



# **EVIL GLASSES**

**FIRST EDITION  
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The Lava Farmer  
By Sara Lufrano

Her hands were never pretty and she never cared for them to be. Even with such tough skin her fingers were still slender. In gloves they would be the regular hands of a young woman with an average face.

When she smiled she was pretty. When she smiled it didn't matter that she was so plain looking. When she smiled even couldn't look at herself and think that she was nothing short of fetching.

The smile that made her pretty hadn't been around for a while.

She rubbed her arm, slowly moving her scarred hand up to massage her shoulder. The muscles were firm and dense. She walked from the backdoor through the kitchen rustling the dirt on the floor. Her right hand went up her shirt to help her left arm out of her dirty, sweaty tank top. The days used to cause her to sigh in relief once she got home. But lately she hadn't had any feelings. She didn't like, love, or hate it. She just did it because it was who she was and who she grew up to be.

She slid her feet into her house slippers and went down the hall to the bathroom knocking one knuckle on the closed door she passed. One switch to the right turned on the small, dim light above the dirty mirror. She picked up her toothbrush, squeezed out less paste than she should have, and brushed her teeth for the full two minutes, even her tongue. She worked water on her face and when she lifted her head to dry her face she noticed the water left clean streak down her dirty neck. She rubbed the water on her neck and picked up the towel on the floor. She smelled it. It had a damp metallic smell but she used it anyway. She dropped the towel on the floor, stepped out of her house slippers, undid her belt, unbuttoned her pants, and took them off leaving them on the floor next to the towel.

With her slippers back on she went back to the living room. As the end of the purple sky disappeared from the window she turned on the light. The floor was dirty there too. The living room had a three-cushion couch, coffee table, a pile of yellowing newspapers, and a black AM/FM radio. She turned on the radio, already on talk, and brushed off the couch where her head laid.

She sat down and closed her eyes. The heavy feeling was making her neck weak. She felt her breath go heavy and snapped open her eyes. A yawn pulled her eyes shut again and she was thirsty. She knew that she should get up and get a glass of water to leave on the coffee table while she slept. She thought about it, saw herself getting the glass and blowing out the dirt, filling it with water from the sink in the half light from the living room, and taking it back with her half drunk already. She decided to turn the light off instead. The voices of the radio filled the dark room.

With no curtains on the windows the volcano was always in clear sight. She never noticed it unless she made herself.

One more deep breath and she made her place on the couch to go to sleep.

She woke without an alarm. She didn't even have a clock. Time never mattered much in her life. When she was a kid her father made it clear that if the sun was up she should be working and if the sun was going down it was time to head home. If the moon was out it was time to go to bed. It was her way of life as set by her dad.

The sun had yet to break over the mountains and she was up making coffee with the left over coffee from the day before mixed in with more tap water. Her tin of coffee was on its last pot and she sighed at the thought of having to go into town. She would need more than coffee to go into town though. The line was drawn somewhere at toilet paper and the last few packs of top ramen noodles.

The journey to town took a whole day away from the volcano, which always made her nervous. Her bike was good enough for the three miles to the closest, rarely used bus station where the timing was hit or miss. Then the practically empty white, rusted bus would drive over the rubble paths for ten more miles. And finally the one transfer to the more used bus into the small town of about 5,000 people.

Food and tools were the only supplies she ever bought. Lots of cans, lots of dry goods. Meats, fruits, and vegetables were always planned on the bus ride so that anything she bought was never wasted. She always made checks of the house and her tools in case she needed anything to repair them. New handles, new bolts, new pick and hammer heads. Window screens for the summers, thread and needles for holes. She would drop off a large amount of money with the post office to cover water and electricity. Everything she did away from home and work was planned and she did it as quick as she could.

“Do you remember what this is?” Her dad had held up a small clear pebble. “This is it what we need. This.” She took it in her small, soft hand and studied it. “This is why we’re here.” He told her.

The towns people knew who she was, knew who her father was. They understood very little about her job but knew that when she came to town she wasn’t going to talk to them, have lunch at the diner, ask if everyone was doing alright, or see if they needed anything from her. She was there to get food and tools.

But for now she leaned against the counter of the small kitchen and drank her black coffee, no sugar. She’d run out of that a month ago. She stared in the direction of the volcano. Even though she couldn’t see it she knew its shape. Knew the left side was steeper than the right. Knew that there was chip out of the cone. Knew where the handful of weeds grew. She could walk in the middle of a moonless night to where she left off her work and start again with out tripping. Her life had been spent on that volcano. The violent explosion of earth was not hers to have and she understood that very well.

