

Family Ties

January 29th, 1997, 7:43 PM:

Everything's blurry.

My vision's fuzzy, and my brain hurts. I can hardly make out Emery's body as he lies still on the floor. Tears cloud my vision. I feel them staining my face, and choking up my airways.

Everything hurts.

Nothing was ok. He needs help. I need help. I can barely see my Nokia that's lying face up on the couch. Groaning in agony, I attempt to muster up enough strength to crawl over. He needs help. He's in danger. We're in danger.

"Nine...one..one."

I whisper as my shaky fingertips desperately grasp my blood-red coated phone. Nine one one. Nine one one. Emery's in pain.

"Tough luck bitch!"

A sharp voice hollered from behind me. No, oh god no. Please. A calloused, crimson coded hand snatched my saving grace, and slammed it on the ground, before stomping on it with their big, heavy snow boots. The sharded remains of it scattered everywhere.

"You're not going anywhere tonight."

The rough voice whispers in my ear. I can hardly spot the transit handgun lounging sluggishly in his right pocket. I'm doomed.

"Mommy's out with the ladies tonight, it's just me, you, and dear old Emery. She won't be back till late."

He mutters, a hint of glee in his statement. I can make out his blissful expression, and the sinister grin painted across his face.

How could this man possibly be my father? My father is not someone who would ever want to kill his children. Now here he was, with a handgun in his hand, hovering over me. How could he do this? He scoffed in my ear, before strolling back over to Emery, who started to show signs of consciousness.

“No...”

I croaked. I could taste the familiar metallic sensation in my mouth as I cried out for my brother.

“EMERY! RUN!”

I screamed, a horse rasp escaping my lips as my warning hung in the air. Dad stomped over to Emery, who could barely register what was going on before:

BANG! BANG! BANG!

The noise didn't stop for quite some time. He just kept shooting him, over and over again without reason. All I could do was watch. then-

March 15th, 2006, 6:39 AM:

The shrill sound of blaring brought me out of reliving that fateful night. The shrieking humbled my body back to reality as quickly as the melatonin last night brought me out of it. I rolled over, grumbling in annoyance. It was too early to get up.

“Ughhh...”

I muttered, irritation flowing through my bloodstream. I don't want to get up. But I have school. And the scheduled visit with dad.

I don't know what compelled me to want to visit him after seven years of neglecting anything that had to do with “prison” and “Dad.” I didn't want to see him again after his attempt to murder me, and the successful murder of Emery.

“God, Why did I do this? I’m such a fool. It won’t be different.”

I probed as I pulled myself out of bed and over to my dresser. On the surface of my oak dresser were photos of me and some of me and my friends, one of me and Emery, one of me and *him*.

Me and my father. I picked up the photos of me and my dad and turned them around, then I picked up a photo that contained Emery in it, analyzing the contours of his face and the smile that was etched onto his lips.

The smile I’ll never see again. Thanks to him. Thanks to my dad. To Bill. It was almost disgusting how I had to share the same last name with him. To have the same surname as a murderer? Can you believe it? Because I certainly can’t.

I placed the photo down, not bearing to look at it anymore. Emery, oh god Emery. I miss you so much, Em.

If only you could see me now.

...

March 15th, 2006. 1:37 PM

“Thank you! Have a good day!”

I told the security guard as I entered the visitation room, before sitting down in one of the rusty, aged visitors chairs. I grabbed the phone with the intention to make this visitation quick.

On the opposite side of the plexi glass was My father, the murderer himself. Standing around six feet at age fifty three. One of the most noticeable things about my father was his hair, if not his height.

His hair had hues of gray peeking in around the highlights styled in his shag, they weren't too light, but enough to where they blended in with his raven colored hair. His scruffy beard hogs all the spotlight on his facial features. His eye color is a pale gray.

He's a tad bit on the bigger side, given his burly frame. But before he killed Emery, he looked like the neighborhood friendly dad, straight out of a 'Family Fun' magazine. Now he just looks exactly like his mugshot: Hollow and pale. Such a stark contrast. He gives me a lopsided smile before taking a seat and grabbing the phone on his side.

