

A COLLECTION OF ONE
THOUSAND WORD STORIES

LOST THOUGHTS

Volume One

JAMILA MIKHAIL

Lost Thoughts — Volume One

A Collection of One Thousand Word Stories

Copyright © 2017 Jamila Mikhail

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the author, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, places, events and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

www.jamilamikhail.com

Visit my official website for more free stories you can download, links to all of my social media and online-only content as well as information, discount codes and special offers for my paid books. You can also sign up to receive email notifications of new releases and other book news by following the link below. It's free and there's no obligation!

<https://books2read.com/r/B-A-UZCF-XIUP>

All of these short stories were written between 2011 and 2016 but nothing ever came of them. The four unfinished parts were originally parts at the end in a longer story that was never completed.

The Vessel

“Did you hear what Churchill said on the radio Leopold?” Eleonora asked for what seemed like the millionth time. “He said that we can have a brief period of rejoicing now that Germany has surrendered!”

As much as I would have liked to rejoice, I was still far too tired to feel anything other than precisely *being* tired. Eleonora had also neglected to mention the fact that Churchill also said that there was still a long and hard road ahead. The Japanese continued to fight and the journey across the Pacific would be a long one.

“Honestly I don’t know how we can rejoice when there’s nothing left of the entire continent.” I grumbled. Eleonora had learned to breathe again, but I had not. I still smelled the smoke, I still tasted the grime and I even still wore my stripes.

“Life in America will be so amazing,” Eleonora continued on. She too was still wearing her stripes but the smile on her face seemed to distort them. I didn’t really see them anymore. I knew they were there, but I couldn’t see them. “Although the vessel will be arriving in New York I really want to go to Boston. Some of the Americans in the port were talking about what life is like there and I really want to go.”

I had no choice but to admire her for her big dreams. They hadn’t taken them from her, despite everything, she still had a good heart. But the big question was, how would she make a life for herself all alone in a foreign country at just fifteen? We had nothing except the clothes on our backs and our souls, if we had any left.

“And what if the boat sinks on its way to New York like the Titanic?” I mused as both Eleonora and I sat on the deck in the open air waiting for the vessel to depart.

“Leopold,” Eleonora grumbled herself, “the Nazis couldn’t kill us, do you think the ocean will?” It wasn’t like her to be annoyed, and especially not with me, but I could not bring myself to share her hope for the future. “I know it’s hard,” she put her hand on mine, “but we’re free now. You can close your eyes and rest easy at night now knowing that our British and Russian friends and allies will stand up for justice for us.”

The boat kept on filling up with other passengers, many also wearing stripes just like us. I said nothing for a while as I looked up at the fluffy white clouds in the sky. My entire family had gone up in smoke, *literally*. My home had been completely destroyed. Rubble was the only thing left of my house that had been taken over by some Germans after we were forced out. The entire street had been leveled too. There was nothing left.

“Are you sure you don’t want to go to Palestine?” I asked Eleonora after an extended moment of silence.

“You’re not a Jew.” She replied emotionlessly. Eleonora was an Italian Jew but I was only a Pole. Palestine didn’t have much to offer me. There was nothing left of my own

country either, or much of any country in Europe for that matter. "But you are." I added dryly.

"I can't leave you behind Leopold! You risked your life for me. You gave me your extra rations, you even took a beating from the SS for me in the factory. And you expect me to run off you and never think about you again? I have nobody else. You have nobody else. Who are we if we don't have each other?"

Tears rolled down my cheeks for the first time since liberation. When the Russians opened those gates I was right there and collapsed into the arms of the first Red Army soldier I saw. I didn't understand a single word of what the disheveled man told me but no words were necessary in a moment like that. I then grabbed Eleonora by the hand and we walked out. Just like that we were free. Just like that we'd also been deported almost two years earlier too.

"Are you alright my son?" An older man asked me as he passed me by on the vessel. "Here, have some chocolate," he went on as he handed me a bar, "it makes anybody happier!"

"Thank you," I said as I took the chocolate bar and split it with Eleonora.

"It's true that chocolate makes anybody happier," she said joyfully, "I mean, as long as it's not milk chocolate when you're lactose intolerant."

We both began laughing. How long had it been since I laughed? Since the war began? Six years? More than that? Eleonora and I both ate the delicious chocolate and licked our fingers afterwards. I also hadn't seen any in years, and out on the streets it was a luxury very few people could have with the food shortages and the destruction left in the wake of all the bombings. A fortunate few had gotten rich off the black market but I'd already given up all of my remaining golden teeth that the Nazis had missed to buy Eleonora and I tickets to New York.

"You still have thirty seconds to change your mind about Palestine." I said blankly as the last few passengers boarded the vessel.

"Look, Leopold, if you hate me that much we can part ways when we get to America." Eleonora replied, equally blankly.

"What makes you think that I hate you?" I chuckled with chocolate still in my mouth, "I just want you to have a good life. You don't owe me anything. I did what I did because I wanted to."

"Me too."

She scooted over to me and laid her head on my shoulder as the boat horn sounded announcing the departure. People waved at those still on land and everyone except me had a smile on their faces that stretched from ear to ear.

"I could've missed out on the camp but that also means that I would've had to miss out on you," Eleonora spoke softly through the cheers echoing all over the vessel, "and I wouldn't wanna miss you for the world."

The Heshin Immigrant

April 17th, 2017

Dear Tamar,

You may not remember me since we haven't seen each other in many years but I'm you're cousin Jasmine. I am your mother's youngest sister's daughter, we used to play together a lot before your family moved to Tehran almost a decade ago now. As I'm sure you've heard, we live in America now and we have been since the end of October last year. I'm sorry that we haven't written earlier, I know dad said we would keep in touch so it wouldn't feel like we left at all but things have been hard these last few months.

New York isn't really how I imagined it would be. It's not bad, not at all, but it's been very difficult for all of us to adapt. When I imagined America I imagined all of these big mansions with private pools and endless prosperity but reality hit me hard when my childish and superficial fantasies crumbled one by one. I imagined having everything I've ever wanted but so far there's been nothing but poverty. All of our savings are already gone. Neither one of us could've imagined how expensive this city would be. Both mom and dad work two jobs and I had to quit school to take on a part-time job and do only a few correspondence classes through an alternative school so Amir, Erwin and Fatima can go to school.

I want so much to make my dreams come true Tamar. There was nothing left for me in Heshin but at least it was familiar. Here everything is so new and strange and I don't know anybody, I literally have no friends and I still don't speak English all that well. I have so many big dreams that I want to pursue and make happen for me and I know that it will take a lot of hard work and perseverance and I hope to get your support because I don't really have any here at home. My parents are always at work and when they come back they are completely exhausted it's almost like they are strangers now and Fatima and the twins are much too young to understand or process the full weight of this situation.

The neighbor in our crowded duplex is also tough to deal with. Although our house in Heshin was crowded too at least there was harmony inside. We're really blessed to all get along so well when some people don't even speak to their families but right now I need more than that. Derek, the guy next door is noisy and disrespectful and has absolutely no consideration for anyone other than himself. At first he ignored us, then he started calling us towel heads, and now he has no problem harassing us. In just five months I've already had to call the police on him twice but they do nothing and the situation hasn't changed.

I had such high hopes for this new life when I arrived but now I'm discouraged. I'm not giving up though, and I'm not going back. I've never wanted anything more than I've wanted this and I'm going to pursue it no matter what but of course that is much easier said than done. Although I'm literally surrounded by millions of people I've never felt more alone. It's only really now that I'm discovering the frailty of humanity and all the confusion and contradictions within me when it comes to just who I want to become.

I need a hope for the future. I have so many dreams but for now that's all they are, dreams. In the face of much adversity I must hold on to the hope that one day they will all come true because otherwise I have nothing good to live for and I might as well just kill myself right here, but at the same time I don't wanna die here. I don't wanna die in this dirty and dark place in which I am writing this letter right now. When I close my eyes for the last time I want to do it with a smile on my face knowing that I've lived a good life and accomplished everything I set out to do. The thought of it is so beautiful, but I must open my eyes and turn this into a reality.

How are you and your family doing? It doesn't seem like we'll be able to come and visit you for a while unfortunately. You are all however welcomed to come by and see us at any time as it would be wonderful to see some familiar faces. Have you completed college yet? The last I heard you wanted to be a nurse, if that's what you ended up pursuing after all. I know how sometimes there's so much we want to do that it's hard to choose just one thing to chase after at a time. As for me it doesn't seem like I'll be able to study law in the near future but I want to take the opportunities America is giving me to become a writer.

