't know how life would present itself. Maybe I'm just overthinking things. I would see him again in a day and a half, so this moment wouldn't be the last, but even then, it's still so scary to know.

"You good?" Laci asked, rubbing my back.

"Yeah," I answered. "It's just that...."

"Yeah I know. Emerald said they were going back Monday and I instantly thought of you," she said as she softly hugged me from behind.

I stood silent for a moment, taking in the hug from my best friend. I usually wasn't this upset about disappointments, but this was different for some reason. No matter how many times I was grounded for getting below a B in school or how many times I was forced to church when I had planned my full day out, it was all not as crushing as this very moment. But why? I couldn't quite put it into words, but the feeling was still very real.

Laci let go of me and then held my hand.

“Did you wanna come to my place so you can try on the clothes you bought from the mall?” Laci knew how much this meant to me, and she’s one of the only other people who knew my secret. A select few knew in my school but I wouldn’t really consider them friends so Laci was all I had to keep me sane as I waited to turn eighteen in May.

While I really did wanna try on the various skirts and lingerie I bought, it wouldn’t counteract this pain.

“No, I think I’ll just go home.”

That answer seemed to shock Laci in a way that didn't invoke her jaw dropping or a dramatic fallback. She simply just stared at me with a frown. In her eyes, I could see worry and disturbance.

Her expression then changed to that of an evil one. A determined one. An adamant one. One that made it seem as though she was gonna soon be up to something.

“What?” I peered my eyes in suspicion.

“Hehe, it’s nothing. See ya later bestie!.”

Laci sprinted down the sidewalk. That left me to walk home alone.

The rest of the day went like it would have usually gone if I wasn't able to hang out with Laci: I did select makeup work from the pile of missing assignments from the past three weeks of being unmotivated in school, I zoned out to my mom giving me the usual seven to eight lectures about how I need to open my eyes and accept God into my life so he may forgive my sins or whatever, and I drew whatever I felt like in my art journal (which may or may not be 98% filled with fanart of hot dude OCs I saw online).

After marking the first two off my mental checklist, I drew this one dude that can turn into any plant or insect. He's a bit of a twink, and I like that in a guy. Not muscular. Although not super boney either. Just kinda like a midpoint, although a bit shifted to the latter. Sorta like me, I suppose. And sorta like Mason too. Actually, I was a bit shorter than Mason, so not exactly. But still.

I hate that I had been thinking about him nonstop, but I guess that's all my brain can do now that we've met. Maybe I'm going too fast, and he doesn't even feel the same way. We did only just meet yesterday.

*Sigh.* Why am I like this? This happened a few times in freshman and sophomore year too. I saw some cute guys, and every one of them turned me down. I could never understand why, though. Maybe I do fall in love too easily. Or you know what. It was probably the other thing...

Various other thoughts frantically moved around my brain at rapid speed. They were then interrupted by a ding on my phone.

It was a text from Laci.

“Meet me on the school roof at midnight. Wear clothes you can easily take off”

That last part sounded a bit weird, but it's Laci, who's asexual, so I didn't think much of it. Although we hadn't been on the school roof in ages, and midnight was a strange time to go there.

Regardless, I was bored, so I responded.

“Kk”

I quietly opened my mom's door. She was knocked out. Based on my phone's time, it was eleven o'clock, so that's not surprising. I quickly changed into a white T-shirt and green shorts. I shouldn't have to write a note since I'll be back soon...I'm guessing so anyway. After checking again that my mom was asleep in her Jesus-themed pajamas, because of course, I silently left my apartment and closed the door.

Following a slightly tiring nighttime walk down one of the busiest streets in the world, I managed to make it to my high school in Long Island. It was far away, which is why I'm literally never on time thanks to the school bus, but it was fine. I didn't like math early in the morning anyway. I think my bus driver didn't like me, though, for that very reason. It was fine since this was the last year I must endure the agony of public high school.