"Kaitlyn, it's so good to see you. I was wondering when you were going to visit me."

He proclaimed, showing signs of a relieved expression at the thought of me coming here for him.

"I have to ask you something Bill."

I told him, my tone firm and monotone-like. I only came for one reason today. And it wasn't to catch up with the man who murdered my brother. Who almost murdered me.

"You know, I still remember that night as clear as day. Why? Why did you kill Emery? He's your kid!"

I stated as a frown danced its way onto my lips. It's hard to maintain a brave face right now. The smile on Bill's face slipped off as fast as it came. The spark in his irises dimmed the moment that I mentioned Emery's name. His lips morphed into a straight line.

"Kaitlyn. It wasn't me. I didn't kill your brother."

I scoffed, not taking his word.

"Bullshit. That's bullshit."

I claimed. Of course he killed Emery. I was there that night. I *watched* him pull the trigger.

“Kaitlyn Rose McDonogh. I did not kill your brother. It was *him*. You know who he is. And it’s not me.”

His words filled my brain with utter confusion. Who’s *him*? The hell? What is he even saying?

“Who is this ‘*him*?’ Man, prison really got to your brain. You’re talking crazy. I can’t understand anything you’re saying!”

I laughed in disbelief. Is this man serious? He frowned at my denial.

“Kaitlyn. I’m not lying. He framed me! My—“

The metal door on his side was slammed open, a policeman strolled over to where we were seated.

“Bill McDonogh? Your visitation time is over.”

He announced. What? No! I need to ask him about my brother. I don’t know what any of this means! Besides, how would I know if he’s bullshitting me or not?

“But we just started talking, Clyde! You told me I have twenty minutes. This is hardly acceptable if you’d please just let us-”

Clyde butted in again, not letting my father have a chance to continue our visitation.

“Times up. Let’s get going McDonogh.”

Clyde placed a rough hand on Bill’s shoulder, and stiffly guided him to the tall slate door that he came out of. I sighed, rubbing my temples. Who was ‘*him*?’ What did that mean? Could I trust what he was saying?

March 15th, 2006 6:55 PM:

Confused and dazed from the visitation with my father, I sat down at my desk and opened my laptop. Who was this guy that my dad speaks of? What if he’s telling the truth. Would that

make me a horrible person for resenting him all these years because of Emery's death. But then again, I saw him kill my brother. It destroyed my family. Why did I even think of visiting him in the first place? This was pointless, but still, what if there could be a slim possibility that he was right?

It destroyed me. It hurt because he was my father. And I couldn't do anything while Emery was getting shot.

I decided to search up my dad's book business that he used to have, and began to scour for information. I clicked around on the different contents of the website. My mouse hovered over founders, and I couldn't believe what I—

January 29th, 1997, 5:30 PM:

"Kids, I want you to be good for him (Dad?) when I leave alright? No roughhousing! Emery, please stop throwing pillows at your sister and listen to me!"

My mother asserts, her stern, commanding stare makes contact with me and Emery. The raised decorative pillow in his palms fell to the ground not much longer after.

"Sorry, won't do it again."

He mumbles reluctantly. I raise a hand to my mouth to stifle my laughter at his defeated expression.

"Now, pizza will be on its way soon. He (Dad?) should be here shortly."

My mother announced. Tonight was her book club meeting, and she and all the members were going to Miss Shayla's house, she's my mom's best friend and the host. They're apparently quite time consuming.

Out of all of mom's friends, Emery was drawn to Miss Shayla the most. She always read stories for him when she came over. Sometimes I joined, sometimes I'd just watch him.

My mom's cracked lips pecked my forehead affectionately. My head raised and I gave her a smile.

"We'll be good mom, I promise. Me and Emery won't get into any trouble for him (Dad?)."

My mother gives me an approving stare before giving my brother the same cracked lip forehead-kiss, and then exits the living room, leaving the two of us alone.

"Hey Emery?"

I spoke up, a familiar set of words straining on my tongue as I waited for his response.

"Yeah Kaity-Kat?"

He asks. His caramel gaze is glued to the tv, completely absorbed in 'Family Ties.' I shook my head and chuckled. I'm technically not supposed to allow him to watch this, but we both enjoy it, and mom's not here, so why not?

