

CLANDESTINELY CONFOUND

It was 1:31 in the afternoon on a gloomy, rainy, post-spring-equinox Wednesday. I felt that no one cared about a 38 year-old, community college student, studying for a meaningless bachelor degree for teaching 11th grade biology.

My main professor was actually not a bad teacher named Patrice Watkins. She had a very loud voice, didn't speak amazing english, however, she got through to almost all students at the Kearney, Nebraska Community College.

"To summarize, the difference between anabolism and catabolism is simply that the anabolism is the constructive part of the metabolic process and catabolism is the destructive phase of metabolism. Ok?" Patrice finishes announcing various things while she hears the rustling and scrambling of restless college students.

"I'll see you on Friday..." I didn't pay much attention.

Right as I started to question whether I was actually obliged to make an attempt at furthering my academic knowledge, my uncle apparated in the threshold of the, 3rd floor room, in the Execui Building. My classmates had just dispersed and I, like always, lingered, and pondered the lecture for about 5 minutes after class.

I waited for my uncle Andrew to call my name or approach me but he just waited. And waited. Finally I got up and walked over to the dull, beige colored, doorway and gave my uncle a suspicious inspection. I gathered that he was wearing a mildly expensive pair of khaki's, a turtleneck and a grey scarf. He was also carrying a green duffel bag that modestly murmured "I'm modest, pay attention to me... Please? Nah its ok." As I looked into his "prison-raped" face, I notic--

"I've come to console with you, I was on my way to Iowa city and i decided to stop in to see my little Alyssa" my deranged uncle clamored.

"Yeah... I haven't seen you, Andrew, since... when was it? August, early September?" I semi-nervously replied.

"Ummm. Yah, you talked about how you didn't want to go back to having responsibilities and putting a shirt on before 12, for Community College. But, yeah I was planning on staying in Kearney for a couple days."

As he was usually late and unprepared, I offered him lodging at my house, but he surprised me and was staying at the Country Inn on Talmadge St.

Right after I nonchalantly gestured to my banged up, Prius, he mentioned that he took the train. The eerie feeling I got when I heard the word train resurfaced to my hippocampus. For that very word was the death of my parents. A moment later I resumed starting up my car. My uncle mentioned something about lunch when I was having somewhat of a flashback. For it was already three and I had lunch, but, he was coming from a different time zone and I was kind of hungry, so I mentioned a couple of places.

Later we shared a good pint of "Tuesday Winter" soup at "Louisoup", a local soup restaurant. Near the bottom of the pot my uncle started rambling on about the day of the train, and how he felt guilty about it ever since it happened.

"I just feel like I was the cause, a--mm--meh--ahh, I don't even know" He struggled to say as a prerequisite to crying.

Surprisingly, this is not the first time I have seen my menacing Uncle cry. This was common, I would comfort him, pat him on the back, and he would drink until he passed out on the couch. After this alarming vicissitude we started talking about the week that was coming, maybe a trip to the park, bowling, etc... I decided to go to bed and he had a Auga de Bolivia cut with coke (the only thing in my cupboard). I heard footsteps down following the door slamming. I was slightly taken off guard when he left the first time I asked him. I suppose I was slightly relieved as well, for my uncle was a macabre person.

I dreamt of many things, one in particular was an eerie recurring dream about my dad.

I was in a dining room and there was a notepad on the table and an open door leading to what I assumed was a basement. I could hear my father's voice from the basement, vague and disorganized. I attempted to look at the notepad but started walking down the steps of the basement and then... It turned into a black haze and I could not complete the melancholy, eerie dream.

I woke up to the sound of the neighbor Felipe playing saxophone with his brother Andy. NO. I slept 25 more minutes and reluctantly pulled myself out of bed at 9:54. I got

my phone and checked my email in the bathroom and promptly got some clothes on. After that I headed downstairs expecting another weird start to a weird day. I turned on the coffee machine and got some eggs out. I proceeded to have ADHD and started watching TV. Good morning America was on and my brain was not ready to process anything smart so I kept it on that channel. Actually I feel better now that I graduated college.; I graduated, YES I, Alyssa Johnson Graduated with a bachelor degree and was.... About to pursue my 2nd string dream, Teaching high school. Oh well. It will be funny. As I started to develop my primary motor skills I muted the Tv and stepped in the kitchen and turned on the stove.

