

Alessandro B            thoughts, dialoge, detail.

Blue Stream

10/5/2022

## The Television

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CAROL: Wednesday, February 2, 2022; 3:05 p.m.

Carol felt her heart spiking in her chest. She had just gone to the bathroom. The gas station in the middle of nowhere was rundown, and now, it was covered in blood. Her sister was standing in the center of the room, laughing. Bodies cluttered the floor. Carol looked at the gun in her sister's hand.

"Jamie, what did you do?"

Jamie stopped laughing. She slowly turned and said, "They're with mom and dad now," Jamie turned fully now to face her sister.

"We stopped for a bathroom break," Carol gasped, "I don't understand, why? Why would you do this?" She was barely able to talk. Carol felt like she couldn't breathe. It felt as if there was a boulder resting on her chest. She could barely feel her chest expanding.

"You know, Carol, the world does not revolve around you!" Jamie cocked the hammer and the cylinder loudly rotated and cambered a new bullet. Her face was red, blood rushing through her veins. Her brow was so squinted it looked like a topographical map.

Jamie had been perfectly silent on the long car drive up. The only indication she was not like one of the lifeless corpses now by her feet was the constant twitching of her leg. She was jittering for three hours as she stared silently out the window. Carol had figured that her sister was still dealing with the trauma that had taken both of their parents in one, random moment. It had only been two weeks since her parents passed. The days since were a blur, ending with the burial at the family plot in Vermont. After silent hours in the car today, Jamie suddenly turned to Carol and announced, "I need a snack," and pointed to the rest stop ahead.

"Okay," Carol said, "I have to pee anyhow."

That was only minutes ago. What had gone wrong? What made her snap?

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JAMIE: Thursday, January 19, 2022

It was an oddly sunny day, but it did not matter to Jamie. She sat inside her cool, cozy, and confined apartment. After all, she had a lot of studying to do. It was 12 o'clock, noon now; she'd been at work for three and a half hours. Jamie stood up out of her comfy chair. Her leg stung—*That's what you get for sitting still all day!* Jamie chided herself. She felt as if she could take a nap and sleep through her test tomorrow. But her school was not all that forgiving. In fact, sometimes it felt like they would only accept better-than-the-best Jamie. The perfect scholar. She

knew how to play that game. Her whole childhood was spent being the *model* daughter, following all the rules.

She walked into her tightly packed kitchen and turned on the news. The old box television slowly hummed as it flickered to life. She wasn't sure why, but she always liked the background noise of the news. It made her feel at home. She remembered many an evening coming home late from work with her dad asleep in front of the tv.

She put on a big pot of coffee and turned the flame all the way up. “**BREAKING NEWS!**” the little box television blared. Jamie quickly spun around. She didn't always like the news—not much interesting happened in her suburb—but this, this could be something interesting.

“Twelve innocent victims were brutally shot and killed today in Charlotte at the usually tranquil Barnes & Noble. It appears to be the act of a disgruntled employee. Though we still don't have many details. Let's go live to Dave Mattingly at the scene.”

*Barnes & Noble?* Jamie knew that store. She and her parents would go there every Sunday after church. Her parents still went there religiously (no pun intended).

“As you can see from the mayhem behind me, first responders are frantically tallying the impact of the situation. Thankfully the shooter has been apprehended.”

Jamie caught a glimpse on the ground behind the reporter of a canary yellow handbag, its contents scattered on the pavement. Her mom had one just like it, but no. *That's just a coincidence, right?*

“The police chief is preparing a press conference later today. Reporting live from Charlotte, I’m Dave Mattingly. Back to you, Susan.”

Jamie decided that she hated his voice. She grabbed her phone and dialed her mom.

No answer.

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CAROL: Wednesday, February 2, 2022; 3:07 p.m.

Carol stared at her sister, who at once looked so familiar and so unfamiliar at the same time. The smell was putrid, Carol couldn’t describe it. It reminded her of the time Jamie made a mud pie and baked it in the oven. Carol remembered the aftermath. The sound of her dad screaming.

"Why should we be the only ones to feel this pain?" Jamie asked with an eerie calm.

"Why, Carol? Why?" Jamie cried as she raised the gun toward her sister.

"Jamie, just because Mom and Dad are gone, doesn't mean we don't have each other," Carol pleaded, "You have ME! You'll always have me! I'm your sister—we're the only family we got!"

Jamie had a sorry look in her eyes but kept her composure and tightened her grip.

"Jamie, this is not what mom and dad would have wanted."

Carol wondered if Jamie would ever go back to being her little sister. She remembered cuddling with her on their sofa and watching whatever was on at the time. That was the little sister she remembered. *Where had she gone?*

“I was supposed to be there.”

“What are you talking about? Be where?”

“They had asked me to go to church with them, but I said I couldn't. I had to study. I just had to follow the rules.”

“Whose rules?” *what the heck was she talking about?*

“My rules. My *stupid* rules. Have to work hard. Have to be the best. Have to please everyone. And for what? Where did that get me?”

The world went gray. *What else might Jamie do?* Carol had to keep composure though, for herself, and for her sister. Carol knew she had to calm her down. Then she could call the police and arrange to turn her in safely.

“Jamie, there’s absolutely nothing you could have done. You know that, right?”

“The only thing I know is that I’m not following the goddamn rules anymore. They don’t mean anything if one random person can destroy everything.”

“Jamie, let’s talk about this in the car. I know it's hard, I really do, but please, put the gun down and let's just go home,” The lights started to flicker, and one of them fell to the floor. Sparks of electricity crackled. Carol's weight shifted.

"All right then, get in the car, Carol," Jamie commanded, "Just turn around and start walking. Now."

"You're coming? Promise?"

"Yeah, sure. I just need to catch my breath. Now go. Give me a few minutes."

Carol turned and started slowly through the door stepping over the body of a man. His glassy eyes looked almost like he felt empathetic toward her. The door rang as she opened it and stepped onto the cold concrete.

Right as she started the car, she knew her sister was not coming. She could hear the sirens in the distance.

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JAMIE: Wednesday, February 2, 2022; 3:13 p.m.

Jamie locked the door behind her sister and stood stoically in the gas station as the police cars screamed into view. The only noise inside came from a television behind the counter. Jamie recognized the voice and smiled to herself.

“BREAKING NEWS! This just in – shooting in the outskirts of Charlotte at the usually tranquil Gas ‘n Go. It appears to be the act of a disgruntled employee. Of course, right now we still don’t have many details. Let’s go live to Dave Mattingly at the scene.”

“Thanks, Susan. I arrived just moments ago. The crazed shooter has surrendered herself to the police and is now in custody. The police chief is preparing a press conference later today. Reporting live from Charlotte, I’m Dave Mattingly. Back to you, Susan.”