

## CHAPTER 12

There were many things in this world that Care did not understand. It didn't feel completely worth it to find the answers, but she still wondered about them. What motivates people to do sickening things - or even great things? Where does the desire come from?

She would tend to think about these things because, to her, it seemed that some actions didn't have reasons behind them at all. Kidnapping, for example.

She tried putting together a list, titled "reasons," but no matter how long she thought about it, nothing would come to her. The list was empty, and it remained empty.

*Everything* seemed empty.

Well, that's not true. At least, not entirely. Sure, everything in that *room* felt empty, as did her life in general, but at least one thing wasn't. And it wouldn't get out of her mind, no matter how hard she tried.

You see, that closet in the basement was not empty.

She knew this because, earlier that day, Marvin had put something inside of it. Something that she needed.

It was late enough at night that Marvin wouldn't have wanted her leaving the classroom (he was still quite paranoid of her escaping). This was the main problem, here - otherwise, the next step here would have been to get up, leave the room, step into the basement, and build herself the happiest engine ever conceived.

Of course, in between those last two steps she was planning to steal a certain circular object and run away. Where to, though? She wasn't one to think that far ahead.

This was only a matter of whether or not to take a risk. Nothing else actually mattered at the moment. Care didn't take risks very often, but this seemed to her like a worthy exception to make. The choice was quite clear: *do it or don't do it?*

She decided to do it.

Putting the "reasons" list in her pocket, she stood up and went for the door. The knob was unusually high up - Care had come to the conclusion that Marvin put it there himself, just so he could watch her jump every time she wanted to reach it. By now she realized that he liked that sort of thing, but again, the *reasons* for this were way beyond her.

He also liked to watch her run, and crawl, and stretch. In fact, that was one of the first things he asked her to do. He brought her into this very hallway, stood on the other side, and gave her directions while

she followed them. She tried to ask him why, but all he would say was "strikingly stirring!" and return to waving his arms about and screaming.

Few things, to Marvin, classified as strikingly stirring. That Care somehow accomplished it blows my mind.

The hallway was quiet, which was to be expected in the middle of the night. She felt like every single door was staring at her - like they all knew what she was doing, and didn't approve. But they couldn't have done anything about it, and they certainly couldn't have alerted Marvin.

It bothered her quite a lot. Nobody was on her side.

Though, even while this was a dangerous situation (knowing Marvin), the fear only began to hit her as she opened the door to the basement. And it hit her *hard*. The darkness may have contributed to that, but not necessarily.

She could hear a strange noise coming from down those stairs. It intrigued her.

After walking down (and thankfully not tripping - it was an assumption of hers that you could not successfully walk down a flight of stairs without tripping once), she flipped the light switch. Nothing unusual. The room was exactly how they had left it, more or less.

I say "more or less," of course, because of the noise.

She wasn't completely concerned with it; after all, that's not the reason she was in the basement. But it was odd, anyway - it sounded very mechanical, like some insanely complicated contraption. And it wasn't coming from that room, it was coming from somewhere next to it.

Her first guess was that she was listening to the sound of a gigantic and complex washing machine with millions of (probably unnecessary or redundant) moving parts. But then she decided that it was probably unlikely. She chose at this point to stop thinking about it and continue with her other nonsense.

The closet door was looking at her. It knew what was going on, but sadly could do nothing about it. If closets could cry, this would have been a *very* good time for it.

She opened the door - at this point, that crying would have turned into violent screaming.

However, as she looked inside, only bad news stared back.

It was gone. The circular object was *completely gone*. She looked closer, opened things, looked under things, but all that did was confirm it.

She was devastated, but still couldn't quite accept it. What could have happened to it? Did Marvin come down and take it? Why would he have done that?

Quite weird.

Thinking about this made her suspicious. It wasn't like she was the only one trying to build a machine - she was sure that other people were attempting the same thing. She *knew* this for a fact, actually, for the pieces have told her these things countless times. And so, naturally, it becomes a possibility to her that she has finally met the competition after all of this time.

Now, she didn't jump to conclusions or anything, but there were indeed *two* big clues here. One, the fact that her circular piece had gone missing; not to mention how Marvin had denied her access to it earlier that day. Two, the horrendous sound coming from the room next to her.

The sound was a clue because her own project, the happiness engine, made a *very similar noise*.

This idea almost made her faint.

She turned to the wall to her right, facing the noise, suddenly remembering the door.

Yes. The door.

Earlier, Marvin had told her to stay away from that door. He must have known. That was the only good explanation.

*He knew about the happiness engine.*

She felt exposed. Like all of her secrets had been released to the world, all at the same time. And now the world was after her.

Her next action was to reach into her pocket and retrieve her "reasons" list, as well as her pencil. Quickly, she jotted down a single bullet point with the following words next to it:

"building sadness engine"

It seemed to make sense. And at least it was a start.

The door was blocked by a few stacked chairs, which she moved out of the way. She opened the door, her hand shaking.

Yes.

Um, alright.

She wasn't expecting to be right. Really, she wasn't. This was her attitude most of the time - she considered things all of the time, but deep inside didn't *completely* believe them. This wasn't the kind of thing a sane person would truly believe, anyway.

