

“Hey, Madison,” Tommy sneered. “Miss your girlfriend, the suicide chick?”

Madison’s back stiffened. *Here we go with the lesbian stuff again.* Her eyes darkened from their usual icy blue, and if it was possible, her dark red hair would have bristled like a cat’s fur.

“Butt off, Tommy,” Fran Delano replied, sliding up next to Madison. “Nobody cares what you think. Shouldn’t you be off stealing lunch money from some poor helpless kindergartener? Isn’t that your usual style? Shoo.”

Tommy flushed, sputtered something unintelligible and shuffled away.

“Don’t listen to him, Madison.” Fran was one of Madison’s best friends, a peppy JV cheerleader. She tucked a flyaway golden strand of hair back into her ponytail. “I saw his grades on his laptop and let’s just say that he’s not the brightest crayon in the box. So consider the source.”

“Yeah, I like crayons,” Madison distractedly replied.

Madison was still thinking about Margot, the girl that Tommy was talking about. Margot and Madison had been friends for as long as she could remember. Margot confided many things to Madison, and Madison listened. She knew that Margot was going through a bad time, but she didn’t know everything that was going on. That was what made her death so dreadful. Nobody saw it coming.

“Hey, Mads, are you even listening to me?”

Madison snapped back to reality. “What?”

What Happened to Margot

Grades 6-8

“I was just telling you that everyone’s talking about Margot haunting the girl’s locker room. I know it isn’t true, but...” Fran’s eyes glistened with the possibility of something truly interesting happening at Sarah Lee Anderson High.

Madison raised her eyebrows. “Really, Fran, I seriously think that stuff is bogus. I mean, come on. It’s not like she wanted to spend eternity here. Like anyone would choose to spend eternity here.” A sudden chill went down Madison’s spine, giving her goose bumps. “Do you feel that draft? Is there, like, a door open or something?” She asked Fran.

“No, I don’t feel anything.” Instantly, Fran’s eyes bulged. “Mads, I think you feel Margot’s ghost! I bet she’s upset that you don’t believe that she’s still... *with us.*” Fran’s voice dramatically dropped to a whisper.

“Fran...” Madison warned.

“Seriously, I really think it was--” The tardy bell rang. Madison looked down at her books.

“Fran, you made us late for Spanish! Eurgh, this is what I get for listening to your ghost crap...” They sprinted down the corridor.

“Nice to see you two made it.” Señorita Vega crossed her arms.

“Sorry, uh, *lo siento, Señorita V. No veces mas,*” Madison said.

“We got lost on our way to your class. *Nosotros somos muy, muy triste.*” Fran flashed a sweet smile to the teacher, showing off one of her prominent charms.

Señorita sighed. “*Sientate en las sillas, chicas, y saca la tarea.*” She continued class, but Madison’s mind was far, far away from conjugating verbs.

“Hey, Mum.” Madison’s book bag landed on the spotless kitchen floor with a *thump*.

“Hi, honey,” Mrs. Harrison said as she scrubbed the dishes in the sink. She glanced at Madison’s book bag and cleared her throat suggestively. Madison sighed and hung the book bag on the doorknob.

“You know, Madison, I’d like to talk for a moment. Do you mind if we sit down?” Mrs. Harrison gestured to the living room with her sponge.

Madison sank into the comfy gray couch, grabbed one of the pillows and hugged it. Her shoulders tensed. *Oh no*, she thought. *Mum wants to talk? Talk about what, say, my **sexuality**?* This was a subject that Madison did not want to discuss.

Madison watched her mom gently sit down on the couch next to her. She took a deep breath. “So, how’re you feeling, Madison? How’s life?”

“Fine, thanks,” Madison said warily.

“Great. I want to make something clear.”

“Like, something bad or something good?”

“Something neutral. I just want you to know that I love you. If there’s something that you want to tell me or your father, I want you to know that we will not judge you, or make you feel bad about what you have to say in any way--”

“Mum,” She interrupted. “Where this is going? What is it that you want to know?”

“Well, honey, I’ve been wondering. You know you can tell me anything, right?”

“Yeah, I guess.”

“Then I want to know something. Are you gay?”

Madison widened her eyes in shock. Her mother's question broke the dam. A flood of emotions crashed down on her. The pain of Margot's death, her confusion about her sexuality, the sly taunts from the kids at school all rushed through her at once. "I don't know," she sobbed and threw her arms around her mother.

"Oh, sweetheart, I'm sorry," Mrs. Harrison said. "I didn't mean for you to be upset."

Madison told her mother everything; about Margot, her feelings, and everything that had happened in the last few weeks.

"I'm so sorry, honey," Mrs. Harrison said. "I know it's all confusing right now. Things like what happened to Margot don't ever seem fair, do they?" Madison sniffled and nodded. "I can see that you have had a lot going on inside of you and I'm glad you shared this with me. Please know that I love you and I'm here to listen, no matter what. You don't have to deal with all of this alone."

Madison gave her mother another hug, one that lasted much longer.

"Thanks Mum. I'm going to do homework now, 'kay?" Madison took a deep breath, stood up and walked to the door. "Oh, and Mum?"

