

The Following by Alyssa Davis, Montcalm High School

There is no mighty God or powerful Lucifer to greet you with a welcoming hand after you die. There are no luxurious gates to heaven. There are no flaming pits that lead you to hell. There is no pain or satisfaction. There is no calming white abyss waiting for you like there is in the movies. There is nothing. Only you and the emptiness that pressurizes the space around you.

You probably don't, but would you believe me if I told you that I have personally experienced what it's like? Would you believe me if I told you that I lay brain dead for a total of eight minutes? Would you believe me if I said that I remember the feeling?

I know that I sound unconvincing, but I have no reason to lie to you. I've been face-to-face with death, and for much longer than I am comfortable with. It felt prior to drowning. Infinitely filling my lungs up with water. It's the feeling of being pulled under before you even have a chance to recognize that you've permanently slipped away.

It felt as if I had been asleep for hours, but in reality I was only gone for a handful of time. Not the good sleep either, but like an extra-long nap on some type of uncomfortable surface. I have no doubt that there is still a large piece of me trapped in the loneliness of being dead. It was an unforgettable moment, forever imbedded into my memory.

When I woke up, the first thing my mind told me to do was vomit, and that's exactly what I did. I puked a warm puddle of that morning's breakfast in my own lap until a doctor hurriedly handed me a trash can that was setting in the corner of the room. While staring blankly at the green colored liquid at the bottom of the can I began to think about the car crash. I'm not sure if the adrenaline kicked in and slowed down my awareness of what was happening around me, but I could still recall the separate events that occurred during those short seconds. I remember a very forceful impact and then being catapulted all the way into the back seat. I saw each small piece of shimmering glass hovering around me as I rotated through the air. It was the first time I had cried from physical pain since I was twelve. The car caved in on my side, beyond where the seat is, so if I wouldn't have been tossed backward I most likely would have died immediately. I hit a tree, the passenger side taking all of the full force, ripping the door completely from its hinges. I don't remember screaming, but apparently I was, because I was on the phone with my boss during the time of the accident and she stated that I was. It explains why my throat hurt for several days after. Why was I screaming? For mercy? I don't know.

During the long month of recovery I noticed that there was something different about me as a person. I began to wonder if the people around me noticed. I felt overly irritated, even towards the medical staff that was currently taking care of me. I was miserable, laying in the hospital bed for days at a time. I rarely had any visitors, and personally it didn't hurt my feelings all-so-much.

I deeply missed my husband, Christopher, who was out of town when he heard out about the wreck. Upon his arrival, one of the nurses who had been watching over me kept him updated on my condition. I could practically hear his heart breaking – or so I thought. I refused to let him see me during my time in the hospital. It wasn't because I didn't want him around or because I don't enjoy his company, but because I didn't want him to see me as I was. When I became fully aware of my surroundings the doctor begrudgingly told me that I had severe whiplash, two broken ribs, tore ligaments in my fingers, and a dislocated shoulder. I had no care in the world about my internal injuries, but the outside of my body

was what truly bothered me. I had several lacerations and bruises on my face. Immediately after impact my head hit the dashboard of the car and instantly knocked six of my teeth out.

The last day in the hospital was the worst of them all. The paperwork that piled as high as my ego left me exhausted by the time it was finished once and for all. Changing back into regular clothing made me feel uncomfortable, almost as if I didn't belong in them. Looking at my reflection for the first time in weeks made me weep like I've never wept before. Before leaving the room I stayed for an extra minute to promise myself that I would never set foot inside of a hospital unless my life depended on it – again.

Dying and coming back to life ruins everything you once thought was a normal part of everyday living. Closing my eyes at night would always bring the sensation of being taken under all over again. Having a fear for nearly everything was very overwhelming. It constantly felt like I no longer had the power to control my emotions. It felt as if a totally different person was attempting to take over my mind.

