

Synopsis: Gabe and Bessie are very different people. While Bessie was carefree and flighty, Gabe was grounded and serious. As these two unusual people meet, an even more unlikely friendship formed between them. With Gabe's struggle to make friends, Bessie encourages him to move forward. Bessie, a girl who wants to be seen, realizes while helping Gabe, that maybe she doesn't have to be that way to be recognized.

Outline:

Chapter 1: Bessie died after meeting Ben.

Chapter 2: Bessie explored and acted as she moved around the ever changing world that she lived in.

Chapter 3: Gabe meets Bessie.

Chapter 4: Bessie has to come realized what she has been doing the whole time she was traveling; running away.

Chapter 5: Gabe's daily life and struggles as Bessie tries to befriend him.

Chapter 6: Bessie's friendship with Gabe as she learns that difficult times are about to head their way.

Chapter 7: Gabe finds out that his mother is sick and Bessie comforts him. Then, Bessie was forced to leave. They both promised to meet each other again/

Chapter 1: The Last Time Someone Noticed

I can remember clearly the last time someone noticed.

It was a cloudy day. The grey was the color of my neighborhood. The soot filled the air, covered houses, and swallowed up the people as well. I always hated how dreary my home was. Everything was black and white. I wanted to be an artist, you know, to spread more color and paint the world. Mum always said that it was ridiculous, that I should just be like her, pretty and dependent, always leaning to my husband. But I don't. Pops always hits her and as time passes, I noticed that she didn't either, but she was forced down to be what she is now.

I went out of the house that day saying that I was going to buy the groceries. I wasn't, I lied. That was the last lie that anybody listened to and believed. I liked to go outside, unlike several people. I took all the money I have been saving up my whole life, 50 dollars. I was going to the train and to the shopping district. That was the first and last time I was there alone.

After I got off, I noticed all the colors, the high class, and the latest fashions. I went to the barbershop and had my long, dark, straight hair bobbed into the latest fashion. Then, I went to a popular boutique and bought a beautiful blue dress with white matching shoes and a hat, of course. I later saw the most beautiful purse and bought it. In the end I only had 10 dollars left, but that was the grandest experience.

I saw plenty of people and sights, I have forgotten how they looked like. But what they said to me, I could still remember. Some were, "Oh! Your purse, it is just the cat's meow!" Others even said, "My, my aren't you just the bees knees, miss?" And I would say in reply would be, "Sorry, but the bank's closed, sweetheart!"

That whole time was like a dream to me, everything just flew by, this was the life I wanted. I didn't even notice time pass until nightfall. When all the signs and light lit up the whole the city, outshining the stars and the moon themselves. Flappers and gents wandered into cafés and bars while some of the oldies started tucking themselves in while the youths danced in clubs. I remember wanting to go in one of those cafes, but I only had 10 dollars.

At that moment I realized that I had to go home.

I rushed to the trains and while the doors were still open, the train was moving. I ran faster and tried to get in, the moment I jumped and went for the door, I knew I wasn't going to make it, until a hand grabbed mine and pulled me in. It was a boy, about 17, like me. He had beautiful brown eyes that reminded me of melted chocolate. He had light brown hair and an impish grin filled with mischief as if he knows something I don't.

"Woah. You okay?" After he pulled me into the train.

"Yeah, thanks."

"You're welcome. Why you out this late anyway, little miss? Wouldn't your parents worry about you, being fourteen and all."

"I'm seventeen!" I replied, slightly irritated, how dare he think that.

"Well, the name's Ben, short for Benjamin. What's yours? Is it Dorothy or Grace? You seem like one of those two, pretty and a gift."

"No, it's just plain old Bessie! I sound like a cow."

"Well, that doesn't suit you very well, little miss. With a pretty face like yours, I'll call you Dorothy instead."

"Fine, Dorothy is a much nicer name. From now on, I will be called Dorothy Radcliffe, no longer little old Bessie Miller."

That was how I got a my new name, it was a shame, only one person got to call me that beautiful name. I loved that name. I don't remember what else we talked about until I had to leave. His last words to me unsettled me. I should've though. That was the last time I was able to be ignorant.

I ran home, fearing for my parents wrath. I snuck into my room and changed. Screams and pounding woke me up that night. Running to the kitchen I saw Pops with a broken beer bottle and Mum was in the floor with the color of crimson painting her body. He saw me and smiled a crooked smile. I didn't like it. Breathe. Breathe. Breathe. He won't hurt you, you're his daughter. *But she was his wife, you're own mother.*

"Where were you all day?" He growled, eyes glaring, walking towards me, lifting the bottle. Breathe. Breathe. Breathe. Run away, walk away.

I gulped, my throat tightened, I couldn't breathe, I couldn't speak. Words won't form. Walk back, run! Get out of here! The wall was in my back, I can't run, he's blocking the door. A swing with his arm. He hit me. The shock, I didn't feel anything. A drip, I reached for my temple. Red is in my hand, it's blood. Another hit, it hurt. This one made me weak. My knees collapsed. Black dots formed in the edges of my vision. There was pain in my arm and chest. He kicked my stomach. I fell to the floor. The smell of alcohol reeked from the carpet. I tasted something metallic in my mouth. Pain! Pain! Pain! Slowly, it started to dull. Until, there was nothing. I couldn't see anything. I couldn't hear anything. I couldn't feel anything. Gone. Gone. Gone. That was the last time I felt pain, or sensed anything at all really.

The next thing I knew, I was outside of our house into my gray neighborhood. Inside I saw Pops in the couch, sleeping, with bile and scarlet surrounding him. In the kitchen was Mum, in the same place and position as last night, the red permanently painted into her once beautiful golden glow. Farther in was a body. It was filled with blotches of blue, purple, and green. Her arms and feet were in odd angles. There was red. Her face was unrecognizable. Her hair was bobbed, like mine.

That was me. I wanted to cry. I didn't. I wanted to throw up. I couldn't. I wanted to get angry. I wouldn't. Then, I remembered what Ben said.

"Be careful with your life. You only get one chance to live. Enjoy your body while you still have it."

