

The Stall

It was the middle of a Tuesday class when Mae rose and left the room implying a bathroom break. She walked to the bathroom and sat on the familiar toilet. She always picked the same stall in each bathroom she revisited, somehow always remembering which stall she had picked the first time. She sat contemplating life and taking a little break.

BAM the door slammed open. Somehow the lock on her stall simply didn't work.

A familiar looking man with dark hair and lifeless eyes stared at her, but she couldn't focus on anything except the black pistol pointed directly at her head. He held it so, so... still, he didn't shake at all, and this made her shake relentlessly.

Oh my god...I'm going to die.

There they were. Silent, she couldn't make out the words to beg him for her life and his expression didn't move even an inch. She still couldn't take her eyes off the pistol.

The door—finally something intervened and she was lucky. He turned his head to see another girl walk into the bathroom on her own break from class. She looked at him confused to why a man was in the bathroom, but the stall blocked the gun he held, on the other side of Mae's door.

In an instant all Mae could think of was that this was life or death, and she had to try and save her life. Finally finding her courage she jumped and pushed the pistol as hard as she possibly could in the other direction. The man was stronger than her though and they struggled to gain control of the weapon. She used strength that only comes in a life-or-death situation and did what she knew was her only chance at gaining control. She kicked up her knee hard and fast hitting him in the crotch and causing him to wince. He crumpled and turned away. She took control of the gun. Backing up towards the sinks at the end of the bathroom.

"Call 911" she barked, finally finding her voice, now in control. The other girl, shellshocked, took out her phone and dropped it.

"Hurry this is life or death" Mae screamed.

"Ok...ok...ok" the girl was hyperventilating even though Mae was the one who just had a gun in her face. Finally, she dialed.

The man didn't seem to be hurting much anymore. Only a minute or so had passed. He turned and looked at Mae square in the eyes. This time with the pistol pointed at his head. His lifeless eyes squinted, staring at Mae, his face turned red with anger. She got a good look at him now that he wasn't holding a gun, and she was in awe. The man resembled her brother. He had been dead almost 2 years now, but there was no question that it was him.

Her brother, Tom was the best older brother she could've asked for. They were best friends and she looked up to him so much. She always blamed herself for his death and in this instance it all came gushing back. Tears started dripping down her face as she saw his face get red with anger and he charged towards her.

He's coming back to haunt me because I killed him.

It was a split-second situation and Mae didn't have time to think. She fired and the bullet hit him square in the forehead. He flopped on the ground now actually lifeless. In awe the random girl dropped her phone again, now beginning to cry. Mae was in shock again. Not able to move or speak. She wasn't shaking anymore though. She had killed him...again.

And then she was on the toilet again. *Snap* back to reality once again. Her daydreams were so vivid it was scary. She was in shock from seeing her brother Tom again. Almost 2 years and she still hadn't fully grieved. She would never stop blaming herself for what happened in that car crash. She was driving and he got the short end of the stick. The countless times Mae tried reimagining the whole thing so she could go back and make a different decision or let Tom drive so she was the one to die. She never felt like she deserved to be alive after that, and she would never forgive herself. It seemed like her dreams were in agreement.

She quickly pulled her sweatpants up and pulled the pills out of her pocket. Inside was a lower dosage of Adderall, antidepressants, and anxiety pills prescribed to her. She was to take 2 per day of each just to stay a normal amount of focused, and the normal amount of "happy". Did they really even work though? She wondered. Mae walked to the sink and washed her hands. Looking at herself in the mirror. She could picture her brother's lifeless eyes.

God, why did they feel so real.

She shivered. Then like clockwork she dried her hands and walked back to class as if nothing had happened. She proceeded to sit back down in the chair she always sits in for class and as she sat, she fell. She fell into the toilet bowl that she had just left in the stall in which her daydream happened. She shook her head awake now.

What an odd feeling.

Mae lifted her hands and rubbed her eyes. She was so tired but didn't understand why. School and life had obviously been tough, but she had been sleeping. Too much, even. Through her depression, Mae always found comfort wrapped up in blankets watching horrible reality TV shows. She tried to forget about her own life sometimes. Mae took a piece of toilet paper and blew her nose loudly. When she finished and wiped her nose, she noticed that there was blood on the toilet paper.

"Damnit!" "Not right now."

A voice heard her from the stall to her left. Mae didn't realize anyone else was in the bathroom. All the stalls were open when she entered, who knows, how long ago.

"You ok over there?" The voice called.

"Yeah sorry" Mae replied a little confused.

The voice didn't feel feminine, but it did feel familiar. She covered her nose with more toilet paper and struggled to pull up her sweatpants with just her right hand. For some reason she was concerned about leaving the stall with the voice still in there. Mae was starting to dislike this bathroom.

"You're fine, you're fine, you're fine". "You just had a daydream and dozed off a bit. Just go back to class everything is fine."

Mae was now annoyed with herself. She was always so paranoid. Her brother wasn't out to get her it was all just in her head.

Mae unlocked the stall door and opened it to find the same black pistol pointed at her head.

That's a lie. She was in her head thinking and paranoid again. Mae actually opened the door to find no one in front of her.

God stop being so stupid. What is wrong with you. Nothing is out to get you dumbass.

Mae walked to the sink. The stall next to her was open.

God dammit, now someone is speaking to you in your mind.

She continued to wash her hands and decided to wash her face as well. As if it would fix her delirious mind somehow. As she finished washing her hands she looked up into the mirror. Tom stood behind and stared at her through the mirror with those lifeless eyes.

"AHHHHHHHHHH" she turned around.

He was there. Alive and real. Holding a black pistol at her. Mae shook and shook, but he held the gun so, so...still. How was he so still. She wasn't in a daydream this time. How was she supposed to save herself?