It was also, like, the middle of the night, and my mom told me to never take public transit at night because 'It's too dangerous,' so I walked. That's probably worse, but I knew the area pretty well, so it was fine in my judgment. There were cars and people all around too, so I felt safe enough.

"Psst, Ashley," said a voice from above.

I looked up. It was Laci.

"How'd you even get up there when the doors are locked?"

"I got a ladder," she replied casually.

I kinda wanted to know from where but at the same time, I didn't really care.

I saw the ladder she was talking about, and I climbed up onto the roof. When I got up on the top, I couldn't see Laci. Where did she go?

"Laci?" I called out into the moon-lit sky

Suddenly I went blind.

"Ah-!" I screamed, flailing my arms around.

"Cut et out," said a familiar voice. It wasn't Laci's, but I have heard it before. The similar warm hands gripping over my eyes grabbed my hands and held them behind my back tight. Whoever it was, they had a firm grip. Suddenly I felt my shorts being pulled off. I blushed and kicked a ton. There was absolutely no way Laci would do this. No way. N o w a y.

"Hey! Watch it you buttard before you kick me."

That sounded like Laci...

And buttard was something Laci called me when I did something stupid...

I stood still and hoped for the best since I trusted the hypothetical Laci. I then felt something soft being pulled up my legs. It felt really good. Although I didn't feel the force of any hands when it went up my legs strangely.

Then my slip-on shoes were removed. That left my bare feet touching the slightly damp ground. But that didn't last long because I felt my feet being lifted up slightly and put into some small container of sorts.

All of a sudden, my vision returned, and my hands were released from being bound. The first thing I saw was Laci with a massive grin on her face. She wore a purple dress with purple eye-shadow, a bit of eyeliner, and red lipstick on her face. I couldn't even admire that since I was a bit pissed off.

“Laci, what was that for?” I asked in a heightened tone.

“Jeez. Relax, little miss buttard,” she responded with a laugh.

A girl came around from behind me. It was Emerald. She wore a white dress and black heels.

“Yah. Aye mean look down fer Christ's sake,” she said, gesturing her hand down.

I grumbled a bit but did what she said. My eyes sparkled as I saw what I had been dressed in. Below my plain T-shirt was a gorgeous sky blue skirt and black heels.

“Woah,” I marveled at what I was wearing.

I was a bit upset about the blindfolding thing, but this...this was something else.

“Tada,” both girls said.

Behind them was a plethora of decorations and lights that I somehow overlooked until they were turned on.

“H-how?” was the only thing I was able to say as I looked around at the blue balloons, blue garland, blue confetti, and white spotlights.

“So you know how my older cousin and his wife are party planners?” Laci questioned my question.

“No. I’ve never even met your cousin.”

“Well they are and we’ve been setting this all up all day.”

I looked around more and noticed a table with a light blue cloth in the center of the venue.

“What exactly is this place?” I asked.

“I’ll let you know after we’re done.” Laci smirked.

“But I thought you guys were already d-” I was interrupted by being tripped into a chair. Instantly, I felt various brushes and creams and powders all over my face.

After a few minutes, the barrage of makeup products finally stopped, and a mirror appeared before me. I had on red lipstick, mascara, blush, and eyeliner, and I loved it. Then I remembered I was supposed to be upset at this.

“OK thanks I love it but please tell me why you-” I was, once again, cut off. This time by a top being forced over my head. When I gathered myself, I saw a black shirt with a large red heart in the center of the chest area. This is what Laci wore three days ago...

“You guys done?” I asked, tired of the surprises.

“Think so...” Laci peered all around me to make sure everything was perfect.

“Yup,” Emerald announced.

I stood up and twirled in my skirt. It felt nice. I then recalled that I needed answers.

“What’s all this for?”

“Ugh you’re so persistent. Just trust us.”

Laci grabbed my hand and dragged me over to the table. Then, she plopped me down into the chair facing the door that led into the building.

That didn't answer my question," I pouted.

"Jest shut up an' trust us will ya?" Emerald complained.

"Fine."

