

The Bookshelf  
By Andy Medina  
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Rebecca entered the study. In the large room, there were books upon books to read. There was a ladder on the bookshelf for the books that were out of her reach. Her parents had told her not to go on the ladder by herself but she always did. No one else ever came in there with her so if she wanted a book past the fourth row, she wouldn't have anyone to ask. At first, she was afraid of going on the ladder, afraid that she would fall down and hurt herself like her parents said she would. After a while, she overcame that fear and got used to the height of the bookshelf.

Rebecca spent as much of her free time in there as she could. Her siblings constantly made fun of her because she didn't do much of anything else. *Not like anything they did was worth doing. All they ever did was watch cartoons or play video games where they killed people. Killing people, what an evil thing to do. The thought of it just makes one cringe*, she thought to herself. She looked around at all the marvelous books. All the books one could ever want to read.

After being influenced by shows such as *Reading Rainbow* or *Sesame Street* and slogans on bus stops, her parents got her into reading. Rebecca was very smart for her age; she would read just about any book she could find. Any book that sounded interesting, and most of them did. She also liked the slogans people had about reading. Her favorite was one of The Count from *Sesame Street* saying, "Vead! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

"Rebecca, dinner is ready," Frank said. Frank was the daytime butler here at the mansion. He took the job at this particular mansion for one main reason. The house was set near a beach and there was a lighthouse nearby. Frank loved lighthouses and lighthouses loved Frank. His former job was one where he was a technician to replace the lights when they burnt out. Nothing terribly exciting in and of itself, but the view is what Frank did it for. For the sun setting and the stars barely visible, the waves crashing and the college surfer kids getting ready to ride the big ones.

"I'll be there in a minute." Rebecca said. *Story of my life*, Rebecca thought, *family always nagging me. I just want to sit here and read. Is that too much to ask?* She climbed down from the ladder and exited the study to go eat dinner.

Frank was glad to leave work, glad to get away from those people and their nagging requests. Frank, can you get the door? Frank, can you tell Mary I'll be there at eight? Frank, Frank, Frank. *At least that's over*, he thought. *Now, I can go and get some dinner. But first, the lighthouse.*

Yes, the lighthouse. Frank's version of happy hour was to go up to the lighthouse with a six pack and watch the sun go down. He regularly attended. *Much better than the usual happy hours with bars and shitty service. Not to mention bartenders who expected tips. There aren't any sunsets there either*, Frank thought. If Frank was lucky, there might be a painting on the wall of a sunset, but nothing compared to the real thing. The real thing with the red clouds and the sun slowly going out of sight. Things were alright when the sun was setting. Night was coming and it was a time for relaxation. The day was over and there's nothing more they can do to you. Whatever happened that day was gone.

Frank arrived at the lighthouse. He knew the place well. He looked out of his car window. The sun shone in his face, he squinted his eyes.

"Well, I'm here once again." He got out of the car. Walking towards the lighthouse, he knew what to expect. He knew what was coming. *Shit, the beer.* Ah yes,

almost forgot about the beer. It wouldn't be happy hour without some alcohol now would it, Franky? He stammered back to the car and found his keys. He opened the trunk where his secret collection lay. He wasn't a picky man. Any beer would do him fine but he sure did like the Heineken.

He grabbed the six pack and closed the trunk. He took a look at the sky to see the sun's progress. *Ah, just in time*, he thought. He walked towards the lighthouse.

Usually, the door was unlocked but Frank knew what to do if otherwise. He had a friend make a skeleton key for lighthouses. *Skeleton key, just in case he was on a trip or something and had some free time to kill*. The door was unlocked and he stepped inside.

The stairs went around. Frank loved the stairs. He'd follow them with his eyes, moving his head only when the stairs were out of sight. Up and up they go, nothing to stop them. Where did they lead? Frank knew. They lead to the sunset.

He approached the flight of stairs and heard his shoes echo as each step passed. Higher and higher he got. His hand touched the rail for support but was barely necessary. He could hear the glass bottles of his six-pack clanging. It was a wondrous time, the prologue before the start of the story. The anticipation that comes and also awaits as Frank's legs carry him to the top.

He reached the top of the stairs and surveyed where he was. He looked for a place to sit but only found the empty floor. *No problem, the floor will suit me just fine*, he thought as he sat. His suit would get a little dirty, but that's what dry cleaners are for. He placed the carton next to him and took out a bottle. He looked out the lighthouse window.

What he saw amazed him. The bottom of the sun was below the horizon. The clouds were beginning to turn red, red with anticipation. They knew what was coming and loved every second of it. They were with Frank on this one. Below the sun stood the water. *Doesn't really stand there though, does it?* Frank thought as he sipped from his drink. The waves were breaking and the tide was getting higher.

