

Everything Happens for a Reason

By: Cole Harris

Summer. To me, it's one of the most annoying things in the world. And yes, I know, I probably sound like an insane psychopath but hear me out.

It's like an hourglass. It starts off full but as the days go on, it starts to fade. You watch as your days of freedom and carefree glee pass before your eyes, and before you can snap twice, it comes to an end.

Purple popsicle liquid drips onto my dark blue shorts on a humid, cloudless summer night. I sit next to my best friend, Eve, who slurps an orange, frigid, ice cream bar.

"I can't believe it's the last day of summer." I sighed, a deep gloom in my eyes.

"I know Midna, it went by way too fast." Eve replied between bites.

"And of course, we're entering the best period of our lives, middle school." I snickered, then stood up from the light brown bench we had sat on. We talked about our hopes and fears for the new school year, until clouds seeped their way into the clear sky.

A raindrop plopped on my head. "No! Don't tell me it's raining on the last day of summer!" I whined, the rain beginning to pour harder.

"Come on! Let's run home!" Eve tucked her mint green hair under her sweatshirt hood, and we began to run.

Mud splashed onto my legs as we passed through the flooded park puddles. "What a fun way to spend our last day." I thought to myself, now completely drenched with mucky water.

We swung the front door open as we reached Eve's house. It was a square, brick building, with blue ribbon-like linings on the edges. We slightly tracked mud through the house, Eve's mom shooting worried glares at us.

"Oh my goodness, you're completely covered in mud!" She grabbed a rag, half-chuckling and half-shouting. "Are you okay, Midna?" she asked me. She had a light blue apron on, and her smooth light blue hair was tied into a neat bun. I was almost like the rebellious daughter she never had, as I had spent so much time with Eve and her family.

"Recent sightings of tornadoes in Northbrook and Barrington have shocked several members of the Chicago area. Several signs have proved that a possibly devastating tornado could be heading for Elmhurst. This is Helga Lonty, for ABC News 7." The TV beamed, an extremely scared look now pasted in Eve's eyes.

I sensed her fear, so I tried to reassure her. "Don't worry, it'll be fine. There are literally never tornadoes in Elmhurst." I sadly smiled. "We'll be fine."

"Okay, yeah, you're right." She croaked. "Anyway, Mom, can Midna sleep over-" She stopped to a halt when I cut her off.

"Oh, it's fine, I'll take the bus home. Thanks for the offer, though," I replied, and began to walk towards the front door.

"Are you sure you're okay?" Eve's mom asked.

"Yeah. I'm good." I twisted the door handle, and stumbled outside into the storm. Flickering headlights of a bus glimmered in the rain, and the sound of cars driving through puddles echoed around the town.

I ran towards the bus, and took shelter under the booth at the stop. Once it pulled up, I hopped on and handed the driver some money. I then proceeded to find a seat in the back, where it was less crowded and hectic.

I looked out the window, rain pelting against the glass. The bus was dimly lit, and only a few passengers were aboard. The most irritating thing about a bus ride is how it stops every few seconds. Are people really that lazy to walk the extra block to get to work?

Once the bus finally stopped near my house, I jogged outside. I covered my hair with my hands, and looked down at my feet to avoid slipping in any malicious puddles. I really didn't need to get wetter.

My mom smiled as I walked inside. "I'm so glad you're fine," she began. "I was so worried about you!" She shouted over the racket of the pots and pans she was rinsing off.

"Yeah, except I'm soaked!" I giggled, hanging my raincoat in the small, wooden closet we had near our front door.

"Well, I'm going to go take a shower, and after that I'm going to go to bed, so, goodnight I guess." I yawned, walking over to the bathroom.

"Goodnight!" She replied.

I took a speedy, steaming shower, then headed into my room. It was messy, with toys I hadn't used in years scattered around the floor.

I plugged in my phone, then jumped under the covers. A bad habit of mine is staying up incredibly late before the first day of school, trying to think about what it'll be like.

Once the clock struck eleven, I drifted off to sleep.



Ring! Ring! Ring!

My alarm buzzed in the most aggravating way it possibly could. I smashed the speaker off, and arose from my bed, more fatigued than I had ever felt before. My mornings were on a strict schedule, and everything had to be done perfectly in an exact order.

Get dressed? Check. Brush my hair? Check. Brush my teeth? Check. Eat breakfast? Check. Feel like you're running late, even though you're actually early? Check.

I hurdled my heavy backpack onto my shoulders, packed to the brim with every single material I would ever need.

I climbed into my mom's car, and drove off in a slight hurry. I was occupied staring at myself in the mirror, making sure every single strand of hair was perfectly even.

