

# LABYRINTH MAGAZINE





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## EDITOR'S NOTE

When we think of summer, we think of dark steamy nights, the neon glow of lightning bugs and carnival lights. We have tried to capture a bit of this aesthetic in our final, late-off-the-presses issue.

We hope you enjoy the magazine, and have a great summer.



# MASTHEAD

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Cover and Inside Cover shot by Chandler Millard  
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Back Cover Haiku by Eva Sandoval



# BRAIN FOOD

The school day is dragging- not really that strange.  
Every morning I'm tired. This isn't a change.  
Already the week feels almost like death.  
And it's only Tuesday- I don't hold my breath  
For a break in the quiet monotony.

But suddenly, shocked, on the announcements I hear  
Loud groans: they are coming ever so near.  
I realize it, quickly, no flicker of doubt.  
This is no news report, sport, or Girl Scout,  
But zombies among us, an audible oddity!

How quickly the mood in Biology switches,  
From boring and long to something that enriches,  
"Quick! Get the hatchet--" my teacher is screaming;  
Her rapid response is not quite redeeming  
For all of the labs she insisted I do.

Funny enough, zombie-infested,  
My school seems much better and I more invested  
In the outcome of such an exciting new day.  
I run through the halls, gleeful and gay,  
Killing the undead and watching them spew.

And sure enough, my classmates feel similar ways.  
Most try to fight the onslaught through the haze.  
But I am quite lucky; my skills to the test  
(Not standardized, no), I'm clearly the best.  
I barely get blood on my shoe.

I'm sad, of course, for my friends who are dead,  
For my teachers and counselors with stumps of a head,  
For my classrooms, wrecked with rubble of brains,  
And cafeteria tables covered in stains.  
But there are new sensations to chew!



Standing solemnly  
These bars may try to hold us  
But we're the future

BECK MONIZ

CHANDLER MILLARD



CATHERINE MELLETTE



Look through the mirror  
Lest you forget yourselves  
Lost in clarity

WOGAN SNYDER



RONALDO NAJARRO



**SHE**

The day dies when my night begins,  
When my best decisions  
Are replaced by my worst sins  
And I close my eyes to harsh visions

All demons attack when you rest your head  
And your thoughts become painful and pithy  
Some demons stay beneath your bed  
But She will always come with me

She haunts my soul  
And never leaves at all  
For Her one and only goal  
Is to feed off of my pain and when I fall

In a way She helps me at times  
In Her fingers, I am a thread  
She inspires my use of rhymes  
But in return, She will not let me be dead

I long to live  
I long to die  
I long to take what chances that She gives  
To escape Her and fly

But She crushes me every chance that I get  
With no sign of decline  
Her voice is too clear to forget  
When She whispers, "You are mine"

My demons are dangerous  
But it's impossible to relate  
Until She starts to endanger us  
For then, my dear, we meet Fate

**MICHAEL HAYNESWORTH**



**JENNIFER CONTRERAS**





GRACE BREITENBECK



CATHERINE MELLETTE





Watch.

Me.

GABY ORELLANA

Disintegrate.

The guilt will chew me up.  
I'll mutter something along the lines of karma  
Something about how one day I will attach like a leech only to be pulled off from my host-  
where is my supply?

This ego boost will leave me beaming:  
I'll stare at the text messages- wait. Let us not get ahead of ourselves.  
Who says there will be messages? Who says I will set off smoke alarms?

I will understand.  
Kind of, sort of- I do.  
But I'm not of the same breed, I swear.  
I will not leave behind sickly dawns and loose threads against grass, nor will i leave behind  
this uncomfortable throbbing of eardrum, echo of silence- an oxymoron.

I do not like this gross connotation of abandonment with summer that you've left me with  
Your apathy has brushed up against me and nested it's sweet cot in my tender belly-  
i think it has grown too comfortable here.

Past rejection is it's main ingredient  
(supposedly)  
Anger is mine

The disconnect is a part of us both now.  
Not in a romantic way but more so in an implicit, pseudo relieving destructive way.