There was a knock on the door, A very loud knock that made me jump and almost made me drop the egg that was in my hand. As I stumbled low to the ground towards the door I heard another knock and wheedling, mumbling. I opened the isolated curtain next to the door and peeked to see who it was, it was my Uncle. At 10 in the morning. I reluctantly opened the bronze highlighted door and made a shrug-gesture to the table.

“So.... What the hell are you doing here at 10 in the morning with no plans?”

“Excuuuse me? Alyssa?” said my Uncle.

“I just think it’s a little creepy for an Uncle to show up to his 38-year old niece’s door at 10 in the morning.”

“You are right but I have come with important information--”BEEP the coffee is done.

“Lemme get that really quick okay?”

He follows me to the kitchen and sits on the middle stool, checking out my cooking area. I pour two half mugs of coffee and ask him if he wants milk and or sugar. He drinks it with a little dash of milk.

“Alyssa, I have something very important to tell you.”

“What?”

“Your father is still alive!”

I don’t know how to react to this, it corresponds with the surreal dream I had last night but I still cannot believe this mind-blowing statement. The reaction to this may be a slight floccinaucinihilipilification, however my Uncle is as innocent as Hitler’s dad.

“How?!” I said.

“I--Your Father was replaced by a different man, by the name of Joe Baldwin, this information was just found out and they alerted me last night but I was not legally allowed to tell you until 9:05 central time today” He hastily explained.

“Oh my.... Gaa, What the hell, why, how,” I barely manage to say as I am incredibly awestruck.

He proceeded to tell me about stuff related to this event that I payed almost no attention to. I was mostly distracted because of the incredible, jaw-dropping sentence he announced to me, and the slightly disturbing smell of burning coffee. Like many things in life, you have to learn to accept, not all bad things.

“Can we get some coffee before we go to my house in Lawrence?” He asked.

“ I was not aware that we were going to Kansas, and why did you buy a house in Lawrence? I don’t even want to hear. But you *are* right we need to get some caffiene if were gonna be on the road for five and a half hours.

“So, how have you been since the last time we met?”

“Um, well I finally came to point where I feel comfortable talking with people about Charlene and maybe would get back out there in the dating world, I know, I know I’m almost sixty-five and it’s weird because I’m your Uncle and you don’t want to discuss that so I won’t go into detail. Otherwise, I have been pretty decent, read a few good books, watched TV--Oh and our bowling team won 3rd place in the state of Kansas. Sorry I know I have been talking your ears off, what’s up with you?” He rambled.

“Uh, I finished college... Um made a few friends, and I met a really nice guy named Jordan but we usually are not anything more than a casual fling.” I say as I pour our coffee and serve our eggs.

We both make subtle gestures while one another a were speaking and eat vigorously. After this I get myself ready and pack up for a--

“How long will we be staying in Lawrence?” I yell from the window from my room.

“Maybe, uh, not more than a couple days... It kind of depends on what you want to do I mean, it is summer and you’re a teacher.” he replies from the back of his Toyota Curren, loading his roller-bag and a couple of loose articles of clothing.

Once we get back in the car it was quite serene for the first 25 minutes, he seemed to know where he was going and I had my original X-men comic's from my childhood. So, with the exception of a couple bathroom breaks, we ended up having a late lunch in Lincoln, Nebraska.

"So, Andy what kind of pizza should we get? The Morningstar special looks good, onions, sausage, sunflower seeds, and a special spicy mushroom tomato sauce."

"Hm, that definitely sounds good... Have you ever heard of Guava?"

"Yeah, I actually had it at a tropical party last year. I'm surprised you are not aware of this scrumptious fruit."

"Y--

"So what would y'all be havin'?" the short waitress named Eliza charismatically blurted.

"I think we'll have...." I give my uncle a questioning look.

"Yeah I think were gonna have the Morningstar pizza, with two guava smoothies."

"Is that all." she mockingly says.

We both nod.

"So, I want to finish this trip fairly quickly, in order to meet my Dad, by the way can't we just call him?"

"Um, yeah..." he says before pulling his outdated early 2000's dumb-phone and squinting at the screen.