"You know that book that Miss Shayla always reads whenever she comes over?"

His head jerks in my direction once the words 'book and Miss Shayla' come out of my mouth.

"You mean 'An Octopus Followed Me Home?' That's my favorite. I wish momma would let me keep her copy. But she says it's only for Miss Shayla.

An Octopus Followed Me Home—

March 15th, 2006 8:59 PM:

Bursting out of my room and down the stairs, I scurried to the front door, with the intention of going to Miss Shayla's house. I hurried down the front steps and onto the sidewalk, then dashed around the corner and onto her street. The dim light weakened my vision, but I still carried on. Her house wasn't too far from ours.

I doubt that any of this would get me anywhere, but I need to see what really happened to Emery. Maybe my dad could be right, but I'm not sure. He lost my trust after the murder of my brother. Me and Emery were very close, and now we can't be because he's dead.

“An Octopus Followed Me Home, An Octopus Followed Me Home..”

I murmured, trying to piece together who the author of that story was. My dad and his younger brother owned a children's book store, that's also an online shop as well. Maybe that book is on the site?

My dad didn't give Miss Shayla that book for her son, but his brother gifted it to her since her niece loved the book, and she was over often. Can she help me?

I can only wonder as I make my way up to her front door. I knocked three times softly so as to not disturb her. But here's the thing, I don't know who his brother is. I've never seen him.

“Miss Shayla? It's me Kaitlyn!”

I called out, hoping someone would be home and able to let me in. A few seconds later, the door cracked open. Shayla stood on the other side, a small smile on her usually poised face as she recognized who's on the other side.

“Oh Kaitlyn! It's so good to see you darling. Where's Travis?”

She asked, a hint of worry in her tone. My smile faltered briefly.

“Travis... oh, Miss Shayla, he's not here, remember? He took a long nap and didn't...”

I trailed off. Miss Shayla was recently diagnosed with dementia a few months ago. When she was younger, she lost her son Travis to cancer. He was 9. It seems she forgot his death. She thought he was Emery.

“Do you mean Emery? Because...”

“Oh, Emery. How is he honey?”

I smile, hiding the heartbreak of losing my brother.

“He’s doing good, Miss Shayla, he has a lot of soccer practice this week.”

She asked as she ushered me inside. At age 72, Shayla was a very kind woman, who has had a lot of accomplishments. With her high cheekbones and slightly pointed nose, and her close spaced almond eyes that were highlighted with a beautiful shade of forest green. Her hair was colored with a faint hue of auburn underneath the silver highlights. She was on the shorter side, around 5’1.

Her presence makes me feel nostalgic in some way. It made Emery feel like that too, when he was alive. I will get down to the bottom of this situation. And I will find out who ‘him’ is. Even if I don’t believe it.

I took a seat on one of the olive wooden stools at the island in Miss Shayla’s kitchen. It was a cool, earthy toned kitchen. It was decorated just right, and it gave a homey feel to the house. Miss Shayla was a fan of earthy tones. I hope she didn’t forget that.

“So, where would your copy of the book be?”

I asked as I gratefully took the herbal gray tea filled mug and set it down in front of me.

“Oh! It would be in the living room darling. Emery likes me to read it there. Will he come over at all this week, love?”

She asks tentatively. I shook my head, and gave her a crooked smile.

“Sorry. He’s busy with soccer this week. That’s why I wanted to bring it to him.”

I fibbed, trying to keep the Emery subject to a minimum. After seven years, the heartbreak of losing him was still there. Miss Shayla’s expression dimmed at my white lie, but questioned me no farther about Emery.

“Well he and you are always welcome here whenever, sweetheart. He reminds me of Travis sometimes.”

She says sweetly as she eyes my stiff stature and monotonous expression as I sit at her kitchen counter.

“What’s bothering you Kaitlyn?”

She asked. Her question startled me, bringing me out of my daze. My gaze flitted up to the elderly woman, eyeing her concern.

“Nothing Miss Shayla. I’m just...thinking. That’s all. I just wanted to get that copy from dad for Emery, for his...”

Birthday. How could I have ever forgotten?

