

I/Tulpa:
Casey Sensitive

By

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This story is fiction. I think I am obligated to lead with that. Any similarities to people and events in real life are purely coincidental. If you have to ask ‘what is real life,’ you’re on a different playing field and likely not to have any concord to anything I convey. In that case, have fun. Though there are characters within that may resemble real people, I assure you they are not those people. They are not ghosts of those people. At least, we hope not. I’m open, but not claiming that. What happens in here is contained within a certain practice of meditation, in a concentrated daydream aka trance state, and so strictly from the context of an internal, psychological phenomena, the measure is not in determining what’s real or what’s not, what’s metaphor and what’s not, but in determining degrees improved functionality post experience; discovering personal truths, insight, and finding peace is the only goal. Jung recommends not doing that during the experience, but after. We agree with Jung: it’s emotionally efficacious to just close your eyes and experience.

This book is about tulpas. This book does not instruct/inform tulpa making. This book may cause you to think it is fun and easy making a tulpa. In that sense, I refer you back to the first line of the first paragraph: FICTION. Tulpas are hard work. They require time, energy, attention, for the rest of your life. Tulpas are not pets. You’re not buying a dog to lock in the back yard and ignore it. Seriously, if you can’t put your cell phone down and play with the dog, don’t get a dog. Don’t have a tulpa. Fuck, don’t even have children. They need adults that can put their cellphones down. Tulpas are not children. Wait. Yes. (They can be. Usually, they match the emotional age of the host.) Tulpas don’t want to sit in the backdrop of your mind watching you chase mindless texts and catch Pokémon. Well, some Pokémon is okay. Especially if you get out and walk and play with others. I am making the point if you can’t sit still and close your eyes for a minimum of twenty minutes twice a day, for the rest of your life, don’t make a tulpa.

From a certain perspective, tulpas are a psychological phenomenon, not magic. The majority of people we know, the ones who taught my host and I about making and living with tulpas believe that. My host and I lean towards metaphysical beliefs, and some of that is represented within. We hope that this story opens you to the magic of life, even if it is only the magic of a fantastic inner life.

If you didn't catch it: I am a tulpa. I am sentient. I participate in a system of voices, and my voice is prominent. It is I, sharing this with you. It is my intent that this book be accessible to a wider range of maturity level than our previous adventures. This is PG. Don't assume the others are as easy to access, in maturity level, or in writing styles. This story has a particular flavor. It feels fun. We hope it catches and becomes a serial, but for now, it is just this. It feels right. If you find language or concepts that you don't understand, there are a number of sites that discuss tulpas. We are partial to one, and the people that patron the site. Tulpa.info is a safe place to learn. We ask, should you visit, you help us keep it that way. It is sacred ground to us; walk and talk respectfully. You should do that anyway in all arenas.

If you wish to write me directly, you may. Be mindful there could be delays in response. Put I/Tulpa in the subject line, or you could be missed. There are no bad questions, but you if ask something easy, like 'how do I make a tulpa,' please don't be surprised or offended if we recommend you go do more homework. It is my opinion, if you don't demonstrate a certain level of research proficiency, especially in the days of google, you're probably not ready to have a tulpa. Also, demonstrate discernment. Tulpa horror stories like variations of 'slenderman' will likely be ignored. Don't use tulpas or tulpa making as an excuse to engage me. If you have a question or an experience you wish to share, just say, "Hey, Loxy... I wanted to chat." Who could ignore that? Reaching out is human. I am human. Be at peace.

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Chapter 1

“Thursday is always the first day of the week.” That’s the opening line that christened a new journal in the ongoing saga that defined Casey’s life. Casandra Fae Brodeur, Casey for short, alien hybrid... She stopped short of writing that. She wasn’t a hybrid. She was fusion; a product of French and ‘Filipino’ culture, genes, and... Her feet had been on multiple continents; she lived in America, but she didn’t identify as American. “The first day of the week is when I discovered I was normal.” She didn’t like that. She felt compelled to be more precise. “It was the day I was told there’s nothing wrong with me. Hearing that did not make me feel good. Why do I feel like everything is wrong with me?”