You could say that I was insanely stressed.

Kids from the size of leprechauns to the size of Bigfoot roamed the concrete grounds. We pulled up to the main entrance, a swarm of people gathered around the area. I took a few deep breaths, my heart seeming like it was running a marathon.

I took my gigantic backpack, waved my mom goodbye, and exited the car.

And so my crazy first day middle school story began.



I anxiously walked through the front gate, crashing into several kids on the way. The schoolyard was incredibly crowded, kids scattered around in every area possible.

I noticed Eve's familiar, green, hair from a distance. After taking a huge sigh of relief, I jogged over her.

She seemed to be wearing makeup, which was a definite first. She was surrounded by a group of girls, who I had never seen before.

"Hey!" I smiled, looking at Eve a little nervously. "Who are these girls?"

Eve stayed silent. One of the girls opened her mouth, revealing a huge wad of gum banging around her teeth. "Is this the freak you were telling us about, Eve?" She snickered. Eve scowled.

"Yeah, the little brat." Eve replied.

"I hear you hate makeup," The first girl said, removing the cap of the coffee in her hand.

"Maybe this will change that opinion." She finished.

Before I knew it, the burning drink was pouring down from my head, soaking my new pink skirt in the process.

I heard the laughs of everyone nearby, including Eve.

I ran away, only ten minutes into the day, tears already streaming down my cheeks.



The bell sounded, waves of students charging at the front door. I slipped in, trying to remain unseen.

I ran inside, and stealthily ran over to the nearest girls bathroom. I swung the door open, and luckily, it was completely vacant.

I trudged my heavy feet inside. Never had I felt so betrayed, lost, and lonely. I slid against the blue stall, sliding down with my hands in my face.

I let it all out. Sobs echoed around, a vomiting reflex beginning to rise up from my stomach. I tried with all my might to hold it down, but it rose stronger.

I threw up all over the floor, a little of the vomit coated on the edge of my pants. I cried even harder at the sight, never feeling this...

...alone.

The depression swerved suddenly into anger as I stood up. A dark scowl was pasted onto my face, one that wouldn't stop me from anything.

I kicked the stall door as hard as I could, a volcano of noise erupting behind me. At that moment, a worried face ran inside. Her face was drenched with makeup, and I recognized her instantly. She was one of the girls that Eve hung out with, one of the bullies.

"Oh, look who we have here!" she squealed, in the most annoying voice possible.

"What do you want?" I retorted.

"Why don't you just die? Everyone would be happier that way, ugly psycho." She snickered.

So much rage and anger was built into my system, that I couldn't control it.

Before I knew it, my fist pounded her face, and she was the one crying.



The world felt like it was spinning thirty times faster than it actually was. Blood trickled out of the girls left nostril, a deep pain embedded in her eyes. She lay down on the cold, wet bathroom floor, screaming in pain.

"You little brat!" she croaked, attempting to stand up.

"I'm so sorry, you just were being pretty mean to me-" I was then cut off by a loud growl.

"Oh, shut up! Leave me alone, you psychopath!" She turned away to leave, but we were interrupted with an insanely loud siren.

A little click echoed through the bathroom, followed by an announcement on the intercom. "*All students report to the first floor hallway in front of the main office! A tornado is approaching. All students, report to the first floor hallway in front of the main office.*"

"A tornado?" The girl cried out. "No, no, no, this is awful!" She put her hand to her face and began to cry more. "Come on freak, we have to go to the hallway! Did you *not* hear anything?" She sobbed. I ignored her nasty words, and left without her.

The second floor hallway was empty, desolate, and seemed like something out of a horror movie. I peeked my head through one of the windows, and there it was.

A tornado.

I noticed Eve's bright green hair when I arrived on the first floor. I took a spot as far away as I could from my backstabbing 'friend'. I didn't care about her anymore. She obviously didn't care about me.

A screeching noise began to pick up in volume by the second. I crouched down against a blue locker, terrifying thoughts beginning to fill my mind.

I could die today, and it would be knowing I wasn't loved.



It's almost funny, thinking you could die at a specific moment. You spend your whole life worrying about hopes and dreams, but then-

Splat!

You're gone. Now excuse my pessimistic attitude, but knowing you'll die within a matter of seconds doesn't exactly lead to happy thoughts. If you were about to be demolished by a tornado like me, I'm sure you would feel the same way.

The gray, dark, ruthless funnel continued to tiptoe up to the school. Never in my life did I feel so lost, alone, and vulnerable at the same time. The bullying was one thing, but this was on a whole other level.