I crossed my legs and arms in annoyance but grace.

Not even a minute later, a boy in a black tuxedo walked into my view from behind one of the roof vents.

My face lit up as I finally understood what this was for.

"Hay," the boy said with a lovely smile.

"Hehe, hi Mason." I couldn't keep my joy-filled expression hidden.

Instead of sitting down, he came up close to me, kneeled down in front of me. I looked at Laci and Emerald in the background. They were bouncing frantically.

"Ashley," he started. I looked into his eyes.

"Remember d'at question aye asked ya en d'he restaurant?"

I shook my head yes.

“Well, now aye ‘ave another question,” he said, pulling a navy blue box out of his pocket.

“I know we’ve only known each other fer ah short periot o’ time and d’his es ah strange place and time ta ask this, but will you be my girlfriend?” he asked, opening the case.

Inside was a ring with a strawberry on it where a diamond would usually go.

Suddenly the universe froze.

How could this be happening? I wanted to say yes so bad, but I just didn’t know how this would pan out. I mean, sure, he’s everything I have ever wanted, but how could this ever work? It’s not April first, is it? There’s no way my mom would accept this. Not only because he’s from a completely different continent and country, but because that would be a sin in her eyes because...because...ugh, it’s so hard to get out. I even said I was comfortable with myself years ago! What’s wrong with me?

“Ashley?” he asked, bringing me back down to reality. I looked up again. Emerald and Laci stood there with their thumbs up, nodding their heads.

I took a deep breath and put my focus back on Mason.

I closed my eyes and thought for a moment.

I could feel Mason's smile diminish.

The chilly wind blew against the decorations.

I opened my eyes.

“You know, before I met you Mason, I was secretly in a sadness that was so severe, I almost decided to leave this life and start anew somewhere else. For a while, I hated myself for the feelings I had, the person who I was. All because someone close to me taught that those...people...go to hell. But you, Mason. You're the reason I decided to keep going. Not that I knew you existed back then, but I just had a feeling that someone was bound to break into my story one day or the next. So to answer your question.”

I paused.

“Yes I will be your girlfriend,” I said as I stuck my right hand out softly.

Mason's face lit up as he slipped the strawberry ring onto my ring finger. As he was close, I grabbed his face and gave his lips a long smooch.

During that, I could hear Laci and Emerald screaming in a manic.

I pulled back and softly grabbed Mason's hand as he attempted to catch up with what happened.

"I love you my Irish prince," I said.

He caught up.

"Aye love you too my American princess," he responded.

Not gonna lie though, I kinda wish that nationality changed.

