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## Part 1 – The Week Prior

### Chapter 1 –

The school bell rang and we all rushed out the door.

“Make sure to be extra vigilant on your way home kids, stay together and walk in groups, please!” the teacher yelled.

There wasn’t that much wrong with our town, it was just a little too big for all of us young kids that were running around while our parents were still at work or doing errands around the house and couldn’t come and get us. That really wasn’t the case for my friend Catherine. Her mother was always there at the end of the school day to pick up her and her three siblings.

“You know, I feel bad for you,” she said. “Where is your mum?”

“Oh, she’s at work still. Don’t worry about it, Cathy. It’s okay, I’m used to walking home by myself.”

The first time she asked me that I could feel the rush of sympathy in her eyes. She was a caring friend, someone that I could trust since I was a little younger than she was. But I know that I did start looking up to her at one point once I had turned nine-years-old and she was older eleven or twelve. It was known that she did have a good life based on what she had told me. She had a loving family. Everyone in their community knew them and really liked them. And on top of that, most the time people would come over to their house to sleep over because their house was so huge. I wish I was a lucky as Cathy, but unfortunately that wasn’t the case for me.

“Oh, crude,” Cathy said. “It’s about to rain again.”

“That’s the London weather for you. And I thought you liked rain.” I said.

“The rain is nice when I’m not standing in it, silly. Now my hair and clothes are gonna get all wet and gross.”

“At least it’s not pouring it down with rain. Then that would be bad.”

Just as I said that, the rain started coming down really hard and the wind almost blew my umbrella out of my hand.

“You just *had* to say something, didn’t you Chelsea? Are you taking a piss?” Cathy said angrily.

“No, but the sky is.” I sniggered.

Cathy took her umbrella and opened it in the direction of my face causing the water to splash onto me. She felt that she was justified in doing that for some bloody reason, I didn’t know what was wrong with her. She was a mad woman, really. But if there is one thing that I will say about Cathy is that she is someone that I can rely on to make my day at little better.

We eventually find Cathy’s mother, Mrs. Hoffman, standing in her usual waiting spot for her children. She too, along with her eldest daughter, were not pleased with how much it was raining.

“Good afternoon, Chelsea,” Mrs. Hoffman. “The weather is really coming down, isn’t it?”

“Hello Mrs. Hoffman,” I said. “It’s not that bad, I would’ve been a little drier if someone didn’t splash water on me.”

“To be fair Mum, she said, ‘At least it’s not pouring down with rain.’ Like an absolute madwoman. Can you believe that?”

All her mother could do was just laugh at us because there wasn’t much else she could say that wouldn’t make herself look like she choosing between her daughter and her daughter’s friend. I personally believe that I wasn’t in the wrong, but of course Cathy doesn’t think so. There’s just something wrong with her, honestly.

“Have you seen the rest of your siblings, Catherine?” Mrs. Hoffman asked. “They usually would be here by now since your class is on the top floor.”

“I haven’t seen them since lunch. Have you seen them, Chelsea?” Sandra asked.

“No, I haven’t seen them at all today. At least I don’t remember seeing them today.”

It wasn’t unusual for Cathy’s siblings to up and disappear somewhere and then magically show back up alive by the time the bell rang since they were all in different grades. However, with Aaron being the eldest male sibling at thirteen. The remaining two children should have been alright in his care. But as of recently, Aaron had been acting different according to Cathy. She said that he had been staying out past his curfew and had started hanging around the wrong crowds. But I told her that she couldn’t be sure of that because she wasn’t with him all the time, so maybe she was just worrying too much. She did eventually calmed down, but she still had a feeling that something was going on.

“Should we go look for them?” I suggested. “They couldn’t have wondered off too far.”

“Mum? Should we?” Cathy asked.

“If we can’t find them by 5:30, then I will call the police.”

The time we started looking for them was 3:30pm.

3:45pm… Nothing.

They really couldn’t have gotten that far away in a such a short period of time. We checked with the school’s nurse and office to see if they came by and they both said that they didn’t.