It wasn't until a week after being home that I truly became conscious. The car accident and all of the time spent in the hospital was a complete blur. There's nothing worse than having the feeling that you haven't been around even though you clearly were. I resembled a mime on the streets, pointlessly moving around and never saying a word. I remember when I was a little girl and my father would travel to New York on business trips every year. He let me go along with him and would always take an extra day to show me around the city before getting on the plane to leave. Our third time around central park I happened to spot a mime with a painted face, the shape of his eyebrows making him seem confused about his surroundings. The man repeatedly touched the air around him and put his gloved hands on his hips. Once he finished the entertaining dance people politely handed him money and tossed change lightly into a hat on the ground. I thought that it was one of the most fascinating things in the world, but now I have sympathy for the stranger. He stood there for hours at a time, never communicating with anyone and being trapped inside of an invisible box. I now feel his pain. When my father quit his job six short years later the thought of going to New York without him saddened me, so I never went back during my time of growing up.

It was only a couple of months after the accident that my existence began to seep down into something unrecognizable. The phone calls, letters, and get-well-soon cards all disappeared after the first week. Not being smothered with attention wasn't what made my life turn upside down, but it was the love of my life that did. Something inside of Christopher had changed just as much as something in me had. It seemed as if I wasn't the person that he wanted anymore. Sadly, my assumption wasn't just my imagination. He began to spend overtime on his hours at work, and I grew suspicious when the extra pay didn't come in like it was supposed to. He wouldn't even bother to pretend to want to sleep close to me at night. I would wait until he fell asleep to let the hurt choke me from being held in for so long. I should had seen it coming from a mile away, but I chose to ignore it instead. One day while putting the laundry into the washer I happened to notice that his shirt reeked of cheap perfume, definitely not something I would spray on. Secretly going through his phone one morning while he took a shower I finally discovered the truth. I wasn't the only woman in his life. With the text to prove it, I knew that the same night of the crash he was going to sneak around with some young lady instead of working out of town like he said he was, which ruined his little plans when he got the phone call. It infuriated me so badly that I didn't even want to think about how many times he had already messed around behind my back. It wasn't soon after I knew about Christopher's ways that we were both signing divorce papers and saying our heart-felt goodbyes. I stood in the doorway as he passed back-and-forth to put his bags in

the trunk. On his way out of the house he sympathetically touched my shoulder, to which I pulled away in anger. "I'm sorry," he said "I know that I was foolish. I hope that you can forgive me."

I didn't reply to him. I decided to slam the front door in his face and lay in the floor to cry instead. It was one of the only times that death didn't seem so bad after all. We tell people we love them, we care for them; we could never live without them, but most of the time it turns out to be nothing more than empty, wishful thinking. There are a hundred ways to lose the one you love, to get your heart broken; however, none are worse than getting cheated on by the love of your life. Cheating is something I never condoned nor, to be honest, understood. It was hard to cope with the thought of not being good enough. Because that was the reason, wasn't it? The reality that I created for myself had vanished in an instant, and I felt completely and utterly lost. I thought that I could change Christopher before it ended. People tend to hold on longer when they're being pushed away.

I slept as late I desired every day for the past three weeks since Christopher left me. I imagined that he was somewhere drinking champagne with a beautiful girl, relieved that he didn't have to watch over me anymore. My mother was overly concerned, blowing my phone up with tons of calls and messages ever since the accident, but I never took the time to answer. Distant siblings also tried to reach out to me with open arms, but I kept myself as distant as possible. I felt furious at the world and everything in it. I wanted to be alone.

I didn't want to get out of bed that day, but my growling stomach practically drug me from the bundled sheets. The first thing that I noticed when walking out of the bedroom that morning was that the entire living area was trashed. The food from the pantry was scattered on the floor, the television was ripped from the wall and shattered, there were holes punched in the walls, the doors were pulled from their latches, and all of my dressers were either opened or knocked over. The entire living area seemed as if I had an insane college party the night before going to sleep. Whilst walking through the house I fathomed that almost everything was broken or vandalized, but the sliding glass door to the back porch was left alone. How did someone manage to get in? Why hadn't I heard any of this destruction happening? Had someone broken in? Were they still there? Without further hesitation I grabbed the phone from the wall to call the police, only to be disappointed to see that the line had been cut. I knew at that moment that someone had definitely made their way into my home. To rob me? To pull some kind of joke? I didn't stand around to find out.