Suddenly the bathroom door swung open, and she was lucky. The same girl walked in, and Tom stared at her.

"AHHHHHHHHHH" the girl screamed and dropped her phone.

Her screech was loud and long. Mae took the opportunity and realized even if it was her brother, she needed to save herself. Somehow, she found the courage to push the pistol back the other way. Tom was stronger than her though and they struggled.

Wtf was going on. What did I do in my dream, is this Deja vu? What the actual fuck?

Mae kicked up at him, hitting his crotch with her knee. She walked backwards with the gun pointed towards her own brother. She found herself next to the door and the other girl still standing, shocked. She didn't know what to do. He couldn't actually be her brother because he was dead. Her mind had to be playing tricks on her.

"Call 911!" Mae was in control of her thoughts again finally. The girl struggled to pick up her phone.

"Hurry this is life of death."

Hold up. Is it? The door is right there. You don't want to shoot anyone. Just fucking run, he doesn't have a weapon anymore. Call the police on the way out. Go fucking hide. Then no one has to die.

"RUN" Mae yelled at the girl as the man finally stopped wincing. The girl dropped her phone again.

Fuck.

The man ran at them with rage. Mae closed her eyes as she pulled the trigger without even thinking.

She opened her eyes, bolting awake. Her heart was pounding as she was semi-hyperventilating in class.

This is embarrassing

The people sitting around her stared at her. It was a large class, but not a giant lecture.

“Are you ok” the girl on her left asked as she texted furiously. She was the same girl who was in the bathroom.

“Uhhh...yeah, yeah sorry I just dozed off I guess.”

“Ok girl, whatever.” Her phone slipped out of her hands and Mae had a horrible feeling. It dropped so...so slowly as it fell onto the floor. Mae watched it hit the floor and a gun was suddenly pointed at her head. The man sitting on her right had horrible lifeless eyes.

You have got to be kidding me. Now I'm really stuck in my head.

Mae looked down and noticed she was sitting on a toilet bowl suddenly. Still in class, but on a toilet bowl. This daydream was getting weirder and weirder. Her brother was haunting her and her punishment was to have to kill him over and over.

Just close your eyes, just close your eyes. But there's a fucking gun pointed at my head how am I supposed to do that. Just let him kill you then maybe it will be over. Or maybe I'LL BE DEAD.

Now she was talking to herself within her own head.

Mae glanced to her right. Her brother—no she refused to believe he was actually her brother because it wasn't fucking possible. The man was still pointing the gun at her. He held it so, so still and she was shaking. He wasn't pulling the trigger though. He was just still. Mae then stood up and walked backwards. The pistol followed her.

“Ahhhhhhhhh” the girl to her left screamed. Mae must've been blocking her view of the gun. The man's attention shifted just for a second and Mae ran.

She ran as fast as she could out of the classroom. She opened the door and slammed it shut behind her. As she slammed the door, she turned around ready to run home, but she wasn't in a normal school hallway like expected. She was in the horribly familiar bathroom again.

You have got to be fucking kidding me.

The only way out of the bathroom was the door she had just gone through, and she wasn't about to go back in there. Suddenly Mae had the weirdest urge to pee. She looked at the bathroom stalls planning on finally picking one she hadn't used before, but each one except her stall was apparently out of order.

Of course.

At this point, Mae was unsure of what to do and so tired of this horrible daydream of a day. She needed a way out of it, and, at this point, she would try anything. She decided it was time to bite the bullet and let her own lifeless brother shoot her. It seemed only fitting since she caused the

crash that caused him to give up his life. She fought the urge to pee and turned back around towards the door she had just come through. Mae took a deep breath and pushed open the door. It closed behind her, and she turned to go back up the row to her seat, but the man was waiting for her.

He was standing right in front of her once again with the gun pointed right at her head. He held it so, so... still, he didn't shake at all, and this made her shake relentlessly.

Oh my god...I'm going to die...or am I?

There they were. Silent. She couldn't just let him kill her, but she also couldn't make out the words to beg him for her life. His expression didn't move even an inch. The classroom door opened behind her, and that same girl walked in.

Not again.

Like clockwork the man lost his focus again and Mae realized that she really was in an endless loop. He was never actually going to pull the trigger. So how was she supposed to get out of it? The same things kept happening as if they were meant to scare the daylight out of Mae but never followed through with the threat. It almost made it worse than actually dying.

What do I do? What do I do? I don't actually want him to pull the trigger, but would it actually kill me or just finally stop the loop? This is mad what am I even thinking I can't let him shoot me.

Not knowing what to possibly do Mae ran out the room and looped back into the classroom as if she was running in the same door. Her brother was still there holding the gun staring into her with those lifeless eyes. Without even thinking she ran through the door again, but just looped right back into the room once again.

Fuck I don't understand.

Mae realized she wasn't going to be able to run away from this just like running away from her trauma. She needed to face the past and face the death of her brother. It's not like she meant for him to die. Of course not. It just happened and looking into his lifeless eyes just made it so much more real. She started to cry. She bawled and bawled, but the girl and her brother were now frozen. Its like her daydream was standing still while she could cry and let out the anger and sadness of his death. She didn't want to die. She wanted to get better and be happy, but she felt like it wouldn't be possible to ever let go of what happened unless she took a chance at death too. Mae knew her brother would want her to live a happy life, but moving on isn't so easy when she was the one in control of the car. She knew what she had to do and the unknown consequences were something that had to come with her choice.

Finally finding her courage she looked her brother in his dead eyes and extended her arm. She took his hand and he accepted the touch. She helped guide the pistol up to her head and braced herself. Together they pulled the trigger.

BAM

Mae's lifeless body fell to the floor.