“Oh right! He’ll be thirteen this year, correct?” She asked me, her expression morphing into delight. I nodded.

“He wa-will be, yes. He still loves that book though. It’s still in the living room like you said, right?”

She nods, and grabs her cane. She hobbles over to the living room. Shayla’s living room reflected her personality perfectly. With built-in shelves with the help of my uncle, she practically has a library.

“Travis loves this room.”

I hear her say as I trail behind her. I frown slightly, a pang of worry hitting me. She forgot her son was dead.

The fire was roaring, sending a warm cozy feel throughout her home. It was probably the coldest month here in Vermont than it has been all year

Mid January was always the worst, so when it comes to warmth like the fire, I always tend to embrace the warmth more than usual. It seems that Miss Shayla does too as she stands next to me. Her shaky frail hands gently hand over the book. I gratefully take the copy before opening it—

January 29th, 1997, 6:29 PM:

Sitting at the granite like kitchen counter, Emery and I enjoy our fresh over-oiled Domino's black boxed cheese pizza as I observe him watching 'Family Ties' again.

"Hey bud—"

My sentence was cut short when the front door opened and the sound of heavy footsteps trailed into the house. (Dad?) was home! Emery's head perked up at the sound of my (Dad's?) familiar footing, and practically leaped off his chair before running over to (him?)

"(Daddy!?)"

Emery cheered as he flung his arms around (Dad's?) legs. He latches onto (Dad?) like a Velcro sneaker, and I chuckle. Emery's so clingy like that sometimes, it always makes my heart melt when I watch him latch onto me, mom, or (Dad?)

"Hey kiddos, sorry I got home a little later today. I heard we're on our own tonight—I mea—"

A Knock comes from the front door.

"Apparently not (Dad?!)"

I tease before bounding over to the front door. Unlocking the door and turning the knob, I pull the door open to reveal our unexpected visitor.

"...Miss Shayla? I thought—"

I got cut off by a harsh shove, sending me to the floor. And just like that, Miss Shayla walks into the foyer—

March 15th, 2006, 9:20 PM:

Hesitantly sitting down on one of Miss Shayla's plush recliners, I carefully opened Shayla's copy of Emery's favorite book, only to see a terrifyingly familiar date written inside with a even more familiar names: *1/29/97-Kaitlyn ~~Travis~~ Emery Bill SHAYLA*

What the hell? What does this mean? Why would she have our names written in here on the same day that Emery was murdered, and why is Travis's name crossed out—

"You saw it didn't you? The date, I mean."

I look up, startled from the unexpected question. I nod, and Miss Shayla's expression turns grim. My expression morphed from confusion to concern. Is she ok? Was the dementia getting to her?

"Miss Shayla...Why do you have that date written in the book along with me, Emery and my dad's names? You...know Emery is at soccer practice rig—"

Miss Shayla immediately jumped in, not letting me finish my white lie. But isn't Emery alive in her state of mind?

A low chuckle escapes Miss Shayla's throat, and she shakes her head. I stare at her in confusion as I watch her pull out something from her pocket. A transit handgun.

"I know all about Emery dear. It was just funny to pretend not to. I'm not *that* old Kaitlyn. But me pretending to have dementia was a smart move. And you fell for it. I know that he's gone and I know why. And I do know that Travis is dead. That's why I loved Emery so much. He's just so much like him. They're together now, you know."

I stared at her, not being able to comprehend the fact that Shayla lied about having dementia? Who in their right mind would lie about a heartbreaking illness?

“Why..would you lie about this? My mom, who was so heartbroken over Emery’s death, believed you! I believed you! Even-even before he died when we found out dad-I mean Bill believed you! That’s just...”

January 29th, 1997, 7:50 PM:

A wave of panic washes over my body as I watch Miss Shayla Stomps into the kitchen with her big heavy snow boots. She walks over to the sink, and begins to wash the evidence of murder off her palms.

It all becomes clear to me now. Miss Shayla is crazy. Like, really fucking crazy. I clutch my stomach as I groan in pain as I lie in an uncomfortable, almost fetal position on the stiff carpet.