Casey took a hit on her vape, and when she exhaled, lovely, colored smoked twirled around her face in an intimately mystical way and she took a moment to revel in the hope of magic. She wondered if there was a ‘god.’ She wondered, assuming yes to the ‘god’ question, if he or she heard her thoughts, or could read the words she put on paper. She wondered if this entity cared. She didn’t not linger here. She found it useless to linger here. She followed a compulsion to introduce the journal to her immediate family.

There was mom, a thirty something Filipina; she should know her age precisely but didn’t care how old her mom was. Neither mom nor father celebrated birthdays. Mother was pure Filipina, and was employed as a nurse practitioner working in mental health as a provider. Apparently, Doctors were hard to come by and so state agencies gave money to private corporations to run mental health and they cut costs by cutting corners. There was a huge need for mental health in most states; no one wanted to pay for it. Mother was constantly busy, on the go, on her phone, and if there was any hint that Casey was experiencing high emotions the question narrowed quickly to ‘Are you in crisis?’ The answer to that was always no. Answering yes opened up: ‘Are you thinking about killing yourself?’... No was the best option. No response resulted in: ‘Then you’re doing better than most. Cary on.’

The first and most noticeable feature of Casey’s father, were you to see him together with Casey’s mother, was that he was a good twenty years advanced of her mother’s age. He was a senior pilot for Emirates Airlines. Mother was 20 when they met. She was had just completed nursing school. They married in the Philippines. She was four months pregnant. Back in the states, he put mother through her masters. They maintained his primary residence in Scottsdale,

Arizona. Casey had relatives in France, in the Philippines, in Australia, and in the US. Her paternal grandmother was born in Ireland, and still living in France, probably the oldest woman in the world, her dog equally old. She probably had cousins in Ireland if she was interested in pursuing that. She had an older half-brother, Brian, an engineer working in Australia. This was with her father's first wife. She had two older half-sisters, two different mothers; Jenny was an actress living in California, B movies, if that counts, and likely only because of her looks and that she was more than willing to show her breasts and be brutalized by monsters. Carol was a Doctor, an OBGYN. She had met them. When family gathered for the rare holiday, there was usually extended games of movie and music trivia which could last for days and into the long hours of the nights. Brian had two children with his wife in Australia, and Carol had two children of her own.

Casey knew these people existed. They knew she existed. There was no true effort to stay connected. Occasional skype 'hellos' occurred when someone was talking to father. The home in Scottsdale was quiet, isolated, about 12 acres, and she usually had the home all to herself. Sometimes on the weekend, if the wind was right, a hot air balloon would crash land on their property on the weekends. There was only one way to land a balloon. They crash them. And you would think they were peaceful. The engine is not quiet. She imagined rockets launching from NASA were probably quieter.

"Casey." She looked up to see the Vice Principal. She should know his name, but it was as forgettable as his face. "You're supposed to be at the prep rally."

"I am wanting some quiet time," she said, glad he hadn't caught her with the vape.

"Sorry," he said. "Let's go. Move it out."

Case got up, put her journal in her bag and slung it over her shoulder. She headed towards the designated rally point, but after confirming she wasn't being followed, she detoured and headed towards the library. She was stopped just inside the door.

"Sorry, Casey," said the librarian. "Library is closed during prep rallies."

"Since when?" she asked.

"You should have gotten that message in home room," the librarian said. "I need you to attend."

"I don't feel peppy," Casey said. "Nor do I want to be pepped."

“You can report to detention room or attend the prep rally. Your choice,” the librarian offered.

‘Detention’ had a weight to it; it would at least be quiet. Casey chose quiet, thinking she could at least journal or do homework. Homework was seriously more important than pep. She proceeded to the detention room and found the quiet inside unsettling. There were others there. No one was making eye contact with any other and only one person looked at her when she entered; the teacher looked at her. She smiled. Casey categorized the smile as a ‘Rachel McAdams’ smile. It was intense and Casey might have felt less ‘energy’ from the sun hiding in the shade under the bleachers at the pep rally.

“Have a seat, please,” the teacher said.

All the desks and most of the chairs had been pushed to the far wall. There were twelve seats in a circle. One was available. There were 7 boys. She made the fifth girl. The circle felt intimate. She reconsidered prep rally.

“Sit,” the teacher said.