A cold feeling formed in the pit of my stomach.

Chapter 2: As Time Passed

That was a long time ago. The house I used to live in is gone now. I didn't know what else to do. I knew what happened. I died. I don't know where Mum went. I never saw her. Maybe she went somewhere else. I saw plenty of people die. They don't stay, their souls just flash out. I tried to do the same, but couldn't. I was alone. Being alone is a worse feeling than being killed.

Pops died in the war. He went in the Second World War. I followed him, you know. He was shot, in the head. When his soul stood in front of his body, like the other soldiers, but he didn't vanish right away. He saw me first, I stood in front of him, that's why, and in his eyes I saw horror, regret, and fear. He opened his mouth and was about to talk. That was when a dark hand came to his shoulder, and then a flash. He was gone.

I stood there. I didn't know how I should react. I don't blame him for my death, everyone makes mistakes, his was just a little bit worse than other, he was only human and you could never hate anyone for being human. I stared into space, the sky the, the ground, the bodies. I don't know for how long, but all I knew was that I was alone. Under the the scarlet sky and fiery clouds, I couldn't see the difference anymore, between what was blood or the world. No one is going to remember me. I knew that. I didn't have plenty of friends, I bet my friends don't even remember me any more. But who cares about them, I'm dead. They wouldn't see me either way.

At that moment I realized that I have been dead for over twenty years. Drip. Drip. Drip. Tears flowed from my eyes. I fell to my knees in shock. It was 1940. I was completely forgotten. Erased. Because I was dead. Dead. Dead. Dead.

I should've known and accepted it a long time ago, but I'm stupid and hopeless. So I started moving around. Even though I knew that no one would see me, I tried to get attention anyway. I stood in front of every person that came around my old house. They just went through me. I screamed, flailed my arms, and cried. Nobody noticed.

I continued like that for a long time. Wailing, running, and grabbing, never stopping. I stopped one day, though, like something inside me just said, "Stop. It's enough. It's over." At that point, for the very first time, I stood silently and just watched.

This neighborhood that I used to live in changed. No longer was the sky always grey from the soot, it was clear. Was the sky always this blue and beautiful? I looked around. I saw that the house that I lived in was raggedy and falling apart. The once bright red walls were starting to cave in, the roof shingles fell, and the most noticeable change was the big 'DANGER'

sign in front and that the once yellow door is no longer there. I looked at the other houses. They were painted in bright hues, like the way I always wanted them to be.

I went around the area and counted the colors that I saw. There was blue, yellow, red, purple, green, orange, and indigo. This place was filled with color! How come I never noticed? The mobiles, no, cars, yes they were called cars now, were brightly colored too!

I went to the shopping district and heard the noise. The buildings were taller. There was a lot more flashing lights too. I went to a news stand to see the date. 1965. That was when I started exploring. Adrenaline and excitement fueled my me to explore. For the first time, I left my home for my own reasons only and went to several different places. I went to all the states, even Hawaii! There were different sorts of buildings and climates. I stopped keeping track of time and people after several weeks.

I even went to other countries. I saw plenty of sights. Some were bright and colorful while others were deep in poverty and dark. Some are rich in history while some are newly formed. I learned things that I never knew before, like mythology from different cultures and languages! If I were still alive, I would've never seen them.

After several years of exploring, I got bored. I returned home. My old house was gone. Instead there was a tall apartment complex. It's changed. Like the rest of the world. I learned the year was 1995 and that this was newly built. Nobody lived in it yet. I went in through the walls and into the area where I think my room used to be.

The builders were still adding the final touches. That was when I realized that I'm going to stay. I'll settle down here and watch the world change. I'm no longer in denial of my death. I

accepted who and what I am now. There's no more need to rush. So for the first time after I died I looked at my reflection.

I still had black hair. It was not bobbed like when I was alive. It reached the middle of my back and had a blue ribbon to keep it out of my green eyes. I wore a simple white dress. It had a pale blue ribbon going around my waist and frills in the bottom. The sleeves were loose that reaches my elbows and the dress was knee length. My pale skin didn't have any blemishes anymore. I also didn't have any shoes. I twirled and danced around the mirror, not bothering with the people passing through me.

I soon grew bored, but I stayed put. I didn't leave I just watched as time flew by. I sometimes try to talk to somebody, but, alas, they don't notice me. I started sitting in balconies and swinging my feet while watching the sky. When there are clouds; I guess on what they look like, when it's sunny; I just admire the blue of the sky, when at night; I remember that I used to look at stars, but now I know that the city lights outshine even the stars at night, I just watch the moon now.

A lot of times I pretend to be alive. Once, I followed a little boy to school everyday to see what it's like. I followed every day. When he reached middle school, I followed, high school, I followed, and when he went to college, I followed. He was a good little boy. However, that was a long time ago. Still, once in a while, I follow someone for a day. It changes a lot, the world I mean.

I'm not sad, but I'm not angry either. I'm no longer envious or hateful. I get bored once in a while, but the world is discovering new things, I'll learn them with the world, it'll hold off my boredom. Somehow, after all this time, I feel content, but never completely happy.

Chapter 3: The Peculiar Neighbor

My mom was the nicest mom in the world, but sometimes, I think she should just rest or be selfish.

"BEEP! BEEP!"

A swerve to the left, the whole car tilts and I hold on to the door for my dear life. I really hope she gets a good night's sleep today. This is just too dangerous. A swerve to right and I was kissing the window. Yuck. One last swerve, a jump in the air, and an extremely jerky brake later, I'm in school. Out of the ride from hell, killing vehicle, and the thing that I couldn't even consider a car anymore.

"Gabe, you have to promise to be good to the other kids-"

"It wasn't my fault, they insulted me!" I interrupted her.

"play nicely-" She still continued.

"Their games were idiotic and stupid! How can anybody not get angry?"

"and, please, treat the adults with respect. You just have to try this time. That's all, I have nothing else to ask of you," she finished, looking proud of herself.

"But-" She gave me a look, and I said, "Okay, I promise. It's not my fault that those simpletons decided to eat sand," I whispered the last part.