4:00pm – Aaron’s classroom… Nothing. But apparently, his teacher said that he didn’t show up to class today which was really not like Aaron at all. He was one of the smartest kids I know, and his mother would kill him if she knew he had intentionally skipped class. But there had to be a reason why he didn’t show up to class, however, none of us had an idea why he did that.

“Has there been anything going on in class recently that would make him skip?” Mrs. Hoffman asked. “Surely, there is something.”

The teacher shook their head, “Everything from where I’m sitting was going fine in class. This is the first time that I’ve noticed Aaron not in class, he’s always the first one in his seat. So, I’m just as considered as the rest of you. However, there was one occasion that happened a few days ago between Aaron and another student that resulted in Aaron going to the nurse’s office because he had a cut on his knuckle.”

“I remember seeing his hand wrapped in tape when he got home but he told me that he burned himself doing a school project after school,” Mrs. Hoffman. “I just said, ‘Okay, be more careful’ and left it at that.”

I could tell that Mrs. Hoffman did feel guilty for not asking Aaron more about what was bothering him or about what had actually happened that day. But from what she just said, she just didn’t know and she didn’t see a point in asking further.

“What about my other children? Have you seen them at all?” Mrs. Hoffman asked. “I can’t find any of them anywhere.”

The teacher once again shook their head. Since her other two children, Thomas and Judy were younger than Aaron, the teacher really had no idea of where they could be or if anything happened to them.

“What should we do, Mrs. Hoffman?” I asked. “Should we call the police?”

Mrs. Hoffman really had begun to lose her composure because she didn’t know what was going on with one of her children and then her other two children are also missing as well. So, at that point, Mrs. Hoffman’s perfect and lighthearted demeanor was starting to break ever so slightly. But as she was able to fall into complete hysteria, Mr. Hoffman came rushing into the classroom.

“Daddy?” Cathy asked. “What are you doing here? Don’t you have work?”

“I was off today, so I picked up the other children a little early. I was wondering where you guys were since you weren’t home around 3:45.” He said.

Mrs. Hoffman’s face went from hysteria to complete anger, she jumped to her feet and stormed over to Mr. Hoffman and then all I heard was a very loud smacking sound.

“Are you fucking mad?” She hissed. “How dare you not tell me you got off early! Have you lost your sense of courteously, you absolute pig?”

Cathy and I stood in shock as we watched her mother slap Mr. Hoffman. I had never seen anything like that before from either one of them. Especially in public, Mrs. Hoffman was usually so polite and proper when dealing with situations like this. She would never just snap off and attack anyone.

“I’m sorry love, I th—”

“Don’t you fucking ‘love’ me! You know what you did was wrong! Do you know what is going on with Aaron? Do you?”

“No, I—I don’t. What is happening?”

“Apparently, he had gotten into a fight or something with another student and that’s why he came home with a bandaged hand. But what were you doing? Just sitting there drinking that fucking lager like you always do.”

“I just got home from work, what did you want me to do? You were tending to the lad, what more could I have done?”

“Fucking contribute more, you officious prick!”

“I’m not going to argue with you in front of the teacher or in front of Chelsea or Cathy, we will continue this when we get home.”

“Really now? What are you do? Drink your sorrows away again? Get off your ass and get a better fucking job you fucking cunt!”

“Sandra, go to the car please. Cathy, let’s go. Chelsea, I can take you home. Thank you for staying to help.”

“Oh, thank you. But I can walk, it’s not that far away. Maybe next time. I’ll go ahead and get out of your way. See you tomorrow, Cathy.”

### Chapter 2 –

I met up with Cathy and her mother the next morning by the crossroads that we always meet up at. I was excited to see Cathy, but after yesterday I wasn’t sure how to feel. I was really concerned about how she was doing after seeing her parents explode like that, especially her mother. I’m still shocked about that happening. It was so unexpected and so uncharacteristic of her. But today was a new day, so hopefully everything had gone back to normal somewhat.

I walked to see that neither Cathy or Mrs. Hoffman were at our usual meeting place. That was something was very odd and something that doesn’t happen often if ever. Usually Cathy would call me if she wasn’t feeling well or was going to be late. But I didn’t receive a call from her, so I just thought that she herself was alright and already at the meeting place. But the thing was that today since seemed rather quiet.

