

CHAPTER 5

She woke up in a chair.

Surrounding her was what looked like a classroom, dressed up to not look like a classroom at all.

A chalkboard, on the wall in the very front of the room, was partially blocked by a shelf. It appeared to have a few words written on it, and maybe part of a drawing. It was clear that the chalkboard had not been used in years and that what remained on it simply wasn't erased.

Some of the words were readable: "another", "begin", "add", "for." "Supe" was written as well, probably just the first half of a larger word that happened to be covered up.

On the shelf were a few books and things. A large desk sat a few feet in front of it, with a chair pulled under. The desk was covered with seemingly random objects - scissors, mirrors, papers, magazines, and even a couple of marbles. On the corner was a rotten apple. Maybe it was put there recently to add to this "old classroom" theme.

A closet to the left of her, with the door partly open, was filled with small school desks. The chairs were in there, too.

Care was sitting on a chair identical to those. It felt like it was going to break at any moment. A few markings were made on it - mostly random doodles, but some profanity as well. The chair was sitting in the middle of the room, facing the larger desk and chalkboard. She was positioned awkwardly on this chair, sitting very close to the edge.

She was also tied to the chair with a rope.

Outside of this small classroom, beyond the walls of which Care sat between, a number of quiet but intimidating footsteps were heard.

As they approached her, these threatening sounds, she rocked back and forth in her seat. Not that it would have moved with her, for after closer observation, Care noticed that this chair was in fact *glued* to the floor. Thus, there was no escaping this situation, whatever that situation may have been.

Faster, harder, these steps became.

Next to her was a door, the knob of which was beginning to turn.

She didn't quite know what was going on, and maybe it didn't actually matter. There was a possibility here that, as the minutes went by, a slow but steady transition would take place - a transition between now and later, between danger and safety. Some powerful force would push it all away, every last bit of it, and only Care and

her bed would be left. Certainly that disgusting chair would be gone, and so would that door knob, which continued to turn.

As the knob came to a stop, so did everything else. And not a noise was heard for the next couple of seconds.

"Hello?" said Care. She didn't feel in control of her voice.

As a direct response to this, the door shot open and slammed against the wall. The knob came flying off, like it was already loose.

A man came stomping into the room, a horrifying smile spread across his entire face, like this was simultaneously the greatest and worst day of his life, and that he was trying to hide the sadness by taking advantage of the extreme happiness. The joy was uncontrollable, and it looked like it was about to burst out of his forehead.

He also looked very eager. A little *too* eager. He turned toward Care and his mouth opened wide, like he was feeling in the mood to yell something.

It was overwhelming, this situation here, and only one word would leave his mouth:

"Yeah!"

He held his arms out wide, like he was ready for a hug. Care tried to scream, but it just wouldn't happen. Instead, she just stared at him.

The man came walking toward her, the smile still not leaving his face. He looked like he was thinking of something to say.

"This is my life!" he screamed, looking around awkwardly. "Hello, kid."

Care didn't say a thing.

The man, at first, decided that he would wait for a response, but soon gave up on that strategy and continued.

"No." he began. "Who are *you*?"

He continued to look around the room, waiting. Still no response.

In fact, Care looked like she was about to cry.

The man widened his smile, shook his head, and walked to the back of the chair. He held both sides of it and rested his head on the top, looking down at Care.

"This won't do." he said.

Silence. In the distance was the faint ticking of a clock in the corner of the room, hanging on the wall next to the chalkboard. Each tick was louder than the last.

"My name is Marvin," he continued. "Please say hello."

Nothing happened. Care held her mouth shut.

"*Say hello.*" he repeated, irritation in his voice.

As the clock continued to tick, and the silence built up into something increasingly powerful, Care felt the need to explode in her chair. She wanted to do this for several reasons, some of them old and some of them new. It didn't actually need to happen here necessarily, it just needed to happen soon.

This explosion had to be spectacular. It needed to cause death. And somebody else had to clean it up.

"Say hello!" Marvin screamed, shaking the chair with all of his strength.

Still nothing.

Everyone had to know about this explosion. It needed to be on the news. It needed to be a major story. There had to be *fear* associated with it. All of this needed to happen.

This was just one of her dreams - one of many others. She was still young and foolish enough to have remaining hope; though, perhaps it would never go away.

"*Hey!*"

Marvin grabbed Care's head and shook it as hard as he could.

Tough one. Marvin knew, at that moment, what he wanted to do, but it was too much. Too much anger. Too much frustration. This couldn't have been done.

One of Marvin's problems was anger. He had absolutely horrible anger issues, and yet even in the midst of a fit, his mind would be there giving him the facts. No, you can't do that, it would say. That is wrong. Rethink this.

Usually, it worked.

Sometimes it didn't.

Luckily, in the particular fit, all was good. This was a different person, after all. Someone that Marvin trusted. She was not evil. She was not hungry. She was but an innocent, scared child. What was there to fear?