Frank looked back to the clouds and saw them become crimson red. Red like a sea of blood, one broken with pure parts that were still blue. Sections that haven't been touched by the blood yet. Sections that were still clean.

As he took more sips from his green bottle, the more beautiful the sunset became. He watched as the clouds moved. *Ah, how the clouds moved, everyone should see it someday. They move so often but no one bothers to look up. Too busy looking down at the world around them. Too busy with their doctor's appointments and their haircuts. They should look up once and a while, they should. They'd like it.*

And at last, the finale. The event we're all here for folks. If you'd be kind enough to take a seat next to this fine gentlemen in the suit. Have a taste of what's inside his green bottle if you like. He won't mind, he's got plenty. It's happy hour and you're all invited. Yes, even you my dear, the one with the red hair and the butcher knife. Step right up those big long stairs and show me that smile. Everyone loves a girl that smiles. Now, hold that knife up high with your right hand. Hold it like you mean it, yes 'at a girl. You know what to do now, this is what you came for. The grand finale. Now, the anticipation comes before it actually happens. Don't be too loud as you walk up those stairs. You know how to be quiet, now's the time. There you go, conquer those stairs, show them who's boss. You're about to show someone else who's boss now aren'tcha? Alright, now you're done with the stairs, take a look at the red clouds. Red with anger. Here comes the night now, darkness can conceal you now. No time to relax, there's work to be done.

This was it. Frank knew it was coming. He enjoyed this moment more than anything. What happened earlier that day, he couldn't even remember. Why, he didn't care either. The sun was blinding but Frank wanted to look anyway. He wanted to see the clouds as they said their goodbyes. Won't be seeing ya for a while, take care and have a good one.

Frank heard soft footsteps, he looked up but it was already too late.

Frank could hear Rebecca's footsteps as she walked behind him. "Not very anxious to go eat now are you?" He looked back at her.

She was holding her dolly. Well, that's what she called it anyways. It was a porcelain doll with blonde hair and a very pretty red dress. It was a fancy version of 'Barbie Goes to Winter Formal.' She was looking down at the floor; Frank could tell she didn't want to talk.

"Say, what's your doll's name anyways?"

"Her name's Nancy." She looked up at him with her pretty eyes. She held Nancy closer and petted her hair. They came near the dining room. Frank pushed the door open and held it for Rebecca.

Larry was serving prime rib and mashed potatoes. There was a side of gravy, split pea soup, and a collection of vegetables that Rebecca didn't like very much. Larry placed a plate on the table and looked over at Rebecca. "This is yours." He smiled at her. He looked at the dolly Rebecca had in her hands. "She can eat too if she's hungry."

Her eyes lit up as she smiled at him. She could smell the steaming soup as she got closer to the table. She sat at her chair and looked around to see who else was in attendance.

*They were footsteps, I know they were. No they weren't, remember what your psychiatrist said? Yeah he said that whenever you get like this to take a deep breath and remember your condition. You have a way of imagining things, Larry. Don't forget that. Alright, alright. I'll calm down. You're just getting spooked because you're walking down this dark alley. Well, I got to, it's the only place they'll let me go for a smoke. I can't smoke in the house, not with all the little kids around and all. Besides, I always walk down this alley for a smoke and I never get scared, what makes this night any— what was that? Footsteps man I'm telling you. Footsteps? I don't see anyone. Well of course, if someone was going to rob you, he wouldn't let you see them. What kind of fool would do that? No, it's fine Larry. No one's around. Who would be? Who would want to hurt ole' Larry? You've been down this road many times before. Nothing to be afraid of man. Nothing at all.*

Larry turned the corner. He threw out his cigarette and saw it land on the cement. He heard the scraping against the pavement as the fire burned out beneath his foot. Then he heard something extra; a slight rustling in the background.

*That was just a dog, man. There's plenty of dogs on this street. Dogs stay up all night just howlin' at the moon and shit. There's no moon out tonight though. I wonder where it went. It's okay Larry. Just start heading home and you'll be alright. Just get back to the house where nothing can happen to you. Where no robber or thief can get you. You're safe there.*

Larry walked for a while longer, thinking to himself. Before he knew it, he was done with his second cigarette.

*Okay Larry that's enough. Don't wanna get hooked or anything man. Don't wanna end up smokin' a pack a day do ya? No, I don't. You're right. I should get to heading back. It's getting cold out here. How long have I been gone now? Long enough already. Okay, I'm heading back now. No need to worry. Nothing to worry about, everything's gonna be okay. Nothing to be afraid of, nothing to fear. Just get home where it's all nice and cozy and you can lay in your bed and forget this whole thing ever—*

And he saw it. At first, he just glanced at it while he was thinking to himself but after the double take, he was certain. It was Rebecca's doll. It was sitting up against a wall with a miniature knife in its hand. The knife almost looked real. Very shiny and very convincing.