“It’s ours isn’t it, Dad?” she once asked her father.

He smiled down at her as they walked up the volcano, a pickaxe dragging behind her, both hands around the handle. “No sweetie. It doesn’t belong to anyone. It’s the Earth. No one can own it.”

The only thing that she claimed as hers were the minerals that came from the lava. Her father rationalized the selling of the minerals because they could help people. And they couldn’t continue to help people if they didn’t have food. And money bought food. She didn’t know of material goods. The only things they celebrated were their birthdays and they celebrated with a trip to the coastline.

She loved the coastline, the salty smell and the seaweed that would wash up on the white fine sand. It was so opposite her everyday life. She dug out the sand crabs and showed every one of them to her father. When she was older she would stand in the water and try her hardest to hold herself still as the waves crashed onto her shoulders. Her dad would sit on the sand and often nap when she wasn’t next to him talking.

Her father loved her immensely. His love never made her ask what other little girls did in their day. She never wondered why she didn’t have friends. She didn’t wonder if she wasn’t the only kid that didn’t go to school and work all day and read the paper at night. She didn’t think that she was the only one that knew everything about rocks and minerals. She never truly wondered why she didn’t have a mother either. He loved her enough for a whole family. He said I love you everyday. When her hands hurt and had open wounds to where she couldn’t lift her axe anymore he would

let her know it was fine to go home, but she never did until they could both walk home together. As he continued to work she would lie out on the black rock and sing what she could remember from the latest song on the radio.

The world was the two of them. When it was time to walk back on those days that she was too tired or hurt to finish work, he would carry her back. She would be asleep in his arms by the time they reached the house. He'd lay her down in her bed, kiss her forehead, and sleep on the couch since the small house only had one room.

She poured the last of her coffee down the drain and walked to the bathroom, past the only room in the house. The bedroom door was closed and all she did was hit one knuckle against the hollow wood. Once in the bathroom she brushed her teeth as well as she did before. She rinsed her face and ran her wet hands through her hair to help tie it up in a neater ponytail.

She knew her whole day of work would be consumed with the thoughts of going to town. What supplies she needed. Her hands held on to the rim of the sink and she stared at the uncovered drain. Nothing went through her head for half a second and she closed her eyes hoping the sun had come up, that it was time to go outside, breathe the air, and take her first steps of the day on the volcano.

She left the bathroom not looking in the mirror again. Once in the living room she knew the sun hadn't broken yet. A three-week-old paper was on the top of a stack and she picked it up as she went to sit on the dusty couch. None of the articles mattered anymore. They never mattered to her in the first place. But it was something to do and a habit. On the short side of ten minutes the sun came over the mountains and she walked out of the back door, grabbed her pickaxe from the porch, and headed out to work.

She didn't make any progress on her path so she moved to the mineral pits. She worked on clearing them of their tiny rocks and trying to plan out her next spot to carve. The sun was on its back end and she made her way down, stopping to check at cracks as she went. Half way down she noticed a person walking toward her.

No one ever went up here. No one. Ever. She wasn't counting on a confrontation but knew the strength she had in her arms. As they got closer to each other she saw that it was a man. He waved his arm to catch her attention. She kept walking down, checking her lines and walking. He cupped his hands around his mouth and yelled something she couldn't understand. There was no sort of communication she wished to engage in so she did nothing. They got closer and she could understand his yells.

"Hello."

She was annoyed that that's all he was yelling. Again she did nothing. The man jogged up so that she could finally see his features and hear his panting from the jog.

"Hi." He let out a loud breath and smiled.

She looked at him and nodded her head. He nodded his head back and had an expectant look on his face for something more. She looked his face over while fighting her curiosity to look at the rest of him. Questions flooded her brain as she focused on his eyes. Brown, big, bright. Happy and smiling. What was he doing there? Why did he bother to come all the way out there? Why was he talking to her? Why was he there so late? She didn't ask any of these questions but her heart fluttered and her neck heated up. She turned her head and continued toward home her distance from him.

He made a sound but she did not turn back to him.

When she got home she locked the door behind her and proceeded with her nightly routine. The thought of what he was doing took the place of her trip to town. She hoped he wasn't dead up there. She didn't want to drag down his body. Why did he care to talk to her? His expecting but soft smile burned in her eyes as she closed them

to wash her face. His brown eyes. She had to remember where she lived. Volcanoes are rare. He was there to see the volcano of course. She just so happened to be the volcano farmer that he came across.