A little too quiet.

Usually, the birds are chirping around 6am. And the sound of children yelling would be quite profound, but not today. Something just seemed off. I just couldn’t figure out what it was. Maybe it was just me though. I was known by Cathy to be quite a skeptical person, whatever that means. She was rather weird when it came to those big words that her and Aaron used since they were a very religious family and believe that demons and spirits were real and stuff and that they could get into the minds of those around them and could control them. Me personally, I really didn’t believe in that kind of stuff. But I knew it did exist, I just didn’t understand it enough like Cathy or Aaron did.

But I ended getting lost in my own thoughts long enough for Cathy to sneak up behind me and scare the living crap out of me.

“Gotcha! Hahaha!” She laughed.

“Bloody hell man, what’s your problem??” I yelled. “You scared me half to death! What’s wrong with y—”

I turned to see that Cathy eye was black.

“What happened to your eye?” I asked.

“Nothing, just fell and hit it. Nothing to worry about, really.”

“Everything alright?”

“Of course, silly. Why wouldn’t it be?”

“Umm… hello. Yesterday doesn’t ring a bell?”

“Well, obviously it does. But that’s—besides the point. Why are you here so early?”

“What are you on about? We always meet at 6am.”

“No, we meet at 7am. School starts at 8am. I should be asking if *you* are alright.”

I stuck my tongue out at her, and she did it back to me. I could swear that it was 6am that we always met at the crossroads to walk to school. Now, all of a sudden it’s 7am. Since when did that become a thing?

“Has it always been 7am? Or am I losing the plot?” I asked.

“Honey, I think you been lost it. It’s always been 7am, you sleeping in the subway or something?” She snorted.

“The war has been long gone and done with, honey. Look at me, tough as nails.”

“Americans say that, is there something you’re not telling me?”

“How about ‘Piss off, you prick?’”

I could see her smile quick fade into a depressed gloomy frown.

“Hey, everything alright?” I asked. “Did I say something wrong?”

“No, no. You’re alright. I just wasn’t expecting you to say that. Especially after last night.”

“What happened last night?”

“W—what? N—nothing! I’m sorry, I was just thinking aloud. Shall we head to school?”

“You’re not gonna tell me what happened?”

“If I wanted you to know, I would show you myself. Now come on then, we’re gonna be late.”

She forcibly grabbed my hand and we ran to school.

2.1

Whatever happened this morning has been in my head all day. I couldn’t process what I did that could’ve made her act like that. Maybe something really did happen last night and she doesn’t want to tell me. But that was something that I didn’t notice until just then. Where was Mrs. Hoffman? She always walked with Cathy to the crossroads and then to school with us. But she wasn’t there today. Hopefully, nothing happened to her. Especially after what she did and said to Mr. Hoffman yesterday. I could understand him being extremely upset about whatever she said about him. But at the same time, I didn’t know how Mr. Hoffman was going to react after I left because I noticed that he wasn’t trying to be confrontation with Mrs. Hoffman. However, based on his calm demeanor and what she said about him, I don’t think he had much of a choice but to remain as calm as possible.

I felt a kick in the butt and quickly snapped around to see that Cathy was standing behind me and yet again scared me half to death.

“How many times are you going to spook me today?” I asked. “That is getting rather silly.”

“Well, you need to learn how to pay attention more my dear,” she said. “You need to be more careful and watch your surroundings.”

“Umm… alright then. That’s new coming from you. Are you sure you’re alright?”

“All I said was be careful and you think I’ve lost it?”

That was the biggest understatement if I’ve ever heard one ever.

“But regardless, you are my friend and I will look after you because no one else will,” she said. “Who’s going to protect you for those bad people in the world?”

“Umm… my mother? Who else?”

“Oh \**pfft*\* we’re not worried about her. You just leave everything to me, okay?”

I just looked at her with a face of confusion yet slight concern. How could someone literally have personality flip in a single night? I knew that it wasn’t my face to question or comment on what I thought and how I felt but at the same time… something just wasn’t right.