I hear that it's very easy to get published here as long as you take the right approach. I know I'm getting ahead of myself because I don't even have a single word written yet but at least that door has opened here in New York. I don't seek fame and fortune (although I'll admit it would certainly be very nice to get out of poverty and be able to afford a proper education for myself and my siblings), I only really want to accomplish a lifelong dream. Remember when we used to write little screenplays as kids at your paternal grandma's house?

For now I don't really know what else to say, I feel like I'm only repeating myself and I don't want this to be all about me, so I'm going to end this short letter now and put it in the mail tomorrow. I hope to hear back from you soon and I hope that you have some good news to share with me.

Much love and blessings,
Jasmine

When I See You Again

Dear Someone I Used To Know,

It's been almost two years to the day since we last spoke. I know that you think of me, you cannot persuade me otherwise. There is no doubt in my heart and soul that at some point since that last July day that I have crossed your mind. Maybe I haunt you, or maybe you smile sweetly when you think of me, but I know that you do.

You and I have a long history. Maybe our time together was short lived but we made memories that even the devil himself cannot corrupt. We poured our hearts out to each other, held each other, loved each other. I will not lie, you also put bitterness in my heart when you left and never turned back to look at me again. Despite that you promised me even on that last day that you'd always be there for me I don't really hold it against you. It is not in me to harbor negative feelings towards someone, although I do believe that you cannot hate something or someone that you've never really loved. I loved you. I told you that on numerous occasions, and you dared to say it back to me, and I believed everything that came out of your mouth.

I was definitely enchanted to meet you; you put nothing but feelings of goodness inside my soul. When I cross your mind, what kind of residual emotions do I leave you with? Do you miss me? Do you have regrets? Do you look at my photos the same way I look at yours? Do you smile when you think of me? Or is it too hard and you'd rather not do it? For a long time I prayed that you'd come back to me but nowadays I'm happy that you're gone and I don't feel sorry that things ended because other things such as pain, anguish and regret never really do.

From time to time I do frown when you cross my mind, I'm not going to lie. It was very hard on me the way you left things, and it's altogether possible that that part will always sting. The easy part was indeed saying goodbye, but the easy part is over now, and I'm still here contemplating things I cannot change. I remember us sitting at my kitchen table and you talking about everything under the moon from the richest man in all of Turkey to God's grace to the pepperonis on the pizza you bought for me. I could tell you everything that was on my mind and you'd talk back to me with wise words and encouragement no matter what else was going on through your mind. So don't pretend that I'm not still crawling around in there somewhere.

Most certainly you've seen me at least once when you close your eyes at night. When some of our old friends ask me about you I reply with a simple *I don't know* but in fact I do know. Maybe I'm a coward and maybe I'm simply the one who doesn't want to admit it to myself that you moved on, that you look like you're happy on all of your pictures on Facebook and that you have a beautiful family life while I'm still sitting here all by myself like the very first day that we met. I've never met another one like you, did you meet

another one like me? If we saw each other again today you would tell me that I'm not the same person you used to know and I'd tell you that you're correct, and I'd also tell you that to me you're nothing more than a stranger. Just a stranger. Just like before we ever crossed paths.

I don't know why sometimes I smile when I think of your smile and other times I am tormented by simply the thought that you're somewhere out there probably disregarding me just like that time when we said our last words to each other. I wish you well, I really do. I do not wish ill on anyone, not even you. We both tried our best but it seemed like destiny had other plans for the both of us. If it brings you any comfort, if you ever actually come to read this which I'm pretty sure you won't, I'm doing fine. Destiny didn't quite rip me off after you left me in the middle of winter; the coldest winter on record in fact, and that was before you even rode off in that truck in the middle of the night.

I used to count the days since you've been gone, I got up to about 163 before I finally gave up, gave myself a good slap in the face so I could finally wake up and move on with my life too. I see that you did that quite nicely. I also heard, however, that you asked some of my friends how I was doing but they couldn't answer you because they hadn't seen me in months. They didn't tell me how you were doing either because you probably left that part out also. Do you feel guilt for what you did? Maybe it wasn't a choice that fell entirely on your shoulders, but you're still the one who chose to do it. I knew that one day it would come to that but I didn't expect the aftermath to be like this. What would you say if you saw me again? That I turned out decently? Or that you should've stayed because deep down you knew that I'd be lost without you?

Sometimes I wonder the same about you, but on most days you're nothing more than a distant memory in all that is currently waiting for me. Even the memory of what you once looked like has begun to fade away with everything else; the way you smelled, how your diamond eyes shined in the sunlight, how tight you'd hold me against you. Until the next time you cross my mind again I will end this letter by telling you that I'm much happier now that you're far away from me. This way I know that you can't hurt me anymore. And maybe one day we'll both have the answers to all of our questions because I know that one day I will see you again.

*Sincerely,
Someone That You Used To Know*

Sixty One Years

The rain wasn't stopping. In fact, it only seemed to rain more and more. I hated being wet but I knew I couldn't miss the bus so I ran outside across the street and took shelter underneath the concrete canopy of a now vacant building that used to be the bowling alley. I hadn't noticed him at first, but there was an old man also standing in the shadows there. I minded my own business and let him be, but after a few minutes he walked up to me and started talking to me.

"Are you waiting for the bus too?" he asked in a barely audible voice.

"Yes," I said softly, "when is the next one coming?"

"It should be less than seven minutes. One passes every twenty minutes or so."

"I'm just a foreigner trying to find my way, all of this is new to me."

"Don't worry child, you'll adapt. I promise."

"I hope so."

The old man looked like he was well into his eighties. He didn't have much left on his head, but the few hairs that were still there were whiter than snow. He had dark green eyes behind those thick glasses and the pattern of a map seemed to have appeared in all the wrinkles covering his face. He didn't seem to be bothered by the chilly weather either because he had nothing but a light jacket on while I had on multiple layers.

"You know young man, when I waited for the bus with Dima Mozdierz it was a lot like this," the elderly gentleman spoke after a brief moment of silence, "the two of us served in the war together, that's where we met actually. We were friends for sixty one years afterwards."

"What happened to him?" I asked since the old man spoke as if the friendship had ended.

"He died a month ago. We talked on the phone every single day in our old age. Our wives and are children are gone and when you're almost ninety you have nothing better to do than to talk on the phone all day."

"I'm sorry for your loss."

"It's been pretty lonely without him. When you've known someone for so long it leaves quite a big hole."

The bus arriving at stop put an abrupt end to the old man's sentence. I ran across the parking lot and waved my arm at the bus for it to stop so it didn't drive by since there was nobody waiting for it there. It stopped and I signaled the old man who walked with a cane that he could come. There were only a few people on the bus that early in the morning so I basically could have any seat I wanted. The old man and I sat together in the front section and continued our conversation.

“I knew something was very wrong when Dima stopped calling one day,” he continued “because he called every day. No matter where he was; at home, in a hospital bed, or traveling back to his home country, he always called me.”

“At school, when I still lived in Lithuania there was a kid in my class that stopped coming one day too,” I replied in a pensive tone of voice, “I never knew him, but I never forgot him either. I was eight years old. Back then I did not understand the value of life, nor how short it really is, but it’s really sinking in now.”

“At war I’ve seen so many people I cared about be blown up, and Dima is the only one who ever really stayed.”

The two of us continued our chat until I was about to arrive at my destination. I let the driver know my stop was coming up and the old man seemed to be sad that I was going to leave.

“No matter how good or bad your life gets young man, wake up each morning and be thankful that you still have one. And quit saying that you don’t have time, you have time for what you make time for in life.”

“Thank you for the wise words sir, may I have your name please?”

“Just call me Duke, and you?”

“My name is Dima.”

“Dima! Well it seems like God finally saw that I was alone and sent a replacement!”

I smiled and looked down for a brief moment as the bus came to a halt. I didn’t want to leave the old guy, but I couldn’t be late to a job interview if I actually wanted the job.

“If I get this job Duke, I’ll be riding this bus every day.”

“Well you better impress the head honcho there Dima! I’ll be waiting for you!”

“I’ll do my best.”