Early in the morning she was at her same spot from the day before. Yesterday the looming thought of town stopped her but today it was the man. She thought of walking where he might have walked to make sure he wasn't caught in a crack with a broken leg bleeding out. But she didn't. He would at least be screaming if something like that happened and he was still alive. She heard no screams.

"Hello again!"

She jumped and dropped her axe.

"I'm sorry for scaring you!" He was thirty feet away but spoke clearly.

She caught her breath and bent to pick up her axe.

He waved his hand apologetically and a half smile took his mouth. "I'm very sorry." He continued to approach her.

"You don't have to talk to me. I don't own the volcano."

He stopped three yards from her. His mouth hung open in question until he realized what she meant. "That wasn't my intention. Not like I was just going to come here and not say anything to you, you know? I mean I saw you and just didn't want to walk by like you didn't exist."

She looked at his teeth when he smiled. They were nice. "Okay." She said.

He shaded his eyes from the sun and nodded his head. "Okay."

They stood facing each other silently.

"You do this?" He asked.

"Do what?"

"Work up here. Is that your house?" He motioned behind himself.

"Yes."

"By yourself?"

She eyed him and turned her left shoulder in a bit to guard herself.

"Just wondering! I mean just asking. It's weird. Well, not too weird." He looked to the black rock ground. "There's no one else out here, so I meant do you do this by yourself?"

She didn't answer him.

"It looks like a tough job."

She heard the sympathy in his voice. "It's all I know and I'm good at it." At that open gate she ventured to look closer at his features, his body.

His muscles were lean and skin very tan. He was very clean.

"I have a tough job too." He said.

She watched his lips. They were thick but fit his square jaw. "Okay. I have to get back to work."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah. You do what you have to." He pointed up to the volcano. "I'm just going to keep going up then."

She nodded. He gave a small wave and smile as he passed her. "You don't want to go with me do you?"

"I need to work." She said.

"Of course." He smiled at her again and then turned to walk up the volcano.

Once he was clear of her she stooped down and looked from the rock she was breaking to watch him walk away. She watched his back and legs. She grabbed a handful of the pebbles and dust then let it drop. She thought she should have smiled at him.

Hours later she noticed him coming down before he could scare her with a greeting.

"I'm in town," he started right in, "for who knows how long. Do you go often?"

"No."

"Well when you do, maybe we can eat together?"

"I don't go to town to eat."

"Fair enough. Either way maybe I'll see you around." He smiled and made his way back.

This time she didn't hide watching him on his walk down before getting back to work.

She sat down on her couch with the light on and ruffled through the stack of newspapers. The date at the top was a year and half ago. She opened it up, glanced at the top, and her eyes fell to the middle on an article that she read before.

Her and her father would go to town more often. He had more to care about and for him it was a good way to break up the every day so his daughter had more memories.

She was around ten when she met another boy in the grocery store. She was roaming the store for things she wanted to eat while her dad got supplies. They were both shy like kids are shy but still curious. David was his name.

Her father smiled and let them play in the grocery store until he was done.

"Dad, I love David." She looked up to him with a happy smile as they got on the bus back to home.

"No, you don't love him," he said kindly pulling her closer to him. "I'm the only boy that you'll love."

"Okay, Dad. I love you." She buried her head into his side and closed her eyes.

She closed her eyes and sighed deep and she folded the paper back up and put it aside. She clicked on the radio and clicked off the light.

A few days later she had to admit to herself that it was time to go to town. No coffee, she needed an axe handle, no flour or eggs for bread, she ate corn out of the can with no salt, pepper or butter. She made her complete list and went to bed with the worry of the trip. From two-thirty on she woke up every half hour thinking about the ride to the bus, the waiting, the things she would have to say to the people. Hellos and thank yous. The I'm sorry for your loss, your father would be proud, we all miss him. She thought about seeing the brown eyed man on the street. What would he be doing? She wondered how long he'd been in town and what he did. She felt bad for not letting him tell her what he did. She pictured how he would wave his hands and to get her attention and if she would avoid him or go to him.

She got up at 5:30 and pulled her bike and the cart off the porch. She was waiting at the bus stop for the first bus by 6:45 and it didn't start running until 7:30.

She wasn't the only one at the stop by the time the rusted, noisy, white bus showed up. There was an old woman with a rolling handcart and an old man with gloves in his back pocket.

The ride was bumpy and loud along the poorly paved road. She looked out of the window the whole ride. As she took the last step off the bus from the long ride she watched the few people that passed in front of her. She set out to the store with her rolling cart behind her. The town's people looked at her and if she looked at them they would smile. She did not. The store didn't have everything she wanted but she was able

to make substitutions like twine instead of rope and a smaller hammer instead of the correct size.