“Have you seen your siblings today?” I asked.

“Not today unfortunately, I left before everyone got up this morning. So, whatever happened to them is up in the air.” She said.

“What are you on about? What do you mean ‘up in the air’? That’s your family. Are you the least bit concerned?”

“If I wasn’t, I wouldn’t have said what I just said. You seem more concerned about them than I do. Why is that?”

I wasn’t really sure where this conversation was going, but I knew that I had to step away from Cathy rather quickly because I felt that she was going to do something to me.

“Umm… no reason at all, really. I was just thinking about yesterday and how worried everyone was about each other. But hey listen, I have to go to nurse’s office. We can talk later, okay?”

“I can walk with you there, it’s no—”

“No, no! Really, I have a serious headache. I’ll see you later!”

I quickly stepped around Cathy and hurried to the nurse’s office where I just laid on one of the beds that were empty and tried to doze off to sleep.

2.2

I woke up from whatever nap that I took and still had that pounding headache. I think it got worse as I slept. The nurse didn’t come get me and shoo me back to class, so at least I was able to skip class and be excused for it.

I looked around to see that no one was in the nurse’s office and the hallways were quiet and empty.

“*Surely, school wasn’t over. I didn’t sleep for that long, did I?*”

I walked out into the hallway to see that it was darker than usual and even quieter than when I was sitting in the nurse’s office. It probably didn’t help that the light was on the nurse’s office. I looked at the clock and it was half past 6pm.

“*How did I sleep for so long?* *No one thought to wake me up and see how I was doing?*”

Surely, that wasn’t the main issue. The main issue was where my mother was. She should’ve noticed me not back by around 4pm, she normally would’ve drove up here to see what was taking me so long.

I didn’t try to force myself to understand what was happening. I walked back towards my bed and then looked down to see that my bag and shoes were propped up next to it. I didn’t remember putting them there. And the only person that knew I was going to the nurse’s office was Cathy, but I didn’t tell her to bring my stuff to me.

I reached down and grabbed my bag and noticed a small piece of paper inside my shoe. I opened it up and read it.

“*I told the teacher that you had needed to go to the nurse’s office. So, someone most likely will be you your stuff. I hope you feel better soon. Cathy.”*

“That’s a relief at least.” I said.

But the question still remained of where my mother was.

I grabbed my stuff and put my shoes on and walked towards the door.

I turned off the light in the nurse’s office and saw a shadow standing on the other side of the glass.

I fell back and crawled back as far away from the glass as people. I didn’t see anyone or hear anyone near me or in the school when I woke, so I didn’t know what I was looking at or how whatever was there got there.

“*Surely, it doesn’t know you’re here, Chelsea. Nothing to worry about.*”

I knew that I had to get out of there as fast as possible and I knew that whatever was there either didn’t see me or didn’t know there was someone there.

While still on the ground, I started crawling as quietly as possible towards the door. As I was crawling, I had my eyes glued on that shadow standing there. It wasn’t moving from what I could see, but I was more concerned about trying to not be seen by it. I realized that when I flew back into the corner of the room that I was rather far away from the door and had to crawl basically into the open space.

I tried to crawl along the wall of the room so it couldn’t see me. It seemed to work well enough.

I reached the door and breathed a sign of relief, “Finally, hopefully it didn’t see me.”

I turned around to see that shadow was gone.

“*Oh, no…*”

It was at that point that I just decided to accept fate and opened the door and sprinted out of the nurse’s office as fast as possible. I didn’t know where I was going since it was so dark in the school. Any turn that I made just took me back to where I started, and every turn felt more like maze than anything else. I had never been in the part of the school, my class was on the far west side of the school. So, I knew that if I could get down there I would at least know where I was and could escape.

I tried looking and feeling around for anything that seemed familiar to where my class was. I noticed that there was some light shining through a window in a hallway. I ran towards it to see that I was in the hallway that connected both the east and west sides of the school together.

I took a moment to catch whatever little breath I had left and took a second to ponder on what I should next. I thought the nurse’s office was on the side as my class. Was there another one that I didn’t know about? Wouldn’t someone have told me that there was two?

