



EMILY

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“Judy!” That’s my name, I think to myself, don’t wear it out.

“Judy!” That’s the big, fat judge calling my name.

“I’m not going to ask you again,” he pauses and I know he’s going to ask me again. “Can you stop ignoring me and explain why you think you’re innocent?” His eyes glow with frustration. He’s not going to give it up and just gives me the stare down, which really bothers me. It’s not intimidating, just annoying. Besides, what’s he going to do, chase me down and make me answer? Yeah right, not with those legs he won’t.

I stare back, I’m not as good at it though; I tend to just smile, distracting myself by staring at his *ness*. His *fatness*, his *annoyingness*, his *hairiness*. There’s a lot of *ness* going on with that man.

“Sir, my client here does not wish to answer and has already pleaded the fifth.” That’s Cindy, my attorney. “Maybe you should buy some hearing aids,” she scoffs to herself before impatiently stating. “She’s been interrogated and tried several times. There is no *real* evidence.”

Cindy is the only person I truly have left on my side, not counting my sister— wherever she may be. Cindy has been trying for months now to get me out of this god-forsaken place. Like I said though, pointless. I’ve told them what happened. She told them what happened. No one cares what-

“Judy!” Cindy’s voice goes cold for a moment, “Can you please stop staring at his—“

Whatever respects the judge and spectators had for me, slim to none, I lose within seconds of Cindy opening her mouth. My eyes begin to run with water and my face muscles become sore from laughter. I should probably listen to her, but I don’t let anyone try to control me. I will do what I want. I’ve been on this stand for so long that it’s only become a game. There isn’t anything I can do to get myself out of here since I’m the only suspect, and until they dig up some more evidence to *prove* that I’m guilty I’m just going to end up back in my cell.

“Out! Get her out!” the judge strikes his gavel on the stands. “I want her *out* of my courtroom!” Furious with hot rage, the red-faced tomato ostracizes me from the courtroom, refusing to deal with my shenanigans any longer.

In a quick march, the officers, in their black and blue too-tight-for-jelly-belly outfits pick me off the stand like an ant from a picnic table. The thirty seconds they drag me from the courtroom are mine. Everyone’s staring at *me* waiting to see what I’m gonna do next. Scream, kick, and throw a fit? Say a smart ass comment to someone who called me a ‘crazy bitch’? Maniacally laugh the whole way out or cry like the innocent person that I truly am? I hear the silence grow and see the venom-spitting mandibles hit the ground as I appear to calmly exit the room of haters and disbelievers.

Glad that’s over. Now all I want is to sit in my heatless, heartless cell. But I know I have at least an hour yet, an hour that will go faster than the years I have spent in that courtroom the past several months. The group of oversized jelly bellies, who ate one too

many friggin' doughnuts and smell like coffee stains, lead me to the room with no eyes—the only place in the world I can safely talk to Cindy and be entirely alone with her.

Before Cindy is allowed in they have to chain me down since I'm a *supposed murderer*. This is the only time I truly feel like the monster law officials play me out to be. But just like the courtroom, I act like the shackles and the handcuffs are no big deal. It doesn't matter what I say or do, they won't listen anyway. This bothers them, the way I act so smoothly when they chain me down. It's almost like they want me to act up, to fight against them. But I don't. I don't let them win this little game of theirs. I wouldn't want to give in and have them think I'm guilty.

Several minutes pass, and the clip-clop of Cindy's high heels can be heard outside, a sigh of professional composure and the heavy metallic safe-like door swings open.

"Can you leave now?", she questions impatiently to the guards who are obviously lost in her beauty. Cindy looks really tall, but it's just those heels of hers. In reality, she's no taller than I am, a shorty of five foot five inches. Her curly, blonde hair bounces when she walks and her petite curvy figure can make anyone stop and stare. Underlying her beauty, her sarcasm and lawyer tactics perch on her emotions, ready to spring at virtually any second.

"That was a good show you put on today.... But, if we are ever going to get you out of here we need to get some facts. Tell me again what happened."

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I try not to remember every detail from that night, but every now and then it haunts me and it's then that I know I'll take those events to my grave. The weather was hot and

humid, one of those days where a cold shower or dip in the pool doesn't even cool you down. Only the serenity of my air-conditioned room kept my skin from melting.