*Do they make little knives like that for dolls? How would they? Who would buy such a thing? Oh here's a little knife for your doll. She'd love to have one. No, that's nonsense, it would never fly. You're just imagining the knife, Larry. It's not really there. How could it be? Sure, the doll is there. Maybe Rebecca left it outside one day while she was playing. You know how forgetful children can be. But the knife is definitely not there. No way, Larry. No way. Okay fine, you're right. I might as well grab the doll and give it to Rebecca when I get back. You know how she loves these things. How her eyes will light up with joy when she sees it again. 'Where did you find it?' she would ask. Her with her pretty young eyes. Her dark red hair that the light always shines so perfectly on.*

He approached the doll and bent over to pick it up. He touched the blade that wasn't there. It penetrated his skin and caused it to bleed. He felt the pain and looked at his finger. He stepped back in fear.

*Okay something is definitely fucking wrong. That knife's real. It's fucking real. How could this be? There's no way this could fucking be. I'd better get outta here. Get the fuck home where I can be safe. Where I can rest in the nice house with my nice bed. Get to sleep and forget this whole incident ever happened. And get rid of that fucking doll. Goddamn doll, how did that just happen? How would a doll have a thing like that? How? How?*

He felt it then, a searing pain in his leg. He'd felt many painful things before but nothing like this. He felt the blade twist as it stayed inside his leg. His attacker was behind him. He instantly realized how she snuck up on him. *Those footsteps were real!* He thought. He felt the blade being removed from his thigh and the flesh that came back with it. His legs gave out and he felt the pavement slam his already bad knees. The pain was there for a moment then his mind returned to the cut in his thigh. He felt the warmth of the blood running down his leg. His mind preoccupied with the pain, he tried to think of a plan.

*Shit that's my good leg. What am I going to do? Okay well look around; see who your attacker is. If you can size 'em up maybe you'll get out of this.*

Larry turned around to face him but all he saw was darkness. Nobody there, nobody around. He turned back to the doll in front of him. The doll was smiling a very beautiful smile. *It's alright, Larry. There's nothing to worry about,* the doll seemed to say. Her hair was golden blonde, almost hypnotizing even. The light shone on it like a spotlight. He felt the security of thinking that everything was going to be alright. It was okay, nothing to worry about.

*Larry! Come back. Don't lose it Larry. Don't drift off into La-La Land. Not now. This is not the time. Stop looking at the fucking doll. Okay think. Where did the attacker go? Why didn't he finish the job? Look for him Larry. Do it!*

Larry glanced around but saw nobody.

*Get up! Leave then if you can't find him. There's no use in staying!*

Larry used his hands to make himself rise. The pain in his leg was debilitating. He had to walk with a limp, he had no choice. He got going. No time to waste now.

*It's okay Larry. Just get home, that's all I ask. Get home where you can wash up and clean off this fucking leg of yours. Tell the others you got robbed or that there's a killer on the loose. Tell them whatever you want. Who cares? Just get home, you can figure out the details later. Figure out the details while you're in your nice bed enjoying a drink of—what the hell was that? Footsteps, they're fucking footsteps! Not mine either.*

"Who's there! Who the fuck is out there?" All Larry heard was silence.

*Who gives a fuck who's out there? It doesn't matter as long as they don't kill you Larry. Just get home man.*

Larry turned the corner and he could see the light coming from the porch now. The light was guiding him like a lighthouse guides a ship at night. A ship that would get lost in a storm had it not been for the lighthouse. Well tonight Larry was the captain and he needed that lighthouse more than anything he needed before. Land ho Larry!

*The light is on. There is hope Larry. You can make it. Just a little longer.*

But it was not "just a little longer." He had a bleeding thigh and a very large hill left to conquer. Larry ignored that little fact and kept walking. He saw the mailbox not too far away and decided to set little goals for himself.