There was no small talk between her and the storeowner. She gave him her dusty, gritty money and packed her supplies and food in her cart. She pulled the cart behind her on the way to the post office.

“Oh my goodness, sweetie.” She heard it but kept on walking. “Sweetheart!” She stopped and turned her head to an old woman, pain shadowed the woman’s face as she stepped closer. She did not recognize the woman.

“You don’t remember me then. That’s fine. But I remember you.” The woman came right to her side and put her boney yet soft hand on her strong arm. “You haven’t been into town for some time.”

“I didn’t need to.”

“There always comes a time. How are you doing up there?”

“Fine.”

“Sweetie, I was your dad’s school friend. Remember when I came out to visit there toward the end?”

“No.”

The woman pursed her lips and looked down to the ground. Her hand was still on her arm. “Well I was there. It’s good to see you. You look healthy.”

“Thank you.”

As much as the woman could squeeze, she squeezed to say goodbye and began her painful walk again.

She paid her utilities at the post office and began her walk back to the bus stop. She passed the diner and there was knock on the glass from the inside as she passed. It was him. He waved his hand to coax her inside. She shook her head. He stood up and walked outside leaving his half eaten plate.

“Hey, you’re here.” He smiled. She didn’t say anything. “Do you want to join me? Are you hungry? I’m already eating but I can hang out while you eat.”

“No. I want to go back.”

He looked at her cart full of supplies then at his watch. “The bus doesn’t come by for another 40 minutes. Just a cup of coffee or something while you wait?”

She looked at his arms and chest through his tee shirt. “Come on,” he said cheerfully and opened up the door for her.

She slid into the booth opposite him. The waiter came by and she asked for coffee and toast. He smiled at her. She looked at his teeth.

“My dad and I used to eat here when we came into town.” She said.

“Did you come into town more often then?”

“Yes.”

“Where’s your dad?”

“He died.”

“I’m sorry to hear that.”

She drank her coffee. It tasted sweet even though it didn’t have any sugar. She ate the toast plain as well.

“You don’t like butter or sugar?”

“I like them.”

“You just don’t use them?” He moved the sugar bowl to the middle of the table and pushed the small bowl with butter pads a little closer to her. She didn’t go for either. He went back to eating his breakfast as she ate her toast.

The time ticked away slowly for her. She didn’t look around the diner too much and mostly focused her eyes to the outside. He took a sip from his coffee then loudly

scraped his plate and she looked at him. "Sorry," he said. She thought of her dad as she sat with this man and missed the love he had for her.

"Why do you talk to me?" She asked.

He tilted his head at the question. "Honestly it looked like you needed someone to talk to. Selfishly, I'm interested in you."

The waiter came and refilled her coffee and left.

"You're interested in the volcano."

He smiled. "No, I'm interested in you."

She cracked a smile and his smile got bigger. She hid it quickly.

"You're just heading back home?" He asked.

"Yes." She looked out the window.

"Can I come see you later?"

"You can do whatever you want."

He smiled at her and she didn't see it. "I'm more asking if I go up there can we see each other?"

She turned her head to his smile. His brown eyes, white teeth, tan skin. "What do you do?"

"I'm a nautilus fisher."

He waited for her to ask another question but she did not.

"I'm on shore for a few months before going back out. This is a new area for me. Me as in, it's just me. I don't have a crew. My boat is little."

She had not gone to the coast since her dad died. She missed the waves crashing on her shoulders.

"Luckily there are a lot of nautiluses off of this coast. I made the right choice in coming out this way."

"How long have you been doing it?"

"Since I was a child. The town I'm from fishes them but they've been declining. I had to try somewhere else."

"So you'll go back?"

"Yes. Maybe. It's nice out here though."

She shifted and pulled out a few dollars for the coffee and toast.

"No, no I'd like to pay for it." He reached for his wallet and waved his hand in protest.

She chose not to hear him and left the money on the table and scooted out of the booth.

"There's still time before the bus comes. Please stay just a little longer." He reached out and touched her hand.

Her heart raced at the touch and she looked at his hands. They were rough, dry hands with calluses running along his fingers. They were almost as scarred as hers. He smiled at her as he watched her look at his hand.

"It's not my volcano. You can come and go." She said.

She unhooked her cart from her bike and pulled it up the steps into the house. As she stacked her food in the bare cabinets but it didn't get much fuller. She took her new stack of newspapers and put them on the old. She knocked one knuckle on the hollow door as she went to the tool closet. After putting away everything she went out to continue her work. She thought of the diner as she headed up. Her heart raced again thinking about his hand on her. A fisherman.