The thick, slightly bitter, almost cheap perfumey summer humidity will, like honey, coat your  
lungs, my lungs in a thick film.

You will be reminded of your too often panic and panic at the idea of not knowing if this is,  
once again, panic.

I do not appreciate this residue of fear rather than blood cells left in my bone marrow.

This all ties together.  
Someway, somehow,  
This rapid shedding of the skin.  
An event taken place far too quickly to become familiar with this new uniform:  
i've run out of time.

From these new pores, an alien concoction of atoms has erupted.  
Somebody who can do what i did wrong right and what i did right even better.  
The catch? Neither you nor I, nor anybody can play "dress-up" forever.

HALISTA DIAMANTOPOLOUS



GRACE BREITENBECK



# MIRROR MONSTER

ABIGAIL BISCHOFF

Art by:

SANJIDA RAYISA

There was a monster in his room.

It was looking at him, right now. It blinked when he did, it moved when he did, but it was different from him. The monster may have looked like him, but it was off. It was wrong. It wasn't him, but there it was, inside the mirror. It was trapped there.

If he moved, it would escape, he knew it. It would be unfrozen from its place in the mirror; it would leap from the wall and devour him.

He blinked, and the monster did, but a nanosecond later, only he could notice the slip. It was pretending to be him, but why?

"Phineas?"

His name. He turns, and the monster doesn't. The monster has not yet taken his name, and Phineas felt a glow of satisfaction at that. He could defeat the monster, if he hid his name from the monster. He knew it.

"Phineas, you're still up there, right? I'm almost ready to go, are you?"

"Yeah, I'll be down soon."

He eyes the monster. The monster eyes him back.

Phineas, after another long minute, tears himself from the mirror. The monster does not. It disappears when Phineas leaves. It has not become tangible. Yet. But it is growing, and it is waiting.

## 3 DAYS EARLIER

Phineas can't sleep, though he very much wants to. He lays in bed, trying to ignore the sweat drenching his sheets. He'd had lacrosse tryouts today, and he smells like it. He's so tired, that all he wants to do is forget the stress in the blessing of unconsciousness, but his pores screamed "no". So, groaning, he forces himself out of bed, glancing at his alarm clock. It was almost midnight. But he had to take a shower, or he'd regret it later.

He picks up some clean underwear and goes into his bathroom, getting in the shower as quickly as possible. The water is a relief, and Phineas doesn't know why he delayed a shower earlier. But at the same time, his drooping eyelids remind him, despite the liquid heat pounding his tired shoulders.

After what Phineas estimates to be a half hour or so, he steps out, turning off the water and grabbing a clean towel and his underwear in one motion. He drags the towel over his body, feeling pure, and then he looks in the mirror.

And he does not see what he expects.

What does he expect to see? Hazel eyes, black hair, milk-white skin, a wide nose and mouth, evenly spaced eyebrows, only a plain face he'd grown used to seeing. What he saw, right there in the mirror, was different.

The eyes were crude, as if drawn by a child. There were glints of green that weren't there before; and there was a tilt to his mouth that made it a half-sneer. Distortion surrounded his reflection, thick like oil and a wrongness that pierced Phineas so suddenly he was doubtless of the difference in his mirror image. It was not him, but something else.

The thing studied him. There was no other way to describe it. It was looking, appraising, studying Phineas. But why?

And then, he knew.

It was an impulsive thought, but an unshakable one, a thought free of any doubt as soon as it was formed: the reflection wanted to be Phineas. It was the look in its eyes as it studied Phineas, starved for life. The life Phineas had.

The monster morphed as Phineas stood there, rooted to the bathroom floor. Its eyes became brighter, hair wavier, leer wider. It had aura Phineas hadn't noticed, which clarified as he watched, and the only reason he noticed was because of the previous distortion.

And then--the thing in the mirror had become Phineas. It really was his reflection, and that's all it was.

But he knew. He felt it, and he was terrified. When he looked in the mirror, he knew something was looking back.

He ripped himself away from the mirror, grasping for the door and throwing it open to his bedroom, and nothing happened. But he was too terrified to look back in the mirror, and he firmly shut the door, leaving the light on and not caring. He fell into bed and stared at the ceiling, wondering at what he just saw. Phineas knew it was real; he was shaking too much inside to deny the monster. What was it? What did it want?