For this reason alone, the massive machine sitting only a couple of feet in front of her was more than just a shock.

One half of it was entirely lit, while the rest of it didn't appear to be finished.

In the center was a tower, and near the top of that tower was a flat circular object, firmly in place. It was very high up.

She knew what she needed to do - there were no longer any reasons to deny it, this was a sadness engine, and it was surely going to be finished in a matter of time. This was a very, very bad thing. If she didn't do anything about it, one could only imagine what would happen.

Not to mention, one of the pieces that she needed was attached to it. It was likely the only circular piece in existence, assuring that only one engine is ever built.

Care decided to climb the tower.

She walked over to it, found a good grip, and pulled herself up. It actually wasn't *that* difficult - almost like it was designed for that kind of thing (and indeed it probably was, since there needed to be a way to get up there to put the piece on in the first place).

The view of the engine from above was terrifying. Millions of moving parts; sharp ones, at that. They could have pulled you in and cut you into pieces in seconds - new pieces, perhaps to be used to further expand it. She tried not to think about it, and continued climbing.

She found the object and attempted to grab for it, only to realize that it was pretty deep inside - like it was glued in there or something. She made another attempt, once again failing. On her third try, however, she realized that her past two attempts had loosened it - it flew out at least ten feet, which also happened to be less than the distance between the tower and the wall.

Care didn't expect what happened next.

The entire machine, including the tower in the middle, began shaking. And, while the noise was loud enough two seconds ago, it got *louder*. Care, in a panic, started climbing back down the tower, but was thrown off by a sudden explosion.

Pieces of the machine began falling off. More explosions occurred, sending millions of small moving pieces all over the room, hitting the walls, colliding with each other.

Care ran out of the room and slammed the door. Four seconds later she heard another explosion, this one much more tremendous. The entire building shook, and even from down in the basement she could hear the sounds of hundreds of objects simultaneously falling off of shelves.

After a few seconds, the sound was gone. Even the machine had stopped making noise. Care was alone with the silence, just thinking about what could happen next.

However, once she was positive that the danger was gone, she opened the door. Her circular object was lying on the floor next to a broken machine. She paid no attention to the machine, but she *did* grab the piece before once again leaving the room and closing the door.

As much as she dreaded the question, she couldn't help but ask herself: what now?

There wasn't much to do at this point.

Unfortunately, even if there *was* something to do, *doing* it would require time. This was, without a doubt, something that she had none of, for at that very moment, the basement door was opening.

"Hello? Candice, are you down there?" asked Marvin, peeking through the door. "*Hello?*"

Care wasn't really sure what to do. There didn't seem to anywhere to hide.

He began walking down the stairs. At this point, she gave up on trying to hide, and simply sat down by the door with the circular piece in front of her.

"Cassie!" Marvin said, waving in a confused fashion. "Hey. What are you doing down here?"

"Uh, I--"

"And what are you doing with *that*?"

He pointed at the piece in front of her.

"N-nothing. I wasn'tâ€¦!"

"Wait a second. What did you do?"

"I didn't do anything."

He began walking toward the door, his feet stomping hard on the ground.

"Step aside, let me seeâ€¦!" he said, opening the door.

He was greeted by a broken machine and room full of smoke. He stepped back and gasped.

"Youâ€¦! you didn't." he said. "No! You *didn't*!"

Care didn't respond. Marvin turned around, and while his expression was not angry, it was filled with sadness.

"Iâ€¦!" Care began. Looking at his face made her suddenly feel guilty.

"How? *Why?* Iâ€¦! I don't know what to say about this. This is insane."

"I'm sorry," Care said, finally.

"No," Marvin replied. "You aren't sorry. I wish you were, but you aren't."

"I'm sorry. I am!"

"Oh, gosh, I'm starting to get dizzyâ€¦!" he said. "This is too much. This is really fantastically bad."

"I won't do it again."

He stared at her with the most focused, serious stare he's ever given.

"You don't know what you've done. You really don't. *You don't get it.* You're looking at years of work - gone! A waste!"

Care said nothing.

"This is really, really disappointing," he continued. "I'm gonna have to do it again, I have to start nowâ€¦!"

"No, you don't--"

"And *you*," he said, once again staring that horrible stare. "I need to give a punishment to you. That's what I do. And this is punishment worthy."

"You don't have to do that."

"Carrie, as much as I'd hate to do it, I'm gonna have to ask you to step in that closet."

He pointed to the closet in which he had originally placed the circular piece. She remembered it being considerably small.

"W-what?"

"I see that you opened it. So you like it then? You're going to stay in it."

"Stay in it?"

"Get in there. It's stupid, but get in there."

"N-noâ€¦! Iâ€¦!"

"Okay, in that case, I will need to force you."

Marvin walked forward and grabbed on to Care's hand, pulling her with him. Care tried to break free a couple of times, but to no

success. She was placed *lightly* into the closet, as Marvin wouldn't want to hurt her.

"I'm sorry about this," he said, holding her down.

He let go of her and slammed the door.