Mom smiled. She looked nicer that way. Today, she had her auburn hair in a loose and messy bun, probably forgot to set the alarm again, I had to wake her today too. Her chocolate eyes lit up, but I ruined the moment.

"Mom, you're wearing mismatched socks with mismatched shoes. Plus, your shirt is inside out, and most of all, you're wearing pajamas."

I could hear the giggles of children and their parents as they passed us by. Whispering cruel jokes and words that didn't really affect me. It did to my mom though, she frowns at this. She probably thinks that I'm ashamed of her or something along those lines, she watches too much teenage movies and dramas, I tell you. I'm not even a teenager yet! I'm only nine. I love my mom, but sometimes, she's a bit too dramatic.

"Oh! Gosh, did I embarrass you? Sorry, I'm such a horrible person! Your friends! They won't talk to you anymore! And you'll be a loner forever!"

"I don't have friends. I'm new to this school remember? Plus, I'm in fourth grade. Everyone in class assumes that if you're their classmate, you're a friend. So I basically got that part covered," I reply bluntly, slightly irritated of what she said. I get friends! I make friends! Better yet, I don't need friends to survive in school, who cares about friends anyway?

The bell rang and I ran to my classroom. I already knew where it was, I memorized the map yesterday. I sat alone in the back corner of the classroom to observe as other people came. I took out my notebook, pencil, and eraser, arranging them in a neat fashion. I also took out a book, just in case. I saw other kids trailing their parents, looking around shyly. They looked pathetic. Why would they bother dragging their busy parents? Don't they know that their parents have lives too? That whole ordeal was boring. So I read my book.

"Good morning class, my name is Lucy Reynold, but please call me Ms.Reynold," says my teacher. I guess she's pretty young, her blonde hair was in a pony tail and her blue eyes were filled with excitement. I bet she's newly hired. Say goodbye to your pretty blonde hair lady, they will turn gray because kids are stressful and annoying. I couldn't help but chuckle at that thought.

"Let's have introductions first, okay?"

A hand raised up in the air. "What are we suppose to say?" said a girl with pigtails.

"Well, your name, your hobby, and what you like. I'm Ms.Reynold, I play tennis, and I like puppies!" Ms.Reynold went first.

"Oh! Then, I'm Abigail, but call me Abby! I like to draw and I love candy!" The girl in pigtails said next, as if saying that if she said it first she would be original and special or smart. She is so stupid, doesn't she know that nobody cares? This whole activity is stupid, we're not in kindergarten! Doesn't Ms.Reynold know that this whole activity is pointless? Who am I to talk though, almost every kid in here is like her, not knowing how stupid this is.

In the end, I was correct. They basically said the same thing and argued about it. I mean just because someone said it first or copied the same answer, doesn't mean that their copycats. This room is filled with simpletons, I say. It was my turn now.

"My name is Gabe, my hobbies are reading, researching, and learning. I like my mom," I smiled confidently, but got irritated when the other kids weren't paying attention. So I continued, "You simpletons are mentally incapable of even understanding are you? Well, I'll inform you nincompoops-"

Ms.Reynold tapped my shoulder and looked at me closely, "Gabe, that wasn't very nice. They might not understand what you're saying, but it's not right to insult them." I got angry at this.

"What are you talking about Ms.Reynold? I wasn't the only one being rude. They weren't even listening to me. I paid attention to their introductions. You weren't even listening to me were you?"

I knew I got to her. She had this unsure look in her. Deciding to admit it and insult me or deny and lie, setting a bad example to a child. She turned away and just changed the subject, never bothering to answer me. What a coward.

"Class, we'll do self portraits today, okay? Who wants to help me pass put the paper?" She gave it to two kids and they passed it out. This assignment was stupid too. It went like that the whole day and I waited for my mom to pick me up in front of the school.

It turned out that Ms.Reynold told my mom what happened in school today. She wasn't furious or angry. In fact, she was so happy, she bought me ice cream.

"Why? We're wasting money on ice cream. We don't need it."

"You know this is actually worth celebrating about, Gabe.

"Again, why?"

"You didn't do anything to the 'irritating' kids!" She said teasingly while making air quotes in the word irritating. "Seriously, last time, you pulled pranks on everybody in your class!"

"How did you know that?" I asked, a bit too quickly. I knew for sure that I left no proof or evidence.

"I'm your mom, I have a sixth sense," she said, raising an eyebrow and forming a smirk. She always liked to pretend to have a super power.

"Right," was my sarcastic response.

"Ring! Ring! Ring!"

The phone rang. Mom picked it up and seemed worried. She works as a nurse, so she's mostly not home. I know she has work, but sometimes I wish she would just stay home and spend time with me, but that was a selfish thought. Other people need her more than me anyway.

"Hey, it seems like they need another person at work. Sorry Gabe, but I have to go," she told me. She grabbed her keys and jacket. I followed her while grabbing my regular stuff, like the routine. I went next door and knocked.

This was the Jonhsons' home. They were an elderly couple who usually babysits me when mom isn't home. A big plus is, when I'm over, Mrs.Johnson will always give a big cookie the size of the plate its on with juice. She gave some to me and talked to Mr.Johnson. She turned to me.

"Gabe, I know you're smart enough to know what's right or wrong. So I will allow you to do whatever you want. Please wake us up if you need something, we'll be taking our afternoon naps."

"Okay Mrs.Johnson!" I smiled sweetly as I said this, they're not stupid after all. They know that I don't like being looked down on. They turned away and headed to their room.

After a while, I got bored. So I started wandering around and into the balcony. There, I saw a girl, maybe around sixteen or seventeen years old, sitting at the edge. Huh, maybe she's suicidal. I shrug and turned around. Until I remembered that if she killed herself here, the Johnsons will be blamed for it! They're good people and it's going to be messy cleaning up the mess.

I ran back and looked if she jumped yet. She hasn't, thank goodness.

"Hey! Girl, you better not jump off!"

She turned around and looked at me shocked and looked around her, looking for another person. As if asking if I'm talking to her. What a simpleton.