I hurriedly made my way out of the front door, across the lawn, and to my neighbor's house. It was the fastest I had moved since walking out of the hospital a few months ago. I frantically pounded on the door, my feet slowly growing numb from being barefoot on the dew covered ground. It wasn't until I glanced around me that I noticed how insane I must have seemed to the people peeking through their cracked doors at the commotion. I hadn't showered in days, I was half-dressed, and I was breathing like a chain smoker who had just ran a marathon. Being frightened can make you forget things like that.

I stood on the porch for another three minutes, my legs shaking from nervousness. I had to know for sure that no one was home before attempting to get help from someone else. I cupped my hands around my squinted eyes and pressed my face against the cold window, my breath fogging up the glass. I awkwardly moved my head back and forth, disappointed to find that the house was vacant.

Just as I was about to give up I happened to realize that the back door was wide open, letting cool air slowly seep into the kitchen. Seeing no one around made me feel uneasy. Was something wrong? I

practically leaped from the steps and into yard. Without wasting another second I took off running full speed to the back of the house.

“Is anyone here? I think someone broke into my place and I really need to borrow a phone.” I said. Eeriness surrounded me. What if the person who had broken into my home decided to hide here? What if the person was waiting for me right around the corner? Half-way into the living room I came to realize that the house looked just as totaled as mine. Everything was thrown around, broken, or on the ground. I knew at that moment that something was definitely wrong. I scurried into one of the bedrooms, distressed to see that it was empty “Is anyone home? Hello?” my voice grew more and more nervous each time I decided to speak.

I wish I would have never gone in the direction of the bathroom. Something had drawn me to it – like someone was pushing me from behind. Immediately when I entered the room I let out a high pitched scream. Nancy, my next door neighbor, was lying down in a bathtub full of water, her eyes wide open. One of her arms hung over the edge, blood dripping from her fingertips. It was obvious that someone had broken into her home and killed her. I started walking backwards before I fainted. I wondered if she experienced the same death as I did – tranquil and quick.

I slowly picked up the house phone and dialed the three numbers with shaky hands. In less than a minute they answered the call and I explained the situation with a jittery voice.

Why would someone do this? How did I not hear anything last night? It was almost like a maniac had swept its way through the neighborhood.

It had already been a month since the break-ins happened and yet I still sat at my kitchen table wondering what happened. The police searched my home, the wreckage next door, and the body of Nancy yet there was no trace of the criminal left behind. No finger prints, no evidence. Nothing. I began to have severe back aches from sitting and thinking so much. My brain felt as if it were a large pile of mush.

I needed to get my mind off of the things that had been crushing me for almost a year. I was like a scratched CD that repeated itself over and over. Car crash, Dying, Christopher, and loneliness. Car crash, Dying, Christopher, and loneliness. Car crash, Dying, Christopher, loneliness.

I decided on Saturday to go to the nearby church to talk to a preacher. Not because I needed the holy-spirit, not because I wanted saved, but because I desperately needed someone to talk to. I easily opened the car door and plopped myself in the front seat. I was frightened to start the ignition. What if I hurt myself? What if I hurt someone else? Those two questions kept running through my head as I pulled out of the driveway and started down the road, my foot ever-so-lightly hitting the gas.

I’d never felt so drained before. The appearance of me slowly began to show my exhaustion just as well as the inside of me did. I was filthy, black bags circled my eyes, and I had lost so much weight that I could barely fit any of my clothing anymore. I spent my nights crying myself to sleep instead of showering. I was exhausting myself mentally and physically. I felt lost. I needed to know how Christopher was. I wanted to know how what was wrong with me. I was tired of secluding myself and being scared. I gripped the steering wheel with all of my strength because tears threatened to pour from

my eyes in any moment. I no longer had the comfort of God to help me. I had no doubt that he was just a made up person that someone could cling to for hope. Life had chewed me up and spit me out for the worst, and no mythical man was going to bless me. If he was real, I hated him. I hated him for putting my life into a wrong direction, for leaving me with so many questions, and for shutting me out.