Why was it there?

## NOW

He'd been avoiding mirrors, knowing what awaited him if he made eye contact with himself. He was paranoid; he avoided puddles, eye contact, any potential reflective surface. He didn't know what knowing what his mirror image really was doing to him, but he couldn't help it. Phineas could not unknown what he now knew.



Outwardly, his normal life was unaffected. He may have been paler, a little more--haunted--but no one else knew. Who would believe him? Phineas knew it was stupid, he'd read horror stories and knew how they ended, but he couldn't bring himself to tell anyone. How could he describe his little...problem?

---

It escalated. He was in terror of his own shadow, convinced that it moved without him, that its purpose was to kill him in his sleep. He'd tried not going to rooms with mirrors at all. It was difficult, but he couldn't stand the sight of the not-him studying him. Being him

And then.

It was the opposite of avoidable. Honestly, Phineas had known it was coming. The moment he would lock eyes with his reflection. Confront it.

He was at school, in the middle of band practice. He had unable to 'hold it'. He was in the bathroom, standing there washing his hands, and he couldn't help, Phineas glanced up. And his eyes locked with the creature.

There was a reaction, almost immediate. Phineas jerked away, as if burned. The thing leered at him. Its mouth twisted, it vibrated, and Phineas fell, his tailbone hitting the bathroom tiles with a painful thud. But this was not like the other times where his reflection had seen him. It did not disappear, as reflections were supposed to, when one falls from the mirror's sight.

It hovered beneath the mirror's surface, and it leaned against the glass, which wobbled, and then shattered. Phineas squeezed his eyes shut as the pieces of glass fell over him. And so he missed the eeriest part.

A misty-like form stepped out of the place where mirror once was. It grew more solid by the millisecond and by the time Phineas opened his eyes, it was there, in front of him. It was a physical presence.

It was breathing. Phineas watched its chest rise and fall. It was hard to believe it was real. He could no longer have the benefit of the doubt, of hoping he just needed more sleep, that what he thought he saw would go away. It was a reality, and it was there. It was picking him up, with impossibly fever-warm hands, pressing him against the bathroom wall. The monster's eyes were dark and strange, a resemblance of his own.

"What do you want?" Phineas asked, and he watched the creature's mouth move in time with his own.

His heart pounding, he did not think the thing from the mirror would answer him. But it did, in a profoundly perverse echo of Phineas' own voice.

"I want everything you have."

With that, with no time for a scream, the monster dissolved into mist again, and sunk against Phineas, into Phineas. And Phineas was replaced; his soul was absorbed. The monster was in his place.

And there was silence and emptiness within Phineas. He and the monster were one.







Sans art, les gens n'auraient pas de petits plaisirs simples.  
Les bourreaux des coeurs n'auraient pas leurs poèmes d'amour.  
Les frigos seraient sans petites tranches desinnées des enfants.  
Et les cafés seraient sans petits chats de crème.

Without art, people do not have small simple pleasures.  
The Heartbreakers would not have their love poems.  
The fridges are small slices desinnées without children.  
And cafes are no small cream cats.

ANNE WILLIAMS



HEVIN BATEN



# BURNED TRAILS

Smoke rose on the horizon, a billowing gray column that fanned out into a hazy cloud that spanned over the fields. If it were not for the towering blaze, one might assume that the smoke clinging to the trees that bordered the property were a storm coming in. Jeanne watched the smoke, hypnotized, from the living room window, her hand clutching a cup of coffee and the television playing with low volume in the background.

"Hudson burning rubbish again?" A gravelly voice said from behind Jeanne, and she jumped, spilling a Smoke rose on the horizon, a billowing gray column that fanned out into a hazy cloud that spanned over the fields. If it were not for the towering blaze, one might assume that the smoke clinging to the trees that bordered the property were a storm coming in. Jeanne watched the smoke, hypnotized, from the living room window, her hand clutching a cup of coffee and the television playing with low volume in the background.

