

Mallory

The sun shone as bright as a highlighter, coloring every bit of the earth a soothing, tinted yellow. Mallory rode her bike, and I watched so carefully as her big legs pushed the pedals in a circular motion, thrusting her forward into the endless sidewalk. I stood there, looking at the tall trees and plucked the flowers that had their petals perfectly placed around the soft, fuzzy, yellow middle. At five years old, I was the most joyful girl in the neighborhood, always laughing and skipping my way through every day. I was always fascinated by Mallory. Her posture was bold and upright like she was a brave soldier. Her hair was long and swayed with the wind as she walked, and her face, so caring, made me smile every time.

But that day, something was different about Mallory. Her face was different in a way I just couldn't place. I didn't smile when I looked at it, even when I tried my hardest. Overwhelmed by curiosity, I decided I couldn't watch her any longer and walked inside the house. I walked at a steady pace straight through the kitchen, up the stairs, and to my room, my small sanctuary. Thinking through the whole morning, I was startled when my mom yelled it was time for lunch. Not knowing what I was eating, I thought and went straight to my room again.

It was only when I heard a blood curdling scream that I bolted out of my door. My first hypothesis was that a burglar barged into our little house. Then I wondered if Mallory just scared my mom while she was cooking, like usual. But this scream was different than anything I had ever heard in my short 5 years of existence. As I cornered the end of the stairs, my jaw almost fell out of my mouth. There was Mallory, laying on the ground, drowning in a pool of deep red, menacing blood. Then, I saw who had screamed, my shocked, frightened, and traumatized mother. No words traveled to my mouth; I just watched as the blood oozed into the innocent white carpet, staining the ground with terror. I saw a sharp blade in the palm of her hand, and a

cut seeped into the soft flesh of my big sister's wrist. As still as a statue, staring at Mallory, I realized I would never speak to her again, and everything went black.

I had woken up to the blinding fluorescent lights of the ER and my parents beside me, eyes sunken deep into their body, paler than paper, and I knew my sister was dead. I held her cold, smooth hand and kissed her goodbye. I wasn't the 5 year old I used to be after that. I smiled less and there was less jump in my walk. As years passed by, I grew more mature and wondered about my sister's death.

12 years later, I still had no clue to why Mallory did what she had done. At 17, I was desperate to find an answer. My sister was burning a bigger hole in my brain every single day. Why did she just end her life? Why did she leave me? What did I do? Sometimes I was angry, sometimes I was curious, sometimes I wanted to join her. I always watched the daily morning news before rushing to school, and would sometimes see a suicide story. I never thought about how the others were affected, but now, I was experiencing it. One day, I decided to enter into Mallory's vacant room. I never went in that space after Mallory died. I felt like I would disrespect her by barging into her space when she was dead. But my curiosity led me there anyway. As my footsteps touched the soft, velvety carpet of her room, I thought about Mallory following this exact path, going to the safety of her bed. In the left corner was her dresser which I'd envied. Everyday, I sat beside that dresser, watching my sister pull out the small, cushioned chair and make her hair so precisely. Everyday, I thought of having that dresser when she didn't want it anymore, but now, it was covered in a blanket of thick, dark dust. To the right was her bed, still made from the time she passed away; the sheets were pulled tight to the corners, and her fluffy, mint duvet on top. Mallory's drawers were chesapeake brown, polished wood, and still standing so proud, guarding the bed after their owner had gone. But they grew old, dust floated to the top, trying to hide their presence.

One drawer was open the slightest bit, but I noticed. The dust must have got into Mallory's belongings, I thought and wrapped my hand around the dusty knob, trying to coat me in filth as

well. As I was closing the door, a sparkle caught the corner of my eye. In all of the sadness, there was still something vibrant and alive. Once again, my curiosity overtook my senses, and I grabbed the shine from inside the drawer. When I realized what it was, it fell to the ground with a hard, prominent thud. I found what I was looking for all 17 years of my life.

As I opened the book and scrolled through the delicate, off-white pages like wisps of memory bounced off my fingers. I stopped the timeline at a particularly prominent page that caught my careful eye.

June 21st, 2001

Dear my precious, most beloved diary,

Today, I will share something with you that I will never share to Mom or Dad or Caroline as long as I live. Last week, an event took place that even now, I can't process

And the rest of the page was hastily ripped off. I so badly craved to know the rest of her story and read the rest of her black, thin words. After flipping through the next couple pages, the answer stood up right before my eyes.

June 29, 2001

Friendly diary,

I couldn't let that cold, dark story bore a hole through my book, so it now lives in the dumpster.

But finally, after careful consideration, I will pour out my thoughts and drown this page with my burden. I was just walking down the sidewalk that led to our home, coming back from school. I counted the cracks and noted the plants that sprung from them. They had overcome the hard concrete to face the glorious sun with all their strength. The grass glistened and swayed to the music of the wind, while a squirrel slyly snatched an acorn and shoved it into its enormous mouth. As the ants frantically scrambled after every step I took, another set of legs was started to trudge towards me. I thought it might be a warm, kind grandpa taking a stroll or a dad who was going to pick up his loved child from school. As I lifted my head to say good day, a set of eyes was staring right through my fragile body. Little did I know, I was face to face with a menacing

college student.

Mama broke the chain of words entering my brain as she yelled that dinner had been made. Right as she called, a waft of carefully seasoned chicken and roasted potatoes with thyme hit me. I heard a deep, anxious growl from my stomach, but as much as I wanted to eat, my heart told me to read.

Sweat started to leak out of my skin. My hairs stood up trying to warn me, and I knew this was not going to end well. Before I could turn back, a cold, big hand grabbed my arm so tightly I thought I would pop a vein, and he dragged me into the dark depths of an alley. What happened in that alley was terrifying and traumatizing. I would never wish for anyone on the face of this earth to experience what I did. Days passed by and mum was the word. I didn't tell anybody and tried to act natural. Why would I terrify my family as well? I share this with you today, because I feel like my life isn't worth living anymore. I feel like I could have lived a better life than this. I feel like a scar has tore my brain. I feel unworthy. So these will be the last words I write and the last breaths I take before I go to a better place far away. Bye diary and bye family.

Wet, salty droplets trickled down my face and covered up the page. I gently closed the book and put it in its safe haven. As I trudged downstairs, I wondered if I should tell Mama and Papa this significant story, but I knew nothing good would happen by not telling. When I sat down to eat my marvelous meal, I explained every miniscule detail to my parents.

The next day, I couldn't take it any longer. I couldn't let all these girls who had their stories untold stay hidden in their drawers, notebooks, and minds. I couldn't let this big dilemma just stay hovering in the air with knowing. So over a couple of weeks, I formed a group. A group that would bring awareness to assault and rape. I called it the Safe Society. I told all the stories that hadn't been unheard, and listened to all the stories being told, because I wanted to fulfill Mallory's wish.

On the day of our first big event, I woke up in my cozy bed, still dreaming of the day to come. As I followed the smell of freshly baked muffins and fluffy eggs, I thought of Mallory. I thought of Mallory watching me as I made a stance for her. I crossed the corner of our white kitchen and walked onto the balcony. The morning breeze blew my shiny, light brown hair into the wind as the tiny, tweeting birds conversed. There I cried, "Watch me fight, Mallory. Watch me fight."