I nodded my head at Duke as I stepped off the bus into a clear blue and sunny sky. I hadn’t even noticed that the rain had stopped. I waved as the bus departed again but Duke didn’t see me. I almost had second thoughts of going into that corporate office simply because I wanted to hop back on the bus for one more minute, but I knew that if I wanted to chat with Duke again I needed to get a good job, so I walked in.

* * *

Every morning as I climbed onto the bus I paid for two fares and waited for the old man to get on at his usual stop while I saved him the seat where we first sat until then. Even on weekends when I didn’t work I climbed onto the bus anyway and the old man Duke and I rode around the city simply admiring the architecture of the historical buildings and talking about anything from the weather to some adventures from our days back in our homelands.

But one day the old man stopped coming too.

Josephine

I remember the first time my gaze came across her beautiful dark brown eyes and her brown hair. I didn't need to have any second thoughts. I knew from that very second that she was the one, the one I wanted to be with forever. My heart sank in the pit of my chest when our looks crossed and were locked together. The moment seemed to last forever in the instant it happened. I swore I stopped breathing for the few seconds we looked at each other. The world around me had stopped turning completely. She was the only thing I wanted, she was the only thing I needed. As I slowly approached her, she turned to look at me and smiled. Her smile made my heart explode, I swore it could have lit up the whole world.

"Hi, I'm Josephine," she introduced herself to me in her velvet voice.

It was almost like singing as her crystal clear words sank into my brain. My heart skipped a beat as I heard her speak to me.

"Josephine," I whispered, "I'm Albert."

"Hi Albert, would you like to dance?" she asked me in her always charming and sexy crystal clear voice.

I swallowed hard. She had me hostage of those beautiful eyes. I got lost in them looking for the road to her heart. Before I could speak a single word she already had placed her hand into mine leading me onto the dance floor. She then placed her hands around my neck and shoulders. I placed mine around her waist and let the music do the rest. Josephine had such a passionate gleam coming from the center of her beautiful eyes. I took one of my hands to swipe her hair out of her face to get a better look at her.

I let my fingers trail down her neck and then back up to her chin. We both stared into each other's eyes up until I closed mine and our lips locked. In that moment in which we kissed my heart stopped beating completely and all the oxygen in my body was robbed from me. When our lips separated all the air came flowing back into my lungs accompanied by the uncontrollable desire to have another taste of Josephine. The second time around I placed both my hands on her neck and aggressively kissed her.

I pulled Josephine closer to me and kept making out with her up until oxygen was rare for the both of us. My heart was pounding almost out of my chest and my knees shaking beyond belief at that point in time. We looked deep into each other's eyes once again. We were unaware of anything happening around us, we didn't care anyway. I grabbed Josephine and dragged her out of the club and into the streets. I was just about to grab the strap of her white satin dress and slide it off when I heard the bus pulling up not too far from us. I took Josephine into my arms and took her aboard the midnight bus. We kept on passionately kissing as the bus drove us back to my apartment. I ran my fingers

through her silky smooth hair as our lips locked and our saliva mixed. My heart was still pounding insanely inside my chest as my fingers travelled inside her bra.

“I think it’s our stop Albert,” Josephine softly whispered into my ear in her seductive voice as the bus slowly came to a halt at a street corner.

I take a peek outside in the corner of my eye, yes it was our stop. The bus driver quickly glanced at us to see if we were getting out there.

“Take me to bed,” Josephine whispered to me.

I took the beautiful young woman into my arms and carried her up the stairs to my apartment. I shut the door behind me with my foot and carried Josephine into my room and laid her down on my bed. I climbed on top of her and started kissing her again. I was madly in love with a woman I had just met. We had just met but it felt like we had known each other forever. It felt like we had been full-time. I ran my fingers through her silky smooth hair as she began to pull my shirt off. She then proceeded to biting down my neck as I took her dress off.

“Don’t ever, ever leave me,” I whispered in her ear, “no, not tonight, Josephine.”

She didn’t say a word. I kept on kissing and biting her furiously as I took her bra and underwear off. At the same time she took off the rest of my clothing too. My heart was almost pounding out of my chest as her hands ran all over my body. Her nails dug into the skin of my back and my neck as I began making love to her. Her moans were the most beautiful sounds I had ever heard. I looked deep into her eyes, our gazes locked once again. I ran my fingers through her hair and bit down on her neck. She did the same to me. I kept making love to the gorgeous young woman for hours, trashing my entire apartment as we were so wild in the process, never wanting to stop. After we had finally stopped we both lied in my bed holding each other tightly. I never wanted her to leave, my Josephine.

“Albert,” she whispered, “I need to leave.”

“No! You can’t leave!” I protested, “You can’t just leave me!”

She went to get up but I grabbed her and pulled her towards me.

“I need to go Albert! There’s somebody waiting for me!”

“Who?! Who’s waiting for you? I love you Josephine!”

She struggled to set herself free but I didn’t let her go. She was the only one for me, I loved her so much. I couldn’t let her go, no, not that night. She was my one and only love, my Josephine! My one and only love! I used force on her to pin her down on my bed and cover her mouth with my hand. We intensely looked into each other’s eyes when she finally shut her mouth and stopped protesting. I could feel my heart racing

and hers too. I took my hand off her mouth and retreated from holding her down underneath me.

“Let me leave!” she shouted as she got up and ran to the other side of the room.

“No!” I yelled back, “I can’t!”

“Why not huh? Why not?!”

“Josephine!”

“You’re going to have to eat my heart before I stay here with you, you creep!”

I furiously jumped on the young woman. Who did she think she was? I pushed her against the wall and grabbed her by the wrists with one hand. She screamed and yelled for me to let her go but I covered her mouth with my free hand.

“Shut up!” I yelled back at her.

She kept on moaning for me to set her free but the more she squirmed the more force I had to use on her. I finally managed to grab a piece of clothes and tied it over her mouth so she would stop yelling. I hit her in the face with my fist, against my will, to calm her down while I ran into the closet to get some rope. I fought against her up until I got to tie her up in the bed. She laid there motionless, crying to be set free. I took one last look into her beautiful dark eyes.

“You know that if you left me it would be breaking my heart,” I whispered in her ear, “please don’t go Josephine.”

She didn’t stop fighting back. I was getting angrier by the minute so I put my hand around her neck and pinned her down even harder.

“I told you Josephine,” I yelled in between my teeth, “you can never leave me!”

I go and take out a scalpel and hold it over her face so she could clearly see it despite that the room was pitch black. Fear filled her tearful eyes one last time as I started cutting.

Cereal & Schizophrenia (English Version)

I get up out of my little hard bed and immediately go into the kitchen. Passing by the bathroom I pick up my pills to treat schizophrenia and depression. I take the two big blue containers from the medicine cabinet and look at them menacingly. I hate taking pills, especially with my breakfast! I squeeze the containers in between my fingers and walk to the end of the hallway where my usual bowl of cereal is waiting for me that my uncle lovingly prepares for me each morning ever since I've been living with him.

I shove the pill containers on the black table and go pick up my infamous bowl of cereal next to the kitchen sink. Usually my uncle places it on the table but this morning my bowl is on the counter next to a pint of milk tipped over and spilling onto the floor with cereal all over the place. It's also odd that my uncle is not present to eat with me this morning. I bite my bottom lip and head over to grab my big bowl of Cheerios that is way too full before sitting down on the wooden chair that I hate so much. The wood surface is too hard and uncomfortable and is constantly breaking my back. That's part of the reason why I'm always angry and frustrated in the morning.

I intensely look at my Cheerios floating around passively in the white milk without moving a muscle. Oddly, there isn't a single sound in the entire house. After a few minutes of looking at my cereal I notice that the golden Cheerios are forming some kind of face that looks like my uncle's. Disgusted, I abruptly get up and look around the room. My uncle wasn't in the house. The fear and anxiety of being alone overcomes my little body only covered in an old black and white bathrobe. I swallow hard and look intensely around the room one more time. I walk around the table on the cold floor made of incredibly shiny white tiles in a fury for a few minutes before sitting back down on the chair.

I take an old fork from the table and forcefully squeeze it in my hands. I feel my blood pressure rise when I get angry. There is nothing that I hate more than eating alone and having to look at a mess of milk and cereal on the counter and the floor. I hate living in a dirty environment! I squeeze the hot and sweaty fork one last time before violently

stabbing my cereal. The milk and the big Cheerios splash everywhere, subsequently making another mess. I cringe and throw the fork at the reddish wall of the kitchen with all of my might. I angrily look at my bowl of cereal while grabbing a handful of Cheerios with my fingers and shoving them in my mouth.