My phone vibrated on the dash board – somewhere I had tossed it two weeks ago because I was tired of hearing it ring. I answered it without taking my eyes off of the road. “Hi,” I say awkwardly. I hadn’t talked to anyone on the phone for months and it felt strange to me.

“Rachel, where have you been? How are you? Are you okay? Why haven’t you been answering your phone? Everyone is worried sick about you. Do you need help with anything? No one hears from you anymore. I didn’t know what to think when mom told me that she hasn’t talked to your in months.”

“I’m okay.” I said bluntly.

Hannah, my sister, was the last person I expected to call me. Out of all of my siblings - she was the most distant. Growing up we never grew close to one another or had a sisterly love. We were always the two going head-to-head, and even after she moved out to live on a college campus she still had no special feelings for me. She didn’t travel a few miles to see my graduate, didn’t come to my wedding that she was invited to, and didn’t even bother to visit me in the hospital after the accident. Did she think she could fuss at me about my behavior and change me? I don’t know, because I never gave her the chance to say anything else.

“You have no business calling me to give me a lecture. I don’t want to change, okay? I’ve been doing just fine without you. I’ve never needed your help for anything. What have you done that’s so special, Hannah? You’re no better than me.”

“That’s not what – “

“It doesn’t matter. Some people can’t help but want to be alone. You didn’t have to go through that.”

“You aren’t yourself anymore.”

“It’s hard to be yourself when everything that once made you into who you are is falling apart. But I guess you wouldn’t know about that either.”

Hannah didn’t reply.

“That’s what I thought.” I pressed the button to hang up and threw the phone out of the window. What was wrong with me? Why did I feel so much anger for the ones who tried to care for me? As much as I hated to admit it, Hannah was right. I needed to make some changes but I didn’t even know where to begin.

It wasn’t until I pulled into the church parking lot that I noticed the flames. It was on fire. Half of the building was already burnt to a crisp. When did this happen? Who did it? Why would someone burn it? I stepped out of the car and nearly collapsed on the ground. I felt helpless at that moment. Why was everything happening to me at once? I wanted to go to the church, talk to someone, and clear my mind. I wanted to feel sane, even if it was only a second. I wanted to hear that I’m not crazy.

Now that the place was burning I wanted to dive into the heat and let it consume me. I needed a release. I kick the side of my car and pain shoots through my foot immediately.

“Why are you doing this to me? What did I do to deserve this? What do you want from me?” I practically screamed at the top of my lungs, my head pointed towards the sky. If there was some man with a beard watching me in heaven, why wasn’t he helping me?

I stayed there for a while and gave another hard kick to my car before getting back in and driving away. The fire department arrived soon after.

I was wrong when I said I would never go back to the hospital. I was lying straight through my teeth, and I apologize in advance.

Tuesday morning, I woke up in a puddle of blood. It wasn’t my blood. The first thing I noticed when waking up from a deep sleep was that I was in the basement floor. My clothes were tore in some places and covered in a type of filth. The smell was so overwhelming to me that I threw up on myself just like I did when I had first become conscious in the hospital. There I was, covered in blood and chucked up leftovers.

I felt an agonizing pain in my side and lifted up my shirt to find a large shard of glass jammed into the skin. The sight was frightening. How did I end up in my basement? Who did this to me? Why did I feel so furious? I stood up from the floor and practically crawled up the steps to the basement door. Something was telling me to turn around and lay back down on the cold floor but I refused.

I didn’t remember anything from that previous night, or the night before that. It felt as if I did heavy drugs like I used to in college and spaced out for a while. Oh how I wished I was in college again. I was happily engaged, financially stable, and not losing my mind. I wasn’t waking up in basements either.

I limped my way into the main room. Blood was not only on me, but it was faintly smeared on the wall and on the floor as well. I followed the trail of red liquid until it came to a halt at the entering of the back porch. The sliding glass door was completely shattered to bits. I didn’t know what was going on. In all honesty, I was so scared that I thought my heart was going to jump out of my chest.