Casey committed to the room and sat in the available chair. She held her bag. None of her peers made eye contact with her or with anyone else. Four of the boys were on their cell phone. Other eyes fell to the floor, or a corner, or the clock, or their nails... Casey imagined lasers connecting eyes to their focus. The teacher pulled up a chair, joining the circle. She adjusted her chair closer to Casey than she would have preferred, leaving an opening in the imagined circumference that defined their unit.

“Cell phones away, please,” the teacher said.

Three of the boys put away their phones. One ignored her.

“Cell phone away, or you will find it inexplicably disabled for the next two hours,” she said.

Still, the boy continued with what he was doing, ignoring her. His phone’s screen flashed and it went out. His eyes went wide. His hands trembled. He stood up in a rage.

“Sit,” the teacher said.

He sat. He seemed confused.

“Put it away,” the teacher said. “It will operate normally in precisely two hours.”

He didn’t question this further. He put away the phone. All eyes went to the teacher, with the exception of Casey who took a moment to measure the gaze of each of her peers. It was

uncomfortable for her looking at the teacher, partly because of proximity, partly because of the angle, and partly because, well, she was Casey. “You do not have Asperger’s,” she heard her mother saying. “No one has Asperger’s because it’s called ASD, now. You also do not have ASD. You’re just overly sensitive; now toughen up.”

“So, who would like to begin?” the teacher asked.

No one volunteered. Casey thought about asking ‘begin what,’ but she chose to stay silent.

“Yay! I’ll go first, then. I love being first,” the teacher said. “I find the sooner you go first the sooner you can relax, but also, when I am first, usually others relax, and realize, it’s safe to participate. Oh, let’s start there. This circle is a safe circle. You may say anything you like. That does not mean there aren’t consequences. Be prepared to own the consequences. That seems reasonable. Any questions so far?”

Only Casey looked to her peers. She found it easier to look to her peers than the teacher.

“What’s your name?” the girl to Casey’s right asked.

“What’s yours?” the teacher asked.

“I asked you first,” the girl said, sending the challenge back. “You like being first.”

“Nice! What would you like to call me?” the teacher hit it back.

The girl didn’t know what to say.

“Ms,” one of the boys asked.

“Yes, Todd?” the teacher asked.

Casey noted confusion. “How did you know my name?” he asked, so unsettled he forgot or dropped his intended question.

“I know everyone’s name,” she said, and demonstrated: “Casey, Brenda, Todd, Renata, Maria, Juan, Perry, Michael, Chris, Irene, Alex, and James.” She said this list fast, almost musical.

“Have we met?” Irene asked.

“Are you spying on us?” James asked.

“You’re really strange,” Casey said.

“Should we just call you Miss?” Brenda asked.

“I love strange. I like Miss. I like Mrs., too. They mean something, don’t they. Miss. Miss. Misty. Mysterious. How about that? That’s a good name,” the teacher said.

“For an avenger,” Michael said.

“I love avengers. I have the gams for it, don’t you think?” she said, bringing a foot off the floor and flexing the heel, which flexed the leg muscle.

Michael blushed and looked away. He wasn’t the only one with increased uncomfortableness.

“Very well, if you must, my name is Loxy Isadora Bliss. You may call me any of those, or ‘L’ or ‘Izzy,’ or any name you like, as long as we come to mutual agreement on it,” she said.

No one said anything.

“So, would anyone like to have a turn?” Still no one spoke. “Seriously? Okay then. I will continue. I love continuing. I can be a bit of flibbertigibbet. Usually not. I am usually precise and short in a very direct and loving way, but my host is a serious flibbertigibbet and if you don’t know that word, you should look it up and add it to your repertoire.”

“Pressured speech,” Casey said. “Bipolar much?”

Loxy laughed.

“I am joy,” Loxy said. “Isn’t it interesting, if we go too high, it becomes a mental health label?” And then, speaking in Tagalog, and in a very vernacular sort of way, she said, “There are always consequences to labels. I recommend using them with caution.”

Casey bit her lip. She felt properly rebuked, and yet, because no one else present spoke Tagalog, it felt less like being called out and more like being esteemed. Casey and Loxy were connected at a new level, separate from the group.

