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Blue Grass Clippings

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Blue Grass Clippings

Alena Willbur

2nd Place

I guess I killed her in my sleep.

But nobody really knows for sure. *I* don't even know for sure. I just *happened* to finish mowing the lawn right before the murder took place, and I just *happened* to be next door neighbors with Carla Meyers, and I just *happened* to be happy that she's dead. Now the damn cops won't leave me alone.

Someone slit her throat.

So I sleepwalk, to the extreme of mowing my lawn sometimes, big deal. I've been sleepwalking since I was five.

So I almost stabbed my dog with a kitchen knife—he didn't die. Close, but not quite. No one knows about that one, though, and I sure as hell wasn't about to admit that to the pedo-stache-jelly-donut-eating-gorilla excuse for a cop.

But hell, Carla was the one that put used tampons in my gym locker! The damn tampons bled on my jeans and reeked of fish guts, so I had to walk around school in my BO-soaked gym clothes, not a much better alternative. If anything, she was the psychotic murderer. Maybe she killed herself for attention, you know, her last little attempt to get famous yet stay blonde and beautiful forever.

But the red spray paint on my locker says otherwise.

PSYCHO!

I roll my eyes and don't even bother to open it. When I turn around to head to U.S. History, Didi's wide googly-eyes are about to pop out of their sockets, and her frizzy brown hair seems to pop out of her head more than ever.

“Oh my god Rae, who did this???”

“Shut up!” I hiss through my teeth. People glance over at us, and I roll my eyes. I decide I won't go to class and hope they clean it by tomorrow. “It doesn't matter, Di. It'll blow over once they get something else to talk about. I think I'm gonna ditch. Wanna come with?”

Di scrunches her lips and shrugs. “Skip class? I don't know...I have a test coming up...”

I don't expect any other answer from Di. She is a great friend, of course, but a goody-goody, like ties her shoes perfectly and listens to whatever her mother says kind of goody. “You always have a test coming up,” I say.

“I know, but...”

I sigh. “It's okay, Di. I'll see you later.” I get the hell outta there just as the bell for first period rings.

*

In the small town of Ojai, California, the sun sears into your skin almost every day, and thus fries the grass yellow. Unless you're my mother, of course. She's obsessed with keeping up an image, as if in some constant competition with the neighbors, especially since I was accused of murder a couple nights ago. So

our grass is always lively, earth green and mown into diagonal lines. She gives the landscapers special instructions to do so.

But at night, the dark shades of the sunless sky dye the grass blue.

It's my favorite time because, for a minute, the universe and the earth are one: I can lie in the grass but fly in the sky. Like right now.

I close my eyes in the cold grass on this late summer night, but something closes around my wrists:

Handcuffs.

Lightning strikes my heart and I jump up, breathing hard. I feel my wrists—bare. I shake my head at myself; the cops have me paranoid now.

A cut of wind slices through me and the trees rustle and the grass sways. Goosebumps pop on my arms and hair rises on the back of my neck, making me believe someone is watching me. I glance behind me, near my neighbor's house—Carla's house.

Shadows from the tree on their front lawn hover over the white house. Branches crawl toward a window that used to be Carla's. I know that's her room because, whenever I happened to be outside, I would see her sneak out that window, or a boy sneak into it. She was that stereotype of a girl who loved to sneak out to parties and kiss boys who didn't love her but served as a verification of her beauty and desirability.

I'm the girl that doesn't really give a shit after her first heartbreak: the infamous Tristan Summers. Golden curls, sun-kissed tan from surfer mornings, and a twist of green and blue life in his eyes.

Let's just say he's another reason why I hate Carla Meyers.

Thump.

My body jumps and I scan my surroundings for any movement among the trees, behind the houses, in between the bushes or even across the street, but only the wisps of shadows crawl amongst the yellow glow of the streetlights.

I look back at my house, but all the lights are out: Mom's asleep. Dad's working his night shift at the mental hospital.

Then there's me.

Still sitting alone under the pale moonlight.

WHAM.

My head pounds and I try to scream, but a hand covers my mouth and panic fries my senses: I have felt this hand before. It's unmistakable—warm like the summer sun, like soft gold, like—

I wake up covered in black and blood.

“I know you killed her. I saw you,” he says, his voice dark and quivering.

I'm still lying on my front lawn, but my blue jeans and grey t-shirt are soaked in red, and his shadow stands over me. I recognize him immediately.

“Tristan? What're you—”

“You killed Carla.”

I roll my eyes. Great. First he cheats on me with Carla, then he accuses me of murder. I sure know how to choose them. “Yeah, okay?” I stand up and face him, crossing my arms. I’m not afraid of his bulging arms and trembling fists at his sides.

“I saw it.”

I grin and laugh. “Yeah, okay. Whatever. How about you leave me alone?”

I start to head back inside, but before I can even move, his hands wrap around my neck and squeeze.

Air exhausts out of me; my green eyes bulge and stare into his, which are blue and green like the grass. His jaw tight and body shaking, he reaches for a pocket knife and motions it across my throat and—

Slit.

*

“Rae? Rae? Raaaae?” Didi’s voice calls to me and sunlight pierces into my eyes. I’m still lying on my front lawn, and Didi stands over me.

I nod, but my hands shake. My vision; blue grass. Tristan. A nightmare?

“How long have I been out here?” I ask Didi.

Her eyebrows knit together. “You don’t remember? You ditched school then texted me to come over to drop off your homework. . .”

She hands me a stack of papers. I don't remember, but I play it off. "Right. Thanks. I'll see you later, Di."

I stand up and walk toward my front door. "Ow!" I trip over a rock and catch myself with my hands. The gravel digs into my palms and scrapes of blood drop out from the skin.

"Rae! You okay?" Didi helps me up but I shake her off and stare at the rock I tripped over. And the grass clippings near it.

"I'm fine. . ."

That's when I see it. On the grass clippings. Then the memory slams into me.

"I have to go," I say, then sprint into my house without a word. I go up the stairs of the empty house—four bedrooms, three people, and wood floors equal a ghostly echo whenever I walk into it. Maybe that's why I like being outside of it.

I grab a pair of white yard clothes in my room and go to my garage for the yard waste bucket.

The sun sears into my skin and sweat breaks from my pores. In my front lawn, the grass clippings are green in the sun.

I remember.

I took a nap that night. The night of her murder.

But then I woke up. Or, "woke up."

I was about to mow the lawn that evening, the time where the grass dyes into a blue as the sun falls. And I saw Carla. Carla

and Tristan sneaking out from her room and whooshing tongues.
They laughed.

They *laughed* at me! *Hahaha, oh my god, what is she doing?*

Carla giggled, flipping her hair off her bare, tan shoulders.

My knuckles squeezed the lawn mower handle, turning white. I bit down on my tongue; red rust poured out—blood.

Blood.

Blood.

Silenced her. Squeezed her throat and reached for a pocket knife and—

Slit.

The blue grass clippings clump at the end of the lawn; I forgot to clear them up the other night. I bend down and get ready to dump them inside the yard waste bucket, but I stop.

Because there it is.

Small, but noticeable.

Among the grass clippings, a bloody pocket knife stains my white gloves.