*Get to the mailbox Larry! Worry about the hill later, just get to the mailbox.*

Then he felt the second blow. The Achilles tendon tore apart in the same leg as the first cut was in. He dropped to the floor and landed on his side. He rolled over onto his back voluntarily, or maybe there was a little hand on his shoulder helping him over. Larry was in too much pain to tell. Once the pain subsided, he opened his eyes. It was too dark to see much of anything. He was certain though that he saw the outline of a little girl's face. Probably about seven or eight years old. She was hovering over him, smiling. She had a very pretty smile, very young pretty eyes--the kind that would light up when you did something nice for her. It almost looked like someone he knew. Then, he felt the third and final blow. Straight to the neck, no more fucking around. The warmth he felt on his leg earlier was now on his neck, where he never wanted it to be. In his final seconds of life, he thought of his condition. Except for this time there was no faking. This time was for real, none of that psychiatrist bullshit. But then again, maybe this was all a bad dream and he would soon wake up. *Yeah, this is when you wake up, right before you die,* he told himself; wishing it to be true. Then, as he closed his eyes he thought of how much the girl reminded him of Rebecca. Rebecca and her pretty red hair...

Larry placed Rebecca's silverware on the left side of her plate. Larry noticed how the light from the sun outside hit Rebecca's knife just so it shined in his eye. He blinked and looked out the window. *The sun will be setting soon,* he thought, *then night will come.*

He looked back and Rebecca was holding her knife with her dolly's hand, pretending it was cutting the steak. "There you go Nancy, that's how you do it." Larry realized how scary it was to see a doll holding a knife. Even though the dolly wasn't alive, it was the look in its eyes that gave you the impression that...*that maybe it was. That it would take its knife and--*He was awakened out of his thought process by the sound of Ryan chasing Jesse around the table.

"Hey, sit down!" Larry yelled at them. Stunned, Jesse and Ryan found their seats. They sat next to each other on the side opposite Rebecca. Larry placed a plate of vegetables and steak in front of Ryan. Jesse got on top of his chair and stood up.

"Look, now I'm as tall as you." He said, showing with his right hand that he was indeed correct. Larry turned around and scolded him. He didn't find it funny at all. Jesse, on the other hand, thought it was one of the best jokes he made in a long time. *Way better than Ryan's cruddy jokes. One day I'll show him. I'll beat him at something and I'll see the look on his face. He'll see.*

Jesse quietly got out of his bed. If his parents asked where he was going, he'd say he was going to get a drink of water. What he was really doing was getting ready for the nightly round of hide-and-go-seek. Jesse opened his door and left his room.

The meeting place was downstairs in the kitchen. That way, if anyone were to spot them while they were in there, they could just say they were getting something to drink or something to eat. It was also far from the parent's room so they could get away with making noise. The kitchen was home base.

The others were there as planned. Be there at eleven, Jesse could remember Ryan telling him. They never let Rebecca play with them because frankly, Rebecca had cooties. She was a girl which deemed her an outcast to the hide-and-go-seek game. Tonight, she would be playing, however. Tonight, the hide-and-go-seek-gang is not alone.

But Ryan doesn't know that. Neither does Jesse. Huddled around are Ryan, Jesse, and Steven. First, the dispute of who is hiding and who is seeking is handled.

"Okay, rock, paper, scissors is the name of the game," Ryan said. They threw down what they had. Rock, rock, scissors. Ryan loses. "Okay, I'm the counter." Ryan wasn't worried because the other two were younger than him. They usually picked terribly easy spots. Getting the younger ones was so simple.

Ryan turns around and covers his face. The rules are that the other two get one minute to hide. Then the counter has five minutes to find them. If he doesn't find them, then he loses and consequentially has to be counter again. They all set their watches and the other two scam, looking for a spot to hide.

They played this game often and there were only so many spots to hide. Jesse and Steven split up and Jesse searched around for a new place to hide. Jesse saw Steven run into the study. Jesse figured he should go upstairs instead. He approached the big, long banister which was almost black in the night. He quickly walked up the stairs, careful not to make too much noise and give away his position.

He reached the top of the stairs and looked around. He had to be especially quiet now because he was near his parents' room. His parents hadn't caught on to the whole game just yet and Jesse didn't want to give them any clues. He tried to think of a place to hide.

*Where's somewhere new? Where would he not expect me to be? The guest room? Nah, he's found me in there before with no problem. How about the attic?* Jesse thought to himself.

He'd never hidden in the attic before. He'd been there a few times to help his parents clean it out. Those were the nostalgic days. Old, dead memories lay up in the attic. Every now and then, you had the extra time to go awaken those memories. *Let's see how well I do up there.*

One problem though. Jesse wasn't tall enough to reach the string to pull the ladder down. *No big deal, I'll just grab a chair.* He got a chair from the guest room and stood on top of it. He pulled the string and the door came down which held out its extended ladder. Just like an arm holding out its hand, inviting him in so he could hide from the evil Ryan who is looking for him.

He climbed up the stairs and closed the door behind him. "They'll never find me here!" he exclaimed.