There is a ring, then another, then another, then it goes to the company's default voicemail and Andrew frowns and shrugs.

"Oh well, would you like me to tell you how he survived?"

"Oh, yes definitely." I say while focusing on him and resting my head on my hands.

"Well before the train ride, Chris had several immigration charges and he needed to get out of the country so he faked his own "death". Since then the immigration charges have been getting less and less serious. So when he got out of trouble he started living at my new house. One other thing that is vital to this whole thing is that your mother did not even know that your father was an illegal immigrant. So she just

thought that your father went on another of his drinking “trips” where he drinks, and somehow cannot get back to the household in as much as a week, and the train was only going to Chicago for a week.”

“I understand it, oddly.” I reply.

After lunch we get back in the car and there is almost complete silence for about 3 hours and that is nice. He mentioned something about a chicken shack right near his house and something about how the weather was, but I was immersed in my 90’s comics.

We finally got to his house. I put down my comic slower than a turtle on codeine, as I was barely ready to meet my father again after almost 15 years. Somehow I thought he would be on the lawn waiting for me ready to wrap his arms around me and celebrate life, but no. We go inside the house, it is a big, fairly old house with nice woodwork and great feng shui and there is a slip of yellow paper on the granite countertop. Andrew rushes to see look at the note and mumble-whispers the note out “loud”.

“Your father is at the grocery store he says he has dinner all planned out” my uncle says as he grins.

At this point something seems weird, but not horror story weird.

“Alright. What *is* for dinner?”

“Grilled chicken with, uh Surmor sauce, I think it’s like soup or something.”

“Yum.” I say in an uneducated way.

It was already 6 o’clock after we unpacked; my dad had not gotten back yet.

“I’m gonna go shovel the front porch.” Andy yells.

“Ok.”

I immediately look around the house and scan to see if there is anything suspicious. I come to basement stairs and start heading down there. I hear a faint breathing almost like a fan but somewhat like a dog panting. After that promiscuous happening, I feel around to my right on the wall, for a lightswitch. I flick the light on. There is a washer and dryer with two scruffy t-shirts next to them, and the floor is covered in dust except for a vague trail leading to a carpet. I am now starting to think that I am in a scary movie, and my heart rate has gone up maybe 40%.

“Hello?” I say frantically, not thinking about the probability of a freaking, I don’t even know what some sort of monster popping out and clawing at me.

I continue to hear that breathing, mumbling sound and it seems to be coming from the carpet or under.

I lift up the carpet. And there is a pounding noise coming from underneath the eerie, sinister trap door. I decide that I want to see whats under there.

It might be superstitious but I take a knife and cautiously walk down the stairs and open the trapdoor. It was dusty and gloomy. I heard screams, they were getting louder and louder. They were not amazing, boisterous, protruding screams, they were concerned non-committed screams. I continued down what seemed to be a never ending staircase.

“Hello.”

There was no response.

I had watched few horror movies when I was younger, but one thing I did know, was that the suspenseful “reee’s” were about as scary as it got (back in the 90’s). Now I know, first hand that silence is exponentially scarier than a simple garageband sound effect added to a film.

I heard another scream, louder. Louder. I almost could not bare it. Then I heard another type of scream, a deeper, more aggravated scream. Coming from upstairs. My uncle was coming. I actually don’t know why I didn’t talk to him but back to the overwhelming suspense.

I finally saw something other than gloomy darkness. It was a bright yellow door that had a small mirror on it.

“SAAAAVE ME!” someone howled from the beyond the door.

It pierced my ears like a flaming arrow would a person wearing toilet paper. I screamed out loud and heard another worried, concerned, mad bloodcurdling scream leading up to Andy stumbling down the stairs.

“Save me Alyssa, Andrew trappe--” he said with his last breath before he was cut off by dull pain and a freezing, vague storm, before my eyes.

The last thing I saw was an angered dark figure with a gun in the mirror. and a plethora of painful screaming.

Brick. Brick wall. I was staring at the brick wall across from my bed. I felt nourished, I felt amazingly rejuvenated. Was this heaven? I felt my body and looked around my room. There was a Mariah Carey poster. Wait, I was seventeen. BOOM. Darkness.

“I give up!” someone with a feminine voice shouts in the darkness.

I was so Confound. For that voice sounded so familiar, was it--