"Yaaaayy!" the two girls shouted in the background.

~~~~~

The rest of the night was magical. We danced for hours...well, actually like forty-five minutes since it was super late and Mason had to wake up super early. But still, every moment was magical. Teachers have always asked about the class' favorite memory, and I have always struggled to answer it. But now...I definitely have a clear answer if anyone were to ask in the future.

Mason kissed my cheek before he left down the ladder with Emerald into the night.

Laci walked me back home, and I snuck into my apartment quietly. I then got into bed, not even caring about the clothes, and closed my eyes. Two notifications forced them back open. I grabbed my phone and stared at the screen.

One was a message from Mason.

“You’re the best thing that has ever happened in my life. I wish you luck in the rest of your boring American education and I look forward to seeing you soon. I love you~”

No matter how many times he said those three words, it always seemed to make me feel better.

Another huge victory for the trans women of the world.

The second was a notification from my bank.

“WARNING: YOUR CREDIT CARD MAY HAVE BEEN STOLEN OR COMPROMISED. PLEASE CONTACT YOUR BANK IF YOU HAVE NOT PURCHASED THIS LIST OF ITEMS:”

...Dang it, Laci!

Prom Night Blues

Cast of Characters

Jimmy: Young boy, about 17
Jimmy's Father: Older man, around early 40s
Ellie (Jimmy's Date): Sweet girl, recently 16
Police Officer: Rookie, early 20s

Scene

A small town, midwest of America. Likely set in the outskirts of Kansas.

Time

Prom night, early 50s

ACT I

Scene 1

SETTING:

We're in Jimmy's kitchen.

AT RISE:

It's dark out. You can clearly tell Jimmy's father had been woken up from sleep. Morning birds will not chirp for a few hours. The play begins as Jimmy's father turns around to Jimmy being slumped over the table.

(The lights go on, curtains open)

Jimmy's Father

So...you gonna tell me what you did?(He takes a spoon and stirs his coffee, he goes to take a sip and burns his lip. He winces slightly, placing the cup back down) You're outfit sure does say a lot about where you've been.(He narrows his eyes at Jimmy)

Jimmy

I guess I should,(he says with a grin and a light laugh) but I'd think it'll take too long. Maybe we should just go to be-

Father

Not so fast young man, you are going to sit here an-

Jimmy

Not so fast Dad, you can't really force it out of me can you? You can't make me do anything I don't want to. Your A plus parenting has showed me that.(he scoffs)You're a joke old man.

Father

(He takes a deep breath in. Then sips from his coffee. He puts his glass down, almost slamming it on the table.)Look, you're going to tell me what happened, and why you home looking like that.

Jimmy

If you must your...Majesty.(he says with a fake bow and the tip of a hat)It all started 16 years ag-

Father

Not that far back.

Jimmy

Fine.

Father

Continue.

Jimmy

I will.

Father

Then get to it.

Jimmy

I'm going to.

Father

Jimmy if you don't start talking, so help me I will pick up that phone and make you talk.

Jimmy

(Sighs, his face is reluctant to speak, he opens his mouth, it gapes open for a few seconds, he looks down)It's not my fault. I want you to know that. I want to make sure you know it's not my fault. I didn't do it. I didn't do that. I never would.

Jimmy

(Jimmy is slumped once again like in the beginning of the scene. He hangs slightly rocking with his suppressed sobs.) Okay dad. I'll start talking.

(The light fades out on the table, the curtains close)

End of scene 1

Scene 2

SETTING:

Outside of Ellie's house

AT RISE:

The curtains opened with Jimmy leaning against his car. The audience can only see the front of the car. There are a few trees on stage. You can hear Ellie, but you can't see her house.

(The light goes on, the curtains open.)

Ellie

(Ellie is off stage but you can hear her talking to her Mother. As she continues to talk her voice gets louder and louder so that the audience can hear.) Mom I-...I understand, I'm going to be-, Yes ma'am. I love you. I have to go, I love you. (With her last I love you she makes it on stage. She then looks in Jimmy's direction. She smiles at him. He returns a small one.) Hi Jimmy.

Jimmy

Hi Ellinor

Ellie

Don't call me that. Please.

Jimmy

I won't.

Ellie

Okay so..(She looks over to the car signaling that they should go.)

Jimmy

