

12-14 Age Group Runner Up

My Andrea

Ella H.

A barrage of memories of her shoot at me, like she's an apparition attached to my skin, slowly putting the burning desire into me to rip it off. I'm stuck with her, and I can't let go.

When I pass by the beach we went to once, or that cafe she was obsessed with, or any place we had been together, I see her there, watching me intently, urging me to join her. My conscience tells me it's not her, she would not want this, but I never listen to it, I won't. I've probably tried a million times now, emphasis on try. I've tried to join her, but each time the sun suddenly comes out beneath the clouds, shining through my window, or on my face, and I hesitate, and then I fail, again.

I looked down to see my friend, Jona, calling me as I was still lying in my bed, though it was already 11:00 AM.

"How are you doing, Mich?" he asked.

"Alright, you?" I replied.

"Good. Hey, did you check out that therapist website I sent you?"

"No. How many times do I have to tell you that I'm not doing any of those stupid money-wasting sessions?" I half-scoffed, half-chuckled.

"I'm telling you, you find the right one and it won't seem like such a waste of money." he laughed.

"Wanna join me at Penny's?" Penny's was the cafe Andrea was obsessed with.

"Sure." I thought if I went, I'd be able to see her.

To no surprise, she was waiting for me as I suspected- but the seat Jona was at was in the complete opposite direction, so I couldn't see her anymore when I sat.

“I want you to meet my friend, Danny, he’s a huge ball of sunshine to everyone around him.”

“Why, exactly?”

“No need to be so interrogative, I noticed you don’t really hang out with much of anyone, so I thought you two could be friends. He’s actually getting us some coffee right now- don’t worry, I had him get your usual.”

“Hey Jona! And you’re Micheal, I’m assuming?” Danny approached the table with the biggest smile I’ve ever seen plastered on his face as he sat down our coffee, and his lemon scone.

“Mich,” I grunted.

Andrea was suddenly by the pick-up counter, unnoticed by any passersby. I saw Danny look at me, and then to the place I was staring, and said, “So Mich, I heard you like playing baseball. You know, my nephew loves baseball. I was hoping, maybe, you could give him a few pointers whenever you’re available. He’s a great kid, would love it.”

My eyes slowly letting go of her sight, I focused on Jona, who was nodding. Do it, he mouthed, smiling.

“I mean, I guess I can tomorrow,”

“Thanks man, I appreciate it, we are only just meeting after all.”

The next day, Danny drove me to a small baseball field, where I saw his nephew there, handy with a glove and bat.

“Hi! Are you Micheal?” the boy said as we got out of the car.

“Yes, and what’s your name?”

“Will!” right away he grabbed the glove and a ball and handed it to me, then ran back and picked up his bat.

We went back and forth as I gave him a few tips for about an hour and a half, when Danny got a call from Will’s mom asking for him to come home.

“Thanks again, he was very excited when I told him you’d be coming to play with him,” Danny said after we dropped Will off.

“No problem,” we were now approaching the beach on my way home. “Turn.”

“Hm?”

“Turn right, here.” for the first time, I didn’t want to see Andrea. In fact, I was trying my hardest to forget her torment. “If you don’t mind, I don’t want to go home.” Danny smiled empathetically, and replied with

“Sure. Donuts?” again, with that huge smile.

He bought both of us a maple bar, and we sat down on the bench outside.

“Why didn’t you want to go home?” he asked. I pondered whether to tell him the truth, or lie once again. “I have some not-so-nice memories in that place, my good mood would’ve been spoiled.” I laughed, but he looked at me straight-faced, pressing me to tell the rest. “I’ve been seeing... someone, in my mind I mean.”

“Who?” Danny asked.

“My wife. She’s been following me everywhere we’ve ever been together.” I looked away from my lap and towards the early sunset. “She died last winter.”

“If you want, I have a spare bedroom at my house until you’re ready to go back home?”

“You’d do that?”

“Yeah, why not?”

“What if I’m a psychotic murderer who has a habit of screaming in the middle of the night? It wouldn’t be a surprise to me if I were you.” he cackled like I’d just made the funniest joke on planet Earth, and I laughed along with him.

Two weeks passed while I stayed with him, and I hadn’t encountered Andrea once- until the 4th of December when we went to the card shop for the holidays. Behind the window, I saw her picking at her nails as she waited for me, so I went outside and sat next to the apparition.

“You’re not really Andrea, I know that,” I said as I sat alone, no human near me. Her expressionless eyes didn’t even glance at me. “she wouldn’t follow me like this. She would want me to move on.” I

looked back at Danny inside, whom I had much respect for now.

“So I’m going to do just that. And you, whatever you may be, won’t be stuck to me anymore.”
I looked back at it, but I saw only air.

“Hey, you doing alright?” Danny asked, stepping outside to join me.

“Yeah.” I paused, “I think I’m ready to go home.”