"Yeah, you, stupid. If you're going to jump, can you not do it in this building? It would take too much paperwork to fix the mess. I mean seriously, do you know how troublesome it is to convince the police that you're innocent and didn't kill a person?" I think I said too much.

She looked at me in amazement and said, "Wait, you can see me?"

Chapter 4: What She Knew

At that moment thoughts hit me in full force.

They went in this order:

1. Is that kid mental?
2. Who is he talking to?
3. Ha ha! His talking to air!

And then he had to answer my question. I didn't know what to do, should I get angry or celebrate? This is amazing, yet kind of painful. I don't know anymore. Since I've read that if you make friends and if they left and died, you'd be sadder than before you met them. I don't know how to deal with this kind of pressure, okay? So, like any other sane person, dead or not, I did the sensible thing, I laughed at him.

He got angry, but he's so cute! His big brown eyes turned furious, for some reason I saw some red forming around it, just a bit. He puffed his adorably fat cheeks, turning them bigger than they already are. Don't get me wrong, he isn't fat or chubby, but what kind of kid doesn't have baby fat? His light brown hair, already naturally spiky, turned even spikier! His once pale pigment, slowly turned red. He looked a tomato!

It was too hilarious for me, so I burst out laughing. He burned even brighter red! Oh gosh, I need to stop, but what else can I do? I don't know any other way to react anymore. I haven't talked or communicated with anybody for a long time.

"Stop it!" He said, clenching his shaking fists with anger.

"You slay me," I continued to giggle, "Get a wiggle on! You got me all balled up now, boy."

"What? I can't understand you, are you making fun of me?"

Reality shook me from my merit. I forgot that this wasn't the 1920s anymore. I just remembered that slangs changed through time. I need to talk normally for this time. When I realized this, the little boy came closer and glared even harder, if that was even possible. I need to get serious, I'm actually having a conversation with a real, living person. For the first time after death. Like I always knew, frost impressions always lasts.

"Um, no. Little boy, could you please calm down? I wasn't making fun of you," I said to him, trying to calm him down. He started taking deep breaths and unclenched his fists, it's like watching an angry tomato turn into a calm, pale person.

"You! I've never seen you before. What are you doing in the Johnsons'?" He gave an accusing stare.

"What are you talking about? I live here," I replied, without thinking.

"Stop lying, the Johnsons don't have any children, much less a granddaughter! This is unbelievable, why would you barge in on an elderly couple's house!"

"I'm not lying! Just who do you think you are? Accusing and pointing fingers at me."

"I hate liars! Stop lying already! Liar! Liar! Liar!"

The little boy started to turn back into a tomato again. This time though, he screamed and stomped his feet on the ground, pointing accusing glares and fingers at me. I'm not a liar, I know I'm not. He's the liar!

"Dry up! Level with me because I am to you! I have lived here my whole life!"

I heard footsteps approach, slightly sluggish, but slow and steady. Diana walked in, looking around confused. She looked at me, no, through me. She can't see me, this I know. Just because a little boy can see me, doesn't mean everyone in the world can. It such a shame too, Diana is far kinder and more polite than this boy.

Diana questioned the little boy, "Gabe? Why are you screaming? Is everything alright?"

"Yes, everything is quite fine, Mrs.Johnson. This intruder was lurking in your apartment so I was interrogating her," Gabe replied, gesturing at me. So that was his name, Gabe. How disappointing really, she can't see me.

"Are you alright? There's no one there," Diana said, looking at my supposed location and back at Gabe, confused.

"She is there! Don't you see her? You know I'm not a liar, and definitely not a hypocrite either. Please, believe me."

A smile, a pat on the head, and a hand held. With just gestures, Diana calmed Gabe, "Of course I believe you, but I'm an old woman, I might not see her. I might not hear her, but I believe you Gabe. I truly do."

"I-I just thought that you thought I'm crazy too, I'm sorry Mrs.Johnson. And thank you," the corners of his mouth lifted up and the corners of his eyes smiled with him, "Thank you for believing me that I'm not a liar despite my notorious reputation of being one."

At that moment, I knew. I want to be his friend. Not just because he's the only person who can see me or talk to me, it's more than that. I have existed for quite a long time. I know people like him came along rarely. People that appreciate things that really matter, who is honest to themselves and sincere. He might not be those characteristics, but, from what I've seen from him, he is genuine and true, and most importantly, he admits his his mistakes instantly.

He turned around to look at me again, but he can't see me. This I know. I hid while he talked with Diana. *You're a coward.* I know. I want to be his friend. *But are you ready for the pain of saying goodbye?* It's not goodbye. Never goodbye. *Being solitary is better than carrying the weight of the responsibilities from companionship, you know.* I do know, but if pain is the price for companionship and friendship, I'll be brave, even if it does hurt in the end. *But you're a coward, how can you be brave?* I know can't. I know. I know.

He walked out of the room, leaving me with my thoughts. The thoughts that I wished would never come back. I don't want to have these thoughts, being alone brings them back. I need to have a friend. I want to be his friend, no, I have to. This might be the last time I would ever have the chance to be brave again, because I am. You aren't and you know that. I am brave, yes, I am. I am. I am.

I look at the mirror again. I look the same as then, but different somehow. I looked scared, a coward, too much like the girl who had her dreams crushed by the man she called her father. That's not me, no, not anymore. *But you are.* No, I am not. She's gone. She was the liar. She was the one scared. She was the one that's pretending to be alive. She was the one trapped. She was the one broken. *What are you talking about? Aren't you the one that's gone? Aren't you*

*the one scared? Aren't you the one trying to pretend to be alive? Aren't you the one trapped?
Aren't you the one that is lying right now?*

"No, no, no! I am not! Pipe down! Scram!"

I covered my ears with my hands. Screaming as loud as I can. I want to run away. The girl in the mirror smiled at me condescendingly, she's not me, I know. She is a part of me, the one who hates me, the part of me that I pushed away, so far away, I never wanted to see this me ever again. This me was my past, I want to forget it, I want it to disappear. I want her gone. I looked again, why is she still there? She, who continued to smile, started crying. *I thought you wanted to change, why can't you face me? Why won't you look for me? I am a part of you too, why are you pushing me away?* She shifted, she shrunk, replaced by a little girl. The little girl looked like her, but different, the little girl wasn't crying, she was smiling. *Do you know who I am?*

"You look familiar, but I'm sorry, I seem to have forgotten your name."