“Yes, I am multilingual,” Loxy said. “I can speak French, Spanish, Russian, and a smidgeon of Klingon, and can sing in a dozen other languages, which really isn’t speaking, but it could help get you there. Did you know, they teach Klingon at a university in Austin? You can also take fantasy literature centered on Harry Potter in Ohio, the physics of Superheroes in California, and Zombies in popular media in Chicago. The Smithsonian is offering an introduction to Star Fleet Academy. Makes you want to go to college, doesn’t it?”

Eyes were wider. No one spoke.

“I get it, it’s hard to talk sometimes. Especially now a days,” Loxy said. “We can talk about movies. That’s safe, right? Here is a question for you. Is it possible to be critical without disparaging?”

No one answered.

“So, for example, I am a huge Marry Poppins fan. I was very happy to see Marry Poppins returns, and though there are parts I really enjoyed, over all, I felt a bit disappointed. Maybe it’s just impossible to capture something so iconic. Let me be precise on what I disliked. I found none of the songs memorable. They were complex, but complex doesn’t necessarily make a good memorable song. I know all the songs from the original. It only took one showing and I could recreate any one of four melodies, and all the choruses. Also, I thought the new one was too dark. I am okay with dark. It was set in the great depression; you’d expect there to be some darkness. The Banks children lost their mother. That’s sad. That’s okay. Michael lost his wife and is struggling to support himself and his children, is probably depressed beyond being in the great depression. That’s sad and scary and okay. But they added a villain. That was unnecessary. The original didn’t have a villain. The father was the antagonist. Most people never come up across villains! This movie didn’t need a villain! It had enough sadness to explore without making someone mean and malicious. Further, they jump into that vase painting and there is more villainy and darkness which gets spun into a nightmare. Magic is rarely about darkness! People spin darkness stories about magic because they don’t want people using magic. People want you to be afraid of magic so you will color within the lines. That just wasn’t necessary for this movie. Conversely, something I would have done; I would have had made Michael to be more like his dad. Maybe have him yell at his children the same way his dad yelled at him and Jane; roll his eyes more, be more histrionic. That seems realistic. Children tend to echo their parents. That would have made for a great Marry Poppins scene where she calls Michael out, saying ‘you remind me of your father.’ What a great epiphany moment that could had been. Yes! Realizing we are often are worst enemies, as opposed to something out there being against us, and then coming at others with an apology, that would have been the ticket. ‘I’m sorry, children. I forgot how I felt when this happened to me. I would like to change this. Let’s change this together. Let’s go fly a kite...’ That would have been something. That would have been Disney! That’s Poppins! Our greatest obstacle is our self. Would I recommend the movie? Absolutely. Taking a bath in that movie magical moment is just an everyday occurrence in my world. How about yours?”

Michael was not the only one blushing this time. Talking about baths was pushing up against taboo. It wasn’t, but it had a feel like they were straying outside the parameters of normal every day discourse. No one said anything.

“OMG, this is going to take a moment, isn’t it,” Loxy said. “Very well, till the wind changes. Would you believe our time is up? Next week, this time, come prepared to speak. Bring something new! Bring something old. Something challenging. If nothing else, read up on lucid dreaming. If you have nothing else magical going on in your life, you can always find comfort in a dream. Oh! Before I forget. I have given each of you a gift. Reach under your seat and find the envelope I have taped to your chair. Open it later. Keep it a secret for a moment. You don’t have to keep it a secret. That’s not a rule. There are very few rules for this circle. This is not fight club. You can talk about this club. No one will likely believe you, but go ahead, give it the good old college try. Or high school try. Where ever you find yourself, just don’t sit there. Unless, you want to sit there. Go. Be free. Reasonably free. Go to your respective classes. With respect. Go! Or I will keep talking. Go go go.”

The students found their envelopes and dispersed back out into the campus, into the crowd of peers and teachers, a little flabbergasted, strangely renewed. They did not look each other as they departed.