“*What am I going to do?*”

After pondering for a second on what the situation with the nurse’s offices were. I walked towards the big window and said that the main courtyard was right there. But the problem was that I had ended running around to the top floor of the school in a frenzied panic. And it didn’t help that the school was still incredibly dark, and the only light source was this open window since the stairs didn’t have windows. I felt trapped and didn’t have anywhere to go. I didn’t feel safe going down those stairs by myself and not knowing what was down there, if there was anything at all. I didn’t know where that shadowy figure went, for all I knew it could’ve been following me or waiting for me at the bottom of those stairs.

“*What was Cathy on about when she that she would protect me? Is this what she was talking about?*”

Clearly, in this situation she wasn’t anywhere to be found. And I didn’t have a phone to call my mother and ask her to come save me.

I curled up into a ball and cover my ears and face and tried to drift to sleep.

### Chapter 3 –

“Chelsea dear, wake up!” A voice called. “What are you doing here?”

I snapped awake to see I was lying in the nurse’s office. I looked around to see that the nurse was standing over me with a clipboard and was looking at me worriedly.

“Are you alright my love?” she said. “You’re sweating through the sheet.”

I looked around to the room to see that it was still daylight and that there were people walking around and the lights were on in the hallways.

“Where am I?” I said groggily.

“You’re in the nurse’s office. I had stepped out for a brief second. You probably came in here and just laid down since you didn’t see me based on how dark it is over here. Did you happen to turn the light off on accident?”

“I—I—I remember don’t remember, Madam. Really I don’t. How long have I been here?”

“Well, I don’t know what time you got here but it is now 3:45pm. School is about to end, so that’s why I’m waking you up.”

“Oh. Okay, thank you.”

I quickly got up and look around for my shoes.

“Oh, Chelsea, darling? Cathy came by earlier and dropped out your belongings. There are in the locker next to the door.”

“Thank y— Umm… Madam, what side of the school are we on?”

“The east side of the school, my dear.”

“H—how many nurse’s offices are in the school?”

“This is the only one my dear. Now run along, you got to get your stuff ready…”

Her voice started to fade as I tried to ponder what she just said. So, there was really only *one* nurse’s office in the school. But then, how did I end up on the other side of the school? What is happening, am I missing something here? Surely not. This was just a coincidence, whatever happened last night was surely a dream. It had to be, but it was far too real to not be.

“Cathy said that she dropped off my stuff, right, Madam?” I asked. “Did she say anything?”

The nurse turned around, “Not of much importance, just to meet her outside after school in your usual meeting place. Why?”

“Oh, no reason at all. I was just curious as much. Thank you very much, have a good day.”

“—did you see that thing last night—”

“—I don’t know if that was a thing—”

“—I heard they were looking for someone—"

“—whatever it or *they* are can fuck right off—”

In the midst of everyone talking amongst themselves, those particular things stuck out to me. What were they talking about? Who were they talking? What happened last night? But I never met those students, so I wasn’t able to just jump into their conversation and make myself look like a moron.

However, the notion was somewhat intriguing. But I still betted against it.

I walked outside to our usual meeting spot and met up with Cathy. She seemed really concerned about me and ran up and hugged really tightly.

“Oh my God, are you alright??” She asked. “I’ve been worried sick about you, tell me you’re okay.”

“I’m alright,” I shrugged. “My headache is still there a little bit, but it’s not as bad as it was earlier today. Maybe I just needed to get some sleep, you know?”

“Are you sure? I don’t need you passing out on me. I worry greatly about you, Chelsea.”

“I don’t know why. I can take great care of myself.”

“I find that statement to be strongly questionable since you’re only twelve, but alright. Let’s go with that.”

“You’re not that much older than me, missy. You’re thirteen or fourteen.”

“Fourteen is more accurate.”

I nudged her shoulder, “Oh, fuck off.”

She laughed off my humorous insult and stuck her tongue out at me in retaliation.

“I have one question though,” I said. “How did you know which class I’m in if we’re in different years?

“Oh, I have seen you around in the hall and I know a few kids in your class. So, when I mentioned you they said that they also knew you as well.”