She continued to smile through it. I don't know her name. I don't. I don't. I don't.

"What's your name?" this time, she said it, aloud, not in my head.

This question is one that I know the answer to. It's simple really. I do know the answer, "My name is Dorothy, what's yours?"

At this answer, she vanished. But I still hear the sounds of heart wrenching cries and screams of "Why?". I don't know what I did wrong. *Oh, but you do.* I don't. Liar, you're a liar. No, I'm not. You said you were going to change. I am. *But you're not.* I am doing so. *Such a liar you are, you said you're moving forward.* I am moving forward. *Then why do you deny your past?* The past doesn't matter to move forward. *True, but moving on and moving forward are*

very different. They are the same. You are such a liar, even I know you don't believe yourself on that one.

Something wet hit my hand, I looked at the mirror. I was crying. I was crying. I was crying. For so long I haven't cried. I didn't think I could. I admit it because I know. "Moving on and moving forward are very different," this time, I say it out loud. *Good, you admit it. Maybe you are moving forward. Running away has gone a bit tiring, hasn't it?*

"Yes, it is, and I'm too tired of running anyways."

Chapter 5: The Needs and the Wants

"BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!"

5:30 AM. Although my body told me to not get up and my mind agreed, but I knew that if I didn't, my mom wouldn't be the only one late for the day. Swinging my legs off of bed, I heard a slight rustling sound, like fabric swaying in the wind. I shook my head, it was gone. Changing clothes and arranging all my things for school by the door took quite a while. 5:50 AM. Time to prepare for for the wake up calls. I took my alarm clock, my watch, my mom's watch, and my mom's phone. I brought them to my mom's room and set them all around her bed.

I looked at the clocks. 5:55 AM. I've got five minutes to prepare breakfast. Taking two bowls out, I poured the cereal into a measuring cup that said it was one cup and from the cup, I put it in the bowl, one cup each. I took out the jug of milk and measured the same way as the cereal, pouring the contents into the bowl. Taking out two shiny spoons, I carefully placed them next to the bowl. There! Everything was perfect! Precision is perfection.

Then, the beeping started. 6:00 AM. The utmost perfection of the moment, ruined. Screams and thunderous footsteps shook the floor. I almost dropped the jug. Mom ran out

muttering about how late both she and I am, trying to tie her hair, which may I say, is a horrible mess right now. She flurried around the room looking for her shoes and things she needs for work. She looked at me and I knew she was going to apologize for sleeping in and making me late. She is too selfless, she's also late, but from the look in her face, I knew that the thought haven't even occurred in her mind yet, if it will ever happen at all.

My chest and stomach dropped, I knew I wasn't suppose to do it, but I did. She is already as stressed out as she is, now she's worried for me. I hate this feeling, guilt. I looked into my mom's frantic face, muttering, "I changed the clocks' times in your room, you're not really late, Mom. I was pranking you again."

"Why would you do this? I panicked again, you know," Mom looked at me in the eyes. That sinking feeling plummeted even farther. I shouldn't have done it. I'm a horrible person.

"I just wanted to eat breakfast with you, like they do on those books, shows, and movies. I apologize I shouldn't have done it. It was very selfish of me to do so," I couldn't look in her eyes as I said this. I know I'm a horrible person with a disgusting personality. Pathetic, that was what I was. A hypocrite too, talking about how other kids are disgusting even when, I too, looked for the attention I wanted. That attention is not needed though, not for me, at least.

"Gabe, I want to spend time with you too and I understand," she pat my head and gave me a hug. She then pulled the seat across me and started to eat the cereal while smiling, "Hmm, cereal, very soggy! My compliments to the chef!"

"I don't like my cereal soggy, it becomes too sweet this way."

"Wow, everyone's a critique now, aren't we?" She looks at me pointedly because we all know who fixed the break fast.

That morning continued like that, filled with pointless banter and laughter. It was quite relaxing, but I heard giggles that did not sound like my mom's. It was familiar though. It was on the tip of my tongue, but I can't quite remember. I looked around and I only saw ends of a blue ribbon. Weird, but I ignored it.

With such a great beginning for the day, I never expected anything good to happen that day. After breakfast, I ran into the car and waited for mom to start driving. Preparing myself for the horrors that this car, no, this death trap brings me thoughts that haunts me in both my dreams and waking hours. Yes, it was that horrifying. "*Swish!*" I looked to the side, there was nobody, but I couldn't shake off the feeling that someone was following me.

School was the same as usual. Ms.Reynold took attendance and requested everyone to say "Here!" when their name is called out. Which would be productive, if she didn't have a seating chart in her hands that she, herself, made. Plus, the fact that it is in alphabetical order, does not make this experience any less stupid than it already is. There wasn't even a point for her to look at the seating chart anymore, after three months of school, everyone knows where each other already sit.

"Aileen Babbs."

"Here," a girl raised her hand.

"Blake Carson."

"Here," a boy raised his hand.

"Gabriel Cassiel."

"Here," I didn't bother to raise my hand, she wasn't even looking.

That was how she pointlessly took role, even though she already knew who was in class. I saw her using her seating chart when everybody first sat. Why bother waste time with everything you already know anyway? She's a stupid person.

After all that dawdling with the unnecessary, she finally announced what we were suppose to do today. It was a group project that we were to do for this next week and after. Instantaneously, kids grouped up in threes and left me with no group. I don't care, I don't need help from anybody at all. I can work on my own, besides, I don't want friends! I don't need them.

Just as I was about to ask if I could work alone, the bell rang, signaling the part I dread the most about school. Recess. In all purposes of school, I find the idea of recess to be simply the most needless activity that the school could offer. Books were my escape to this endless spiral of boredom forming in the idea of school. Alas, I did not bring a book today, being too giddy about the occurrences this morning, much to my deep regrets of the moment. The sporadic screams and idiotic laughter of my peers filled the vast yard of school in which they continuously run and play at.