I try to savor the cereal with every fiber in my body but the milk is too hot and the Cheerios are too mushy. With each chew I become more and more disgusted. These cereals do not taste good, so I spit them onto the floor. I calm down a little realizing that there is nothing else to eat and my uncle still hasn't arrived. With a sigh I grab the cereal and put them in my mouth one by one. They don't taste good, but I'm hungry so I eat them anyway.

After finishing the bowl and still being more or less angry, I get up and go look for my uncle. I walk towards his room but instead of finding his bedroom door, I come face to face with a white wall. There is a slight bizarre sound, like a broken TV, so I hit the wall and get an electric shock after my hand hit the wall. Stupefied, I look at my hand in surprise and horror. My little white hand is still intact. I then look at the wall with big eyes full of rage. I don't know if my eyes are playing tricks on me but the wall seems to be moving now.

I run to the other side of the hallway all the way to the kitchen and I grab my big yellow and green bowl of cereal, still half-full. With the Cheerios in my hands, I throw the bowl at the weird wall and it starts to melt right in front of my horrified big blue eyes. The wall reveals some sort of holographic projections on which I can see my uncle preparing me my bowl of cereal early this morning. He puts down my bowl of Cheerios on the kitchen counter to pour in some milk when a big black thing comes out of the bowl and vacuums him up. I don't notice as the projection keeps rolling but either way I need to find a way to bring my uncle back into this world!

I walk towards the kitchen but I stop abruptly in the middle of the hallway. I look behind me and notice the bowl of cereal on the floor next to the white wall. In that moment I realize that I had just eaten my uncle! I quickly make my way to the bowl and I pick up as many pieces of cereal as I can but most of them had already been eaten or melted in the wall. As I put each little piece of half-eaten Cheerios into the bowl, the black thing comes out of it and retransforms itself into my uncle, but he didn't have a head!

I quickly grab the box of Cheerios and the spilled pint of milk. I start putting some into the bowl but nothing happens. I start crying into the bowl as I take it into my hands and place it on the counter where my uncle had put it this morning. In that moment the mysterious black thing comes back out of the bowl and vacuums me up as well.

Cereal & Schizophrenia (Original French Version)

Je me lève de mon petit lit dur et je me dirige immédiatement vers la cuisine. En passant pas la salle de bain je ramasse mes pilules pour la schizophrénie et la dépression. Je prends les deux gros contenants bleus de pilules du cabinet de médicament et je les regarde féroceement. Je déteste prendre des pilules, surtout avec le déjeuner. Je serre les contenants entre mes doigts et je marche a travers du corridor où m'attend comme toujours mon bol de céréales que mon oncle me prépare à tous les matins depuis les années que je vie avec lui.

Je lance les contenants de pilules sur la table noire et je vais ramasser mon fameux bol de céréales qui étaient sur le comptoir près du levier de cuisine. Habituellement, mon oncle le place sur la table mais ce matin mon bol est sur le comptoir à cotés d'une pinte de lait renversé et des céréales étendus sur le plancher. C'est aussi bizarre que mon oncle n'est pas présent pour manger avec moi ce matin. Je mort ma lèvre et je vais ramasser mon gros bol de Cheerios trop plein avant d'aller m'asseoir sur la chaise de cuisine fait de bois que je déteste tant. La surface de bois dur est inconfortable et me casse toujours le dos. C'est en partie pour cette raison que je suis toujours frustré et en colère le matin.

Je regarde intensément les Cheerios qui flottent dans le lait blanc passivement sans bouger un muscle. Bizarrement, il n'y a pas aucun bruit dans la maison. Après quelques minutes de regarder les céréales je m'aperçois que les Cheerios dorés forment un genre de visage qui ressemble à mon oncle. Dégouté, je me lève brusquement et je regarde autour de la pièce. Mon oncle n'était pas dans la maison. L'inquiétude et la peur d'être seule envahi mon petit corps seulement vêtu d'une veille robe de chambre noire et blanche. J'avale ma salive et je regarde encore intensément autour de la pièce. Je marche autour de la table sur le plancher froid fait de tuiles blanche hyper luisantes en fureur pour quelques minutes avant de me rasseoir sur la chaise.

Je prends une vieille fourchette sur la table et je la serre fortement entre mes mains. Je sens ma pression artérielle augmenté dans mes veines quand je deviens fâché. Il n'y a rien que je déteste plus que manger seule et avoir à regarder un dégât de lait et de céréales sur le comptoir. Je déteste vivre dans un environnement sale! Je sers ma fourchette chaude et pleine de sueur encore une fois avant de violemment poignardé mes céréales. Le lait et les gros Cheerios éclaboussent partout sur la table, ce qui cause un autre dégât. Je grinche des dents et je lance ma fourchette de toutes mes forces sur le mur rougeâtre de la cuisine. Je regarde mon bol de céréales en colère en prenant une poigner de Cheerios avec ma main et les mettant dans la bouche.

J'essaye de toutes mes forces de savourer les céréales mais le lait est trop chaud et les Cheerios trop mous. Avec chaque mouvement de mâchoire je deviens de plus en plus dégouté. Ces céréales ne goûtent pas bonne, donc je les crache par terre. Je me calme des nerfs un peu en réalisant qu'il n'y a rien d'autre pour manger, et mon oncle n'est pas encore ici. Avec un soupir je prends les céréales une par une et les mets dans ma bouche. Elles ne goûtent pas bonne mais j'ai faim donc les mange quand même.

Après avoir fini la moitié du bol et être plus ou moins encore en colère, je me lève et je vais chercher pour mon oncle. Je me dirige en direction de sa chambre mais au lieu d'arriver devant sa porte de chambre, j'arrive face à face avec un mur blanc. Un petit bruit bizarre, comme une télévision qui fonctionne mal, donc je frappe le mur et reçois un choc électrique au lieu d'avoir ma main entrer en contact avec le mur. Stupéfaite, je regarde ma main surprise et horrifiée. Ma petite main blanche est encore intacte. Je regarde ensuite le mur avec des gros yeux plein de colère. Je ne sais pas si mes yeux me jouent des tours mais le mur semble bouger maintenant.

Je cours de l'autre côté du corridor jusqu'à la cuisine et je ramasse mon gros bol de céréales jaune et vert encore à moitié plein. Les Cheerios entre les mains, je lance le bol contre le mur bizarre et il commence à fondre devant mes gros yeux bleus horrifiés. Le mur révèle un genre de projection holographique dans laquelle je peux voir mon oncle me préparer mon bol de céréales plus tôt ce matin. Il dépose le bol plein de Cheerios sur le comptoir pour y ajouter du lait quand une grosse chose noire sort du bol et aspire mon oncle. Je ne remarque pas si la projection continue de rouler mais de toute façon je dois trouver une façon de ramener mon oncle dans ce monde!

Je me dirige vers la cuisine mais j'arrête brusquement au milieu du corridor. Je regarde derrière moi et j'aperçois le bol de céréales par terre près du mur blanc. C'est à ce moment que je réalise que j'ai mangé mon oncle! Je me précipite à tout bout de champ prendre le bol et récupérer le plus de céréales possible mais la plupart ont été mangées et les autres on fondue avec le mur. En remettant chaque petit morceau de Cheerios à moitié mangé dans le bol, la chose noire sort et se retransforme en mon oncle, mais il n'y avait pas de tête!

Je me précipite tout de suite chercher la boîte de Cheerios et la pinte de lait renversé. J'en mets dans le bol mais rien ne se passe. Je commence à pleurer dans le bol quand je le prends entre mes mains et je le place sur le comptoir où mon oncle l'a mis ce matin. À ce moment la chose noire mystérieuse ressort du bol et m'aspire à mon tour.

Schizo Soup (Cereal & Schizophrenia Alternate)

As usual I awoke from a deep slumber in my uncomfortable little bed and immediately went into the kitchen exactly as I did every other morning. Passing by the bathroom I picked up my bottles of pills to treat schizophrenia and depression, also exactly as I did every other morning. I took the big blue containers from the medicine cabinet and looked at them menacingly. I hated taking pulls, especially with my breakfast! I squeezed the containers in between my fingers and walked downstairs where my usual bowl of alphabet soup was waiting for me. I hated eating cereal for breakfast. I hated eating cereal period. My grandfather had always lovingly prepared the soup for me ever since I'd moved in with him two years prior.