Her dad's words, "I'm the only boy that you'll love." She couldn't remember the sound of his voice but the things he said came often. She swung her axe down hard



digging the pick in deep. She struggled to loosen it. She gritted her teeth and yanked on it, wiggled it, and pulled. It came loose. She swung hard again and a large crack sprang open.

“His name was David.” She said to the crack. She swung again. “I was little. What did it matter?” She swung again and the head of the axe got wedged in the crack. She pulled the handle and it didn’t budge. She wrenched on it and pulled back and forth and then the handle snapped from the head. She sighed and stood still for a moment.

After breaking the axe handle she moved onto gathering small rocks from another crack she had dug out. The sun was on it’s way west and she began her walk down with jars full of rocks. She placed them on the kitchen counter and went about her nightly routine. This time she had new papers to read so she stayed up later than usual. She still woke at her usual time and this time was able to make coffee.

She grabbed a new handle from the tool closet and set out for the day. After the full day her hands ached and she had to pull out a few slivers she got from the new handle. She gently rubbed her palms as she walked back home. She saw him sitting on the steps of her house.

“Hi.” He stood and smiled. She said nothing. “I know you didn’t say that I could come over. I just wanted to give it another try.” She stopped at the bottom stair.

“Can we sit? Together I mean.” He sat back down so that she looked down at him. The sunset made him look even darker.

“How long have you been here?”

“Not long. I didn’t want to scare you again by meeting you out there. I actually wanted to come yesterday but that could have been weird since we just saw each other. So today it is. At night.”

“Dusk.”

“Yeah. So, will you sit with me?”

She looked at his arms and his face. She liked both. She leaned her axe against the stairs and sat next to him on the same step. His smile grew as she settled. A content sigh came from him. She looked at the volcano, the chip from the cone, the left side that was steeper than the right. The top of it bathed in pink and orange light while the rest was dark blue. She turned and looked at him. He turned and looked at her.

“I’m Anna.”

“My name is Miguel.”

She smiled.

### About the Author:

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## **Anorexia** **by Marshall Bowles**

(This is a horror story. Not recommended for the faint of heart)

### **8/5 Wed**

First day back at school, and it's already shit.

Ms. McReady--our cow of a biology teacher--forced us into assigned seats. She sat me down beside this skeleton of a girl. The girl had long stringy black hair, hunched shoulders, and her clothes were almost falling off. She smelled gross. I haven't smelled anything like it before. The best way I can describe it is stale.

Then I realized who it was. Sandy. Holy shit! I must have looked like an idiot, sitting there with my mouth wide open. She had needed to lose weight, but damn she took it too far. She had to have starved herself the entire summer to get that small. I felt guilty. Maybe I shouldn't have called her a fat bitch.

Whatever though. She needed to hear it. I looked at the front of the room and tried to ignore her. She just sat there staring straight ahead the whole time, acting like I didn't exist.

Everything was fine until the bell rang. I wanted to get out of the room, but when I grabbed my bag, Sandy looked at me. Oh God, her eyes were sunken into her head. She wasn't really looking at me, more like through me at something in the distance. She looked so weak that I have no idea how she could even move around.

Then her eyes focused on me, and she checked me out from head to toe. She said, "Why are you so fat?" I gasped. It felt like she dumped a bucket of ice water on me, and I was on fire at the same time. And my skin felt odd, like something was crawling all over me.

Sandy tried to smile, but it was forced. A tear rolled down one of her cheeks.

I ran away.

### **8/6 Thu**

Sandy didn't show up to school today.

I told Amanda and Cici about what happened. Neither of them have seen Sandy yet, so they don't know how bad she looks. Amanda laughed about it. She said that it doesn't matter how much weight Sandy loses, because being skinny won't improve her face.

I said that maybe I had been too hard on Sandy, but Cici told me Sandy was a weirdo. My choice to cut Sandy out was a necessity, because being friends with her was social suicide. I know Cici is right, but I still feel guilty. Sandy and I had been close ever since we were little.

### **8/7 Fri**

I was grabbing stuff from my locker, and I felt someone behind me. The stale smell was enough for me to know it was Sandy. I glanced back at her and felt sick. She looked worse than before.

I took a deep breath, faced her, and asked what she wanted.

Sandy clutched her notebook to her chest like a shield. I thought she was going to cry. Instead, all she said was, "I'm sorry." I could barely hear her, she said it so quietly. She turned around and walked away.