I headed for the lone bench which I have claimed my own. I other students tend to avoid me for no apparent reason so I approach no one as well, from what I have observed, this suited both parties very well. As I waited out the for the end of recess, I noticed adults looking at me, giving me tight lipped smiles, that weren't smiles at all. They say that actions speak louder than words, but I believe that the actions or words that one does not do or say speak the loudest of all. The look that other students give me tells me that they want to play with me, but on the other hand, by the way they talk, I know that they'd rather not bother, finding me somewhat intimidating or incomprehensible.

Deep in thought of this, I barely saw the red rubber ball heading my way, but, nonetheless, I was hit straight to my nose. I lifted my hand to my aching nose, covering the on steady flow of blood from my face. I took out my pristine handkerchief and folded it into a square for my nose to dribble on and to wipe it.

"Hmmmph! How rude those kids are, they should at least apologize you know!" said the girl that I met in the Johnsons' apartment. She's been visiting and following since three months ago, it's very troublesome.

"What are you doing here?" I sighed, I could feel the start of a twitch in my right eye. Irritation built in the back of my throat, I could barely hold back the lashing words.

"Oh, don't change the subject! That was really mean of them to do, if you're not going to tell on them, you should at least go to the nurses office. That nose has a very steady flow of blood you know."

"It's not broken, that I know. I still have," I glanced at my watch, "10 minutes anyway. Most of the blood will probably be gone by the time recess ends. Telling adults would only cause hassle not only for them, but to me too."

"Well, I still think you should. You should at least get some ice or pain reliever, it looks painful."

"I'm fine. Look, can you back off? I don't need your help, I know what I'm doing, and you're not the boss of me, just leave me alone!" There it goes, I finally exploded on her. I hate myself for caring so much. I hate myself for hurting her. I hate myself for telling her to go away. I hate myself for pushing away a the only one willing to talk to me on their own choice. Mom was different, she didn't have a choice, I'm her son.

"I-I w-was just worried y-you know," she mumbled, scratching the back of her neck with a nervous laugh. I didn't want to look at her, but my body had to. I only saw a glance and I knew that I hurt her bad. She was forcing a smile and her eyes were moistening while looking around, dodging my form. I should apologize, but a lump formed in the back of my throat so I just sat there, unable to apologize properly.

"Beep!" That was the signal for the end of recess. I looked at my handkerchief, it was bloody. I looked at my reflection in a window, good, there wasn't anymore blood, though it still hurt to touch.

I glanced back to my bench, she didn't follow me to class, the girl just stood there looking at the ground. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I ran to class and slid to my chair. There I was, in a room full of people but still somehow manages to be alone. When the girl first started following me, she would go in class with me and try to make conversation. She still does, until now anyway. I need to apologize.

Ms.Reynold came in. She said, "Okay class, sure to continue and make your robots perfect okay?" Robotics. I hate robotics. I took all the tools and materials I needed and brought them to my seat. Taking a deep breath I read the instructions and started right away while my peers chatted and distracted each other. Finished! My robot was a golf player. I stood up and grabbed a laptop, plugged it in to my robot and started programming. It was in the instructions. I looked around, nobody is finished yet. Looking back on my screen and adding finishing touches to the code, I still couldn't get rid of the image of her crying and sad. Guilty. Guilty. Guilty.

I gave my robot to Ms.Reynold and had her check it, "It's perfect, Gabe. And you worked alone too! I'm so proud of you right now!" Of course you are, but I'm not. I shouldn't be. I did something horrible to a person again.

I sat down back in my seat and took out several pieces of paper and cutting them into perfect squares. Folding each one into different shapes, I continued with my work, silently and diligently. As time passed, the noise around me turned into a blur, just soft murmurs heard from far in the sky. Focus is what I need to have to finish my task. Taking out a lined piece of paper, I started writing. Focus. I don't communicate very well, though I should really learn how to, I don't want to talk.

I jumped when someone touched my shoulder. Looking to my right, I see Eddie, a soft spoken be speckled boy, with a nervous smile in his face. He's intimidated by me. With a shaky and quivering voice, he asked, "Um, Gabe. Can you, uhh, well, help me with my programming? M-Ms.Reynold told me to ask for h-help from you s-since you're done. Can y-you help me?"

"Sure," I took the laptop his holding and typed up what he was missing and fixed what he did wrong. Overall, considering that he works alone, I noticed, he did fairly well on the project. There was barely any mistakes and his robot was pretty well built from the looks of it. I gave him back his laptop so he could show it to our teacher. As he interacted with Ms.Reynold, I noticed that she seemed to be trying to encourage him to do something. I don't care though, until he started making his way towards me with Ms.Reynold anyway.

"Gabe? I know that you sit and work alone so I thought that maybe you'd want to have a companion to talk and do projects together with. Eddie will now be sitting with you from now on, okay?"

"Understood," I replied. From the corner of my eye, I could see Eddie looking giddy as annoyance bubbled inside me. I don't want a companion, much less need one.

"I hope you guys get along!" she exclaimed, walking away. How bothersome. Looking around, most of the people with groups are either arguing with each other or struggling on building their own robot. Looking at Eddie's nervous fidgeting and glancing, I decided to ask him a question that I'm sure would interest him, "Isn't it weird how while they have more help, we, who worked alone, finished first and earlier?"

"Well, I d-don't know really. I n-never was really put in a group y-you know," he answered with a nervous laugh. It's boring.

Silence came over us again. As he fiddled with his hands, I continued with my work. Snips and pencil scratching on paper was the only thing I could hear. *Tap. Tap. Tap.* In the corner of my eyes I could see Eddie dribbling his fingers in the wooden table. Distractions, that's the reason why I like sitting alone in a table.

"Beep!"