*Five minutes later...*

Jesse was crouched, facing the wall, behind a large five or six foot painting by Van Gogh or Escher or some other painter. He was convinced it was the best place to hide.

*Up, Ryan's only got one minute left. He's totally not going to find me now. This was the best idea ever,* Jesse thought. He was so excited he just wanted to jump up and down. He wanted to get out from behind the painting he was behind and run down and rub it in his face. *Ha, ha you couldn't get me that time. It's your turn to count again. Betchya'll never guess where I was.* But then, something happened.

Jesse could hear footsteps. He could hear two feet on top of a wooden plank. Then, the attic door was opened and the ladder went down, inviting the next guest in.

*Oh crap, he found me. What am I going to do? Well, maybe he'll think the chair was a decoy. Who would be stupid enough to leave the chair there in the first place? Yeah, that's it. If I stay quiet, he won't find me.*

He could hear feet coming up the ladder. Climbing and getting higher and higher. Closer to where he was hiding. The person was done climbing the ladder and stood on the attic floor. The door was closed. Jesse attempted to breathe shallowly but his excitement made it difficult. He'd stop his heart if he thought it would prevent Ryan from finding him.

He heard the feet walking around the room. Searching for something, searching for him. He tried not to breathe or move or make any noise. He didn't realize but he was holding his breath. Suddenly, he had to let it all go. A loud exhale came from his mouth. Jesse covered it.

Then, the footsteps changed their trajectory. They found the new target and were not going to miss it. Jesse knew he was toast, knew he didn't stand a chance. He hoped for the best. He thought that maybe he could get through this one and win the game. Win the game so he could rub it in Ryan's face. Win it and never let Ryan forget it. Win it and—

Jesse heard a tear and felt a sharp pain in his throat. He looked down and saw his shirt covered in blood. Then, it faded to black.

*There's only one left. Better hurry up and get home, the parents will be up soon.* Rebecca was looking down the driveway to see if her car was in sight. Soon, she would be driving up towards the house.

Sarah walked into the room and smelled dinner. She was glad to be home from volleyball practice. Her stomach hurt from being hungry and her abs were sore from sit-ups. She knew it was painful and much work to do volleyball, but it would keep her in shape for him. For whenever he asked her out and took her to the movies. For when he put his hand on her thigh and he would like what he felt. They would kiss in the darkness.

Sarah saw Jesse standing on top of a chair, right next to Larry who was serving Ryan his dinner. Larry turned around and got very mad and Sarah laughed. She went to sit down next to Rebecca. She always wondered how Rebecca never had a bad hair day. It always looked so vibrant and pretty. *When she gets older, surely she'll have a bad hair day*, she thought to herself.

Rebecca looked over and had some ketchup on the right side of her lip. She had apparently already begun digging in. Sarah told her about it and she laughed in embarrassment. She picked her napkin off her lap and wiped it.

“Did I get it all?” Rebecca wondered.

“Yeah, that’s it.” Sarah said.

“Who’s hungry?” Larry asked as he placed Sarah’s plate in front of her. Sarah was starved and attacked the steak immediately. Larry looked at her. “Hey, you don’t have to go that fast, he’s already dead.”

Rebecca laughed.

She loved him. That’s all there was to it. She saw his hair as it partially covered his eyes. He shook his head slightly every now and then to clear his view. To clear his view of her, of how he wanted her. She watched him all night at the party. He would laugh with the other girls and talk and joke and play. If only he knew she was thinking of him. *Oh he knows*, she assured herself, *he knows more than you think*.

It was getting late and it was time to head out. She didn’t want to go but she knew she had to. Everyone else was leaving and you don’t want to be at the party when everyone’s gone home and it’s dead. She found her keys, said her goodbyes and went to her car.

She was driving and nearly home now. The sun was starting to rise in the horizon. Sarah checked the time and it was nearly six o’ clock. Another late night on the town. It only seemed like she just left the party. The party with him there. Oh how she wanted to tell him what she thought. *He’ll ask me out soon enough. Don’t worry. He has to have noticed me at the party. I did my hair all nice and pretty so he would see. Plus, I painted my toenails and got a manicure. I wore that cute dress that my parents don’t like. All for him, all for his attention, all for his love.*

Then, she ran over a speed bump in the road.

*What was that? Was that a speed bump? Since when is there a speed bump in front of the mailbox? What idiot put that in?* She looked in her rear view mirror to verify what it was. The speed bump looked like it was wearing a suit. *Oh shit!* She got out of the car.

She ran to the person in the suit to see who it was. She could tell it was Larry. His white face stared up at her, his eyes still open. There was a line of blood on his neck. Running him over wasn't what killed him.