Emily was four years younger than me. It was the summer before her freshman year of high school when the incident occurred. I remember Emily would try to talk with our parents about the 'problem', but then shrug it off afterwards when Dad or Mom would try to help her. She'd put on a fake smile and say, "It's okay, I just thought you should know," and my parents would buy every bit of how it wasn't really a big deal. I did too, sometimes she just acted like a stereotypical teenager—not many people would have thought anything of it. Looking back, only now do I realize I should have picked up on her façade.

When Emily was younger, I always felt the need to be around her—to protect her. I would stay home to play with her, rather than sleep over at a friend's house or walk with her to the park after school when it was nice out. She loved going on the swings—and not the baby swings either, even when she was just a little, little tyke she despised them. She loved the ability to go up high into the clouds without restraint, always wanting to be free from earth.

"Higher! Higher, Judy, higher", she would shout and giggle, leaning back as the swing arched up so that her tiny white shoes looked as though they were a part of the clouds.

"That's high enough, Emily. If I push you too high you could fall and hurt yourself." I always sounded like a paranoid parent, but I couldn't help it. She was my little sister and I was her big sister—her playmate, her best friend, her protector.

Then just before I go to slow her down, when my fear of her diving into the ground became unbearable, she would take flight, jumping with all her might, spreading out her arms, soaring to the mulch below and bracing her legs for impact. I wanted to yell at her and tell her not to do that again, but her child-like, innocent laughter kept me from saying anything. Each and every time she would take off, my heart would race into my throat, but I knew that as much as I wanted those moments to last forever I couldn't always be there when she landed. I couldn't always stop her from falling off and crashing to the ground.

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“I need to go, is our hour up?”, I sniffle, my teary eyes and reddened face explain my wanting to leave. I try not to let people see me cry anymore, except for Cindy. She has become more than just my attorney; she's my best friend, sister and mother.

Both of my parents have disowned me. Every once in a while within my first two months of being locked away I would get visits from them. Each visit slowly became more and more awkward. My mother would sit across from me, playing nervously with her hands and always glancing around. She looked like a paranoid patient who escaped from the loony bin. Her eyes would twitch from one spot, to me, to the guards, to my father—never resting for more than a few seconds on one single object. She never said very much; each forced word exhausted her wits and I became more disgusted with every jaw movement.

All I wanted was for my mother—no, my mommy—to believe that I *wouldn't* and *couldn't* be a monster, like everyone else seemed to believe I was. I wanted her to hold me and kiss my cheek, tell me everything was okay—to see the light that once occupied her

eyes. The light that once shone brightly whenever she used to see me or mention my name.

“Mom, please... do you really believe that; that I could do that to my own sister? How can you believe *them* over *me*?” I would cry, pleading and begging her, not understanding why she couldn’t just listen to me. Then she would rise very slowly, as to make a show of everything, and storm away leaving my father and I alone.

I’d always thought my father understood me more than anyone else, and looking at his sullen, shadowy figure, I searched for something to give me hope—to make me feel loved again. Don’t get me wrong, my Mom and I were close, but there was something missing... something she just didn’t understand about me, and I’ll never know what or why that was.

Daddy and I were almost as close as Emily and I once were. Some of my best childhood memories are with him—bowling animals, football games, little league, just watching a funny movie.

“Sweetie,” a tear slid down his face leaving behind a trail of salty remorse, “I don’t know what to do for you.”

To be honest, I didn’t want to talk about how he didn’t know what to do for me because only my sister could help me and I wasn’t sure that was possible. “Daddy, do you remember when we went animal bowling?”

That old smile of his returned, as he flashed his silly, toothy grin and—for a moment—we were no longer in a prison, but at our favorite bowling alley. Animal bowling was something we enjoyed doing as often as we could. We would each choose a different animal to act like, a chicken, a monkey, or an elephant. The object was to do as



many animal-like actions and loud noises before rolling the ball down the alley. Yes, everyone around would laugh at us (or with us, as we would say) and probably think we were very strange, but as long as we were having fun it didn't much matter what anyone else thought.

"Yes, I do remember," his toothy grin fading into nothingness. I stared, watching every word pass through his lips. His face tensed and I could see his entire body switch gears. His shoulders hunched up and his eyes followed my mother's trail, leading out of both the prison and my life. His mouth moved again, but only enough for his words to barely squeeze by, "But that's in the past now Judith."

I thought words couldn't hurt, but this was different. It felt like he was stabbing me in the back with a spear, trying to rip my heart out all together, shoving his little Judy in the darkness of the past and forgotten. At that very moment, I knew I lost him. His voice had become a frozen monotone abyss. His mind overrun by a black hole sucking away the rays of sun left in my life. But I could tell, for that split second, that he wanted to believe me, wanted everything to go back to the way it was. But he couldn't, because it didn't feel right. Because my mother was a paranoid freak-a-zoid and he had to be there for her.