I'm such a fucking asshole.

### **8/10 Mon**

No show again on Sandy. I thought it was going to be a normal day. Stupid me.

We were in the cafeteria for lunch. Pizza day. I didn't feel like talking, so I left the conversation to Amanda and Cici. Like usual.

In the middle of a mouthful of pizza, I looked up and noticed a creepy guy.

It was some gross old man. He must have been 60, at least. He stood all the way on the other side of the cafeteria, so it was hard to see him well. He looked bald and pale, and he was wearing a dirty one-piece outfit that was almost the same color as his skin. It was kind of like what a mechanic would wear.

The creep was staring at me. Even from so far away, I could feel his eyes crawling all over me. I was so disgusted I had to spit out my food. Amanda and Cici were like WTF? I tried to point him out, but he had disappeared. Scary. The school should do background checks on their janitors.

I lost my appetite after that.

### **8/11 Tue**

I've been sick all day. Mom said I had a fever. She tried to give me chicken noodle soup, but I felt nauseous at the sight of it. No school today.

It's late, and I'm feeling a little better. I'm still a little queasy, but I think I can go back to school tomorrow. Mom thinks I had food poisoning.

### **8/12 Wed**

Sandy is dead.

Mr. Willard called an emergency school assembly in the morning. He got up in front of everyone and told us that Sandy had passed away on Monday. They brought in counselors to talk to us.

Marisa Wright and Lorry Masterson were sitting behind me. I could hear them whispering to each other. Marisa said that Sandy had committed suicide, and that the school was worried about other students killing themselves.

Lorry said that she heard it wasn't suicide. Sandy was murdered. Some serial killer had gotten into her bedroom while her whole family was asleep. Sandy had been cut up into a bunch of pieces and all of her skin was taken.

Marisa said that was a bullshit story someone made up to start an urban legend. They must have noticed me trying to eavesdrop. They shut up after that.

I cut class for the rest of the day. I'm not talking to the counselors.

### **8/13 Thu**

I don't know what to do.

Dad cooked steak for supper. I was starving. Between being sick and finding out about Sandy, I haven't been able to eat anything since Monday.

We were all sitting at the dining room table, and I had just put a piece of steak in my mouth. A horrible feeling came over me, exactly like last week when Sandy called me fat. It was like the beginning of a fever where your whole body aches, and I felt sick like I had eaten spoiled food. There were invisible tentacles running all over my skin.

I don't know why, but I looked over my shoulder and out through the bay windows. The janitor from school was standing on the other side of the street staring at me through the windows. I almost threw up.

I screamed. Mom and Dad freaked. I tried to tell them about the man standing outside, but I was crying and I couldn't get the words out. I kept pointing at the windows and Dad went to look. The guy ran off before Dad got out there.

Dad called the police, but they said there's nothing they can do. Dad is taking off work tomorrow to go by the school with me.

### **8/14 Fri**

They don't have a new janitor at school.

Dad and I were sitting in Mr. Willard's office. I tried to describe the creep to him, but Mr. Willard kept saying that they hadn't hired anyone new. He and Dad kept eyeing each other. As if I can't read body language.

I yelled at them for not believing me. Mr. Willard looked right at me, and in the most condescending tone of voice, he said, "If someone like that was lurking around the school, don't you think someone else would have noticed?"

This is the worst day of my life. I haven't eaten anything and I'm starving, but every time I think about that monster I get sick to my stomach.

### **8/16 Sun**

I hid in my room all weekend. Mom and Dad tried to get me to come out, but I faked being sick. They didn't believe me. Mom tried to have a "serious" talk with me about Sandy, but I told her I wasn't ready to talk about it yet.

Mom left food for me. I flushed it down the toilet when she left. I'm so hungry, but just the thought of food makes me want to puke.

## **8/17 Mon**

It happened in the sophomore hallway between second and third period. I was so hungry that I had to eat something no matter how sick I felt. I bought a bag of chips from the vending machine.

As soon as I put the first chip in my mouth, that sick feeling started again, the worms crawling over my skin. For some reason I looked up...and there he was. The creepy guy. He was standing at the far end of the hall, staring at me. The hallway was packed, but everyone was walking around him. Nobody even noticed him. It's like he was invisible to everyone but me.

I felt like vomiting, but I didn't. I was so hungry. I stared that fucker down and forced another chip in my mouth. When I swallowed, he smiled.

He took one step towards me.

My hands were shaking, but I wouldn't look away from him. I pulled another chip out of the bag and ate it. When I swallowed, he took another step forward. A long string of spit came out of his mouth and dripped onto the floor.

