“No One to Hear Her”

By

Amanda Dickey

Searsport District High School – Searsport

She wanders through life, in sync with the world. She is always at the top of her class, the most stylish girl in school, dating the popular guys and leading her squad to triumph. But everyone knows her only as what she seems to be, and nothing more.

She walks down the hall, Prada heels ticking against linoleum tiles; no one knows she had to shoplift to get them. Blue, white. Blue, white. Her hand is limp, knuckles bumping carelessly against blue lockers, lazily thumping over hinges. Dashes of rosy pink, flawlessly brushed across porcelain cheekbones, mirror thirsty, blood-red lips. A mouth stretched into a picture smile. Ocean blue eyes, hinted with flecks of green. Hair bouncing with jealous volume, golden curls showering her shoulders. A daisy-yellow skirt flows behind her, tucked over a creamy blouse, half-covered in a light-blue cardigan.

A flock of rednecks has already migrated in front of the Art Room. Her eyes follow a grubby, worn, once colorful hacky sack being thrashed about between feet. It’s slung between black DC sneakers, grayed with age, and heavy, brown work boots. She passes swiftly with a light descent, as if floating. A warm breeze of fruity floral perfume sways with her hips, catching their attention. The hacky flops to the floor in a heap of beads encased in knitted thread, as they gawk at her; some are gape-mouthed, some grinning: they’ve heard the rumors. She glances in her peripheral vision, just long enough to catch their eyes, and the words they exchange, often followed by the squawk of a degrading whistle. Hot. Prep. Skank. She does her best to swallow the cold, dry lump that has begun to form in her throat; it goes down like a tight ball of unchewed oatmeal, raising a fraction of a tear, which settles just above her lower eyelashes. She feels the urge to wipe away the drop of water, but refuses to let them bring her to this, not here, not now. She can feel their eyes follow her away, penetrating her invisible force field, reading her thoughts.

She lifts her head and carries on in feigned confidence. To her right she distinguishes a gathering of about twenty students. They are sprawled out across the hall; some are leaning against a barrier of lockers. As she passes, she gathers bits of dialogue revolving around the communist government in China. Others lay on the floor with their noses buried in Shakespeare or science fiction. These are the eccentrics, she categorizes to herself. A group of people with an unconscious obligation to excel in nearly everything, especially the arts. Some of the ugly ducklings gaze at her as she strides by, for they do not exceed in beauty.

A bell signals the beginning of block 1, and she gallops to Algebra 3. Thirty students congregate in the fluorescently lit room where she finds herself surrounded by math brains. The most unattractive among them is a scrawny boy with horrendous posture and pasty white skin. He looks as though he hasn't been outside a day in his life. Half-grown patches of tinted peach fuzz grow above his top lip, which is cracked and chapped from the weather. More than 50% of his face is dominated by hot red patches of irritated skin. He wears crooked glasses that are too big for his thin face, that require him to keep readjusting with his index finger. Smudged and scratched with age, they magnify his alert, brown eyes. He smells of thick, prescribed ointment and stale sweat from the day before. He is dressed in a yellow and black striped, long-sleeve polo, with white cuffs and collar. No wonder the jocks call him “Bumble Door”. His shoulders are speckled with light flakes of dandruff, which fall loose from his dried scalp every time his
body thrusts with a sneeze. Whenever he speaks to a peer about logarithms or exponents, his voice cracks with an unsure squeal. She looks away and focuses on the black board, repulsed...

“Good afternoon, girls. I am running cheer this year. You can call me Sara.”

She strides up in a dark purple track suit, her long brown hair gathered in a pony tail; clutching a black boom box with her left hand, and a dark blue mesh bag over her right shoulder. She sets the stereo on the bottom bleacher, and the 'ting' of impact vibrates throughout the metal bench. She sits down and loosens the knot on the bag, revealing blue and white pom-poms. Each girl grabs a pair, selects a song on the boom box and takes center stage.

After tryouts, Sara announces that Abby will be leading them to another year of triumph, and she is appointed head cheerleader.

Later on, Bethany, Lily and Abby are headed across the field to the parking lot when the senior captain of the football team jogs up behind her, brushing her hand with his fingers.

“Hey,” he whispers in her ear. As if a secret.

“Since you're the head cheerleader, and I'm the team captain, I am obligated to get your number. It's a team rule,” he grins with straight, white teeth, and winks at her with his baby blue eyes.

“Okay,” she says, intrigued.

Abby takes a pink ballpoint pen from her backpack and scribbles her number on the inside of his wrist.

“I'll talk to you later,” she says, and she sways off to catch up with her friends.

She meets up with them at Lily's red Jeep Wrangler, her 18th birthday present; they're leaning against the driver's door.


Bethany lifts the handle of the passenger door, and swings it opened dramatically. She rolls down the window and blasts the radio.

“Oh don't be jealous, Bethany!” Lily shouts over the music. She pulls open the door and hops into the driver's seat.

“Abby, you coming?” asks Lily.

“No, she's too good to ride with us, remember?” Bethany snaps.

“I'll just walk,” Abby responds. She never went with them – and she had her reasons.

It's almost dusk when she reaches her part of town. Sleek glass buildings turn to crumbling brick, and cobblestones to cracked cement. Her elongated, feminine silhouette follows her. The lonely cry of a police cruiser haunts the air. Abby stays close to the buildings, tracing the crevices of brick with her fingertips, over violent clashes of graffiti. There are dark gaps between buildings, and she can often make out groups of men, consumed by shadows; or an expensive car pulsating heavy rap from its smoky interior.

Out of the corner of her eye, she watches as seven large figures step onto the sidewalk, emerging from the shadows into the dim light of a crooked street lamp. They remind her of the rats that gather in groups and infest the sewers. She holds her head high with feigned confidence, and thinks of her cell phone, lost in her purse, which is buried in her duffle bag, slung over her shoulder.

She slips inside her building unnoticed. Her Converse sneakers glide down the familiar path, down the endless hallway toward her apartment. She fumbles with the keys, stumbles
inside, and secures the locks with the ease of signing her name. She looks around and the scene is the same as the day before. Her four younger siblings surround her with hugs and stories of the day. She glances over the tops of their heads, searching for her mother. She spots her hand, hanging over the arm of the faded green couch. A half empty bottle of brandy sits on the coffee table, as if she could find happiness at the bottom.

Abby takes the worn blue blanket from the chest, and pulls it over her mother's shoulders. She kisses her forehead and wanders down the hall to her bedroom. She sits at her vanity, gazing into the mirror as she carefully untangles her braids. She slips out of her preppy yoga outfit and into frumpy grey sweats and an apron.

At around midnight, she sets down the broom and dustpan. She creeps down the hall – peeking into the room which holds her siblings – and slides under the covers.

Moments after the lights go out, the cruel words creep out of her subconscious and infect her heart. Suspended in time, she props herself up, locked inside the four walls of her own mind. She clasps her hands around her face, and sobs until she is nearly drowning. The heat of breath against her palms softens the tears and makes it a challenge to inhale. Every now and then, a desperate whimper escapes from her throat.

She cries and cries, with no one to hear her.