"But what about me? You can't just leave me here all alone..." I was going to cry. It was inevitable, but what girl in my position wouldn't cry after realizing her parents were deserting her?

"What do you mean?" His eyes softened for a second.

I knew this wasn't going to be the easiest thing for me to do, but I had to stand up for myself, "I've lost Mom already, it's pretty obvious, in case you couldn't tell. The baby



can't sit still long enough to take a breath or blink an eye. Yeah, you *think* you have to be there for her, but what about *me* Dad? Who do *I* have?"

"This has been hard on us Judith," he said without looking at me. My blood began to boil and for the first time since I was here I felt the chains were necessary for his safety. I no longer cared that he was my father. If he truly were my father, he would look at me and say he was there even though he didn't know what to do. If he were my father he would support me and *try* to believe me, no matter how hard it was.

"It's been hard on you? Dad, I'm the one in the cell—not you," I searched his face for any sign of support. "Who do I *fucking* have if you leave?" I continued, sneering, trying not to yell and speaking grotesquely through my teeth, "No one. I thought if anything, I would have you. After all that we've been through, after being so close, I *thought* that I would have you." I could taste the hint of salt lingering on my lips, "Well, apparently not—"

"Look, I'm sorry, but I can't—"

"You can't... Why *can't* you Dad? Is that what you told Emily, I can't be there for you? You left her to deal with her own problems even though she *tried* to ask for help. Do you see where that's gotten us?" He did not reply, "Huh?"

"I...I...I'm sorry, I have to leave," and like that he was gone.

I haven't seen or heard from him since, not that it surprises me anymore. Looking back, I might have been a little harsh on him. I know I shouldn't have said that about Emily. Emily and I were just as close as they were, and I didn't try to help her either. At the time though, I had refused to believe he wouldn't stand behind me. I was afraid of being alone—now, I'm used to it.

“Hello? Judy?” Cindy’s voice brings me back from the horrible nightmare and I slowly become aware of my surroundings once again. As she wrapped her arms around me, I tried not to think of my parents and pulled myself together. My cheeks stung with remorse. I just needed to be alone.

“Come on, I’ll walk with you back to your cell,” she disappeared for a second, only to return with a new set of jelly-bellies.

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Toilet. Bed. Walls. Bars. Heatless, heartless. My lungs shiver and I cover up with my paper-thin blanket, trembling with coldness. Despite the temperature, I’m thankful to have time to myself. Even though I feel alone, I’m usually heavily guarded or talking with Cindy. Sometimes, when I become overwhelmed with emptiness, I imagine myself as Emily. She must have felt so alone to allow such evil to take her over. I try to imagine myself doing what she did—even in this place, as heartless as it is and as alone as I feel, I still wouldn’t be able to.

#### EMILY

That was never my intention, to kill myself. Although, I did try to see how far I could push myself. I would try to see how close I could get myself to heaven, just to get a glimpse and see if it really existed. Then I’d stop and apply pressure; my head would spin in circles as I tried to keep my heart beating, waiting for my soul to completely return.

Once I started, I couldn’t stop. It was my drug. I lived for that rush of relief—that out of body experience where it felt like my soul could fly; a feeling that I was finally free from earth. My parents raised me right; I knew what was right and wrong—that I needed help. I knew that what I was doing was dangerous and if I ever took it too far I could kill

myself. But after having so many unaddressed issues and feeling like I couldn't trust anyone, I needed an outlet. I was becoming more and more depressed every time the sun rose. My world was like the nighttime sky—dark, but seemingly perfect with specks of light all around. I would be lying if I said there wasn't at least one reason for me to be happy. But at the time my senses became numb, my feelings almost non-existent.

I only did it because I wanted to be someone else; I hated my life. Now, after having months to reflect, I'm getting closer to accepting what I did and why. I've been going to Judy's trials, dressing in all black like I'm attending a funeral and sitting right in the middle of everyone. I never make eye contact and never speak. I listen, waiting for the minute she confesses and they sentence her to death.