I feel the liquid pour out of my body and onto the now stained carpet as the shock hits my body like a freight train. I glance over to see Emery’s almost unrecognizable, blood coated body lying just a few feet away from an unconscious Bill.

The transit gun was barely supported by his lack of grip as he lies still on the carpet. I was the only one who was awake and conscious.

Closing my eyes, I began to think of what to do to get me and Bill out of this drastic situation. Shayla was still over in the kitchen cleaning herself up, getting rid of the evidence of the murder that she just committed.

A low groan of pain escaped my lips, giving away my conscious presence. Fuck, she knows I’m awake.

“Just a minute Kaitlyn, I’ll get to you in a minute. Which weapon would you prefer for your murder, a Butcher knife, or my gun?”

A-what? She’s mental if she thinks that I’d choose which weapon I’d die at her hands to. I’m not dying tonight. I already lost Emery, I’m going to lose Bill too, I can’t lose myself. I’m only 15.

“Uh....can I see these weapons please?”

I ask weakly, hoping that she’d give me enough time to take these from her, so I can call the police, leave, and get over to my mom’s book club to tell her that her best friend is mentally deranged and tried to kill her whole family.

A sinister grin creeps onto her face, and she nods. I watch her take the enormous kitchen knife out of the knife block. She walks over to where I’m lying on the floor, and practically shoves the knife in my face.

“Does this look painful enough for you dear?”

I shake my head as if to say no.

“May I hold it? I could even stab myself for you..”

I ask weakly, hoping she’d agree. Her smile grows wider, as if it wasn’t big enough already.

“Why of course, I wouldn’t be opposed. Here darling.”

She hands me the knife, and I snatch it from her. Raising the knife in my hands, I look like I’m about to slit my neck. But no, I have an even better plan than going out on Miss Shayla’s idea of a painful way out. Without a second thought, I slash the knife into her leg, trying to get the knife deep inside her flesh so I could give her a deeper wound.

I yanked the knife out, not caring about the blood that got all over my hands. Miss Shayla screamed in pain, her voice shrill and ear piercing.

I pulled myself up off the ground, and with what strength I have left, I began to run. I ran into the foyer, not looking behind me. I knew she wouldn't be far behind, despite the wound in her leg.

I charged out the door and ran through the front yard, screaming for help as I ran.

With adrenaline seeping throughout my body, I tore down the streets and over to Miss Shayla's house, calling out for help as I did.

"Get back here you little bitch! You're dead!"

March 15th, 2006, 11:59 PM:

I turn to face Miss Shayla, my face scrunched up in disgust as I eye her devious expression. It's as if she takes pleasure in watching me remember the trauma she gave me.

"You tried to kill me. You tried to kill my whole family. You destroyed my life, you crazy bitch. And I think that it's time that you go to jail for what you deserve. Bill didn't kill Emery, you did you old hag!"

She laughs, and I see her switch the safety of the gun off. She pulls it out of her pocket, and aims the gun to my temple. I let out a shaky breath. Am I going to die tonight?

"I've waited so long to kill you. I couldn't handle seeing Emery after I got so attached to him. He reminds me so much of Travis. So much so that I thought he should join him in death. I wanted people to know what it was like to have a dead kid. So I did this to make people feel what I did, because nobody understood me when Travis died. But once your family loses you, they'll understand me."

I blink. What did she just say? What is going through her mind right now?

“Shayla...what? Why would you do this? My brother loved you.”

No response. Just a manic smile from Miss Shayla. She got up from her spot on the couch where I previously sat, and walked up to me, still pointing the gun to my head. My bottom lip began to quiver. My hands began to tremble. The adrenaline began to set in as it dawned on me that I might die tonight.

“W-wait...don’t do this. I didn’t do anything to you—“

“QUIET! Shut your mouth, you little bitch!”

January 29th, 1997, 7:44 PM:

The rough voice whispered in my ear. I could barely make out the smile on Miss Shayla’s face. My bottom lip quivered, and my hands began to tremble. The adrenaline kicked in as it dawned on me that I might die tonight. A terrified whimper escapes my lips.