“Really? You know like everyone. You’re really popular, but you talk to me. So, I guess you’re not *that* popular.”

She put her hand on my shoulder, “I mean, just because I know a lot of people, does not mean that I am even remotely close to being a popular girl. I am just like you. But the only different is that I am two years older than you.”

“So, naturally…”

“…People, for example, kids your age, will walk and talk to me because I’m older and I just seem cooler than people their own age. Trust me, I was the same when I was your age.”

“Well, that’s nice to know that someone kind of understands where I’m coming from. Most people don’t understand.”

Cathy wrapped her arms around me and squeezed tightly.

“I understand you more than you think. You just gotta trust me, okay? I won’t let anything happen to you.”

The words that came out her mouth were something that I hadn’t heard before or felt before. The amount of effort that she put in just to prove to me that she would always be there for me was something that I hadn’t heard from anyone in my life aside from my mother. But to hear it from Cathy, a girl that I looked up to, really meant a lot to me.

3.1

I ran home after saying my goodbyes to Cathy and was full with some much joy. I didn’t know how to feel honestly. Finally, someone who actually cared about me as a person. Most people really didn’t care too much for me for whatever reasons. I knew that with Cathy, I was younger than her and that I couldn’t really keep up with her in any sense. She was someone that I wanted to be. She was beautiful, intelligent, caring, and assertive.

All the things I wasn’t. And it really showed.

But there had to be a reason why she wanted to be my friend. Most people didn’t like me or talked to me. However, as soon as I moved to London and saw that we lived in the same neighborhood, it was almost like she implemented herself into my life. Which to me, wasn’t a big issue. I wasn’t looking forward to having to make friends all over again. The “friends” I had back in Wales really were really hard to make and it made life difficult for me because of how I looked, talked, and dressed.

But for the most part, moving to London was neither something that I was looking forward to or really dreading because it would have been a new place and a new chance to actually make a real friend.

I walked past the kitchen to see my mother reading the paper, an activity she had rarely done and it was rather dark in the kitchen for what I noticed.

“Hiya, mum!” I said gleefully. “How was your day?”

“Oh, Chelsea!” She said. “You’re home early and in a rather happy mood, did something happen?”

“Nothing really, I had a really bad headache earlier today. But I feel a little better and I made a new friend.”

The newspaper was still in front of her face and as I walked into the kitchen, I saw that she was slouching and gripping the newspaper rather tightly and there were bruises on her hands and legs.

“That’s great, honey!” She said. “I’m proud of you. And there is some medicine in the cabinet for you. I can get it for you if you want.”

“Mum? What happened to you?” I asked. “You never read the paper. And why are you bruised up? Did something happen to you?”

“What are you on about, honey? I—I—I’m alright, really! See?”

She moved the newspaper away from her face to show that she was fine. But I noticed an excess amount of makeup on her face. And her face was more puffy than usual.

“Did someone hurt you?” I asked.

“Of course not, don’t be silly dear!” She said. “I just had a little… work accident today.”

“Is that why you have on a lot of makeup at four-fifteen in the afternoon?”

“Maybe I just wanted to freshen up today, you never know. I may have a special occasion to attend.”

“Mum, I—”

“Don’t worry dear, I’ll be fine. Now go on and do your homework. I’ll make dinner in little bit. What would you like?”

“Umm… you decide, I guess. We had fish and chips yesterday.”

“How about hamburgers, chips, and potatoes?”

“That sounds good, I guess.”

“Alrighty then, now run along. I’ll call you when dinner is ready.”

I looked at her with a face of concern, however I did want to say something but I knew that I would probably just get dismissed or interrupted by her because she was claiming to be strong. But something was really wrong and I didn’t know what to do about it.

I walked into my room and started working on my homework. I had a record of The Beatles that I would always listen to whenever I did any work. My mother gave it to me when I was younger as a way to stay closer to her and to escape whatever pain was bothering me. Which most of the time was just not having any friends or being alone all the time while my mother worked.

I heard a glass shatter in the kitchen.

“Bloody hell!” My mother shouted.