Okay so..what?(He said giving her a questioning look, then he looks at the car and what she was wearing)Oh,...yeah.(He goes to the passenger side on the door and lets her in. The front of the car is the only thing the audience can see. Jimmy then gets in on his side of the car. They begin to drive off. The trees that were on stage move upstage and off as they drive off.) So...how have you been?

Ellie

I guess I've been good,(she looks down at her hands)Not much to do around here, if you know what I mean.(she laughs lightly)

Jimmy

(With his own light laugh.) Yeah I know what you mean, not much to do in this one stoplight town.

Ellie

(She feels at ease with his words, she lets out a small sigh, more to steady herself than anything.) You like the swings?

Jimmy

I mean-...I guess, when you get old like me,(he gives her a little wink, she blushes)they get old I guess, nothin' new really happens, you know what I mean.

Ellie

Yeah, I know what you mean.

Jimmy

I'm glad you know what I mean, cause most girls like you don't know what I mean. You're special Ellie. You're special I tell you.

Ellie

(Ellie is flattered by what he said. No one has ever talked to her like that. She never thought an older boy like Jimmy would pay attention to her like he does. She has a smile on her face, one that she can't really hide.)Thanks Jimmy, that means a lot.

Jimmy

No problem sweetheart. (He does this on purpose to make her blush again.)

Ellie

You know, what they say about you isn't true.

Jimmy

Who?

Ellie

Who? what?

Jimmy

Who says things about me that aren't true?

Ellie

Oh I don't know-

Jimmy

What do you mean you don't know?

Ellie

I don't, it's just-

Jimmy

What do you mean you don't know!?

Ellie

Look, all I was trying to say was that you are nicer than you seem. (She huffs and folds her arms over one another)

Jimmy

El- I'm real sorry, I didn't mean to yell at you.

Ellie

But you did.

Jimmy

I know, and I'm sorry, I just hate people talkin bout me, ya know?(He grips the steering wheel tight, his knuckles turn white.)

Ellie

I get it.

Jimmy

Thanks, I can't control my temper sometimes.

Ellie

Well you should.

Jimmy

I'm sorry Ellie.

Ellie

Yeah I hear yah, Jimmy.

Jimmy

Please don't be like that.

Ellie

Be like what?

Jimmy

You know what I'm talking about.

Ellie

Actually I don't. Just tell me.

Jimmy

Forget it, nevermind.

Ellie

(She goes to open her mouth to say something, but hesitates. She shuts her mouth and just turns towards the passenger's window. She then turns towards the audience. She breaks the silence.) Hey, there's the school.

(We, the audience, can't see the school, only Ellie pointing to it. The lights dim and the curtain draws.)

End of scene 2

Scene 3

SETTING:

We open at the school dance, it is either in the cafeteria or the gym.

AT RISE:

The curtains open and there are a few chairs and tables. There are balloons tied to chairs that are floating above them, not on the floor.

There are no other characters on stage beside Ellie and Jimmy. There's loud music when the curtains open, but softens when they begin to speak.

(The lights are turned on, the curtains open.)

Jimmy

(He looks at Ellie, he can tell she's bored. He looks at her for a couple seconds, not sure of what he should do. He speaks.) You having a good time?

Ellie

Yeah.(She says with a fake smile. It's close lipped.)

Jimmy

You know, you don't have to lie to me.

Ellie

I'm not. Why would you think that?

Jimmy

Because you're obviously not having a good time.

Ellie

Is it that obvious?

Jimmy

Just a little. Come on, let's dance. (He stands up and lends his hand out to her. She just looks at it, not taking it. This goes on for a moment before she reluctantly takes his.)

(The music gets louder when she takes his hands. They dance for a few short beats. It's a ballroom waltz. Ellie is surprised he can dance so well. They just keep going around and around. She starts to laugh when he spins her around. You can tell she's finally having a good time. She's smiling wide now, he is too. He spins her once more. They hold still after the last spin, just looking into each other's eyes.)

Jimmy

Well, that was fun.

Ellie

Yeah, yeah it really was.

Jimmy

I'm gonna go and get us some punch. You wait here.

Ellie

No, I'm coming with. I can pour my own drink.

Jimmy

Can you just let me do something nice!

Ellie

Fine.