I gasp shakily as a wrinkled hand reaches out towards me, and grabs a fistful of my hair. The hand yanked my head back. Hard. I grunted in pain as I heard the voice say something.

”QUIET! Shut your mouth, you little bitch! You won’t be escaping tonight after I’m done with you. Now shut it and cooperate.”

March 16th, 2006, 12:01 AM:

“I won't be dying tonight. Not after you already killed my brother. I am going to put you In jail right where you belong, you hag!”

“That’s nice dear, really fucking nice. Because it won’t happen. I won’t let it.”

BANG! BANG! BANG!

A bullet barely grazes my shoulder as I register that she’s now trying to kill me. She doesn’t want anyone to find out that she murdered Emery. She wants to still be innocent, even though me and her both know she’ll never be innocent.

With adrenaline coursing through my veins, I pushed myself to go forward, and ran as fast as I could through her house. Sprinting into the foyer, I threw the door open as I carried myself outside.

“HELP! SOMEONE HELP ME!”

I shout as I heave and pant as I run down the street in worn down sneakers with Miss Shayla in tow, chasing me with a transit gun. I wave my arms frantically at any car that I see, trying to get away from this psychotic grandma.

“SOMEONE HELP!”

I yell, my voice hoarse as my plea echoes through the street. I turn the corner onto the familiar street of my house, and push myself to keep running. Grabbing my phone from my pocket, I dial the familiar numbers of nine one one, and press call.

“Nine one one, what’s your emergency?”

“HELP! I am being chased down Folkner Cul de sac by a 72 year old woman who is carrying a gun with the safety off. She is trying to kill me! PLEASE HELP!”

I plead on my side of the line. I ran into the garage, and shut the door behind me. For a 72 year old, she can run at a faster pace than I expected. I have to act fast.

“Where are you now? Are you still on Folkner?”

The dispatcher asks me. I hear the sound of a keyboard clacking in the background. She’s probably putting my location into the search bar.

“I’m inside my house. 927, Folkner Cul De Sac in Ambrose Community neighborhood! Please hurry, she’s trying to kill me!”

I heave as I lock the door and run into the kitchen. I eye the knife block on the kitchen counter. Stopping right in front of it, I stare at the various knives.

“Ma’am? Are you still on the line with us?”

The dispatcher asks, pulling me out of the trance.

“Uh, yeah, I am. I locked the door, at least I think . How far away are the police?”

I ask as my trembling hands reach out to grab a knife from the block. Pulling out a sharp butcher knife from its assigned spot, I gripped it tightly, clinging onto it like a lifeline.

“Kaitlyn...I know you’re here...”

My blood ran cold. I forgot to lock the door to the back of the house. She’s inside. Shayla is inside my house, with the same weapon, the same target: me.

”Ma’am?”

The dispatcher repeated, concern in her voice as she stayed on the line with me.

”She’s in the house. She’s armed and she got into my house. I forgot to lock the back door. I got a knife to defend myself, I don’t know what else to do.”

I whispered into the speaker, my voice trembling as I tried to suppress my pants and heaves so Shayla doesn’t hear me. I lower my body, now sitting on my knees as I hide behind the kitchen counter, holding the knife to my chest and the phone to my ear as I wait.

”Kaitlyn.....Kaitlyn..”

I hear Shayla’s maniacal voice nearby.

”She’s getting closer, please help...”

I whisper. I can still hear the wobble in my voice even in my whisper. I grip the knife tighter as I hear the sound of footsteps creep closer. It feels like I’m in my own personal horror movie.

“Ma’am, stay calm. The police are three minutes away now. Can you hang on until then?”

I nod, a shaky sigh escaping my lips. I continue to hide behind the counter, using it as a way to shield myself from her view.

“Why don’t you just come out..”

There’s no way in hell that I will reveal myself. Not until she has handcuffs on her wrists. Not until she’s hauled into the back of a cop car. I hear the sound of the footsteps get louder. I’m so screwed. My lower lip begins to tremble as I try to muffle my noises of despair.

”I can hear you..”

A shiver makes its way down my spine, causing my body to shudder. She’s close. Very very close. I inch away from where I heard her voice, trying to put distance between me and her.