I touched the wound on my side once again. It was obvious that I was the one thrown or pushed through the glass door. Soon after, the person must had pushed me down the stairs. When? Who attacked me? Why didn’t I remember anything?

I grabbed my cell phone and called the only number I could memorize at that moment. After waiting through several long rings there was finally an answer.

“This better be something important because I’m a little busy at the moment.”

“Christopher, you have to help me. I – um, there’s blood everywhere. I don’t know what to do.”

“Rachel? Are you okay? Are you hurt?”

“I think so, but I need you. I’m scared.”

“You need to stay calm. Don’t touch anything. I’m going to tell my boss that I have an emergency and I’ll be there as soon as I can. I can get someone to take my spot.”

“I’m sorry. I didn’t know anyone else to call and – “

“Don’t move, okay? I’m on my way.”

That was the first time I had listened to Christopher’s voice in months. I missed him. I missed him so much that as soon as he came through the front door I practically leaped into his arms. To my surprise, he made no attempt to pull away from me. He embraced me as tightly as possible and nuzzled his face into neck instead. It made me feel at ease to see that he looked just as much of a mess as I did. His hair was pointing thirty different directions, his clothes were dingy, and he reeked of alcohol. It was relieving to me that Christopher was going through the heartbreak of losing me. It made me feel sane.

“I’m sorry,” I said quietly. I don’t know what I was sorry for, though. Sorry for ending things so badly? Sorry for giving him no second chance? Sorry for everything? I couldn’t come up with only one reason. I’m sure he was sorry for his actions, but I didn’t dare show any signs of weakness towards him. It was at least two minutes before we let go of each other.

Without saying anything Christopher swept me off of my feet and carried me to his car, making me wince every-so-slightly. I intensely stared out of the passenger seat window while he silently brushed my hair with one of his hands. It was as if we were a happy couple again. Sadly, in reality, we were two broken people on our way to the hospital that I died in.

It wasn’t until we were in the waiting room that Christopher began to keep a causal conversation. I was barely listening to him until he took a handful of my shirt and gently forced me to look at him.

“I was lying to you, Rachel. I wasn’t at work when you called me.”

I let out a stifled laugh and roughly leaned my head back against the wall behind of me. It was funny how the lies continued to build up. “Let me guess,” I say, my voice full of humor “You were out with another woman. I get it.”

Christopher sighed heavily before pulling my head into his chest. We sat in silence until he gained the courage to say something “I wasn’t with a woman. I don’t even have a job anymore. I lied because I’m embarrassed. Soon after everything happened I quit my job at the infirmary. I haven’t been able to function. I’m a complete wreck.”

Was he admitting that he missed me? Was he making me feel pity for him? Whatever his plan was, I was falling for it. I took his appearance into view. He was right. He had faint lines under his eyes from sleepless nights, a bushy beard, clothes that are way too large for him, a hurt expression, and smelly breath. He looked like he was on a major hangover. He still didn’t seem as bad as I did, though.

I turn the opposite direction of Christopher and stare at a water fountain as a child carefully drinks from it. It seemed unreal that only around a year ago I was dead in one of these hospital rooms. I remembered the car flipping, the impact, the ambulance, dying, and waking up yet it seemed as if I was unaware of everything around me all at the same time. I still get the same feeling of uncontrollability of what I can remember and what. I should have been able to recall the events of last night and how I ended up in my basement – but I didn’t.

“Are you even listening to me? I’m trying to talk to you.” Christopher tweaked me once more to get my full attention. Even though I didn’t hear a word he was saying I nodded my head in agreement anyway.

“You didn’t have to get away from me. I’ve apologized and have done everything that I can. Please let me come back home to you. We need each other.”

That boiled my blood. We need each other? What did that mean? Did he think that he was a needed necessity to my life? I had been on my own ever since the divorce and I wasn’t going to sit around and let him guilt trip me into believing that I needed him.

“Christopher,” I said sharply “You think just because I’m at a weak point in my life that I’m going to take you back. I needed a ride to the hospital, not an apology. I – I’ve been making it on my own.”

“That’s such a lie. It’s obvious that you haven’t been taking care of yourself.”