Then, she heard the tire blow on her car which wasn't more than ten feet away. She looked up and saw a butcher's knife hanging out of the sidewall. She could've sworn she heard small footsteps above the hiss of the air seeking its way out. She didn't see anyone though.

It wasn't the first time, but it was the loudest time Sarah screamed.

After the scream, she regained her composure and started looking for whoever it was that blew the tire out. *The person must be hiding in front of the car, I can't see him at all,* she thought. She started to walk towards the car. On the driver's side, she could see a strand of red hair on the ground.

As she got closer, she could hear heavy breathing. Sarah knew someone was in the front of the car. The driver side door was still open. *Fuck it, I'll get in and run that bastard over.*

She ran into the car and slammed the door as fast as she could. She fumbled to put the car into drive so she could run him over. Run him over and teach him a lesson. Show him who's boss. The car got into gear and her foot pounded on the pedal. The car jolted forward and met no resistance. Sarah checked her rear view mirror but there was nothing but the speed bump sporting black slacks. *Oh well, I don't care, I'm getting the hell out of here.* She kept her foot on the gas despite the noise coming from the flat in the back.

*I just want to get out of here. Don't want to die. I want to live so he can ask me out. So He can take me to the prom and all my friends would watch as I danced with him that special night. They'd elect us as queen and king for sure. The spotlight would be shining down and onto us and how we'd be dancing. How we'd be in love and holding each other forever.*

Something shifted in the passenger seat. Sarah turned her head to look and it was her. Her with her pretty red hair and her sweet blue eyes. She was wearing a red dress because red is her favorite color. Sarah couldn't quite tell, but it looked as if she had some red spots on her face. Maybe she tried to put on some lipstick and missed horribly. Maybe she just—She was holding a sharp piece of glass near the right side of her face. She brought it down and into Sarah's right leg. Sarah winced at the pain and once it subsided, punched the girl in the red dress right on the cheek. She quickly recovered and returned with a blow of her own. Then the crash came.

Sarah woke up an unknown amount of time later. Her head was killing her and she seemed to be cut all over. Her arms were bleeding and so were her legs. Little slice marks were all over her body. Her eyes started to drown from the blood seeping in from her face. She closed them to avoid the pain.

*This is it. This is all it's come to. I'm going out like this. At least He will know that I loved him. He will know when we meet in heaven. Some couples are a match made in heaven and only in heaven. That will be ours; our relationship will be truly divine. Put together by God Himself. Dying now only means that the day we are together is that much sooner.* She imagined him as he held her in heaven. As he ran his fingers through her hair, as he kissed her and danced to the music of the gods. The light of God was on them and everyone watched.

In her last seconds, she could hear him coming to rescue her out of the car. The door opened and he dragged her out of the car and blood went all over the ground. He gripped her wrist as he treated her like a paintbrush, painting the ground with her blood. Her wrist was the handle and her body was the bristles; it was cut thin enough to be it. As he dragged her he laughed a very childish and girlish laugh and it was all over.

Finally, the parents were home. "Sorry, the movie ran over, we thought it would get out earlier but all those previews." She explained. She hurried to the table with her husband behind her. They sat down and Larry served them their food.

Now everyone was here and they were eating.

Rebecca was walking up the stairs on the way to her room. Rebecca was now done with Sarah, she definitely didn't see that coming. *Too bad she saw Larry, that didn't let me take her by surprise. That's how I like it, by surprise.* She held the knife in her hand, ready to finish off what she started. She approached the top of the stairs where the straight path would lead her to her room. Lead her to her room where she could fetch her box of crayons and teach them all a lesson.

She reached the top of the stairs, very full from her steak that she ate. She held Nancy in her right hand. "Did you like the steak too Nancy?" She made Nancy's head nod in affirmation. Rebecca saw the door to her room slightly open and could see a tall rectangle of red inside. She walked closer and pushed the door open with her hand, then she got on the other side of it.

Rebecca slammed her door and it shook the picture on her wall. *I can't believe that they did this. Why did they do this? Where did they get the idea from to slash my books? How did it go? Were they sitting around in the library, bored from their video games and G. I. Joe's and all that other crap and thought hey, let's do it? Those rotten kids, and the people that brought them up that way. Any good sensible person would have taught them that it was wrong. Taught them that they shouldn't touch other people's things.*

*Almost as if they needed to be taught a lesson, huh?*

The thought surged through her from nowhere. Rebecca was caught by surprise and immediately excused it from her mind.