"Yes, baby?"

"Thanks. I love you." Mrs. Harrison smiled as Madison left the room.

Madison went upstairs and put on her comfy fleece froggy pajamas, grabbed her old stuffed tortoise Bilbo and gave him a big hug. Sighing, she put him down, put on some music and started her chemistry homework. After a couple of hours, she brushed her teeth, and fell into bed, hugging Bilbo. Madison's weary eyes grew heavy and minutes later she was asleep.

What Happened to Margot

Grades 6-8

Madison woke up in the girls' locker room, alone. *I don't remember falling asleep in the locker room; how did I get here, then?* She heard voices coming from the entrance. Oddly, they struck fear into her heart. She hid in one of the stalls, quickly and quietly standing on the lid of the toilet to hide her feet. The voices were girls her age, chanting, leering, saying "Margot, where are you?" "We saw you come in here!" "Come out; come out, wherever you are..."

The girls came closer, eventually stopping at Madison's bathroom stall. She held her breath. They pounded on the blue metal door, making it jangle and rattle with each shake and punch. "Come on, Margot, get out! Open the door and face us like a man. That's what you want to be, right?" *What were they talking about? I'm not Margot.* She looked down. She was tall and willowy, and her skin was dark. She lifted a hand to her hair. It was short and close to her head. A pixie cut, probably raven black. She was Margot.

"No," she whispered.

"Ah, there, you are!" The weak latch was unlocked by a lunch card and the door swung open. There were Cassandra Florence, Andrea Gamble, and Brenda Higgins, standing with their hips cocked. "We were afraid we'd miss you, Margot," they sneered.

She was frozen, like a deer in headlights. Quickly, she mulled over her options. *Fight them off, maybe? No, there were three of them. Maybe try to outrun them?* That was her only option. She bolted straight through the girls, scattering them like a trio of bowling pins. She raced out the door, and into the gym.

The room that was once the gym had become a maze. The walls were immensely tall, colored and textured like work cubicles. These, however, had only one entrance, and from the looks of it, they were set up like a labyrinth. If she was going to escape her tormentors, she would have to go through it.

She kept running, her shoes squeaking on the linoleum floor. She heard the girls' malicious laughter echoing after her, but could not see them. More voices joined them, which meant more people joining the chase. She kept running, her breath coming in gasps, weaving through dead ends, twists and turns.

Her energy was draining. The previous rush of adrenaline had subsided, leaving her breathless and absolutely terrified. She continued forward, though her feet felt heavier with each step.

The crowd of people finally caught up with her. Her eyes darted to each of the faces that she had known for years. Hanna French, the only other girl in the dance troupe who went en pointe the same year as Margot. Byron Edmond, her next door neighbor who hunted frogs with her in the creek behind their houses when they were in grade school. Autumn Willower, the girl she sat on the bus with every day since the 3rd grade. Then another face came into view. Mrs. Grenfell, her mother, stood with a look of disgust on her face. That look shot daggers into her soul.

They all advanced, the sound of each step echoing through the corridor. She punched and kicked the wall behind her, struggling to find a way out. Her breath heaved as she became exhausted from the strain. This wall was impossible to break—wait! A crack formed in the rough wall. She tore at it, and it quickly widened the crack into a gaping hole, just big enough to squeeze through.

Madison was back in the girls' locker room. The voices of the crowd, chanting, "Fight us like a man, fight us like a man," were gone. She was blissfully alone. Madison noticed a sturdy hook in the ceiling that she had never noticed before. It was probably strong enough to hold a backpack, or even a...

What Happened to Margot

Grades 6-8

Margot stepped out from behind a row of lockers. Her raven black hair shined in the fluorescent light. She glided towards me, and my eyes misted with longing.

“Madison,” she said.

“Margot.” Tears ran down Madison’s face. “I’m so sorry,” she whispered.

“Don’t be sorry,” Margot said. She slipped her hand into mine and smiled. “I’m about to move on to a different plane of existence. Madison, before I go, I need to tell someone why I made the decision I made. Who else could I tell but my good friend... the only person who really understood me?” Margot bent her head down and looked at Madison. “Madison, my life was hell. I didn’t enjoy living. I know that others will miss me but I had to go. I wish I could have seen another way, but I didn’t. I’m so sorry, Mads.”

“I’ll miss you.”

“I know.”

Margot climbed with a catlike grace on top of the row of lockers. A piece of rope lay limp in her hand. She painstakingly tied the noose, slipped it over her head and attached the rope to the hook. She stepped off the lockers.

And then there was light.

People say that suicide is horrendous, a terrible act of selfishness. When faced with that choice, why do people do it? Initially, I felt that Margot’s death was a mystery. Now, after seeing her life through her eyes, it makes sense. When you’ve been tormented, isolated and demeaned for only being who you are, it can seem like the only option for escape.

What Happened to Margot

Grades 6-8

Madison woke up again, this time in her room. She stared at the ceiling, and with perfect clarity, knew what came next.

“Margot,” Madison promised. “I’ll tell them what happened to you.”