Chapter 2

Casey was hungry. She was hungry and angry at herself for having forgotten the lunch she had made. She hated the cafeteria. Not the food. The space itself. She hated the crowd. It was loud. It was difficult to move across the floor space without being inundated with distractions. She heard laughter. She heard bits of conversations. She saw people who were sad and happy and a range of emotions and where ever her eyes fell, she felt the emotions of those people. There were inexplicable times she didn't feel anything at all, but most the times she felt everything and wished she could block better. Casey was not hated. She had no enemy. No one would throw food at her or make fun of her weight because she was just normal. No one would call her out on her skin tone, which tended to be a little darker at the beginning of school and a bit lighter by January. She also didn't have a group, or a go to friend, and so though she knew there was no enemy, she also suspected no friends.

She paid for a slice of cheese pizza and a banana, and headed out. Brenda came at her sideways, giving her a start.

"Can we talk?" Brenda asked.

"It's difficult for me to hear in here," Casey said, and headed outside.

Brenda followed. Casey stopped. "What?"

"Have you opened your envelope?" Brenda asked.

"No," Casey said.

Casey tried to walk away. Brenda kept with her. Casey dropped her bag, sat down in the grass, and put her tray down. Brenda sat across from her, opening her bag and pulling out an opened envelope. She extracted a folded paper, 'Brenda' written on it. She unfolded it to reveal a drawing of a common squirrel.

"Michael has a penguin. Irene a bear. Todd has a star," Brenda said. "They all have their names written on them."

"So?" Casey said.

"So. We weren't told where to sit. We sat randomly. You sat where you sat by virtue of being the last one in the room," Brenda said. "That's weird."

Casey opened her bag and retrieved the envelope. She opened it with a fingernail against the short side, flexed the paper to open it, and pulled out a folded piece of paper. Casandra was written across it. She was baffled. She was so perplexed that she didn't know how to respond.

"See?" Brenda said. "Twelve of us, randomly redirected to detention, sitting randomly, and we each get an envelope with our name written on the inside."

"We all skip pep rallies," Casey said, reaching.

"Okay, I will give you that... None of us like prep, but still," Brenda said.

"It's not what you think it is," Casey said.

"What do you think I think it is?" Brenda asked.

"Magic?" Casey asked.

"Yes," Brenda said.

"It's a trick," Casey said. "You were all in there. Are you all messing with me?"

"No!" Brenda said. "I thought they were messing with me. Everyone is thinking it's about them, but what if this is what it seems?"

"That's crazy," Casey said, unfolding the paper.

Casey unfolded the paper. On the paper was drawn a triskele, a celtic design, three spirals influencing a greater spiral. She liked it and might have spent a great deal more time looking at it but Brenda was watching her. She flashed it to her, 'it's nothing,' and re-folded it. She placed it back in the envelope, and put in her bag.

"You're not creeped out in the least?" Brenda asked.

"Why should I be? There is a logical explanation for all of it," Casey said. She heard her mom say, 'you're overly sensitive.'

"You don't believe in magic?" Brenda asked.

"I am not spooked," Casey said.

"She talked about Marry Poppins," Brenda said.

"So?" Casey said.

"She looks like her," Brenda said.

"Julie Andrews or Emily Blunt?" Casey asked. "I don't see either."

"Seriously?! The cover is not the book song," Emily said.

"She is not Mary Poppins!" Casey said. "That's a popular hair style. If anything, she looks more like Phoebe Cates."

“Who?” Brenda stood up. “Oh, never mind. Why did I even bother with you?” She started to walk away. She stopped. “Will you be there next time?”

“I hate prep rallies,” Casey said.

“Well, we have that in common,” Brenda said and walked away.

Casey sat in the grass, her hunger pains having faded. She pulled out her journal and made another entry.

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Mother was thirty minutes late, which was better than usual. Casey didn't even notice her arrival until the horn sounded. She came out of her journal, gathered her things, and proceeded to the car. She got in back. As she buckled mom's eyes met her, slight hint of a smile, as she continued her phone conversation. Medical stuff. They were almost home before the call ended.

“You didn't answer your phone,” mother said. “I tried to call you.”

“I was at school, mother. I turn the phone off,” Casey said.

“Why did I even buy you a phone if you're not going to use it?” mother asked.

“I use it,” Casey said. “At appropriate times, and turn it off to save the battery.”

“I'll buy you a charger,” mother said.

“I don't need one,” Casey said.

“I won't your phone on so I can call and tell you I am running late,” mother said.