*No way, let mom and dad punish them.*

*They must not be doing their job right. What makes you think they will this time?  
But I'm only a little kid. What could I know?*

*Much more than them apparently. It would only be natural to be mad at them for what they did. Isn't that a form of punishment? Perhaps you'd think bad things about them. Hope mom and dad punish them and that they feel bad for what they did. Hope that they feel pain from their regret. Wish they never did it? Any of this sound familiar?*

*Yes, of course it did and Rebecca acknowledged that fact.*

*How mad are you right now?*

*The walls were red.*

*I am furious. They are gonna pay.*

*Red with anger.*

*Pay with what? Their lives?*

*I don't know. I don't know.*

*Oh come on, don't give me that.*

*I mean it doesn't feel right. I mean I've never done anything like that before.*

*Oh so you need a reason, huh? Fine, little girly who is into reading books. What about: Follow your heart? How mad are you right now?*

*Very mad, they ruined my rare first editions. I can't believe that they did that. Mom and dad won't even punish them much either. Little slap on the wrist and its back to playing hide and go seek and other foolish things.*

*So they do a lot of foolish things? Say, what would be worse? A criminal dying in a car accident or an intelligent doctor?*

*Neither, one person's life is worth as much as another's.*

*But wouldn't the criminal be more likely to hurt and possibly murder people than the doctor who is out there saving lives? And by way of your response, wouldn't that mean that the doctor is more likely to save that which is valuable and therefore that one person's life is worth more than another's?*

*Yes.*

*So then, which would be worse?*

*Okay the doctor dying would be worse. What does that prove?*

*Well, if your family is doing foolish things such as not bringing up their kids right and the kids are doing foolish things like slashing your very precious books, then that would make them like criminals right?*

*The walls were crimson red.*

*Criminals who were deserving of punishment.*

*Red like the blood beating in her veins.*

*Who were even deserving of death.*

*Like the blood in their veins.*

*Okay, they are to be punished. You've established that much. But why death?*

*Say, you don't want them to do that again right? You don't want them to slash any more of your books or possibly if you ever get any more first editions right?*

*No of course not.*

*Well then, how else can you insure that they won't do it again? You leave them alive and you might come home to your dolly messed up. Or, your room could be in shambles, they could write in crayon all over your walls. REBECCA HAS COOTIES they*

would write. Or they could break your ladder that you get your books with. They could do a many number of things. They've already shown that once.

It was starting to make sense.

And how would you feel if they did that?

I'd be furious.

Furious enough to kill them?

Yes.

Say, there's something I brought up earlier. Not sure if you missed it, it bears repeating. What about the qualifier: follow your heart?

I've heard that many times, mainly when people talk about something called love or romance.

What does your heart tell you?

I would be very mad if they hurt my books again or wrote all over my walls. Keeping them alive does give them the chance of doing that or something even worse. This madness definitely makes me want to hurt them.

Well, there's more than what I've said so far.

Like what?

Well, many people when they are taken away something important, something terribly important, are sometimes wanting to kill for that. Say, when a wife is killed by a robber. The husband wants to find out who did it, where they live, why they did it. He wants revenge. Is there anything wrong with that?

Well, I don't know, um.

What about an eye for an eye?

That one's in the bible.

Yes it is. Do you agree with it?

I'd say so, it seems right.

Well, what if we amended it a little. It was written a long time ago. When a robber goes to jail, do we steal things from him? Do we "steal from the stealer?"

No, we throw him in jail. It would be wrong to do what he did. To take something from someone else.

But aren't we taking away his freedom? Aren't we taking away his contact with society? There are many things we are taking.

Yes, that's right.

So, when someone takes something valuable from someone else, we must take something of value away from them right? An eye for an eye.

Yes.

And what we take from them depends on how much they took from someone else. We don't punish the kid who stole a candy bar the same way we do a person who cheats the government out of thousands of dollars in their taxes.

Right.

The walls were painted with blood.

So, they took something of value from you. They took your first editions and thrashed them. Those have provided you many hours, many days, many years of enjoyment. Just like how a robber might take a man's wife that he loves and has enjoyed for most of his life. And something of comparable value should be taken from them. It wouldn't make sense if you took the few books they had and slashed them now would it?

No.

*So, you have to take something from them that is valuable.*

And Rebecca knew what it was.

*If they liked reading as much as you did, they would never have done that. They would've possibly read them from time to time and certainly never thrashed them. They'd take care of them just like what you wanted.*

*Yeah, they should read. They would learn so much in life. They would do better in school and be better off when they grow up. They don't read at all, all they do is play hide and seek and play with their army men. Or watch cartoons or—*

*So, there are many things they do that are bad. Perhaps not each of them is deserving of death but what if you add them all up? What do you get then?*

And Rebecca knew.