I stood up from the chair I was sitting in and crossed my arms in an offended fashion “I have so been taking care of myself. If I don’t, no one else will. You don’t know what it’s like to be lied to and abandoned! You have the audacity to beg me for another chance, yet I never got one from you.”

Christopher opened his mouth to say something but was cut off by a nurse calling my name. He stayed in the waiting room whilst I had my wound disinfected and cleansed. While the doctor put gauze and pressure on the deep cut I couldn’t help but let built up tears pour from my eyes. It wasn’t because it hurt, but because my heart was breaking.

The ride home was just as silent as the ride to the hospital. The only difference was that Christopher didn’t put his right hand in my hair while driving. In fact, he seemed angry with me. I didn’t blame him because I was highly upset with him as well. Our feelings for each other would never be the same and I knew that without a doubt. I could call him if I needed him, go to him if wanted a friend, and count on him to be supportive but I could never be romantically interested in him again. One of the reasons for this being that he wouldn’t change his ways no matter how persuasive he sounds.

Pulling up to my driveway gave me a sense of relief. I wanted to bundle myself up in the bed and get some actual rest. I went to open the door but Christopher reached over and covered the handle with his hand “I think you should stay with me tonight.” He said bluntly “You haven’t even called the police to investigate the situation. Someone could come back tonight and try to hurt you again.”

“I’m fine,” I muttered “I remember now. I must have forgotten the door was closed and ran straight into it. I fell down the basement stairs in a panic.” I could practically taste the lie in my mouth.

Christopher gave me a look that said “don’t go” but that is exactly what I did. I stepped out of the car and made sure to do my very best impression of being happy.

I was genuinely normal several months later. I began to regain the motivation to keep myself looking presentable and clean up around the house. I was on my phone for many hours talking to the people who had been trying to get a hold of me for months. I hadn’t been worrying as much as usual. I drove around every now and again to do small jobs to get the money that I needed. I even went on a few dates. I was trying to become who I was again.

At least I thought that I was bringing myself together anyway. In early June I got the call at three-thirty in the morning that my father passed away with natural causes. I never got to see my father, spend a lot of time with him, or make as many memories as I wanted.

My mother and father divorced when I was young and that was one of the many reasons why he had quit his job in the big cities and moved to somewhere new instead. Being as little as I was, I didn't have a complete understanding as to why mommy and daddy didn't want to live together anymore.

One evening while Cindy, my mom, was so tipsy that she could barely comprehend anything she raised her hands into the air and drunkenly said to me "Sweetheart, never depend on some man to watch after you. They're all lousy. You only need you and yourself."

I never understood why she would speak of my father that way. He was hard working, kind, and supported his children. He was a man of his word and kept the promises that he made with others.

My father's funeral was another day forgotten. In my defense, I wasn't conscious the entire time. I don't know if it was the heat, the grief, or the sadness that overcame me but it hit me hard. Julie, my closest cousin, grasped my shoulder with her slim fingers while she sobbed uncontrollably into the black dress I was wearing. I only stood there staring down at my father's emotionless face.

Without embarrassment or hesitation I leaned over and pressed the side of my face against his chest. It saddened me when I felt no heartbeat, breath, or sign of life. That's when I let out a noise between a scream and a painful cry "I'm so sorry. Please don't leave me, daddy! I promise I won't be a bad person anymore. I can't do this without you." I said. The very last thing I remember is my legs giving up from underneath me and crashing into the table that holds the picture of my father.

I woke up some time later on my couch drenched in sweat. I felt absolutely terrible. My mouth was so dry that I felt as if I had just eaten a handful of dirt. I sighed heavily and brought my hands to my face only to pull them away in disgust. Dry blood stained my fingers and the wrinkles in my knuckles. I slowly, very slowly, sat up from my laying position.

Not only did blood cover my fingers but it covered my entire body as well. I was so tired of waking up in my own blood with no memory as to why. I wasn't scared this time. I was petrified.