I forcefully threw the pill bottles onto the table and sat down, waiting to be served my morning bowl of soup. Oddly enough though, my uncle wasn't around to eat with me that morning. In fact the house was completely silent. He'd made the soup, but left it near the kitchen sink. That was odd for him and as I got up and walked closer to investigate I noticed that much soup had been spilled all over the floor and little alphabet pastas were floating around on the floor everywhere. I bit my bottom lip and headed over to grab my big bowl of alphabet soup that was way too full before sitting back in my usual spot at the table.

Intensely, I looked at the little letters floating around passively in the broth without moving a muscle. After a few minutes of looking into my bowl of soup I noticed that the letters were spelling out different words. *Joseph Stalin. Adolf Hitler. Donald Trump.* Disgusted, I abruptly got up and looked around the room for my grandfather. I wanted my grandfather! The fear and anxiety of being alone overcame my body. I looked down at my myself and noticed that I wasn't wearing my usual white nightgown. I had on weird striped pyjamas that didn't belong to me. What the hell were those?! I was in my own house, not a concentration camp or the insane asylum! I swallowed hard and looked intensely around the around one more time.

I took an old fork from the counter and squeeze it in my hands. I felt my blood pressure rise, that happened when I got angry. My God! There was nothing I hated more than eating alone in a dirty environment! The mess of soup in the kitchen was disgusting! I squeezed the hot and sweaty fork one last time before violently stabbing the letters in my bowl of soup. The broth and little letters splashed everywhere, subsequently making an even bigger mess and spelling out more words and sentences. *The zombies are coming.* I cringed and threw the fork at the wall with all my might. I shoved my hand in

my lukewarm soup and grabbed a bunch of letters before then shoving them in my mouth and swallowing them whole.

The pasta was too mushy and the broth was too cold! Gross! With each chew I became more and more disgusted so I spit everything out on the floor. There wasn't anything else to eat so I forced myself to swallow that disgusting soup. I didn't get far because it was too disgusting so I decided to take the bowl and go dump the contents in the toilet upstairs. On my way upstairs I looked towards my grandfather's room but instead of finding his bedroom door I came face to face with a white wall. There was a slight sound coming out of it, like a broken TV, so I threw my bowl of soup at the wall and electricity came out of it as it began to warp. *The NKVD want some more tea* the little letters spelled out as they slid to the floor.

The wall began to melt and revealed some sort of holographic projection on which I could see my grandfather serving alphabet soup to cannibal Nazi zombies in the kitchen downstairs when they cast a magic spell over the soup and the little letters levitated into the air and consumed my grandfather. He vanished into the bowl and the zombies ate their respective servings. I didn't notice if the hologram continued showing different images or not, all I knew was that I needed to get back downstairs, get a baseball bat and track down those Nazi zombies and make them bring my grandpa back!

I ran down the stairs but stopped abruptly in the hallway as I came face to face with one of the zombies who had merely been in hiding because they had never left the house after they made my uncle disappear. I ran into the kitchen since I couldn't pass the zombie to get to the basement door but three more were sitting around the kitchen table. I grabbed the rest of the pot of soup that was still on the stove and got ready to whack one of them with it but as I prepared for a confrontation they began reciting their magic spells again and I knew that I needed to get rid of the soup before I disappeared too!

I quickly ran back upstairs and dumped the alphabet soup into the toilet and flushed it. It appeared like it had gone down the drain for a few moments but then it came back up and the toilet overflowed. A million little letters came violently spilling out onto the floor and flowed into the hallway. The little letters spelled out all of my dirty secrets for everyone to see and I started panicking! Then I heard the zombies laughing their butts off in the hallway as they read what my alphabet soup was telling them about me. All I could do was scream and scream some more. *Then I opened my eyes.* I was laying down in my bed and my grandfather was trying to wake me up from my nightmare.

"It was just a dream, everything is fine," he reassured me, "come down and eat your alphabet soup before it gets cold."

Motives

I suddenly wake up, covered in sweat and breathing heavily. Today was graduation day. For the past three years, I had been intensely studying spells at Red Velvet School of Magic and Witchcraft. I thought I had finally perfected a spell, and today after graduation, I would put it to the test. I take a deep breath and get out of my bed. The clock indicated 6:30 on this chilly April morning. The sun was just about to rise over the city of Dublin.

I open the patio door of my 13th floor apartment and breathe in the cold morning air. It was so pure, so fresh. Content of myself, I close the door and go take a cold shower before putting on my favourite black jeans and the long sleeved black and white shirt with horizontal stripes. I comb my short red hair to the side like I always did and look at myself in the mirror one final time just to make sure everything was perfect.

With the satisfaction of looking in the mirror, I put on my army boots and head out. I step into the elevator and ride down to the empty lobby for my daily early morning walk. With the morning sun warming up the pale white skin of my face, I take a deep breath of confidence that today would be a great day. This afternoon, we would all graduate after the free lunch held by the staff to thank us for the great year they had with us.

I had just written my last exam yesterday and tonight would be the night that all my hard work over the past three long years finally paid off. With a big smile on my face, I walk down the crowded streets of this industrial neighbourhood in my hometown of Dublin. After my graduation I had big plans for myself and a certain group of individuals who had extremely wronged me in the past.

After my unusually long walk, I invite five people for a little graduation "after party" in my apartment. The first one was my longtime elementary school bully, Melanie. The second, my abusive ex-husband Ridge. The third, my brother Allan, the fourth, Jeremy, a local police officer and last but not least, the fifth, the owner of the building, Roger. All people whom I didn't speak much to, but whom all thought I was their friend and totally forgave them for what they had done to me. I was, up until now.... Just to do this.

I set up a few things for my "party" before looking in the mirror one more time and going to my graduation ceremony. My friends, classmates, and staff ate our free lunch in cafeteria, enjoying ourselves, laughing, and having fun. We reminisced about old times and good memories spent here together in college. The long ceremony afterwards lasted all afternoon but in the end I left the building with a diploma in my hand and a big smile on my face.

Back in my apartment, I make the final touches to the dark decor and patiently wait for my guests to arrive. The first one to arrive was Roger, the owner of the building. I smile and invite him inside. We sit down and casually talk until my other guests arrived one by one. First my ex, then the bad cop, my brother and my longtime enemy. They all patiently sit down on the couch while I go into another room to get their drinks. Ice cold beer how about that? Not to mention a sedative mixed in with that. One by one, they slowly complain of being tired and wanting to leave but I prevent them from doing so.

I stand in the door when Jeremy attempts to leave and start reciting my spell. In the matter of a few seconds, all my guests were shrunk down to only an inch tall. They almost instantly fall asleep so I pick them up one by one and place them in a bucket until they wake up. My ex-husband wakes up first so I grab him and lift him out of the bucket to look at him. I could see him begging for his life despite that his voice was too low for me to understand anything he was saying. I grab him with a pinch and hold him up high in mid air. He did everything he could to get out of my grip but without success. I would make him pay for the 4 years of abuse I endured at his mercy.

"This is for all the times you've hit me, slapped me, and pushed me against the wall." I tell him as I swing my arm and throw him against the wall as hard as I could.

There was no blood, but his lifeless body lay motionless on the floor like a forgotten piece of dust. Too bad the others couldn't see what kind of fate was waiting for them.

The next one I grabbed out of the bucket was Melanie.

"Oh poor sweet innocent thing." I tease her.

She, too, begged for her life but out of all people I had ever met in my life, she was the one I hated the most. Ever since first grade, she had been there to watch my every move and to make my life as miserable as she could. It had worked well in her favour for 8 long years, Now it was payback time.

"Don't you wish you had died instead of lived?" I keep taunting her. "Those were your exact words to me when I returned to school after my big accident. Now I shall ask you the same."

She moves around and cries as I held her high in mid air just like I had done with Ridge.

"You know perfect little Melanie," I begin, "I'd just be cleaning the Earth of it's scum."

I grin even wider as I squeeze her tight and then drop her in a box full of cockroaches.

"They are the same as you." I whisper as I let her go.

I then return to the bucket and pick up my brother Allan. He was relatively calm compare to the others. I guess he knew what kind of fate was waiting for him. All these years he

had told me never to take a drink, while he was just an alcoholic himself. He also didn't know how to swim, so I grab him and shove him down a half empty bottle of Jack Daniel's. I put the lid back on and patiently watch him drown. My only regret, would be to waste such great whiskey.

