

Mr. Sassy Monkey

I woke up suddenly, arms crossed in front of me, lying on top of my books. I opened my eyes and saw a drawing of a sassy monkey climbing a rope, arrows labelling the directions of forces being exerted on the monkey. *Physics diagrams...ugh.* I rubbed my eyes and recognized my favourite coffee shop's light gray walls. I groggily checked the time on my phone: 7:30 PM. *If I leave now, I might get home before 9.*

I quickly walked towards the shop's front door, the sassy monkey safely stored away in my backpack. The shop was virtually empty, the manager making final checks for the night. He waved to a boy and a girl outside in the rain, and I recognized the boy as the clever white-haired boy in my physics course. I pushed open the front door and stepped outside.

I fumbled with my umbrella under the veranda. A small figure brushed past my leg and I spun around to see a small orange cat, rainwater dripping from its coarse, matted fur, heading for the boy and the girl behind me. It wobbled with each step. I shrugged, rose my umbrella over my head, and started walking towards the bus stop.

I took three steps before I heard a distressed call behind me. I quickly turned around. I saw the girl-run back into the shop. The boy was crouched, facing me but his head turned behind him. He quickly glanced into the shop and dropped his backpack.

"What happened-" I started, but he was already running after something behind him. *If he's chasing after an assailant, he's going to get himself hurt, or worse.* I cursed and started running after the boy.

I squinted to keep the drizzling rain out of my eyes. I saw the boy turn sharply into an alleyway and my heart beat faster. *If the assailant turned into the alleyway, he might ambush this stupid white-haired boy.*

I stopped just before the alleyway and peered inside. The alleyway was pitch-black, and I saw no movement.

I waited until my breathing slowed to its normal rhythm. I took a step into the darkness and my eyes slowly adjusted. The end of the alleyway was still shrouded in darkness, but I could make out a low shifting figure a few steps in front of me. The faint silver moonlight crept its way into the alleyway, past me and finally just on the figure. I realized that the figure was the white-haired boy. He was crouched ahead of me, his back towards me, working on something in front of him.

"Wh... What are you doing?" I questioned.

His right arm jerked slightly, but he showed no other signs of recognizing my presence. I squinted to look for an assailant further down the alleyway beyond the moonlight, but I might as well have had my eyes closed.

"You left your friend," I continued, "It's not safe here."

He stood and turned, his eyes still hidden from the moonlight, but didn't move. He gripped a thin, small blade. Blood streamed from the blade to the ground and eventually slowed to a drip. "What did you do-" I began, my voice shaking.

He slowly brought his left hand closer to his face. He put his finger over his lips as if to shush me. I was screaming at myself to run, but my body wouldn't move. He stepped towards me, now in the moonlight. He was easily taller than me and stared at me with narrowed, harsh eyes.

"I won't tell-," I started, but he only walked past me, without uttering a single word.

My knees buckled, and I fell forward. My neck felt surprisingly warm, and I wondered if I had suddenly developed a fever. The soft rain that had once been a whisper in the air felt surprisingly fierce. I looked forward and saw a red and orange cat's tail.

I woke up suddenly, my arms crossed in front of me, lying on top of my books. I opened my eyes and saw a sassy monkey waving its arms around in front of me. "Mr. Sassy Monkey?" I groggily questioned.

I rubbed my eyes and realized that the monkey was actually my physics professor, and he was clearly irate, no doubt only further angered by my accurate but rude comment.

"Well Ms. Jane, since you must find my teaching so boring that you're sleeping, surely you can answer this question," my professor jeered.

I looked at the board, and I had no idea what was happening in class.

"Is this going to be like last time, Ms. Jane, where you just sit there and cry-" My professor began, but I packed my things and left.

I walked out of the lecture room and turned to my right to leave. In front of me, I saw the white-haired boy. I held my breath as he waved, smiling. He walked past me and into the lecture room.