I can make out a figure in the corner of my eye and it dawns on me that Shayla is closer to me than I thought. What If I end up dead before the police arrive?

“Kaitlyn...”

I slowly begin to crawl away from the kitchen, only for my hand to lose grip on my phone, sending it to the hardwood floor, alerting Shayla of my whereabouts.

“I hear you! I know where you are now!”

She gasps excitedly, and now I’m crawling faster than I’ve ever crawled before. On my hands and knees, with my phone in one hand and kitchen knife in the other, I crawled my way out of the kitchen, not looking behind me in case she *was* there.

“The police are one minute away. Can you hold on until then?”

The dispatcher announced, slight relief in her voice. My hands trembled as I crawled faster, ignoring the wince of pain as I felt the knife digging into my palm as I gripped onto it for serenity and comfort.

”She found me. She knows I’m hiding from her—“

BANG! BANG! BANG!

A scream left my chapped lips as I felt a rush of pain fly into my left thigh. She's right on my tail. Lifting myself up from the ground, I pathetically limped my way over to the staircase by the foyer, and ascended the staircase, pushing away the thoughts of how much my injuries hurt me.

“She shot me—“

BANG!

she missed that time, but she's still trying to shoot me. I ascended the last step, and then put all my weight into supporting myself as I hobbled to the master bedroom, knife and phone still in hand.

“You can't wait for the police to save you Kaitlyn, nobody is coming to SAVE YOU! The only way out is death! And it won't be in vain. It will be in my HANDS!”

She cackles from behind me. My trembling blood coated hands shakily threw open the door to the bedroom, and then closed it. I fumbled with the lock, struggling to get myself safety until I heard that click that sent a rush of relief through my body.

”You are going to Jail! Do you HEAR ME? SHAYLA YOU ARE GOING TO BE ARRESTED!”

I shout back with what weak strength my injured body has, my hoarse voice flowing out of my injured vocal chords from my screams of pain.

Crawling into my mothers closet, I shut the door and locked it, praying silently with the dispatcher still on the line. I heard the faint sounds of sirens growing louder over the loud, desperate rattles Shayla emitted as she shook the doors with all her might. She was getting

arrested for my brother's murder. That's what I told myself as the world went black due to blood loss.

March 16th, 12:45 AM, 2006:

Police sirens filled my ears as I woke up on my lawn, covered in a blanket and surrounded by the press, EMTs and police officers. Dazed and confused, I looked around.

I saw my mother standing on the porch, staring blankly at Shayla, who is being dragged into the back seat of a cop car, and spouting profanities directed towards the police officers and me.

"I'll get you, mark my words Kaitlyn! You bitch! I should've killed you years ago—GET OFF ME!"

Shayla screeches as she tries to resist getting handcuffed, but eventually fails. She ceases her squirming and her profanities. A loud groan of frustration emits from Shayla's lips. And that's the last thing I heard from her.

I watch from my spot on the lawn as the police officers shut her door and climb into the front and passenger seats, and drive off to the police station.

"You're ok now Kaitlyn, do you hear me?"

I snapped out of the trance I was in, and looked up at the female EMT who was wrapping my thigh in bandages after cleaning the wound. I nodded in response, and stared at my wound in disbelief that I survived and didn't end up bleeding out.

"So it's really over then? She'll be put in jail?"

The EMT nods, a reassuring smile makes its way onto her face at my question. It's finally over.

Suddenly, a pang of guilt emits from my body. I thought my dad truly murdered my brother, when he was only framed by Shayla to look like the murderer. He's been in jail for 9 years, serving a sentence that wasn't even his.

A frown paints my lips as I realize I hated my dad for something he never did. But...how could I have known? Right?

"Kaitlyn? Are you ok?"

The EMT asks me, concern etched onto her face at my guilt ridden expression.

"I feel guilty for hating my dad for something he never did."

I admit as I feel the shame creeping in and taking over my thoughts. I could've realized if I wasn't so hateful that it wasn't him. Right?

"Your trauma blocked out the traumatic memory of Shayla trying to murder you, and Shayla murdering your brother. It wasn't your fault for thinking like that, especially after witnessing something so traumatic that it stems PTSD from that event. It's not your fault. You didn't know."