"Hudson burning rubbish again?" A gravelly voice said from behind Jeanne, and she jumped, spilling a little bit of coffee on her floral patterned shirt.

"Jack, what are you doing here?" Jeanne said, turning to face Jack, noticing how his police badge gleamed on his uniform next to a patch that read 'PETERS', his mustache freshly trimmed in a way that evoked a memory of his glory days in the 80's. He clutched a cattleman hat in his hand, having removed it in respect of entering the Cambry estate on what Jeanne could safely assume was business unrelated to police work.

"Sorry if I startled you, Jeanne, honey," Jack Peters, not sounding very apologetic, and suppressing a laugh as Jeanne sighed at the damp stain on her front. "The door was unlocked, so I just let myself in."

"Yes, I can see that, but is there a specific reason you've decided to stop by?" Jeanne questioned him a little shortly, bustling into the kitchen to find a rag to soak up the stain on her shirt.

"Here, let me," Jack said, intercepting her, taking the rag and closing the distance between them to work the stain out of the shirt fibers. Jeanne awkwardly fixed her gaze at a point over his left shoulder, out the window at the smoke cloud where her husband was working at its base.

"Burning waste is illegal in this county, Jeanne," Jack said after stepping back, and following her gaze back towards the smoke. "I could issue a fine...or possibly have your husband arrested! Might make things just a little easier for you." He let out a laugh at the notion of locking Hudson Cambry up, one that Jeanne didn't join in on, instead furrowing her brow in concentrated frustration.

"Hush, Jack, you'd never be able to hold him on grounds such as that, and then once he got out, he'd reclaim the whole property from me," Jeanne snapped, "please be serious here."

Jack sighed, and sat down heavily onto Jeanne's worn couch. From his pocket, he procured a box of cigarettes. He offered one to Jeanne, which she denied. With a shrug, he sparked one for himself and let a long sigh of smoke into the Cambry living room. Jeanne paced in front of him, wringing her hands nervously.

"I need to get rid of him...Jack he's destroying this farm! We are scraping the bottom of the barrel here, the silo is almost empty and we haven't grown enough to make enough of a profit to sustain ourselves," Jeanne lamented. "We're living off of the inheritance from my aunt, or whatever he doesn't gamble away."

"So you have told me, about, hmmm," Jack paused, counting on his stubby fingers, then continued, "maybe about three hundred times? Seriously Jeanne, just grind up a little bit of glass, sprinkle it into one of your wonderful casseroles, and in about a week your little husband drama will be over for good."

Jeanne let out a sigh, shaking her head, and groaned, "and let his good for nothing son, Robert, inherit the land? Everything that I've staked in this farm will be gone!"

"That's what you get for marrying a widower, love. First wife probably topped herself and you're left to pick up the two bums of men that, in all likelihood, drove her to her grave," Jack cackled with a shrug, his light and immature response to Jeanne's stress starting to annoy her. "And you sure you can't just, ya know, divorce him and settle for a smaller portion of the land?"

"Well, you pretty much damaged that solution, didn't you Jack? Infidelity invalidates me from any divorce settlements."

"Can't say I feel too sorry about that. I have no regrets when it comes to you Jeanne, honey," Jack said, shaking his cigarette into the ashtray at his elbow. Jeanne rolled her eyes at his comment, but conceded, "that despite the issue of infidelity, it might be the best option."

Jack stood up and crossed the room, taking Jeanne's leathered, soil-worn hands in his, and tried to pull her close, to which Jeanne responded by shaking loose of his gentle grip. She looked away from his hurt expression, and explained, "Jack, I can't keep seeing you if I'm to divorce Hudson. This farm is too important to me to risk losing it for anything."

"Even me?" Jack questioned, trying to catch her gaze. "I'd rather wring Hudson's neck myself than give you up Jeanne; I love you." Jeanne ignored his statement, and went to the window, noticing how the smoke-stack had slowed.

"Hudson's finished burning the trash. You need to go," Jeanne ordered in a flat voice.