I then pick up Roger out of the bucket. He had locked me inside of my own apartment once. He and Jeremy had proceeded to violate me and steal some of my belongings. Of course I couldn't do anything, because one of them was a police officer and the other would throw me out in the street. For Roger, I put him in a Ziploc bag and watch him suffocate. It's for Jeremy that I had the real surprise. I go to my room and grab the shotgun out of my closet. I load my 12 gauge and chamber a cartridge. I then grab Jeremy and shove him down the bore. I walk outside and pull the trigger, pointing into mid air. With a loud popping noise, droplets of blood fly out the barrel of my gun.

I smile.

All She Wrote

I knew it had to be today. I never wanted to part ways like this. Evelyn and I were never really close but having to see her drive away was a very hard thing to go through. I hadn't known her for long and sincerely didn't like her all that much but she was a nice girl and I would miss her. We had ended on bad terms the last time we spoke, four days ago. She was a nice girl but I couldn't ever get along with anybody. I had a hard time living with myself. I had avoided Evelyn at all costs up until this morning. I would have felt extremely bad not saying goodbye to her. Even if he had a small brush I still didn't want us to be on permanent bad terms. She had always been nice to me and she didn't deserve to be treated like an animal by me.

I trailed behind Eve and the others to the bus waiting outside. I didn't have the guts to walk next to them. I would probably break down crying if I did. I swallow my saliva and take a deep breath. I walked down the stairs to the lobby and put my hands in my pockets. I looked down as I walked into the blowing snow without a coat. I didn't feel the cold. I keep my distance as one by one they board the bus. None of them really wanted to get on, especially Eve. I could see her looking at me from the corner of her eye. I didn't want to look at her. I couldn't. I watched them one by one board the bus looking back at us with tears in their eyes. Vivian was crying beside me to see Elka leave. I almost felt like doing the same.

Evelyn was one of the last to board the bus and just before she did I approached the door. Our gazes were locked and there was no escape.

"I'll see you again someday." I whisper.

"Yes." She whispers giving me a little hug.

She boards the bus and I walk out of its path and back to where Vivian and I were standing not too long ago. I really wanted to cry now. I think many of us did. We all stared at the bus through our tears. None of us wanted to part ways. It was still too soon. The bus started its engine and made sure all passengers were on board. As the bus started rolling away everyone waved at each other but I turned around so my back would face the bus. I didn't want to see this. I'm sure Eve was waving and hoping that I would look back but I didn't. I start walking towards the entrance of the building and feel a small piece of paper fly by my head and land in the snow right in front of my feet.

Every time I see a sunset, I wish you were here.

These few short days have gone by so fast, where did that time go?

I cannot stop thinking about the times we've spent together, and oh, it's been so long. Where did you go? Where did I go? I lost my head in a whole and I've lost my heart and my soul. There is not a single day that goes by without me thinking of the good times we've had, and then again I'm here alone. Where did I go wrong? How did I get here?

All I've ever wanted was a place to call my home and to amend the hearts of everyone who feels alone. So I lie down and look up at the sky. If I could fly, like the angels do, I'd be long gone out of here looking back at you. You're still with me in my dreams. In my dreams, you're still right here. Right here sitting next to me on a rooftop. The night sky over the city is unlike anything I've ever seen. Do you remember that night? I wish it could've lasted forever. And now the wind blows cold.

Now I'm sitting here alone, the wind blowing through my hair and only the overcast skies watching over me. Such powerful energy washes over me when I think of you. Where are you? I breathe in the cold air. Summer is almost gone. With every breeze that goes by, I wish I could fly. I wish I could go up there and touch the clouds. I want to hug them like you hugged me. I close my eyes and I drift away. Up here Earth is a mystery. There is nothing for us to worry. You're right here with me again, right where we began. The angels lift me, are you ready?

With ever drop that starts to fall down, my being begins to shatter. I don't want the rain to stop falling down. I want it to wash away the pain to where it can't be found. With every gust of wind, I'm flying. You're holding my hand as we fly over the city. The only thing we can see are the city lights and the airplanes that are like shooting stars in the night sky. I've never seen such beauty. You're the most beautiful individual I've ever seen. This could be the night, the night to remember.

*With another gust of wind, I suddenly come back to reality.
I'll see you in my dreams.*

Maybe our perceptions of each other had been wrong all along but it didn't really change a thing because she was gone.

And that was all that she wrote for me.

Evaporation

Only the sound of my pencil endlessly rattling against my desk as my hand wouldn't stop literally *bouncing* from side to side in a vain attempt to entertain myself. I tilted my head and looked up at the holes in the ceiling. Even they seemed to be emptier than usual. Would anyone notice if I left? Would they miss me? They wouldn't miss my pencil rattling against the desk that was certain. I'd have to write that damn short story eventually.

The air left my lungs and I rubbed my tired apathetic eyes. I stretched my sore and aching muscles and sat up on the edge of my bed. It would be the last time I slept in it. It was never really my bed though, it belonged to my foster family. One of my many foster families over the last five years. How many homes had I been in? At least seven that I could count right off the bat. My brain still wasn't completely awake but I knew very well that number eight was just around the order. I only needed to get dressed, make the finishing touches to packing my bags and head over to court so lawmakers could award me to yet another group of strangers.

Nobody would adopt me. I was much too old now. I knew that this would probably be my last home because I was already seventeen and who would want me now? My own mother never wanted me to begin with.

When I really put my mind to it I could indeed write something worthwhile, but the problem was that I didn't want to. *Blah, scratch that.* I crumpled up my piece of paper and shoved it in the recycle bin. I let out a deep sigh, my creativity wasn't working. All my thoughts did were evaporate. I took another page out of my notebook and attempted to write a second story.

A lot of people regard me as just another part of the body. In fact, most people treat me this way. I'm a lung, I'm responsible for one of your most vital functions, breathing. For seventeen years I was in the left side of a girl named Jane's chest with my partner on the right side but now I'm alone in the body of a sixteen-year-old named Britney. She had lung cancer, that's right, at her age. Both her lungs were slowly dying from the inside out and she was hooked up to an oxygen machine 24 hours a day. Even all the machines and the pills and the steroids couldn't sustain her forever though, she really needed some new lungs but the waiting list for a donor was long.

Inside Jane's body I'd say that I did my job pretty well. I could send the much needed oxygen throughout her body to fuel those cells while she was running and jogging and I could hold her breath for minutes at a time underwater. My partner told me that one of Jane's eyeballs told him that Jane became compelled to be an organ donor when she

walked in to the doctor's office to get a flu shot (sounds harmless enough huh?) and noticed a lung disease support group going on in another room. The heart told me himself that he thought he was sinking down all the way to the diaphragm upon hearing the eyeballs' initial report! During that same trip to see the doctor Jane informed herself about organ donation and what she could do to help. That's around the time she decided to give me up along with the right kidney and some blood.

It didn't all happen at once though. Jane had to undergo a lot of tests to see if I was really functioning properly and in my right mind as the brain would say. As it turns out I was very healthy and my tissue was of a very close match to a girl named Britney waiting on her deathbed for a transplant. So a few months later I literally went under the knife. Jane was sound asleep under the bizarre effects of something the ears told me was called anesthesia. Removing me from Jane's body was fairly easy, I said goodbye to everyone just in time for two big hands to literally scoop me out! Afterwards I was stitched to Britney's blood vessels and airways. It sounds a lot more horrific than it actually was. I didn't feel a thing, and from what I hear the other organs tell me, they didn't either.

In Britney's body I did my regular job like I always did, and for the first few days there we were all hooked up on tubes and machines to drain air, fluids and blood in order to let me fully expand. The other organs were very welcoming to me and the only thing I really miss about Jane were her ears letting me listen to Avicii all day. Gangnam Style isn't really my thing you know? But as it turns out Britney's body responded very well to me and there were thankfully no complications! Thanks to me and Jane's big heart (not literally the heart) Britney is now able to do simple things such as walking up the stairs instead of taking the elevator that she couldn't previously do. Can you believe that, couldn't even walk up the stairs?! And during that time we were all running a marathon! The other organs tell me that Britney became so compelled after receiving me that she signed her organ donor card too. I guess I might be getting, or losing, neighbors soon!

That was just gonna have to do and if the teacher wasn't happy with that she'd have to deal with it because my ambition had also evaporated along with my creativity a long time ago. School did not help anyone with thinking, in fact it only made my braincells die. It made them evaporate along with everything else.