Instead of panicking or taking immediate action I laid there and stared at the ceiling, my brain overflowing with thoughts. Who have I become? I wasn't the girl that I used to be. I knew that it wasn't going to make me feel any better, but I began to think back to the days that I, Rachel, used to be happy. Believe it or not, but yes, there used to be a time where I had days that made me want another. One specific day that I still enjoy to this very moment is the day that I met a girl so wasted that all she could do was try not to pass out. It was at a high school party that was being thrown at one of the richer houses of my small town. Christopher, being the teenager that he was, wanted to "party until he couldn't anymore" so I went to satisfy him. I certainly didn't party hard, but I did set in the upstairs hallway while petting the owner's dog. That's when I heard the soft whimpers coming from the closed bathroom door. It didn't sound like a hurt cry, but it did sound like whomever was in that whomever was in that bathroom needed a listening ear. I slowly made my way into the bathroom and found a girl around my age sitting in the tub, her knees pulled to her chest.

"Are you okay?" I said. The girl didn't reply, so I simply just sat on the opposite side of the tub and watched her let out her sorrow. I was in there for at least an hour until Christopher busted in, picked me out of the tub, and carried me to his car. I didn't say anything on the ride home, and he assumed that I was drunk, so it seemed okay. The one reason I remembered that girl is because the next day at school

the girl approached me, told me her name, and practically never said anything to me again. I didn't mind though.

"Oh my god," I whispered to myself. I wanted to scream, but I couldn't bring myself to do it. Confusion overwhelmed me.

I frantically stood up from the couch and pulled up my clothing in certain spots. There was no wound or cut that was bleeding on me, so I knew that the blood didn't belong to me. Just because it wasn't my blood didn't mean that it calmed me down the least bit. I stumbled my way into the kitchen with weak legs. I occasionally bumped into a wall here and there.

What awaited me in the living room made my stomach churn. There was a simple leather chair and the camera that I had gotten as a gift from my mother sitting in the middle of the room. I don't remember setting it up or making any recordings. I carefully sat down in the chair, not worried that the blood on my pants was already soaking through. I reached up and touched the rewind button several times until it took me back to the very first video made. I had a total of four videos yet I don't remember making any recent ones.

The first video began and I prepared myself for the worst. The video started out with me, but I didn't look like me. I watched myself on the screen.

"I don't know why, but I'm starting to feel something. Since the car crash I have these moments where I lose control and black out. I think I'm in one of those moments right now. It hit me hard earlier. I started throwing things around and making a mess."

That explained why my house was totaled. Have I been blacking out and making these videos to remember? Is that why I never remember most of the things that I do? I set on the edge of the seat and leaned towards the camera to listen.

"I went into my neighbor's house too. I don't know why. I – I think I killed her. I didn't mean to." I started to cry in the video, so I pressed the skip button to go to the next recording.

The next one begins with me pacing back and forth. I'm breathing heavily. I stare at the camera and shout with obvious anger.

"I know that the car crash messed me up! I know it! It's driving me insane! I can't do this anymore! I can't, I can't!"

Only a minute into the video and I already skipped it. I felt numb. Just by the look of myself I could tell that the video was taken not too long before I slammed myself against the glass window and shattered it. I must have put the camera away into the basement before passing out on the floor.

There was only one video left, and it dated back to only the day before. With shaky hands I pressed the play button and leaned back into the chair, my bottom slipping on the leather from the wetness of the blood.

"Today is the day. Just a few nights ago I went to my father's new house. He was happy to see me, but I don't care. I really don't. I waited until my moment was right and killed him. I killed him."

I covered my mouth with my hand and finally let out the scream that had been buried inside of me. The scream that wanted to come out the night of the crash but wouldn't.

"I'm sorry, but I think it's time that you know. You're a monster! I can't believe that you have stooped as low to kill your father. You were the one who caught that church on fire – think. I don't know which one of us are the sane Rachel. I don't know which one of us are doing these things."

I grabbed the camera and smashed it on the ground with all of my strength. I am insane. The girl in the video was the girl who crashed the car, who threw herself down the basement stairs, who killed her neighbor, who caught the church on fire, the girl who murdered her father and then grieved at his funeral like she cared. The girl who recorded it all for me to see. I really was insane. I am who I was scared of becoming.