"Jeanne--"

"Jack, leave. Come back when you can actually help me." Jeanne refused to look at Jack as he dejectedly made for the door, only returning in her incessant pacing after she heard the rumble of Jack's cruiser rolling out of her gravel drive. Jeanne felt as if the walls were watching her, eavesdropping to later spill her scheming to Hudson, her infidelity, her plot to claim his land.

When Jeanne looked at the hanging map of the property that was ornately displayed over the fireplace, she thought of what she could do with the property rights...her dream; sell off the extensive tract of iodine rich land to the state, and finally leave the God-forsaken wasteland she had resided in since her twenties. Maybe, just maybe, move to the coast, get a little beachfront property, and finally retire. Wasted youth and abused patience had worn her finances and sanity thin, and in every waking hour she spent she daydreamed about just how much better life could be once she finally was rid of her ball and chain. The tireless hours, the loneliness of the rural community, even Jack's constant affections which had been an exciting escapism in the moment...she couldn't wait to just get away from it all...

Suddenly, the door slammed open, shaking the farmhouse walls so powerfully that the framed map of the farm fell from the mantle onto the floor, its thin wooden frame splintering. Jeanne swung around, expecting to berate Jack for whatever display he had returned to put on, but instead saw Jonathan, the young twenty-something farm hand, out of breath and face blackened by soot.

"Don't you dare track dirt into my house!" Jeanne exclaimed, moving forward to shoo him onto the porch.

"Ms. Cambry..." he heaved to catch his breath, coughing a little from inhaling the smoke from the trash fire.

"Jonathan, whatever the hell is it?" Jeanne questioned, starting to worry.

"It's Mr. Cambry...something happened..." Jonathan gasped, and in that moment Jeanne was out the door, running to her car.

"Jonathan, call Officer Peters, the fire department, anyone!" Jeanne ordered him, as she threw open the door to her Toyota and threw it into gear, tearing up the gravel road as she sped towards the fading smoke plume.

Upon arriving, she saw Jack's cruiser, and him kneeling over what she presumed to be Hudson's body.

"What is this?" Jeanne cried out. "What happened?" She knelt down at Hudson's side, the front of his shirt soaked with blood, a gaping bullet wound in between his ribs.

"Jeanne, he's dead," Jack said quietly. Jeanne let out a sob, her dreams of claiming the farm dissolving, knowing that once Robert stepped up to claim his inheritance, that all she could do was pray that she would be allotted some parcel of land to claim for herself. Hudson's eyes were pried wide open, still with so much crazed life in them, his tangled beard reeking of smoke and with bits of melted plastic clinging to it.

"Jeanne, I'm sorry," Jack said, but didn't sound too sorry to Jeanne, and she flinched away as he reached out to comfort her. Jeanne could almost swear that there was an upward curl to Hudson's frozen mouth, as if he was watching her from St. Peter's gate, having the final laugh as his detestable wife were made to clean up his final mess.

The following days were a blur to Jeanne, passing in a numbing sort of way. The only saving grace to Robert's immediate arrival, to the police crawling over her property, to the sudden investigation into Hudson's unethical farming methods, and of course, his death, was that Jeanne was determined to have no ties to Hudson's murder. She supposed that she had both Jonathan and Jack to thank for that. Jonathan's testimony that Jeanne was at the house at the time of the murder, combined with Jack's false insistence to the investigators that Jeanne was indeed a loving wife turned suspicion away from her. However, she could feel Robert's eyes constantly following her, assessing, suspicious at what the reading of Hudson's will would reveal, and what possible motives that Jeanne could have against his father.

"This land belongs to me," Robert would say often, half to himself and half as a reminder to Jeanne.





"This land stopped being yours the moment you walked out of this home," Jeanne would retort at him. He would shake his head, then lament about the debts he held from his failed business, or how Jeanne had driven him out after marrying Hudson, or anything that he felt would justify him inheriting the farm. He spoke as if Hudson was listening from Heaven and would make a divine appearance at the reading of his will.