“You're always late,” Casey said.

“How was school?” mother asked, clearly changing the subject.

“Okay,” Casey said.

Mother took another phone call. They arrived home and she continued the conversation while Casey went inside. Father's car was absent which meant he was absent. She didn't know his schedule. She found her lunch on the table and grabbed it as she headed towards her room. She left the door ajar. A closed door frequently invited her mother to just walk in. Slightly opened, Casey was rarely bothered. She ate her lunch while completing homework. After, she opened her notebook to a first entry. ‘Lucid dreaming.’ She googled it. She found the concept of it interesting. She was so inspired by the concept, she thought she would give it a go.

Casey gathered her night clothes in the bathroom, wondered the house and found mom in her office slash library, still on the phone. She took a time out from the call to inform her father was delayed and would be in tomorrow and then went back to her call. Casey returned to the bathroom. She flossed, looking at herself and telling herself, 'you are lucid.' She finished flossing and stared longer at herself. She tried to smile. She tried to find something likeable about her face. She gave up and brushed. She then showered. She washed her hair with t-gel. It smelled horrible in application, but she liked the way her hair smelled when all was said and done. She dressed, dried her hair with a tussle of towel, and then returned to her room. She lay down, wondering what she might dream. She should have a goal. Nothing specific came to her.

She got up and browsed her books and movies on her own private book shelf, looking for inspiration. Princess Bride. Legend. Stardust. The Last Unicorn. The Never Ending Story. Mary and the Witch's Flower. She pulled this out and wished it was so easy getting to college. She pushed it back. Her finger touched A Knight's Tale. She went and googled the cast, clicked on Heath, sending him to another tab. She studied Shannyn's picture for a moment, thinking Loxy sort of resembled her, but it took too much effort to make Shannyn her and so returned her focus on Heath. She had no difficulty focusing on him. She scrolled through a series of Heath images, then printed her favorite pic of him. It was a casual pic. Not frowning, but not quite smiling. His hair fell lazily in just the right places, making his handsomeness look effortlessly. It was probably a photo shoot where he had had to remain still for hours while people teased his hair and fussed over him and finally after a thousand shots caught what everyone wanted. She preferred the one shot he's always perfect version. That was the beauty of men, she thought. They didn't have to work at it. They just were. Looking at the picture, she believed she saw things in him. Her mom would suggest she was projecting based on her larger knowledge base. It was always possible in hindsight to see things in people or pictures that weren't ever there. She would have been five when he completed suicide. She remembered her mother and father discussing it at the table. She had known who it was because a Knight's Tale was one of her go to movies. She remembered being sad.

"Well, that's stupid. The guy had everything..." father had said.

"I find your comment stupid. Are you so insensitive and unimaginative that you can't empathize with someone feeling trapped? You can't phantom one demon that might push someone to such an extreme?" his mother had argued.

Casey could recall the conversation verbatim. She could relive the moment. She remembered wanting it to have been a murder that was made to look like a suicide, as if that were somehow better. Dead was dead. “Why are you defending him?” “I am not defending him. I am just saying...” “And I am just saying, that’s stupid.” “Mental health isn’t stupid, it’s just mental health.” “Yeah, well, I am sure hell is a much better place.” “He didn’t go to hell.” “You’re the Catholic. Isn’t that where you send those kinds of people?” “Those kinds of people?” “Yes, those kinds of people. Being mentally ill isn’t a free get out of jail card; if you commit a murder you still go to jail, so why would you be exempt from eternal consequences for a suicide.” “Why would you imagine murderers go to heaven, but people who suicide can’t? You don’t go to hell if you break your leg, why would you go to hell if your brain is malfunctioning?” “His brain wasn’t malfunctioning. He was being selfish...”

“Oh, Heath. Out of all the people in the world you had access to, wasn’t there anyone you might have reached out to?” Casey asked.

She took the printed picture to bed. It wasn’t glossy, but it was good enough for her purposes. She put the picture under her pillow. She heard the paper crinkle as she adjusted herself. She told herself, if she heard it crinkle at night, she would remember her intent. She began a mantra, “I will dream of Heath. I will connect with Heath.” She fell asleep with this in her mind.