The school entered 'zero-gravity' mode as several bodies were tossed and turned into the air. The rumbling noise was excruciatingly loud as the south wall of the school was swung off its hinges, and tossed into the air.

I clenched the handles of the nearby locker, flung into the air. My head smacked the corner of a dark, wooden desk, causing my forehead to bleed excessively. The school was madness. Blood, vomit, and unconscious-or maybe even *dead* kids were scattered around on the floor. In the air, hundreds of students smashed into each other, others leaving the school entirely. At that moment, I felt myself fly backwards, down a flight of stairs.

Only a few other kids were present with me, none who looked familiar. The ground floor was farther north than the first, so the tornado hadn't even plowed through here yet. Several kids were crying, others shocked by the sight. There was nothing any of us could do. We were like extras in a movie, unimportant, and wouldn't make a difference if we were removed.

The second impact was somehow even *more* dreadful than the first. The storm moved slower now, but it was stronger than before. I saw multiple students plummet down the stairs. One was a face I didn't want to see.

Eve.

She desperately crawled over to me, blinded by the puff of smoke and debris present in the air. A deep sympathy was locked in her eyes, one completely filled with regret. "Midna!" She screamed, a swollen eye throbbing on her face. She rushed over to me, but was smashed backward at the force of the storm.

She jumped over a large chunk of concrete, which resulted in her tripping and cutting her knee. Her skirt turned blood red, and her face was a bright, nauseated pink.

She grabbed my soldiers, our bodies beginning to spin around in the air. She pulled me in close, trying to brace the impact of the ruthless concrete, but it would possibly kill us either way.

She rapidly moved her eyes from my face to the air above me. I followed her expression, to notice a large chunk of wood inches away from my head. I felt a large bang, and the world turned to a blur. A dark fuzz, clouding my vision.



"Last one down the hill is a rotten egg!" Eve giggled, placing her hands on the ripe, green grass of Cricket Hill. She began to roll incredibly fast down the steep hill, a seemingly never ending trail of high-pitched squeals and laughs.

"I'll beat you to it!" I shouted, now rolling down the smooth surface alongside her. Days like these were so carefree. It was the summer of second grade, not a worry in the world for us. As we bounced off the hill and dove into the pool, the sun shone brightly on my back. I pretended I was a dolphin, swimming through the beautiful beach that was the paradise of Hawaii. Eve splashed energetically in the pool. "Midna, we're going to be best friends forever!" she squeaked.

"Yeah!" I replied. Everything had seemed so *promising*, so *real* at that time. I had never felt more loved than in those days of my life.

Little did I know, happiness can't last forever. No matter how much you try to relive it, you have to move on.

I looked down at my feet, which had disappeared. My heart started to beat intensely faster. A tingling sensation started to trickle up my leg, deliquescing in the process. There was no blood, leaving me to believe only one thing.

I was entering reality.

As much as I grabbed on to the poles near the side of the pool, I couldn't win. Soon my hands had been gone, but Eve continued to talk to me as if I was still there.

That was a different Eve than I knew now. The Eve I knew now was too afraid to be my friend in public, but deep down inside, she cared about me.

I had hoped that the tornado incident changed that, but I could never be sure.

No blood trickled, no pain sizzled. I glanced around one last time. I had completely been erased. My spirit was now nothing but a flux, traveling down a never ending river.



As I woke up, incredibly bright light slightly blinded me. I tried to turn away, but it only grew lighter. A silhouette appeared, tears dripping down the cheeks of it and onto my blouse. The tears were frigid, like they had just experienced something tragic.

My eyes fluttered open. "Midna!" The silhouette cried out. The dark fuzz erased itself from my vision, and I could now see the world with a whole new clarity. It was Eve, her mint green hair resting lightly on my soldiers.

"Midna, I'm sorry. I'm sorry for bullying you. Laughing at you. I'm sorry for it all. I'm such a terrible friend. But you know what, I'm not going to give in to the "popular crowd." I was trying to be someone who I'm not, and that was a terrible idea. From now on, I'll be loyal. Right by your side, the whole time. I swear on my life. I've never felt more guilty." She cried. Tears rolled down her cheeks and onto the grass below us. She has a large, deep cut slashed across her face, most likely from the rubble knocked around through the storm.

"But Eve, your face..." I whispered.

"Yeah Midna, I know, but the most important thing is that I'm here with you now, and you're alive. And I'm eternally grateful for you." She smiled.

Did she keep her promise? The answer is an astonishing yes. Whenever I would be tormented, she always defended me, even if it meant getting herself hurt. She was the most important person in my life, one that I would be eternally grateful for, too.

Everything happens for a reason, and my life is living proof of that.