I rushed into the kitchen to see that she was on the floor trying to quickly sweep up the glass that had shattered.

“Mum, are yo—”

“Don’t step in here without slippers on, are you mad?” She shouted.

“I’m sorry!” I said. “Do you need any help?”

“Most likely, because I can’t see all the shattered pieces of glass. Can you be a dear and go get a trash bag?”

I quickly ran and got my slippers and ran back into the kitchen and tried to not step on the shattered glass that was scattered all of the kitchen. I grabbed a trash bag and bent down and opened it to have my mother put whatever pieces she was able to get up in.

This behavoir was really not like her. She was never this clumsy or sloppy. And why was she acting so hostile towards me? She never did that either.

“Mum, are you *sure* you’re alright?” I asked. “You’re always more careful than this.”

She put some more glass in the trash bag, “Yes dear, I’m fine. Why are you so concerned?”

“A lot of reasons, really. Your face, your bruises, your clumsiness. It’s not like you.”

“It’s just one day, it’s not like it has been happening for a while. You’re worried about me too much. I can take care of myself. Nothing to worry about.”

Her half-hearted answer was something that I clearly didn’t accept, but there wasn’t anything that I could really do to make her take me what was really bothering her. And for that matter, she never told me anything that was bothering her since I was her daughter and I couldn’t do anything about it except just sit there and watch her. But she was always so strong, so if there was anything that was actually bothering her, she never showed it.

We finished cleaning up the kitchen and I took the trash bag out to the bin. I walked back inside to see that my mother was sitting on the couch and watching something on the T.V. Whatever it was, wasn’t that much of an interest to me, especially since I was too young to watch whatever she was watching.

“Oh, Chelsea,” she said. “I will be going out tonight. So, don’t wait up, and I’ll be back before you’ll leave for school.”

“Oh, okay,” I said confused. “I didn’t you know you had plans. And what about dinner? Weren’t we gonna eat together?”

“I’ll wrap up dinner for you, but not tonight unfortunately. This was sudden and I didn’t expect you to be home so early. I’m sorry, but tomorrow for sure. I’ll whip something that we can both enjoy together, how about that?”

“That’s fine, I guess. You *will* be back before the clock strikes midnight, right?”

“Of course I will, young lady. Who is in charge here?”

“....”

“I’ll let you know when I’ll be leaving.”

“Okay.”

3.2

The clock struck half past eight and I had just finished my homework. My mother didn’t come get me or call for me to tell me that she was leaving yet, but she did say that she was wrapping up dinner for me so she could leave.

I walked into the kitchen to see that the food was made, but she wasn’t anywhere to be seen. And the front part of the house was rather dark. I walked into the living room to see that the T.V. was on, but it was just static on the screen. Which was weird because she would just turn off the T.V. when she was done with it.

“Mum?” I called. “Are you still here?”

The house sat there in silence as I waited for any response from her.

I turned my attention but to the T.V. and went up to turn it off, but when I clicked the off switch it didn’t turn off.

I repeatedly tried turning off the T.V., “Come on, then! Turn off…”

I hit the top of the T.V. to see if it was broken, and then after I hit the second time, the T.V. flashed a still-shot of the room I was standing in.

I quickly step back from the T.V. and tried to process what I was looking at.

“Who is that?” I asked. “What am I looking at?”

I tried reaching to turn the T.V. off again when it flashed to another room in the house. And in that room was a figure standing in the corner by the closet. It looked like a person.

“…How? Where--?” I stuttered.

As soon as I uttered those words, the figure looked up at the screen and the T.V. shut off.

I was left in a state of shock, confusion, and pure terror. I don’t know what thing was, but it’s in the house and I don’t have anywhere to hide.

“*How did it get in here?* *Where is my mother?*”

I quickly tried scanning the living room for a place that I could potentially hide in. But most of the furniture that we owned was too narrow for me to fit into. I tried squeezing between the couch and clock, but that was too much of a squeeze because I couldn’t breathe properly. The next step was making a run for the kitchen, but the hallway was incredibly dark and I didn’t know where that thing was in the house.

Or how close it was to me.

### Chapter 4 –

## Part 2 –