Natalie's Granny (Unfinished Story Part #1)

"What's your name child?"

"Natalie Vaillancourt."

"Oh, you must be Yvette's granddaughter."

That's usually where the conversation ended. Unless that person had never crossed onto my grandmother's bad side, but my grandmother was generally well liked in the community. You got out of her what you put into her. You're nice to her, she'll be nice to you. Over the course of my interesting life I've witnessed her set straight a handful of asshole neighbours and a few landlords. Growing up without much money and on the wrong side of town we often didn't have a choice but to bounce from one run-down place to another, just seeking something better for ourselves.

One time in March several years ago William, the landlord, seemed like a sympathetic guy and I was really looking forward to finally having peace of mind. It took quite a bit of cleaning up when we moved in since the house had been left in terrible condition by the previous tenants but the place was spacious and it would be quiet. The previous tenants had left a lot of messes and broken appliances in the house but William had a friend who was a plumber that fixed it up nicely when we moved in.

At first William didn't give us any trouble. You'd see him once a month when he came to pick up the rent money and you wouldn't see him again after that. I thought that he was an okay guy. There was nothing about him that would set him apart from any other property owner. Rumours went flying that he had cashed in a considerable inheritance which he had used to purchase the house. He had lived in that house about three months before renting it to three young men. He told us that we could stay as long as we wanted, and we had been looking forward to settling in nicely and finally having peace of mind.

The roof leaked a bucket of water a day next to the patio door and after a while the wood on the doorframe expanded and it was impossible to open the doors to access the deck in the backyard. We had to take down all the security cameras and the crazy wiring attached to them. Whoever had lived there before had an extreme case of paranoia and I would later learn why when the cops came pounding on the door during a lazy summer evening, but for the most part I really enjoyed living there. I had never lived in an actual house before and even though I still suffered from insomnia, at least the nights were peaceful at last.

None of the doors inside the house would properly close since the floor was crooked but it never bothered me until I finally managed to close the bathroom door and got trapped inside. I freaked out while it was happening but looking back I can't help but laugh. Each wall in a room was of a different colour and the floor on the first floor was severely crooked to the point where we'd need to cut out small pieces of wood to place under the furniture so it would be on even ground. Despite everything that was wrong with the house I was as happy as I'd ever been in my life up to that point. But like everything else that had happened previously, it got real sour real fast.

Within just a few months we began to have trouble with William, our landlord. We hadn't ever had trouble with him in the past. He asked us if we were interested in buying the house when he came by to pick up the rent money one month. Even if my household had wanted to buy the house, neither one of us was financially capable to making such a large purchase, plus the house needed to be repaired too. *So much for staying as long as we wanted.*

"Then I'll have to put the house up for sale," he told us that day.

"Why would you want to sell the house now?" my grandma asked him, "You have good tenants, and you told us that you bought this place as an investment. We haven't even been here a year!"

"I want to buy myself a new truck, and I need some quick money. This investment just isn't working for my anymore."

At first we bought his story of needing a new truck because he did have an old truck and if nobody fixed up the house it would lose its value over time as well. We were rightfully disappointed and angry but on some level we understood his situation. He hadn't put up the house for sale but a few days after that he came back with a young woman who was apparently interested in buying the house but we would soon learn that it was all a setup. William told us to move out because this girl wanted to "try" the house for a few months and then maybe buy it in the summertime if she liked it. He told us that she had already made the \$10 deposit too!

"William," my grandma told him sternly, "I can pull \$10 bills out of my ass! It'll take a lot more than that to kick us out."

He probably thought we were stupid enough buy his crap because in his mind we were three quiet and defenceless ladies, but he was wrong. My old lady got in his face and he got lucky that Vladimir didn't live with us at the time because he would've had the same taste of wrath Anton did. He never bothered us after that, but eventually the house came to be falling apart and we had to find another place to live anyway.

At school I was a terrorist. Not only had I never cared about school, I thought that all my peers were idiots. One time they pushed my buttons a little too much and when it came to settling the score I took after my grandmother. I taught them what they needed to learn to put them mildly. Of course I was sent to the principal's office for that offence and that idiot wasn't about to scare me by attempting to call my parents, something that

usually worked on kids from “normal” families, whatever the hell that meant anyway. Since my mother was at work, it’s my beloved grandma who showed up that afternoon.

“Did they piss you off?”

“Yes.”

“Did you set them straight?”

“Yes.”

The principal looked completely devastated as my grandma and I burst out laughing on our way out of his office. I had an amazing sense of satisfaction that I had won again despite his attempt to try to scare me by calling my parents. What followed was me bragging to anyone who would listen about how I got rewarded for my bad behaviour. And it was true, when I acted out I was sent home, which is exactly what I wanted. So I began acting out deliberately regardless of if I was angry or not just to go home and enjoy my time off.

I ended up in plenty of petty trouble after that. Honestly, I was willing to do anything just to not go to class. Apparently making someone sit by themselves in silence is supposed to be a punishment, but in reality it gave me a great opportunity to plot what I was going to do next. My “rebellion” cost me most of the few friends I had, but once again I gained many supporters along the way. Many students hated the principal for many reasons but I hated him mostly because he didn’t do his job. He promised us things we never got, never solved any conflict in school, and never responded to any of the inquiries people made for various reasons.

At the end of the day nobody disciplined me anymore. Nobody cared if I desecrated my schoolwork anymore, they didn’t care if I even did it or not. Most of the time, I’d watch movies on my laptop in class instead of paying attention because I frankly just didn’t care anymore. One day I watched a documentary about Leonard Lake and Charles Ng in English class when I noticed the teacher standing behind me. I turned around ready to show defiance when I saw that most of the class was behind me watching the movie. I giggled and went back to watching something else.

Mr. T (Unfinished Story Part #2)

When it comes to my job though there's something I didn't tell you. The LCBO is my second job. I got fired from the one at the deli because I threw some condiments at somebody that I didn't like one day. I guess you can't understand unless you've been through it yourself but when this person pushes your buttons at school day in and day out and then just expects you to serve them in town, you snap. That's all. There's really nothing more to it than that. It doesn't have to be complicated!

And on the other hand, it made for a pretty good show for all the bystanders that were around too. I sure became the talk of the town after that one! That poor kid Karl that also worked with me in the deli got a bit of sauce on his uniform when I squeezed the bottle and swung it at the same time but he wasn't the only one covered by the time I was done. The chickens he'd just taken out of the oven were decorated, the coffee maker was decorated, the walls were decorated, there was a stripe on the floor and that bitch Gabriele never spoke to me again.

But my story doesn't end there. Whether you believe in God or karma or the law of attraction or any of that other stuff where you get out of it what you put into it, well I got my payback too. No, I don't regret for one moment doing what I did even after the consequences (getting fired wasn't one of them, really it was a relief to get out of there and for once I had a valid excuse for not showing up there anymore) and I would probably do it all over, but I sure got served what I deserved by the universe afterwards.

The short version of the story is that the Russian boys took me out to Tim Horton's (out of all the places they could've picked) and I scored myself a pretty serious case of food poisoning. It was so bad that I was sent to a hospital in Ottawa. I felt like I was dying, or maybe I would've preferred to die than to continue suffering like that, but I got a very interesting roommate in the hospital. He wasn't Russian, I don't know what he was really, he looked just as human as anybody else and everybody called him *Mr. T* because they couldn't pronounce his actual last name that looked something like Tljbwefkwebszk (c'mon Polish people don't even have names that sound that bad!) and they called me *V* because it insults me when people can't pronounce my last name correctly.

I also hate being called Miss V or Misses V (despite that I'm not married) because it makes me sound too damn old! I was just a teenager damn it! We became V and Mr. T in that little room up on the seventh floor.

While I was seriously sick in bed and could hardly move, the doctors wanted to release Mr. T because he was in optimal health according to all the tests he'd taken but he was convinced beyond any doubt that he was dying.

"We've done every medically possible test at our disposition and you're not sick Mr. T!" the doctor tried to convince him one last time, "You're not dying! We can't keep you here if there's nothing wrong with you!"

I came to be considerably annoyed at the same charade every day so I finally decided to put my foot down one day. Well, I didn't actually get out of bed but I did sit up in my bed and after I vomited some bizarre yellow liquid on the floor between our two beds and tell him what was on my mind once and for all.

