

WRITE  ON!

Short Story Contest

Story 8
Deadly Diner

Deadly Diner

I hear a loud, whining noise. “No, no, no!” I murmur under my breath. My car halts to a stop. I lay my head on the steering wheel and sigh. This was supposed to be it. This was supposed to be my chance to prove myself to my parents. I check my watch which says 5:20. The interview starts at 5:30. I climb out of my car and pop the hood. Smoke blasts onto my face causing my eyes to water. Coughing, I take a closer look. Yeah no way I can fix this. For the 12th time today, I heave another sigh.

I don’t realize where I am until I look up. It seems like a sleepy town, with only a few shops and cracked sidewalks. The little patch of grass next to the road is dead. This place looks deserted. A pang of sadness hits me but I quickly brush it away.

I scan the area, praying for a mechanic shop. My eyes land on a glowing sign.

“Bill’s **Manchenic!** Open 24/7,” it reads.

“Thank God!” I mutter under my breath.

The shop is a fair bit down the road, so I get out my phone. No signal. I conclude I will have to push my car all the way there.

About 5 minutes pass and I have only pushed my car a foot. I bend down in pain because *everything* hurts. I decide that I will have to walk there and get the mechanic to pick up the car.

It only takes me 10 minutes to get to the place, but it was the longest 10 minutes of my life. I look up and notice how run down this place looks. It is a refurbished gas station, but the paint is peeling off and there is mold everywhere. The road is uneven, and the few plants are wilting.

The door creaks as I open it and the man at the desk jerks awake.

“Welcome to Bill’s,” he mutters, “How can I help you?”

“Hi, yes, my car is down the road and I need to get it fixed. I tried to push it here, but it wouldn’t budge,” I reply.

“Ok give me a minute,” the man says.

I nod and take a seat on one of the cracked leather chairs. As I sit down, a cloud of dust explodes into the air. I cough and grab a tissue from the nearby table. Once the dust clears, I get a good look around. This place looks like no one has been here in 20 years. The furniture is obviously from the early 1990s and is mostly broken, and coated with a thick layer of dust.

I glance at the man at the desk. He looks like he’s fifteen and 60 at the same time. He is wearing a dirty t-shirt with the shop logo on it. I squint at his nametag and finally conclude the man’s name is Joshua. He looks up and I quickly turn my attention to something else.

“Ok, third door to your right,” he says.

I thank him and walk down the narrow hallway. Most of the doors are locked or have no handle. I arrive at the office and attempt to turn the door handle, but it won’t budge. I push on it. Still nothing. I try one more time, and it opens. I tumble inside the office, landing flat on my face.

I quickly stand up and take a seat at the desk. It smells like years worth of TV dinners and old man cologne. I try not to gag.

“How can I help you?” The man asks cheerfully. He has a voluminous gray beard and tattered clothes.

“So you see, my car broke down a little ways back, so I need it fixed ASAP.”

“Ok, just fill out these forms for me.”

He hands me a large stack of forms to sign which I don’t bother reading. When I finish I hand them all back to him.

“Ok, you’re all set. I’ll just give you a call when it’s ready.”

“Thanks!” I reply. My stomach grumbles.

“Do you know where I could get a bite to eat around here?” The man points across the road to an old looking dinner called “Moe’s Diner.” I thank him and head that way.

I arrive at the frosted glass doors, out of breath. That walk is way longer than it looks. The doors creak as I open them, and the smell hits me like a wave. It smells musty, mixed with something rotting, and a faint bit of febreze spray like someone was trying to mask the scent. I gag and walk up to the host’s table. There is a small sign that says to seat yourself, so I choose a lonely booth in the corner.

There is already a menu on the table so grab it, but immediately drop it. There are pieces of brown slob and crusted food on it. The plastic covering is so dusty I can barely read the words. I can make out large, vintage letters that say Moe’s Diner, and a few appetizers and entrees. After reading it over, I decide that I want a spicy chicken sandwich.

The waiter walks up to my booth and I almost fall out of my chair. She has a white, short bob with bangs that cover her dark eyes. She is wearing a spiked headband to match her choker, and her shirt has numerous holes and rips in it. She is wearing black shorts and knee high socks with black boots. I notice she has a spooked look on her face. I somehow will myself to look at her nametag and see that her name is Blanche. She doesn’t ask me for my order so just tell her.

“Hello, can I just get a spicy chicken sandwich?”

She nods and takes away my menu.

As I wait for my food I realize how disgusting this place is. The checkered black floor has crusted pieces of food on it, so you could practically see everything anyone has eaten here. The wallpaper is peeling off and all the photos on the walls are faded and look 100 years old. There are dark red splatters on the walls similar to the splatter in front of the kitchen door. I don’t dwell on it and focus my attention elsewhere.

My eyes land on a figure in the kitchen. He is cooking, I can tell from the grease splashing up to his face. I can't see his face but he is wearing a baseball cap atop curly hair. He has a big, unkempt beard that falls on his white shirt with numerous food stains on it. Suddenly he looks up. I quickly look away but his bright, piercing, blue eyes burn into my mind.

Soon later my food arrives. I thank Blanche, but she just walks away. A little suspicious, but she just must be having a bad day. As I am about to take a bite of my sandwich, I notice grease dripping from it. I realize I don't have a napkin, but I reach under my place to see if Blanche gave me one. I feel something rough on my fingers, so I pull it out from under the plate.

