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### Nightmare

Of course I go with him. Of course I want to help him. He looks at me with such sad eyes, pink and watery that contrasted with the green of his iris. He's not the type of kid to show emotion. We are friends, close friends, but not best friends. We don't really see each other outside of school except when I give him rides home, but I care about him and he trusts me. He's sweet and lost under all of the black leather and piercings. He tells me about his family, about his boyfriend, about everything he's been through. I listen. I support him. He needs me. And there he is, standing on my front porch in tears, asking me to come with him, telling me he needs help, my help. So yeah, I tell my mom I'll be back in a few hours and leave.

I walk with him down my neighborhood roads. It's twilight, I can see the moon brightly and the end of the sunset dimly. He walks fast, and I try to keep up. "What the hell is going on?" I ask.

He inhales through his nose. "Nothing, I just, I did something bad. I'm not safe." *Oh god, I think, Did he cheat on Ben? Did he get in a fight with someone? Is his family trying to kick him...* and I'm face first in a bush, with Kyle's arm ontop of me, pushing me down on the ground. He lets me up but covers my mouth with his hand. I watch a police car drive by.

"Okay, Kyle, what law did you break?" He doesn't respond. "C'mon, this is going to get me in trouble, too. Tell me."

"I killed someone."

“What?”

“Killed someone. Dead.”

The blood drains from my head and I start to feel dizzy.

“Kyle, what the fuck? Why did you do that?”

Kyle looks down, and then up at me with the sad eyes. “She was trying to hurt me. Bad. She had a knife, and she was coming toward me, and I shot her in the head.” He begins to cry. I hold him close to me. He said in between sobs, “I really... Didn’t...”

I pet his soft, buzzed head and said, “It’s okay, I know you didn’t mean it. Shhhh, it’s okay.” I text my mom, “I’ll be away for a few days, I’m safe, just gotta help Kyle out.” I then throw my phone, pull him up from off the ground, and we start walking.

We finally make it to the bus stop a few miles away. We run to catch the last bus, and grab two seats in the back. I take the window seat and he sits next to me. The cars rush by, almost towards me. Their yellow headlights burn my eyes, and the fluorescents in the bus make my head ache. He has his chin up and his eyes steady. He looks more content than I expect him to. Smug, almost. A coping mechanism, I assume.

We stay on until the last stop and look around. We’re in some normal looking suburban town. It isn’t much different from our town, but I still feel uneasy and out of place.

“What do you want to do now?” I ask. I’m getting tired.

“Want to see a movie?”

“Sure, I guess.”

We count up our money. We have \$50. Seems like going to the movies is good way to spend some of it. For \$25 we can spend the night at the theater movie hopping instead of in an

expensive motel. We buy tickets to see Hellboy, and I get bored quickly. Action movies have never really been my thing. I rest my head on his shoulder and fall asleep. I dream lucidly, and the sounds of the movie melt through my dream and color it with fire, gunshots, destruction, and death that I cannot change, no matter how aware I am.

“Jess, get up!”

“Hm?” I mumble softly.

“There were gunshots.”

“I told you I don’t care, this is a dumb movie.”

“No, in the theater. In real life. Get up.” I open my eyes and people are running out the doors. He pulls on my sleeve. “C’mon, Jess. Please get up. I think they found me.”

I grab him by the hand and we maneuver through the crowd until we are lost. I forget what it’s called, but we sneak into the theater that’s playing the movie about the elephant with the weird ears. We sneak to the back and take a seat. There’s sweat on his forehead and tears in his eyes. I hold his head next to my heart. He cries for a long time, and I try to calm him down. I look around for people trying to hurt us.

“Shhh, get some sleep. I’ll look out for us, I promise. I got you. I can keep you safe.” He looks up at me and I wipe the tears off his eyes, then continue to pet his head. He finally slows down his breathing and drifts into sleep. The contrast between the events that happened tonight and the innocence of the movie weighs on me heavily. I feel uneasy. Something isn’t right. Why did we run? Why didn’t we tell the police? If it was self defense, then why was he so afraid? And why did he need me? He needed me for emotional support. But what was he running from if he did nothing wrong? I felt lightheaded again. Those gunshots... I feel around in his jacket gently,

trying not to wake him. My fingers wrap around something metal. I get dizzy and nauseous and I jump out of my seat. His head falls and hits the armrest. He holds it with his hand then looks up at me. The confusion soon turns to anger and fear and he reaches for his jacket pocket. Before I know it, it's aimed at my head. I start to cry and try to scream but no noise comes out of my mouth. My whole body is frozen. I am a statue with my mouth wide open and water rolling down my stone face. He stares into my eyes, and though his hands are shaking and his brow is furrowed, his chin is still up. He doesn't think twice, and I'll never think again.