

They Understand by Katie Elkins, Westside High School

We know. We understand. We hold the secrets. Last week in Central Park we saw a little girl. She was alone. But, she wasn't. No one is. We saw him first, before she did of course. We also saw her parents on the other side of the park. In their frantic hurry of trying to take her to daycare and then make it to work, they didn't see their pride and joy get distracted by the pretty statue. Because of that, they also won't see her go to college, or get married, or have children. It wasn't like we could do anything about it.

A month ago we saw a boy, about seventeen, in the Appalachian Mountains of West Virginia. He screamed of art. He screamed of new beginnings. He screamed of the side effects that some would call a disease; love. He drew her. He drew her reading her favorite book. He drew her watching television. He even drew her looking off into space. Most of all though, he drew her as he saw her; beautiful.

Four little girls came together at the park. The girl with kinky curly hair spoke first.

"Friends?" she asked. Another of the girls seemed hesitant.

"What if it isn't forever?" The girl had dark brown hair and green eyes. In those next few moments, something wonderful happened.

"It is." The remaining two girls (one with only a slight curl to her hair and one that had a blue bow in her own wild, brown hair) said those two simple words with such force that they not only scared themselves, but the other two girls as well.

You see? We don't only see the ugly parts of life, like you witnessed in the first memory. We are kind of like a person's spouse. We see the good, the bad, and the ugly. Sometimes we see the unthinkable though. Sometimes we watch children grow up to be beautiful and kind, other times we watch children grow up to be horrible, horrible human beings. One girl was different, though.

She was young. Too young to be outside by herself if you ask us. We can't lie, so there is no need to hold our thoughts in. We see things the way they are, just as we did on that chilly January morning. She walked slowly at first, then sped up. She finally made it to the outskirts of town, where nothing but forestry was visible for miles. She looked up to us.

"I know you are there." she said. "Mama says that you hear and see all. So please, tell me who killed papa." A shudder began racing through her. She shook uncontrollably as a sob escaped her tiny mouth. "Please!" She yelled. She started hitting us.

Of course we knew who killed her father. Of course we knew how the cruel man came through the woods after this girl's father. Of course we knew that we couldn't tell her. Of course she knew that as well. So she left. She ran off. This wasn't the only time she came to us. She made it a daily thing. She

wasn't there, so much for comfort, but for closure. Closure from the wretched entity that happened to her sweet and kind father.

"He used to bring home ice cream every Friday after work. He told me not to eat too fast or that I would get a brain freeze." She laughed. It was a bitter laugh that held no humor in it. "I didn't listen though. I was just happy to be with him. You see, I was adopted when I was about four years old, so having him as my father meant everything to me." That's when we started to notice something. We noticed how familiar she looked. How could we not have noticed this before? It was the little girl from Central Park. Everything seemed to be coming down on us. It was like God didn't like that we didn't understand. The world tilted and we were on the ground. The little girl screamed. We creaked. The world went black.

They should've known. We always know. We always understand. We always hold the secrets. We are the trees.