It is a crumpled up piece of paper, with messy, shaky writing on it.

It reads: "Help. He won't let me go."

I look in Blanche's direction, and catch her eyeing me. She immediately looks down, her cheeks flushed.

I call her over and she reluctantly shuffles toward me.

"What is this?" I demand. She just looks at me and walks away. Funny joke. I crumple the note up and place it next to me. I pick up my grease-soaked sandwich and I try to take a bite. When it is an inch from my mouth, I see a man pause by my table out of the corner of my eye. I see my sandwich slide out of my hands and it lands with a SPLAT on the table.

I look up to the man annoyingly. He keeps his cool expression, and he looks from me to the note. I pick it up and he looks in Blanche's direction. My eyes dart frantically from the note to Blanche, and when I try to turn and say something to the man he is gone. All that is left is me, Blanche, and the man in the kitchen.

It is at this point that I know something is terribly wrong. I pull my phone out of my pocket, almost dropping it. I dial 911, and as soon as someone picks up, they get cut off. I check my bars and see that there is no internet.

My eyes dart around the restaurant, and I see the cook walk out from a room in the back, staring at me. I watch as he goes and grabs a knife from a drawer in the kitchen. The light

gleams off the knife, and my vision flashes. I see my sister walking towards me, the knife in her hand. I blink and realize that the man is inching closer.

I dart behind a nearby table and look around the diner frantically. My eyes land on a figure outside the window. It is the same man I saw minutes earlier. He is staring at something. I follow his gaze and see that he is looking at a knife hanging in the kitchen. I look back but he is gone.

I watch as the cook walks across the diner, talking in a sing-song voice. When his back is turned, I quickly run into the kitchen. I grab the knife from the shelf, and wait. I see the cook jerk around which causes me to tip over onto a stack of pots. They fall, the sound ringing throughout the room. I see the man smile and walk towards me.

One...

Two...

THREE!

As soon as he enters the kitchen I use all my strength to stab him in the leg. He falls back in shock, and I use a nearby pot to whack him in the head. His eyes close, then he goes still.

I stare at him in disbelief. I just did that. Suddenly, my ears ring and I bend over in pain. I look up and the man is not there anymore. It is my sister. There is blood everywhere. I look down and see that I am covered in it. I am in a dark room with no doors or windows. My sister is lying there, lifeless. I gasp as she sits up and blood drips from her mouth.

“You did this,” she growls.

I stare at her apologetically, and try to find words. I can't speak. She stands up, slowly walking towards me. She murmurs something under her breath and reaches out her hand. I try to run, but I can't. It is like my feet are glued to the floor. She draws closer, and she wraps her hand around my neck. She squeezes, a murderous look on her face. I gasp for air, unable to beg for her to stop. My vision blurs, and suddenly, there is darkness.

I open my eyes. An unfamiliar face stares back at me. I focus my eyes and see a cop in a blue police uniform.

“Are you alright?” He asks.

“Yeah, sorry I zoned out. What happened?”

“Well the man you were standing over, he is one of the most wanted criminals in the state. He has kidnapped numerous women, who he was keeping captive in his mountain house. We rescued them, and they are all fine.”

“I-is Blanche ok?” I stammer.

“She's ok. She is just being taken to the station for an interview.”

I look around, observing the scene. There is one other cop there, eyeing me from the corner. It makes me uncomfortable, so I look away. The cop in front of me tells me I have to go to the station, and asks if I need a ride. I decline and he gives me one last pitiful pat and walks to his car. The other police officer follows him out, still looking at me suspiciously.

I wait a few seconds, taking deep breaths before I head out. I walk to my car, and start heading to the station. About 10 minutes in, I see a car following me. I speed up and take three left turns, and the car does the same. I realize I am being followed, so I quickly turn around and head back to the diner. At a red light, the car pulls up right next to me and I see the driver pull out a gun. I recognize him. He's the cop who was staring at me. I knew there was something off about him. I scream and swerve away. I quickly take a few turns, and start heading to the diner once again. I notice more cop cars, so there must be backup.

I quickly get out of the car and scream for help. The car pulls up and I scream in horror. The cop gets out, pointing a gun at me. I dart behind a trash can, and he kicks it out of the way. I remember a trick I learned, so I jump up and hit the man right in the nose, he falls back, and I run into the diner. I call for help and two cops follow me outside. When I point towards the man he is gone.

The next few days are a blur. I don't remember much. Just a lot of waiting. The officers thank me for my bravery and say some other pitiful things. They even prescribe me to a therapist.

After a few days, I am free to go home, and the first thing I do is flop on the couch. What a whirl these past days have been.

A few months later...

A lot has changed since my near death experience. I have had a lot of time to focus on myself and reflect on my life. I realize life is short, you should be doing something you love, and I feel like I have taken advantage of that. I decided to switch my major to criminology, to help people who have been in the same situation as me. Blanche has been doing great. Despite her trauma she has been doing her best to overcome her mental hurdles and has opened her own diner. I still wonder about things, like who that mysterious man was. The figure at the window. Without him, I may not be here today. I try not to dwell on it too much. Finally, I feel like my life is just starting. I have all the pieces, now I have to put it all together.