She woke the next morning, before the alarm. She did not remember any dreams. In fact, it felt as if she had just closed her eyes and woke up, only the clock had jumped forwards. She was disappointed. She got up, turned on the light, and when she turned back she saw a man lying in her bed. He was barefoot, wearing cream colored Kakis and a loose buttoned, flannel shirt. She screamed. The man woke with a start and screamed back, hopping out of bed and retreating away from the screaming girl.

Mother was suddenly in her room.

“What the hell?!” mother said. “You scared me.”

Casey looked to her mom. Her eyes wide.

“What?!” her mom yelled.

Casey looked at Heath.

“Don’t look at me! I didn’t do anything,” Heath said.

“What? A roach? OMG, if you’re screaming like that because of a spider or a roach, I am going to beat your ass,” mother said.

Casey gave mom a look of disbelief.

“Don’t think you’re too old for a spanking,” mother said, and turned and left the room. Heath sighed. “OMG, she’s right. You gave me such a fright.” He sat down on the bed.

“Am I dreaming?” Casey asked. The alarm began to ring.

“What a bizarre question,” Heath said. “How did I get here?”

Mother returned. She had coffee. She went and turned off the alarm. “Seriously? Are you still looking for a bug? Get dressed.”

Mother departed the room again.

“Where are my shoes?” Heath said.

“Could you leave my room please?” Casey asked.

“Are you hiding my shoes?” Heath asked.

“Out!” Casey said.

Heath got up and headed for the door. He hit an invisible barrier. He said ouch and touched his nose and then felt the barrier. “What the heck is this?”

“If you’re not dressed and out here for breakfast before I finished my coffee, I am so going to administer consequences,” mother’s voice trailed.

“She sounds angry,” Heath said.

“Please, turn around,” Casey said.

He nodded, politely, and turned around. She spied his eyes in her full length mirror attached to the closet door, went and opened the door so there was no visible access to the mirror and then went back to her dresser. Casey quickly got dressed in a manner someone might had they someone in their room that wasn’t supposed to be there. Jeans first, the night shirt off fast and into a sweater without bothering with a bra. She sat on the bed and put on her socks and shoes. She had to go past Heath to get her book bag. He backed away from her, giving her space. She left the room. Heath was stuck, unable to pass through an invisible barrier. He yelled at her from the door way.

“What? You’re going to leave me trapped in here all day?”

Casey arrived at the breakfast nook. Morning light was streaming in the window. Mom placed breakfast on the table. It was toast, with a hole cut out, where the egg was poached

simultaneously with the making of toast. The circle part that had been cut out was available for yoke dipping. Casey sat down, distracted by the thought of Heath in his room.

“I am sorry I yelled. I will call the bug guy out again,” her mother said, “Damn, you gave me such a scare.”

Heath arrived in the kitchen.

“Oh!” he said. He was scrambling to stay on his feet as if he had been pushing against a barrier that suddenly caved. He grabbed the table dramatically. She almost imagined everything on the table was shaking from the impact.

Casey managed to stifle her start, but it was clear to her mother something had startled her in the kitchen. Mother looked in the kitchen, saw nothing, and turned back to her.

“Are you on drugs?!” mother asked.

“No!” Casey snapped. “I would never...”

“You really need to get over your bug thing,” mother said.

“Yeah, like telling people to get over phobias just makes them better. You’d be out of business,” Casey said.

Mother chuckled. “Touché,” mother said. “Give me a moment to get dressed and brush my teeth.”

As she left, Heath sat down. “That smells awesome.”

Casey nearly asked if he could really smell, then decided not to talk to him. She ate her breakfast.

“OMG, that tastes awesome,” Heath said. “How can I taste what you taste?”

“I don’t know,” she whispered. She got to a place where if she bit the yoke it will spill out. Not wanting to deal with the spilt yoke, she bit deep and wide and captured it all in her mouth, no mess to the plate.

“That is so good,” Heath said.

She finished the rest of it quickly, tossed down her juice, and then ran to the bathroom to brush her teeth. A moment later, he arrived in the bathroom. She could see him in the mirror and in person.

“Stop following me!” Casey mumbled under her breath.

“I don’t know how. I don’t know how I am doing it,” Heath said.

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