She reassures me. Suddenly I felt my vision cloud and my eyes well up in tears. I feel the liquid guilt slide down my cheek after escaping my waterline. Then I felt another, and another until I realized I was full on sobbing in front of the EMT.

I felt her put a gentle hand on my shoulder as I continued to cry. Oh god, Emery...you'll get the justice that you deserve. It will happen.

April 4th, 3:41 pm, 2006:

"How'd you do it? How did you survive witnessing the murder of Emery McDonogh, and how did you escape Shayla's attempt to murder you?"

The press bombards me with questions about Shayla and my brother as I exit my mothers car and begin to ascend to the courthouse with her trailing behind me. The trial of Shayla Caprisenme Vs. McDonogh begins today. I'm being called to the stand for witness testimony today. I already made my affidavit.

"How...I survived?"

I repeated the reporter's question, and they nodded.

"Well...I guess I survived because I didn't want to die that night. I wanted to live, and I wanted to get help so I could make it out. I think that night, and the night a few weeks ago, my body was filled with a will to live."

The reporter nods eagerly at my response as he follows me up the stairs and to the courthouse doors.

"What type of will to live?"

He asks, persistence evident in his voice. I sighed before pushing the doors open. Press wasn't allowed in.

"A will...to survive. To live for Emery, because he can't anymore. Because of her. Because of Shayla. Emery is probably the reason that I lived that night."

I then close the door in his face, leaving the reporter outside with the rest of the press.

I walk up towards the first bench row, where the prosecution witnesses will sit. I feel as ready as I'll ever be to get Emery his justice. A woman sits next to the judge, I'm assuming the Bailiff, stands up.

"All may rise."

The Jury and the rest of the room begin to rise from their seats.

”The Trial of Shayla Caprensienme Versus McDonogh has begun. The honorable Judge, Luna Deflorances has presided.”

He turns to the Jury and clears his throat.

”As Ladies and Gentlemen of the Jury, you may not be sworn by sympathy, but by the truth of the witnesses and their lawyers.”

He then turns back to the Lawyers and us witnesses.

”All may be seated. The Trial has now commenced.”

I let out a shaky breath as I sat down on the uncomfortable wooden courthouse benches.

The Judge clears her throat before hitting the gravel twice.

“Order in the court! The Trial of Shayla Caprisenme Versus McDonoghs has commenced,”

She turns to the prosecution Lawyer.

”The prosecution may proceed with their opening.”

The Lawyer raises his hand before getting up to take the stand.

”Your Honor, before calling witnesses in, for the sake of time may they, even the expert witnesses, be pre-sworn in—”

“OBJECTION! Your honor, despite time and the sake of it, may each witness just be sworn in as called onto the witness stand?”

The defense lawyer cuts in, interrupting the prosecution lawyer's motion before opening.

“Sustained. The witnesses may be pre-sworn due to the sake of time. Prosecution may begin their opening.”

The prosecution Lawyer, raises his hand.

”Permission to take the stand, Your Honor?”

The Judge nods.

”Permission granted.”

The Prosecution Lawyer stands up. I feel my heart begin to race. This is really happening. I watch the Prosecution Lawyer walk up to the stand and adjust the mic.

”Ladies and Gentleman of the Jury, today you all are attending the Trial of Shayla Caprisenme Versus McDonogh. I want you all to remember after leaving court today that Shayla Caprisenme has ruined the lives of the McDonogh Family for the attempted murder of Kaitlyn McDonogh and the First Degree Murder of Emery McDonogh. Today, we have six witnesses who will take testimony to prove to you that Shayla destroyed their lives with these violent acts of murder. Kaitlyn McDonogh will take the stand, and she will describe her near death experience at the hands of Shayla Caprisenme, and she will describe the traumas that Shayla has given her due to witnessing her brother's unfortunate murder before her eyes!”

I feel my heart begin to beat faster, as the Prosecution Lawyer continues, and I feel my palms get sweaty. I’ll be first. And I will make sure to tell the Jury that Shayla ruined my life. And I will make sure Emery gets his justice.

I will mend these family ties, and I will put Shayla in jail.