"Listen to me Mr. T!" I grumbled in a hoarse voice through a sore and burning throat, "You are not sick! I am sick! They've done everything they scientifically could for you and there's nothing wrong with you! *Go home already!* If I could get out of here I'd be happy to sleep on the sidewalk tonight if I could just leave! For my sake go away!"

The next morning he was gone when I woke up. I found out several years later that I had somehow "helped" him. I don't know if I simply knocked some sense into him or if hearing me speak had some type of healing effect on him, but as far as I'm concerned the guy went on to live a healthy life. So did I. I recovered after almost two months and despite the terrible ordeal, I walked out the door into a big beautiful city full of new adventures just waiting for me to discover.

The City of My Dreams (Unfinished Story Part #3)

In reality the universe did not punish me for completely flipping my lid (and the lids of a few condiment containers) at the deli. Once I walked out of that hospital it wasn't long before I completely fell in love with Ottawa, the city of my dreams. I'd never really had the chance to go anywhere before and I really wasn't aware of all the amazing things that were out there waiting for me in the world. In school they don't teach you shit about the world or anything relevant to real life.

So history is awesome and it's important to take lessons from it, I agree with that, but what about the modern world! What do they teach us about that? Not a whole lot. At school my knowledge of the world went like this:

- Stalin is a dictator with a big moustache
- Hitler is a dictator with a little moustache
- Some guy named Borden has something to do with Canada
- Winston Churchill was one hell of a chain smoker
- President Roosevelt had a homemade wheelchair
- Pearl Harbor was a good movie
- Some people got trench foot and that was really nasty
- Canada became a country in 1867
- Steam trains are awesome

Now please tell me how this is valuable knowledge for the modern world. It did not help me pick a decent boyfriend. It did not help me keep my cool at the deli. It did not help me in the hospital. It did not help me with my cooking "skills." It did not help me with dealing with harassment by people from a local church.

One time I was invited to a church supper by a girl from school, and since she was a nice person and had always been nice to me, I politely accepted her offer and went with her. There was nothing insane about that in itself, the cookies were good (after the food poisoning I hesitated to eat certain other things) and the guy playing the violin put on a good show.

Well, the fun turned out to be short-lived because after I wasn't interested in their preaching and they found out that they couldn't oppress me enough to get me exactly where they wanted me the mask came off and they weren't so nice anymore. The worst part is that I didn't even string them along, I told them straight up, nicely and politely that I wasn't interested but for some reason they couldn't take no for an answer. Then the harassment came. First the driving by the house, then the knocking on the door, the emails and the phone calls and even trying to lure my friends in the hopes that I would follow. Well, I didn't.

The last straw came when one of them broke into my car but they didn't take anything, instead they left something. I didn't even look at their damn catalogue, I set it on fire and threw it in the parking lot of that cult establishment as I drove by one day while they were there. To me that was really just a taunt to tell them to come back for more (and then I'd file a restraining order) but I had no further problems with them after that. I guess maybe they took it as some satanic ritual and I defiled their church and if so then I'm happy about it, despite that I know nothing about witchcraft or much of anything.

And the sad thing is that such screwed up people give a bad name to normal religious people, which make up some 95% of the religious community. The dude that lives next door to me is Catholic and he doesn't behave like that. I ended up eating at a Jewish restaurant several times in Ottawa (kosher is actually very good) and the Jews didn't behave like that. The Muslims at the shawarma shop didn't behave like that. But I suppose that there are radicals in every group and some people probably call me a radical too.

Really I don't hate God or religious people but I suppose that after this experience I'm more understanding of people like Rudolf Höss who become disillusioned by such organizations after bad experiences. That's also my story with school, but I think I've made enough nasty comments about that already. I'm just glad it's over. And I've learned to never accept dinner invitations from anybody else after that too.

So basically what I was getting at about my little vacation in Ottawa after getting out of the hospital... Damn the streets were so clean there! I saw so many people walking barefoot on the sidewalk and it wasn't because they didn't have any shoes! The boys

and I took this awesome tour around the city in this amphibious bus that also took a dip in the Ottawa river. It was the coolest thing in the world.

Ottawa also has a whole lot of museums and historic sites. There's the Parliament but back then it unfortunately wasn't the very handsome Justin Trudeau in office so I didn't take much interest in it. The boys and I rode around on public transit a good portion of the night but Ottawa really isn't party city. It's the complete opposite, it's business city.

We stopped at a costume store and we dressed up Nick as a girl and if it hadn't been for his disheveled facial hair he probably would've been a pretty decent girl. We took him around town but much to my disappointment there wasn't much of an uproar about it. In my shitty little town WWII would've broken out and the people at Tim Horton's would've talked until their lungs gave out, but not in Ottawa. The people are surprisingly cool there. They aren't like in Lac-Retsina. They are like a whole other breed of human. I really fell in love with them during my time there and I was severely depressed when I had to go back to Lac- Retsina. I freaking hate that place.

The Kidnapping (Unfinished Story Part #4)

After we came back to Lac-Retsina I was quite disillusioned with the place. I wanted out. I wanted to go to Ottawa. I wanted to go to Ottawa permanently. The truth of the matter is that this wasn't the first time I was disillusioned with life in Lac-Retsina. It happened once before when I first became a teenager. I supposed that this happens to a lot of people when they go through puberty because it seems like our brains fry and everything gets screwed up. Some people tend to be more screwed up than others and I just happen to be one of them.

For some reason the natural order of things made it so that girls mature faster than boys, and maybe only girls *ever* really mature if you ask me. This makes it so that girls really get annoyed with boys when they are teenagers (and beyond too I've come to see) and maybe this was a prerequisite to the condiment fiasco, but one time one boy in the neighbourhood pushed my buttons just a little too much.

Being a girl who went through puberty first I had the advantage of being bigger and stronger than the boy and although I don't know if it's this way for everybody, I've always had my intelligence. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to know that you can lure about any horny teenage boy into your grandmother's garage by the promise of a kiss. At that time my grandma rented a small two bedroom house with a small garage only big enough for a small vehicle. The boy, a kid named Joey came to the garage almost immediately, well at least as fast as he could.

What he didn't know is that I never had any intentions of giving him a kiss. I'd set up some type of torture chamber, not to harm him, but just to scare him. Once he arrive, I didn't waste any time, I jumped on him, pummelled him a little bit and then tied him up and duct taped his mouth. My young and undeveloped mind hadn't thought about much more beyond that point so until I made up my mind I left him there and went into my grandmother's house for eat the grilled cheese she made me. Well, I ended up forgetting the boy there overnight.

It was only the next day in the late morning I was out in town with my mom and while she was in the grocery store and I had stayed in the car listening to the radio when I heard a report that my neighbour little Joey was missing and hadn't been seen since the previous day. I had completely forgotten about him in there! And worst than that, after my mom was finished in the grocery store we were headed straight to my grandma's house and the car was going straight into the garage. I was trapped. I had to do something and *fast* too!

I really had two options; *I don't know who put him there* was the first one and the second one was to jump into the driver's seat, race to my grandma's house, release the kid and come back to the parking lot before my mother came back. I decided to take a change and jump into the driver's seat. My mother had left the keys so I simply turned the ignition and drove off. I'd never driven before, I was just a young teen and I could barely see over the steering wheel in that 1991 Chevy Cavalier and I passed by two police cruisers but it seems like they missed me.

I honestly didn't have a blue what I was doing, I didn't know if I was going at the right speed limit, I blew a couple of stop signs and when I arrived at my grandma's place I drove over some grass and flower beds half in the neighbour's yard but I ran into the garage and untied the poor kid who had yet himself and gave him a stern warning to not tell a single soul that it was me who had done that to him. He could say whatever he wanted, but to not implicate me. He ran across the street and disappeared between the houses. I got back in the car and drove back to the grocery store hoping that I would make it back before my mother got out so I wouldn't have to explain what the hell I'd been doing.

Once I arrived back at the store I didn't see my mother wandering around but the previous parking spot was now taken so I had to find another one. I was stressed because there wasn't another one in close proximity so I had to park the car on the other side of the lot and the car was completely crooked in its spot. My mother's parking was always perfectly straight so it was obvious that the car had been disturbed but I was out of town and I didn't want to attract any unnecessary attention to myself so I left the car there and jumped back into the passenger's seat.

My mother never said a thing about the crookedly parked car in a different parking spot, the police never came to question me about Joey's disappearance and subsequent reappearance and that puddle of urine in the garage, well the adults were just gonna have to figure that one out by themselves.