Taking my materials and lunch bag, I walked out of class headed to my bench again. Usually, the girl would be there, but today, she's gone. Because I pushed her away, she's gone. I guess the saying you don't know what you have until it's gone is true at this point. I guess having her make one sided conversations with me unconsciously nourished my thirst for companionship. I need to finish my project for myself. Looking at my letter, I just realized that I don't even know her name. Odd, I usually don't miss important facts like this. She also knows my name, but I never introduced myself. Just who is she?

Dismissing these doubtful thoughts, I cannot be distracted by shady facts. She has been nothing but kind towards me.

After school, I went to the Johnsons' apartment. I had two purposes here. First, Mom is at work and I have to be here. Second, this is the first place where I first saw the girl and she said that she lived here. Walking towards the balcony, I heard a *Swish!* Like somebody was hiding from me. With the corners of my mouth upturned, I placed a yellow piece of paper at the ground. Surrounding it were origami flowers, the ones I made in class. Laying them out, I listed what I made. Tulip. Lily. Lily pad. Rose. Yellow bell.

Turning away, I saw the girl reading the letter, she probably thought that I left and couldn't see her. Hiding behind a curtain, I watched her silently. The corners of her mouth turned up and her eyes shone. Then, she did something unexpected. She turned to my direction and gestured for me to come out. She loves key way too giddy for my liking, though I can tolerate it.

"Don't talk about the letter," I told her, I don't like to talk about things I've written.

"Okay! Gosh, I haven't been friends with someone for so long! This is so exciting!"

I could feel warmth spread from my chest. I like it when people around are happy. She also seems to be genuinely happy with a delightful laughter and gleeful aura around her. It seems oddly familiar somehow. Before I knew it, I was smiling along the older girl. Which reminds me, I don't know her name.

"What's your name?" I asked her, but she just started playing with her hands and an unsure look grew in her face. For some odd reason, I suddenly felt an urge to reword my question, like the way I wrote my letter. It was like an old memory forced in front of my mind,

an aggressive reminder, though not unpleasant, pushed through me. As she stood there uncomfortably, I phrased out, "Is it Dorothy or Grace? You seem like one of those two."

From the look on her face, her joy was replaced by shock while glee turned into fear. Why would she do that? *Did I somehow offend again?* But I never offended her on accident before. It's quite odd. Even though she seemed scared, I felt a sudden burst of nostalgia. *She remembers me.*

"No, I'm not either of those names, but a long time ago, a person said the same thing as you, Gabe. The world is filled with coincidences, isn't it?" she replied to me in a soft, but steady voice. In my head, a voice spoke almost as gently as she did, "*There is no such thing as coincidences in this world only inevitability.*"

I dare not speak them out as she looked terribly shaken up, "So what do you want me to call you?"

With a gentle smile and confident voice, she said, "That's easy, call me Bessie."

"Hello Bessie Miller. After all this time, it's nice to see you again," I spoke up, but I've never seen her before three months before.

Her eyes widened and jaw dropped, so did mine. Where did all that come from? Looking at her face, I knew. She had no idea what was happening either. As well as that she knew that I, too, had no idea what's going on. I don't want this. *But you do need it.*

Chapter 6: The Not-So-Alone Girl and Boy

I have to admit that making friends are not as easy as it seems.

From novels I read, people just click together some how. It's weird because that's not real like life at all. Becoming friends with Gabe is difficult, I'll admit, he is a bit of a weirdo and a huge

pessimist. You could just feel negativity coming off of him, but he is my adorable little friend. Best friend. He's really mature and serious so sometimes I forget that he's just a kid. For some odd reason, it seems like the days just got a bit brighter and faster. I guess time sure passes when you have fun.

Laying on my back in the balcony. I saw Diana walk in, sluggish and tired. Even though she is old, she's not usually like that. I wonder what happened. I want to ask her but I can't. School already started huh, maybe I should go to Gabe, but that's bad for his grades. I'll wait till recess then. Looking down the balcony, I could see snow on the ground as people shuffled around trying to keep warmth. It's almost winter break, the season where there is the highest death rate.

Going to school at recess, I noticed that the kids weren't outside. Why aren't they? After looking around, I just realized that it was snowing. It was snowing really hard. Oopsies, I didn't notice. I looked for Gabe's class through the snow, it was a bit confusing, with all the snow piling up all around. I came in and the shock of chattering students hit me full force. The constant laughter and screams hurt my ears.

Looking around the ever moving sea of kids I found a tiny pebble going against the current by staying in place. Gabe! Next to him was very fidgety boy, it's a weird sight. The boy seemed to be trying to make conversation while Gabe just nodded and tolerated him while reading a book. Suddenly, the boy stood up and left, when he left, Gabe did a funny thing. He puffed his chest and took a deep breath with a sight of relief, he can be a bit rude I guess. Then, he saw me and his eyes leered. Yup, that's how he welcomes a friend, totally friendly.

"What are you doing here?" he whispers softly.

"I was bored."

"Read a book."

"I can't, people don't like seeing floating books in the air or pages turning by itself. I've done that before. Now they think that the school's library is haunted."

"You caused that?"

"Yup! Their faces were too funny when they saw the pages!" I giggled in reply, I just couldn't help myself.

"Why would you do that in the first place?"

"I didn't think anybody would mind in all seriousness really."

"So basically, you forgot you were a ghost and no one can see you."

"Yeah, about that I definitely knew no one can see me you know!" I said with so much confidence I knew he wasn't going to believe me. He gave me a very pointed look. Yup, definitely not believing me.

"Right, sure you did," his sarcasm never ceases to amaze me. I really would like hurl him outside the window, but like any concerned and irritated older sister, I can't do that.

I just sat next to him, reading over his shoulder, like I usually do. When I'm at his height and look around from my spot next to him, it's like seeing through his perspective. It's kinda sad really, from here, I can see a gap between him and the other kids. The boy earlier is intimidated by Gabe more than the others, but he approached him anyway. Somehow that makes me feel nostalgic and incredibly proud of Gabe and that boy. The boy for talking to Gabe even though he, himself, is afraid. Gabe for not pushing away to be alone. *Like he always did back then.* Huh? Where did that come from?

"Hey Gabe, who was that boy ealier?" I asked.