Robert hung around the house anxiously waiting for the verdict on the inheritance, and for the most part, was a nuisance to Jeanne and refused to give his step mother a moment alone, as if she might turn a gun on him the same way he likely assumed that she did to Hudson. She was almost thankful for the moment when Jack took her aside right before the reading of Hudson's will, Jack shooting Robert a scathing look when he attempted to follow the couple.

"Son, this is a private conversation," Jack said sternly, and Robert scowled and slunk off to the living room to await revelation on the rest of their futures, as determined by Hudson's final wishes.

"Jeanne, whatever happens, whatever that will says, I'll make sure that you are taken care of," Jack promised. Jeanne scoffed at this, and questioned, "and what of your own wife?"

"She needn't know," Jack said, which earned a scowl from Jeanne.

"Jack, I'm sick of this. I'm sick of this town, sick of being a secret, sick of having my life wasted for another person's convenience," Jeanne spat, "whatever happens tonight, I will be gone from this town in a month's time."

"Jeanne, wait, no-"

"Did you kill Hudson?" Jeanne interrupted suddenly. "You were with the body when I got there, surely before Jack placed the call to the police. You wanted Hudson gone for your own selfish reasons. Tell me Jack, did you shoot my husband?"

Jack let out a long sigh, and for a moment, Jeanne feared that yes, he had killed Hudson, condemning her.

"I did not kill Hudson, Jeanne, I would never. I heard the gunshot as I was driving toward the fire, with the intent on writing Hudson a fine for illegally disposing of waste, and when I arrived that Jonathan boy was running around like a chicken with his head cut off," Jack explained. "Whatever happened with Hudson, I knew it would be your decision. My only hope was that you'd choose me." "Thank you, Jack," Jeanne whispered, "let's...let's just hear what Hudson's will has to say..."

"Begin as you're ready," Jack instructed the legal executor, who's name Jeanne was almost, but not entirely certain, was Conner Darry. Mr. Darry nodded, loosening his collar so his flabby neck could have room to breathe, and wiped a layer of perspiration that had formed on his bald head.

Jeanne shuffled into the living room, feeling the true weight of age on her body, delicately lowering herself into a leather recliner. Jack sat across the room, but with his eyes on her, she felt as if he were sitting right next to her, pushing into her space. She avoided looking at him, instead focusing on the legal executor, who stood clutching a series of documents. Jonathan was cleaner than she had ever seen him, wearing slacks and a collared shirt, making himself small on one end of the couch as Robert stretched out on the other end. A few other of the farm hands, and a handful of church members hovered around the living room.

"Good evening, to you all," Mr. Darry began, "I am here today after determining the validity of Mr. Cambry's final Will and Testament to divvy up his property and belongings."

Robert sat up a little straighter, ready to lay claim on what was surely his inheritance, to finally gain some financial security after a string of unsuccessful business start ups. Jeanne clutched the leather arms of the chair, digging in her nails and sucking her teeth, teetering on the edge of insanity at the suspense.

"Mr. Hudson Cambry, as of August this year, came to my office to update the contents and legality of his will."

"That's recent!" Robert exclaimed, interrupting Mr. Darry, a wild look in his eye. Mr. Darry peered at Robert through his bottle-thick glasses, studying the young man.

"Yes, that is recent, now if I may continue..."

"Go on, Mr. Darry," Jeanne said with a wave of her hand, more eager to hear the contents of the will now that just maybe Robert wouldn't have full claim to the property.

"Ahem, Mr. Cambry has declared that Mr. Robert Cambry receive twenty percent of the property, specifically the region north of the Coaster River that runs through the farm--"

"That can't be right!" Robert interrupted again, incredulous. "That land is useless, and my father knew it! I'm his son, he wouldn't leave me with only that!"

"Mr. Cambry, please do be quiet. You can contest the will tomorrow in my office if you so please." Mr. Darry glared at Robert, and Jack interjected with a, "shut up, Rob," to which Robert sneered at Jack.

"As I was saying, Mr. Cambry has determined that Mrs. Jeanne Cambry receive ten percent of the property, thus including the house, which he has said, 'never even belonged to me anyway.'" Mr. Darry turned his glare to Jeanne, who let out an audible cry of relief, that she had something left of this whole affair, interrupting his legal declarations yet again. He harrumphed, and continued, "Mr. Cambry has requested that the church receive another ten percent of the land, and finally, the remaining sixty percent is to be left to Mr. Jonathan Burke, including livestock, farm equipment, and management of the farm hands."