(We see Jimmy go up to a table with some drinks on it after leaving Ellie on the dance floor. He pours two cups and then takes something out of his pocket. He then pours whatever he takes out into one of the cups. We can't see what he took out or what he poured, but the audience knows he poured something. He walks back to Ellie, her arms are folded. He hands her the cup that he poured something into. She takes a sip.)

Jimmy

Now, was that so hard?

Ellie

(She looks down at the cup.) I guess not. Hey does this taste funny to you?

Jimmy

Kinda. Guess it's cheap.

Ellie

Yeah.

Jimmy

Want to dance some more?

Ellie

Sure. (She puts her cup on the table next to her. They start to dance again. The music begins to get distorted, along with Ellie tilting slightly. You can tell she is having a hard time keeping balance. Her legs give out from underneath her. He catches her so she wouldn't fall. Then he looks

around him to see if anyone saw. He thinks he's in the clear. He sets her on the chair that she was sitting in before they started to dance.)

Jimmy

Hey, Ellie you okay? (He looks genuinely concerned)

Ellie

Yeah, I'm okay. I just don't feel real good, my head kinda hurts.

Jimmy

Do you wanna sit for a minute?

Ellie

Nah, I think I'm okay. We should dance some more, before we leave and all.

Jimmy

Okay. If that's what you want.

Ellie

Yeah I'm sure it's what I want.

(They begin to dance once more. She seems to have regained some of her balance again. The music goes back to what it was before it was distorted. They continue a ballroom waltz. Ellie's smile starts to grow. Jimmy's face is dark. She notices this and her smile fades. She looks upset. She is beginning to realise what happened.)

Ellie

(Still dancing with Jimmy.) Hey Jimmy?

Jimmy

Yeah El?

Ellie

Do you mind taking me home after this dance. (The song ends after she says this.)

Jimmy

(They look up. He looks back at her.) You ready?

(The curtains draw close, but as soon as the curtain reaches Ellie and Jimmy, the lights go out and the curtains slowly finish closing with Ellie looking up and Jimmy looking at her.)

End of scene 3

Scene 4

SETTING:

Jimmy's car

AT RISE:

We open with these two in the car. Ellie is worried and Jimmy is looking straight forward. His eyes are trained on the road. Since it is later in the night, the lights should be darker.

(The lights are dim, there's a faint spotlight on the car. The curtains open.)

Ellie

Thanks for taking me Jimmy

Jimmy

No problem. (He doesn't take his eye off the road or even pretend to look in her direction.)

Ellie

You are a really good dancer you know.

Jimmy

Thanks.

Ellie

No problem. (She says this bitterly and looks out the window.)

Jimmy

(He sees that she's upset. He looks over.) You look beautiful. I don't think I said it when you came out of your house earlier, but you do.

(He looks over and smiles, she's still looking out the window.)

Ellie

Why'd you'd do that Jimmy? Huh?

Jimmy

What are you talking about? I didn't do anything.

Ellie

I know you did. You know, you don't have to lie to me.

Jimmy

I'm not lying, I swear.

Ellie

Jimmy, lying is a bad habit.

Jimmy

(Slamming his hands on the steering wheel.) I AM NOT LYING ELLINOR!

Ellie

Jimmy, just take me home. Please, don't do this. (She is crying now.)

Jimmy

I'm not doing anythi-

Ellie

JIMMY! I know what's going on. Take me home.

(Silence fills the car for a few beats. Jimmy leans over and turns on the radio. It's playing slow smooth music. Jimmy looks mad, just staring forward. Ellie has her eyes closed and she is resting her head on her hand.)

Jimmy

You know, you were really beautiful tonight.

Ellie

Jimmy-

Jimmy

I'm serious Ellie, you looked beautiful tonight. You really did.

Ellie

Thanks, means a lot. My house is the left after this light.

Jimmy

I know. Right there.

Ellie

Yeah. Thanks for the night Jimmy, I had a good time.

Jimmy

Sorry about how the night went.

Ellie

Don't mention it. It was good Jimmy. (She is forgiving him with the look in her eyes. They look into each other's eyes. Jimmy breaks away first.)

Jimmy

We're here. (He looks over to Ellie's and she is looking out the window. The curtains close.)

End of scene 4

Scene 5

SETTING:

Jimmy's kitchen.

AT RISE:

We open once again with Jimmy sitting in the same place as he was in scene one. His father is still across from him, but there is no coffee mug.

Father

Well, what happened after that?

Jimmy

(He seems ruffled by this question, he sits straight up.) Nothing much, dropped her off.

Father