During the early months she was a wreck, snotting all over the place whenever she would answer. She couldn't speak a single word without losing her composure. To people who didn't know her, it looked like an act to make her appear innocent, but to me it was real. And I felt terrible. But as the months dragged on, and the court hearings became repetitive, she began to put up a shield. Only to me, it wasn't a shield, but a window to her emotions. She was a crumbling castle on the inside, with a fortress of smartass comments and showstoppers protecting her. If it weren't for the circumstances, I would laugh. She is quite hysterical and her comments remind me of home again—or at least of our old memories. But because this is entirely my fault and her life is in my hands, I cannot laugh.

I have often wished to call out to her, to stand up and tell the truth—but how would she react? Would she hate me because I let this go on for so long? That I let this happen at all? That shouldn't matter though. She knew all about my problem and didn't do

anything to help me. She just stood there and stared at me, mouth to the floor, her face twisted in horror. She was supposed to be my big sister. My protector.

“Don’t say a word,” I growled, hissing and spitting, threatening her with the crimson point in my hand. “Don’t even think about it.” I was scared at the thought of anyone finding out and didn’t think she would actually keep it hidden.

Now, it’s been five months. Everyone that once knew me thinks I’m dead. My sister is in jail and I’m too gutless to step forward and tell the truth. Not once did it occur to me that they—my own parents, the police, neighbors, and friends—would blame her.

### JUDY

I shouldn’t have kept that secret, but she threatened me; I thought she would kill me. Her wrists were slashed horizontally and fading, pink, cat-like scratches ran up and down the entire length of her arm. Her eyes were glowing with evil spirited darkness. She was not my sister. She was possessed and I was scared. I could only wish that her innocent laughter was present and that the blood oozing slashes on her arms weren’t really there. Deep down I had known that I couldn’t always stop her from falling, and often wonder whether or not she is alive.

“See you later girls,” my Dad shouted up the stairs. It was Saturday night, which meant my parents were ‘going out’. In other words, they would have dinner and my mother would drink a lot of wine. She wasn’t an alcoholic and she was never drunk when she would come home. At least, that’s what she would say. “I iths nowt da-runk,” she would slur, stumbling doltishly up the stairs.

Emily and I hadn’t been getting along since I found her slicing herself like a chunk of meat. It’s been three weeks. We haven’t even glanced at each other and my parents

didn't notice. If they did, they didn't say anything and certainly didn't make an effort to try and mend things between the two of us.

I had been spending nearly every day in my bedroom, reading a book or just sitting there. I tried to listen to music, but as soon as I'd put on the headphones and start to slip away I would be jolted back, seeing nothing, but my sister holding that bloodied knife, threatening me. I could barely sleep at night, thinking she would murder me so I couldn't tell anyone she cuts herself. She needed help and I didn't know what to do. For the first time in my life, I failed her.

Once my parents left, I continued to sit quietly in my bedroom staring blankly at the wall. She was moving around out there; I could hear her downstairs in the kitchen and wondered what the hell she was doing down there. She never used a knife directly from the kitchen; always using the crimson, stainless steel knife she hides in her bedroom, where Mom and Dad wouldn't find it.

It sounded like a war zone. I could hear the drawers being opened and silverware flung around the kitchen. Sounds of shattering glass and obscenities reached my ears and I began to cry, rocking back and forth by my bedside. I could see my cell phone, just inches from my body, but I was too afraid to pick it up. My trembling hands covered my ears. I felt small and out of control and couldn't stop my emotions from pouring out of me. She was insane, and I thought my time had finally come.

"Where is it?" She burst through my door and I slid back. Her eyes were blood red; her wrists already gently slashed and her hair standing up as though she had been trying to pull it out seconds before entering my bedroom.

"Wh... where... where is what?" I stuttered through my fear.

Her eyes shot right through me, as if searching for the soul she seemed to have lost. Seeing her like this, my protective instincts toward her briefly took over my body.

“The damn alcohol you stupid-

“I don’t know.” I tried to look past all of her craziness and see the little girl still inside of her. As much as I searched, I couldn’t find it. I gathered up my last ounce of courage and stood up, pushing her backwards, out of my room, “What has happened to you?” I was still terrified of her, my insides were shaking and I thought I was going to pee my pants. All I wanted was to feel like I was in control and her big sister again and for this monster to go away and bring my little Emily back to me. She landed against the railing in the hallway, just a little harder and she would have stumbled over. I didn’t want to kill her. As crazy as she was, I never wished she was dead. I just wanted to help her. All I ever wanted to do was help her.

“Get your grimy hands off of me, *you bitch*,” she sneered, shoving me onto the floor, my head hitting the bottom of my bed.