He let go of her head. She let out a scream, but Marvin quietly ignored it. He never quite gained his smile back, but the happiness was once again flowing in. Nothing was wrong here, he repeated to himself. He even said it out loud.

"Nothing is wrong here." he said. "Nothing is wrong here."

That wasn't completely true. The door was broken, for one thing. He also couldn't possibly have left his home again, not after what had happened. It was pretty bad, this situation, and at the same time, the best thing that could have ever taken place. This was Marvin's dream, basically. He never specifically dreamed of it, but surely he would have eventually.

It was difficult deciding whether or not he made a good choice. Only time would tell.

He began walking over to the table in the front of the room, up against the chalk board. It was filled with various little objects, some of them useless, some of them fun, some of them strange (but that's pretty much the same thing as fun). His hands moved around the surface of the table, as if feeling for something. Similarly, his eyes moved back and forth, scanning it.

As he grabbed for something at the corner of the table (about to fall off, even), he decided that he found what he wanted. It was a long, thin object.

No, that's not it, he thought. It was just a pen - and a weird one, at that. He put it back and continued looking.

Care simply stared forward as this happened. Nothing seemed to be on her mind anymore. There wasn't much to think about at this point in time, and in fact it would probably have been better not to think about anything anyway. She watched as this strange man scanned the table.

He pulled up another object. It was similar to the other one, butâ€¦ no, it wasn't the same thing. He laughed for a second, probably feeling silly for taking so long to find an object on a table.

He held it up, as if getting a better view at it. It appeared to be a syringe, complete with a needle and an odd-looking liquid resting inside of it.

Care recognized this little thing. She recalled a few specific memories of them. Not good ones, mind you.

Marvin's next action wasn't clear. He just waited there, looking at the syringe, thinking to himself. Staring into the liquid.

It was a blue-ish liquid. Somehow it looked like it could burn through your skin, or separate into three solid cubes that would then force themselves down your throat. Luckily it couldn't do either of those things in reality. But the simple act of showing it to somebody could be enough for quite the scare.

After a good while of doing this same, boring thing, something different happened. Marvin turned around, still holding the syringe in his hand, and his eyes began to rest on Care. They were wide open. Eager.

"Hello, you." he said.

Care gulped.

Marvin stepped forward. Then he walked slowly in Care's direction, keeping his eyes on her - actually, at this point, her *arm*.

"So," he began in a quiet, sweet voice. "What's your favorite color?"

Once again, he was given no response. Care didn't even begin to consider saying anything.

"No," he said. "I mean it."

Nothing. The clock continued to tick.

"If you don't tell me what your favorite color is, I'm going to assume that it's orange."

More silence. Marvin practiced with the needle, pretending to throw it like a dart.

"Orange is *my* favorite color." he said.

He crept over to the back of Care's chair, continuing to "practice" with his needle. All of his arm movements were in perfect sync with the ticking of the clock.

Care was ready to explode. Too bad that wasn't going to happen.

"I like orange a lot." Marvin continued. "I think that, in time, you might like it as well. You don't have a favorite color now, but I will give you mine."

It was a wonderful experience, to talk like he did. Something felt marvelous about speaking to a child as if they were something other than€ well, another little kid standing next to the bench. This was parenting, here. This was a step above anything he had been before.

And Marvin was determined to be the best damn parent he could possibly be.

"I will also give you this." he said, again quietly. It was a loud kind of quiet, though.

He immediately lifted up the needle, pulled Care's arm toward himself, and injected every last existing drop of blue-ish liquid into her body. It didn't take a whole lot of strength, but Care did struggle for every moment, screaming her quiet scream and moving about.

Whether or not it was actually every last existing drop was pretty much irrelevant. He definitely assumed that none was left, but maybe that wasn't true.

Care continued to scream, and it quickly turned into a cry.

Marvin kept a hold of her, and reached into his pocket, revealing a small pack of who knows what. His hand ventured into it and grabbed something.

He pulled out a small bandage. Care continued her noise.

It was hard for Marvin to stay calm at this point. He tried looking away from the blood, as this was what he considered his "true weakness" (if only he didn't have hundreds of those). He slapped the bandage on Care's arm, not actually looking away completely, and then let go of her.

The crying faded away, and all that remained was a rapid panting.

And at that point, Marvin just released a giant sigh of relief. He paced around the room for a little while, but soon decided that it would be better if he simply left the room.

And so he walked out, slowly, looking back a few times.

Care didn't notice. She was recovering from a state of panic. Maybe it would have been better if she spoke to him.

Still breathing deeply and loudly, she checked around the room. He was gone. She was still scared to look at her arm, but surely enough she did.

Nothing out of the ordinary, but there was definitely a bandage there. An orange one.

She really, *really* hated that color.