I find that hard to believe.

Jimmy

Well it's the truth.

Father

Jimmy, I know it's not.

Jimmy

But it is.

Father

Jimmy, just tell me the truth

Jimmy

I am

Father

JIMMY! I know, you're not.

Jimmy

How could you? You're never home? You're never here? How could you know anything about me? YOU stopped caring when mom died. You stayed at work. You busied yourself while I had to grow up, alone. (He's crying now)

Father

Jimmy (In a concerned tone)

Jimmy

NO! (He's still crying.)

Father

Jimmy, just tell me what happened.

Jimmy

No, you don't get to know.

(He stands. There's blood on the side of his shirt that was facing away from the audience. He stands there crying at his dad. His dad looks at the blood with a weary glance, a slight disgust is on his face.)

Father

Jimmy, (His tone is sympathetic) just tell me.

Jimmy

Why should I?

Father

Because it's the right thing to do. (He slams his hands on the table and Jimmy winces.)

Jimmy

Give me one good reason why I should.

Father

Did I not just give you one? Do the right thing Jimmy.

(The audience sees that Jimmy is thinking over all his options. His eyes are darting back and forth. He seems panicked by the corner he has been put into. He then realizes he has to tell him what happened.)

Jimmy

Trunk.

Father

What?

Jimmy

Trunk.

Father

Jimmy what are you talking about? What's with the trunk? What? Did you- (He realizes what Jimmy was saying and frantically looks for the keys. He's searching the countertops and tables.) Jimmy, where's the keys?

(Jimmy doesn't move from where he was standing. He's hanging his head as his dad just screams for the keys. He slowly reaches in his pocket, and pulls out some keys with a little dried blood on them. His dad is hesitant to take them. Though, he does and goes out the door behind the kitchen counter. The light is turned on stage right or left, depending on what side the car is put on. There is just the side view of the car, so the trunk can be seen. He opens the trunk. Ellie is not shown on stage, just a small piece of her dress is poking out of the side of the trunk. He covers his mouth in disgust. He takes two steps back and begins to cry. He is feeling as if he caused this. He was the one who made him into this monster. At this moment he is hating himself. Jimmy joins him outside. He slowly walks up to his father's side. There's a grimace on his face when he sees Ellie. In a haste Jimmy opens the front door of the car. This is either the driver's or passenger's door. If he sits in the Driver's side there must be a steering wheel.)

Father

I'm going in for a minute. (He goes out the same door that leads into the kitchen. The stage light goes out in the kitchen when he enters. He remains on stage.)

Jimmy

(Talking to himself.) I did this, didn't I? All of this. (He laughs.) What a great prom date I am.

Father

Jimmy can you come here. (Jimmy doesn't move.) Jimmy?

Jimmy

Yeah, I'm coming.

(He stays still for a few passing moments. His eyes are closed and his head is resting back.)

Father

JIMMY!

Jimmy

Jesus, I'm coming, I'm coming. (He stays put. Jimmy can hear his father talking on the phone in this distance.)

Father

(Lights go back on in the kitchen. He is speaking into the phone.) Hello yes, may I please have an officer dispatched to my house. Yes my address is 467 Terraced Avenue. Thank you. (he hangs up.)

(Jimmy doesn't hear his father talking to the local police in the kitchen. He stayed but in the car. Keeping his eyes closed and his head rested back. He didn't hear the officer arrive. The officer enters from the kitchen side of the set. The officer and Jimmy's father exchange a few words. The face of the officer is twisted in disgust as the boy's father continues. The officer nods and heads out the door that connects the garage and the kitchen. He sees Jimmy resting, but then passes by. He then goes around to the back of the car and sees Ellie. He then goes back into the kitchen.)

Officer

May I use your phone?

Father

Of course, of course. (He steps to the side showing him where the phone is.)

Officer

Thank you. (He dials the police station. It rings for a few beats. Then it clicks.) Hello yes, This is officer St. Clair. And we need a body bag at the 467 Terrace Avenue.

(The stage lights go out in the kitchen. The spotlight is put on Jimmy, still resting. The curtains begin to close with the spotlight still on Jimmy, it begins to dim. They close.)

End of Scene 5