I took my phone out of my bag. My hand was shaking when I took a photo.

He wasn't in the image. He wasn't there at all! I looked over my phone to double check, and he was definitely there. I took another photo. Nothing. All the people around him showed up, but not him.

I dropped the chips on the floor. I was shaking so bad that I had to use both hands to steady the phone. Picture. Picture. Picture. He was never visible in any of them.

That's when I noticed a small crowd had stopped to watch me. I realized I was crying. I stuffed my phone back in my bag, and I pointed at the man. The creature. They looked that way, and then they looked right back at me. They looked confused. The creature smiled.

I ran away.

## **8/18 Tue**

I'm losing too much weight. My clothes don't fit right. I'm so hungry I can't think straight.

Today went by in a blur. I stayed away from food but couldn't stop thinking about it. Hamburgers, mac and cheese, fries, ice cream. Every time I imagine taking a bite, I see the monster's face smiling at me and taking one step closer. I'm so miserable, I just want to shoot myself in the head.

This is what happened to Sandy. It has to be.

## **8/19 Wed**

Mom made me sit down at dinner even though I said I was feeling sick. I was so weak from hunger that I couldn't put up a fight. She gave me a bowl of chicken soup.

I stared at it for a while. When I looked up, both Mom and Dad were staring at me. They were worried but trying to hide it. I made myself smile, and then I ate a spoonful of soup.

I felt him right away. Those slimy worms crawling under my skin. The nausea. He was behind me again on the street. I didn't look. I asked Dad if there was anyone outside behind me.

He looked out the window, then back at me, and he shook his head.

I ate more soup. It was so hard to keep it down. My stomach was trying to vomit out everything I put in. It was such a horrible feeling, the sickness and this insane hunger mixed together.

When I finished, I looked back over my shoulder. The janitor was standing at the edge of our lawn.

### **8/20 Thu**

Cici and Amanda cornered me in the girl's bathroom. I've been avoiding them. Cici asked me what my problem was, and I told them that I was sick. They called bullshit and said they knew I wasn't eating. Amanda said that I was making them look bad and that I better put myself together.

I cried. I tried to tell them about the man--the monster--but I know I wasn't making sense. They just looked at me like I was a stray dog. Cici kept shaking her head in disappointment. I've never felt so ashamed.

I finally gave up because I knew they wouldn't believe me. They helped me clean up my face, and we left. They left me alone for the rest of the day.

I'm so hungry.

### **8/21 Fri**

I didn't talk at school today. Not a word to anyone. I didn't feel like it. Dad had to work late and Mom couldn't put up enough of a fight to force feed me.

I took a long look at myself in the mirror. My body is fading away. I used to be so beautiful, but now my cheeks are hollow, dark bags hang under my eyes, and my hair is stringy.

In a moment of weakness, I dug through the drawer looking for a razor blade. I pulled it out before remembering it was a cheap safety razor. Too hard to get the blade out.

What the fuck is wrong with me? I don't want to die.

Sandy. I need to find out what happened to Sandy.

### **8/22 Sat**

I used a knife from the kitchen to poke a new hole in my belt. My pants are falling off.

While I was heading out the door, I grabbed a bagel. I tried to act cheerful, and I yelled back at Mom that I was going to the mall. Maybe she believed me. I threw the bagel in the trash.

I drove to Sandy's neighborhood and parked a couple streets away from her house. Kids were out riding bikes and playing ball and stuff. It made me want to be little like that again.

Sandy's house was empty. Police tape crisscrossed the front door. Her family must not have come back there since the murder. I wonder if they will ever come back.

I found the special rock in the backyard, but I could barely lift it. My arms were shaking by the time I flipped it over. The emergency house key was still there, thank God. Sandy's parents told her to never, ever tell anyone outside of her family about it, but she told me. The alarm code to the house was the same.

I had to stop to catch my breath halfway up the stairs to the second floor. My stomach growled. I thought about raiding their kitchen for food. For a moment, the face of the janitor was all I could see. My body dry heaved. When I got myself back under control, I climbed the rest of the way to Sandy's room.

Lorry was right. Dried blood covered everything. The worst of it was a huge patch staining the carpet beside the bed, but there were splatters on the walls and even the ceiling.

Small, bloody handprints made a trail across the floor and along the wall, ending in a large patch of blood. They were the size of Sandy's hands, so they had to be hers. There was one much larger handprint on the wall. It could have been a man's hand, except each fingertip was pointed like a claw. I looked away so I wouldn't be sick again.