At the mention of Jonathan, Jonathan the dirty farm hand who tailed Hudson like a loyal puppy, Jonathan who hardly had a brain cell in his tobacco-chewing head, inheriting the largest chunk of land from Jeanne's late husband, heads snapped around to face the young man, who maintained an expression that could only be described as polite and measured surprise. For a moment, no one in the room really listened to Mr. Darry explaining how his office would have to reassess Hudson's left inheritance to determine how his debts would be paid off. Instead, eyes remained fixed on Jonathan, who was beginning to fidget uncomfortably under the gaze of everyone gathered.

"It can't be him!" Robert, of course, always the man with an issue, cried out. "I've never even met this man before, how has my father left him the majority of what should be my land?"

"Mr. Cambry, as I have said, you can bring up your grievances in my office tomorrow," Mr. Darry said pointedly. "And I believe that your father said that, 'I want Thomas to inherit my farm, as there is no greater man to ensure its survival....'"

Robert looked as if he was going to argue further, but was shushed by some of the church members. Jeanne excused herself from the room; she had had enough for the evening, and relief that she even had received ten percent was washing over her. She wandered out to the porch, her carpet slippers slapping against the splintered wood.

She had only just sat down on the porch swing when she heard the screen door slam. She didn't need to look back to know who it was, because it was always the same person.

"Sit," she ordered, patting the seat on the bench next to her.

"I can imagine you're relieved," Jack said, giving the swing a little push with his long legs. Jeanne nodded, quiet for a moment before responding, "yes, you could say that."

"Is ten percent enough to leave this town?" Jack asked, "to leave me?"

"You're always so dramatic, Jack," Jeanne sighed, "you're wonderful, but self absorbed to assume this had anything to do with you. Please, for my sake, be objective, I am too old."

"Sorry...but is ten percent enough?" Jack restated.

"Maybe enough to move away from here, but not enough to retire," Jeanne said with a shrug. "I figure I'll get one of those senior citizen jobs at a garden center, or something similar...but yes, ten percent is enough."

Jack had no response for this, and for once made no attempt to woo her towards him, instead just taking in the silence of the night.

"So what do you think of Jonathan?" Jack finally asked. Jeanne let out a tittering laugh, and declared, "well I now am certain of who killed my husband!"





"I'll have to investigate him, it'll be a whole process...I suppose I'll write you if he's convicted and the inheritance falls to you," Jack offered.

"Any evidence you have on him is circumstantial at this point, and if Jonathan loses the inheritance I'm sure that it will go towards closing my late husband's gambling debts. Write me if you will, but I care less about the property at this point," Jeanne scoffed.

"I'll miss you," Jack muttered.

"I think I'll miss you too, Jack," Jeanne conceded. The screen door slammed again, and out appeared Jonathan, looking a little frazzled.

"Robert harassing you?" Jeanne asked the young man. He gave a nod and replied, "yes ma'am, he's been yelling about how I killed his father for the past five minutes and demanding my arrest..."

"Eh, better you than me, if I say. He's been trying to catch me for Hudson's murder for the past week," Jeanne supplied. "Have a good night, Jonathan."

"Thank you, Ms. Cambry. Officer Peters." Jonathan tipped his hat to the elderly couple, before jogging into the night towards his truck.

"I'll be gone by the end of the month," Jeanne reminded Jack.

"And thus the story of your middle age ends?"

"And a new chapter for me begins..." Jeanne said with a nod. "I feel like I'm twenty again; let's open up one of Hudson's spirits before Robert ransacks the house. A toast to that I live long enough to one day retire." Jack laughed, and offered her his hand as he stood up, saying, "that's a toast I can agree to."

ANONYMOUS



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WHEN SNOW FALLS THE WORLD  
BECOMES SLOW, THE RIVERS FREEZE  
AND THE TREES WEAR WHITE