*But how should I do it?*

*In horror movies—say do you ever watch horror movies Rebecca?*

*Yes, I've seen a couple.*

*One characteristic thing about most of the deaths in horror films is that they die alone. They may be with the group in the woods and things are a little eerie but no one has died yet. Then, say what was that noise? Let me go Alone and check it out. Okay, I'll wait right here for you.*

*Yeah, that seems right. But in horror movies, it's a bad guy who kills the character. Someone like Freddy or Jason. They aren't good people.*

*Yes, but this will be different. You are justified in killing them, don't forget my arguments.*

*No, I won't. Wouldn't want to do that.*

Rebecca looked around in her room and found the picture on her dresser with a poem and her name on the top. She had always liked it, always liked how it talked about how she did what was right and was so pretty.

*I think I still fit the bill. Sure, it's not Rebecca, trying to keep your eyes closed during prayer or to learn her manners. It's more than that. It's what gives some people meaning in life, what drives them every day. Justice.*

Rebecca felt better. She had come in with no plan of action and now she was leaving with a plan; maybe it's only an idea but it's a start. She liked how her reasons for the killing corresponded with the reasons many people use all the time. Follow your heart, an eye for an eye. Rebecca almost had another one, one that was especially apt to this situation. One that people use all the time. Ah yes, that's it.

There's a first time for everything.

She was glad that it was almost over. Sarah was gone and now what is left is the parents. She planned it all out before she did it. She'd kill everyone else first, leave the parents for the morning when they woke up. Dad would be the last to die because he would get framed for it all. Rebecca would be the only witness and the only one left alive who knew anything about what happened so she would be believed. The cops wouldn't question her when she said she heard dad's booming voice, yelling at her to stop hiding. As she peered around the corner and saw the moonlight reflect off the knife he was

holding. In the darkness, that was all she could see, the only way to identify where he was besides by his voice. How she didn't know where anyone else was and why Jesse wasn't in his bed like normal. How he laughed like she never heard before.

Sometimes people snap. Sometimes, when work is tough and one is under a lot of pressure, they just snap. Cops knew the stories; they knew what people were capable of. They would buy it no problem.

And besides, who would suspect a little girl? One who, by normal standards, shouldn't be able to kill someone with a knife or be smart enough to frame someone. She should be busy playing with dolls that lived in fake miniature houses and deciding who was going to marry who. Who was going to the prom with Mary? Why was Joey so quiet around Susan? Things like that.

She looked around her room at her crimson red walls. They seemed to be darker now, more filled with rage than before. She knew what she had to do and she left her room in order to do it.

She got to the bookshelf in no time; she knew the route very well. She climbed the ladder. The very top row was where she was headed. Where her favorite books were, where it would be hard for a thief to get them if he was robbing the house. She reached the top and moved the books from that section down a row or on the very top, wherever they would fit. She had a black crayon in her hand, ready to write, ready to teach everyone a lesson.

Frank was the first to go, I killed him while he was watching the sunset.

Larry, the imaginative one, I scared with my dolly and that made him easy to get.

I found Jesse while he was playing hide and seek, he didn't hide very well.

Sarah did not act very predictably, that is until she died.

And as for mom and dad,

She left that blank as they hadn't been killed yet. They were still alive and were probably going to wake up any minute. Wake up and wonder why no one was around, wonder why Jesse and Ryan weren't in their beds, wonder why Rebecca was all the way up the bookshelf and holding a crayon in her hand.

The reason, of course, was to teach them a lesson. That had been what this whole thing had been about. If only they were into reading, they would know the truth. Rebecca was certain no one would see her confession because they never used the bookshelf. She was the only one who knew where to find a John Steinbeck book or something by Ray Bradbury. For everyone else in the house, all the books were the same save their color. If only they'd venture up here and grab a book, they'd see the writing. They'd know the truth. It was the perfect way to get back at those who didn't spend their days reading. To teach them a lesson and show them that they should have been into reading. One day, they will learn but by then it will be too late.

Then, Rebecca heard footsteps from above her, where the master bedroom was. The usual morning creaks, someone visiting the bathroom and using the sink afterwards, someone else turning on the television to see the morning news.

She waited a couple minutes, trying to decide if she should add anything to the shelf. Then, she heard them coming down the stairs. The door to the library was opened.

“Come on, Rebecca get down from there. What did I tell you about going up there?” Her father yelled.

Rebecca looked back and noticed Mom wasn't in sight. “Okay I'll get down. Where's mom?”

“Oh she went to go get a painting or something from the attic, she'll be down in a minute.” He wondered why there were no books on the shelf Rebecca was at. Rebecca started to climb down, knowing it would come soon.

Then, they both heard a loud scream coming from upstairs. Her father ran to see what was wrong.

Rebecca smiled.