I tried to find Sandy's diary. We started writing them together when we were little, and I know she kept up with it too. It wasn't anywhere in her room. The police probably took it as evidence. Luckily, they didn't find her secret compartment. I'm the only person Sandy ever told about it. She taped a piece of cardboard under her dresser to make a hidden shelf.

The first thing I pulled out was a picture of me. It was a 5x8 from photo day in middle school. Sandy had crossed out my eyes. She wrote a message on the bottom. "I thought you were my friend."

The only other thing in the compartment was a piece of lined notebook paper covered in sketches. A large image of a head covered the center of the page, with smaller versions scattered around it. All were drawings of the janitor.

## **8/23 Sun**

Dad carried me downstairs to the dining room table. I tried to fight back, but I'm so weak now that I couldn't do anything. They stood on the other side of the table and watched me. They wouldn't leave until I finished my whole plate of food.

I was crying and trying to fight them, but I was so hungry too.

As soon as the first piece of asparagus touched my lips, I could feel him behind me. I glanced back through the windows. He was standing in the middle of the front yard, smiling and drooling.

I ate the rest of the plate. I didn't look back, even though I knew he took a step with every bite.

Mom and Dad looked even worse by the time I finished. I was crying and shaking. They just don't know. They can't see him.

Dad helped me out of the chair so he could take me back to my bedroom. I tried not to look, but I couldn't stop myself. The janitor was standing in our living room.

He's going to get me. Oh god he's going to get me.

## **8/24 Mon**

Amanda and Cici sat with me in the courtyard during lunch. They think it will make them look compassionate to take pity on me. They were both gorging themselves on food--so much food! They talked with their mouths full, not even bothering to be courteous.

Disgusting. It was like watching a bunch of pigs wallow in filth. Amanda turned to me, gave me a fake smile, and asked if I wanted a bite of her ham sandwich. I screamed at her. "Why are you so fat?"

I don't know why I said that. It wasn't what I meant to say...it just came out. Immediately after I said it, I felt the grossness pour over me again, even though I hadn't eaten any food. Nausea. My skin felt like it was trying to crawl off of my body.

Amanda shuddered. She stared wide-eyed at me for a few seconds before regaining her composure. Then she stood up and grabbed Cici's arm. They walked away from me.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw movement from across the courtyard. When I turned my head, I saw him. He was standing very far away, on the other side of the lawn by the gym doors. He wasn't looking at me. His head moved slowly, and I followed his gaze. He was watching Amanda.

I'm so sorry, Amanda. I passed this curse to you just like Sandy gave it to me. I shouldn't have let it get this far.

## **8/25 Tue**

I couldn't sleep last night. School was a blur. I avoided Amanda and Cici, and I'm sure they don't want to talk to me anyway.

Mom and Dad didn't try to make me eat again. After I went upstairs, I waited and listened to them. They were whispering, but they weren't being quiet enough. They're going to put me in the hospital and jab an IV in my arm.

I can't take this hunger anymore. I have no other options. I've thought about slitting my wrists or even using Dad's pistol, but everyone would think it's a suicide. I don't want people to think I killed myself.

After Mom and Dad went to bed, I snuck down to the kitchen and got a bowl of peanuts. I'm sitting on the bed now with them in front of me. My phone is tucked away on my bookshelf, and it's recording. The police will go through my things and find the video. They might not be able to see the monster, but they will see what he's going to do to me.

I ate a peanut. I can feel him. He's just outside of the door.

Oh fuck! I ate another peanut, and he was just suddenly in my room. He didn't float through the door or anything. He was outside one second, and when I swallowed he was just...there.

He looks different now that he's close. His skin is thin. I can see the black veins underneath, and he's covered in swollen lumps like angry pimples. His skin moves on its own, almost like a sheet flapping in the wind.



I always thought he was wearing a one-piece uniform. It's not. It's a suit made of skin. There are patches of hair in a few places, from different people. I can tell because the hairs are different colors. I guess once he kills me, he's going to use my skin for part of his outfit.

His face is horrible. I can't tell what color his eyes are because they're clouded over. The skin under his eyes sags down onto his cheeks, and I can see bone under there. His teeth are huge and flat, like a horse.

I'm shaking. I can barely write anymore.

It's time. I just want to get it over with. I'm going to put this diary on the top shelf in the closet so my blood won't make it illegible.

I love you Mom. I love you Dad. I just want you to know this wasn't your fault. There wasn't anything you could do to help. This is a monster. A real monster.

Three more peanuts. Three more steps. It will finally be over.

*About the Author:*

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