“It’s,” I broke down again, she may have been younger, but she was dangerous. I had no choice but to tell her, for fear that she may actually kill me, “it’s in the basement.” And that was the last time I saw her. The last time I talked to her. The last time I didn’t want to be around her.

## THE JUDGE

“Those two frustrate me more than missing my morning coffee,” the judge evinces to the jelly-bellies standing near by. He finally managed to move his rolls out of the

courtroom and into his office, wheezing and holding his chest until his ass hit the duct-taped cushion on his rolling chair (made especially for lazy people like himself).

“Leave me,” he respires, still trying to breathe. “I need some time alone. They tire me out and make my brain ache. Leave me.”

Dutifully, the jelly-bellies leave him and his façade falls flat to the ground. This case has stunned and confused every cell in his body, but there was no way he could let this fade away unsolved. There was no body ever found and the blood trail eventually ended. Nothing was ever found in their yard or those nearby, the woods, the basement. No more blood, no hair, no body parts. Nothing. And only two people know the truth: Emily and Judy.

But one of them could be dead and the other wouldn't crack. Judy's been on the stand for months and never once pleaded guilty, but she's holding back. Her face spasms like she's remembering a wretched nightmare whenever questioned about the details of the incident. But she has tried to build herself up, barricading her emotions. To the others in the courtroom, it works. He can tell she is holding back on him and as horrible as it may seem she needs to either plead guilty or tell the truth.

The judge acted tough, like he despised Judy, but he didn't necessarily hate her. He didn't appreciate her withholding information, but didn't have the heart to sentence her to jail... let alone death.

Judy put on a good show, all right, but didn't come across as the type of girl that could murder anyone, especially her own sister. Investigators interviewed neighbors, teachers, friends... and they all said the same thing: Judy was the best big sister anyone could ever ask for. Still, something just didn't make sense. Judy didn't have the ability to



hurt her worst enemy and there's a possibility that Emily may still be alive due to the lack of evidence against Judy. But, how could someone leave her family in shambles, framing her own sister? It didn't add up. He just wished someone would come clean and stop this disaster while they still could.

### EMILY

Thump. Thump. Thump. I roll over and the blue neon numbers of my clock read 12:01 am. Who is making noise at this time of the morning? Thump. Thump. Thump.

“What the hell?” I groan, falling out of bed, clambering to my bedroom door. Just as my hand reached for the knob the noise stopped again. I didn't know what it was, but I was about to find out. My phone was lying on the nightstand by my bedside. I grabbed it and pushed the home button, lighting up the screen. Waving it around my room, I spotted my old softball bat sitting next to my closet. Thump. Thump. Thump.

I snatched up my bat and took a few good, hard practice swings, making sure not to knock anything over and then slipped out of my bedroom door and around the corner. I was on a stealthy mission. I was a ninja, tiptoeing through the hallway and down the stairs. The thumping became louder as I neared the rear door of our house. The lock clicked, I threw open the door and flipped on the light, running outside swinging the bat above my head and yelling like a maniac until a cold, wet, hard blob hit me smack in the face. I wiped some of the snow away. Feeling the remainder of the snow melt from my face, I looked up just in time to swing my bat and smash the next snowball coming my way.

“Ha-ha!”

“Judy?”

“Yeah...jeeze...calm down. Look what I did for you.”

“Oh...” I looked up to see a giant number fourteen, made entirely of snow in my yard and felt like a total idiot.

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I walk to the rear-facing window and see him trudging through the woods, backpack in hand, snow flakes covering his hair. I first met AJ after coming to this run-down, forgotten farmhouse. When I was younger, before my Nan died, my family would go on long day trips to see her. We used to pass this house every time, so when I needed a place to go, I came here.

The day after my incident had hit the news, I met him wandering in the woods behind the house. At first, I thought he was going to yell and run away or drag me to the police. And he probably would have had he not noticed the scratches running up and down my arms. My most recent wounds were still pink and on the verge of reopening at the slightest hint of the wrong movement. He didn't say a word while standing there in his tight, black Under Armor shirt, sandy-brown, curly hair matted to his sweat soaked forehead.

Then he started to take off his shirt. My eyes, unlike other girls my age, were drawn to the hint of red on his arms; his scars—fading, but still there—were still visible to the eyes. We stood there staring at each other's battle wounds. For the first time in months, I didn't feel alone. He would understand. The one person that would be able to say, “I know how you feel” and not be lying. And maybe it was too late for him to save me, but I may be able to help him. I didn't realize that at first, but once I started to miss my family I knew I had to save him.

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