"That was Edmund Edison. Most people call him Eddie though."

"He seems like a nice kid."

"I guess so," he agreed with me as I stood up. Looking at him, I saw someone I didn't expect to see. *Ben*. I rubbed my eyes hurriedly and there, Gabe just sat there. With a sigh of relief I gave a wave at Gabe, indicating that I was leaving.

I visited the hospital with Diana. She looked pretty shaken up. I heard the news. Gabe's mom, Alicia Cassiel, was extremely sick. She shouldn't even be working at this point, but since it's not contagious, she continued with work. I agree with Gabe she is too selfless. I don't know what to do anymore. Diana's going to break the ice tonight. I don't want to be there when it happens.

Before I knew it, I was hiding again. I ran too. I want to be alone. Because unlike Alicia, I am very selfish. I think of myself before others. Everything has to be about me. I hate very easily. Alicia doesn't deserve this. Gabe shouldn't have to through this pain. This world was just unfair towards him. *But you can be by his side.*

Standing up, I decided that I will at least try to stand by his side and cheer him up till the end. I knew that he's going to need someone to lean on and be his rock. Even if he doesn't want me to do it, I'll be there for him whether he likes it or not. With my new resolve, I went to Gabe. As his older sister and friend, I'll stand by him. I won't run away. *Hey, you realized something. The world is changing for you and soon, you'll be ready to move on.* What was that suppose to mean? Moving on?

No matter, I can see Gabe's bobbing head among the other students, he seemed to be really happy. Taking a deep breath, I said, "So what's got you in such a good mood, Gabe? Don't tell me you're not, I could see that skip in your step."

Looking up at me, he smiled, a sweet smile that could even make the angels sing, "I got all fours on my report card! Mom is going to be so happy, I can't wait to get home!"

My stomach dropped, looking at his eyes, I can't bring myself to tell him the news. I forced a smile and said, "That's great Gabe! I never got good grades when I was your age."

My blatant lie was ignored, I know I'm not a good liar, but thank goodness he's in a mood too good to be ruined. Wringing my hands nervously I followed him, telling jokes and little snippets of tales that I've heard from my travels, though I doubt that he cares that much anyway. That sinking feeling grew deeper and deeper though. Somehow, I can't distract myself from the inevitability about to happen.

It's pretty funny actually, now that I realized it. Gabe is my friend. This whole entire time, I thought that I was the lonely one, but when I met him, I realized that it wasn't me who was more lonely, it was him. Because in a room filled with people, he was still alone and isolated while I, who is really alone, doesn't have to watch others do what I can't. Yup, self-centered little old me because I'm the not-so-alone girl. Unlike him, I always wanted a friend, while he was the one who needed one the most.

Chapter 7: The Day His World Flooded with Tears

Reaching home with a grin on my face was something unusual, I have to admit. But something more unusual is coming home with Mom crying. Mom almost never cries. She's the strongest person that I know. I could count the times she cried with my fingers. First, when Dad

left, second, when Mrs. Johnson collapsed, and third, when I had an extremely high fever that just won't go down.

"What's wrong?" I asked her, putting the grades behind my back to surprise her later.

"Gabe, sit down." I did as I was told.

"Mom, what's the matter?"

"You know that I love you right?"

"Of course I know, why are you saying this now?"

"I love you very much, sweetie," she whispered into my hair as she hugged me.

"Mom, what's wrong?"

"I-I just found out that I'm s-sick. V-Very sick," she stuttered out as more tears spilled over us. Before I knew it, tears also spilt from my own eyes. Eventually, I couldn't even tell the difference from whose tears were falling. I didn't care either way though.

"Can you be cured?"

"No." That word was like a punch to the gut.

"How long?"

"Not long enough."

That night, I slept next to Mom. I didn't visit Bessie. I didn't show my grades. I didn't do my homework. There was nothing productive that I did. Instead, I played Uno with Mom. Helped her cook dinner. Played video games. As well as play charades. Another thing that I did was cry. I cried. Cried. Cried. Cried. The tears didn't stop flowing that whole night. Since Mom stopped crying after she told me, I cried for her. Then, I cried for myself for the rest of the night.

I moved in to the Johnsons household after my Mom's sickness got so bad, she had to stay at the hospital. I barely talked to Bessie anymore and at school, I didn't even bother listening to Eddie's stupid stutter anymore. I hate it here. Mom was the nicest mom in the world, what did she ever do to deserve this?

"Are you okay there, Gabe?" Bessie said beyond the door.

"Yeah, I am!"

Coming in my room, Bessie looked at me carefully. She looked around the room, which I know was neat, and then at me, who I knew looked like a mess. Opening her mouth, she had the most normal conversation I could ever have, "How are you doing?"

"Fine."

"Was school fun today?"

"You were there, you would know."

"We had a nice weather today, didn't we?"

"I guess so."

"Do you have friends in school?"

"No. Of course I don't, you know that."

"Well, you should."

She sat next to me at the bed hugged my shoulders, like she did when was reading over them to look at my book. That was something that never changed even after Mom got sick. Which was nice. It was steady. It grounded me somewhat. This time, I hugged her back.

I miss my mom. I miss my mom. I miss my mom. Thoughts filled my head and I was unable to sort through them. I didn't want to. I didn't cry as I held her, yet at the same time I felt like I did. I just let my emotions flow and somehow, I felt a bit better.

"Bessie, thanks for being the best friend any person can ever ask for," I said suddenly when she was about to stand up, "you're like a sister to me. Someone who gave me comfort even with my horrible personality. You stayed close to me even after I insulted you. For all of that, thank you," I cried out, tears pouring from my eyes with a different reason than Mom.

Something inside me told me that Bessie isn't going to be here forever, that her time here is almost over, and she is going to be moving on soon. Even though she looked confused, I know that from the look n her eyes, she is somewhat aware that she will be leaving soon. Holding my left hand, she said, "I have a feeling that I've met you somewhere before when I first saw you."

"Really?"

"Yeah, I only talked to him once in my life, but he told me something that changed my life forever."

"He warned me, Gabe. About saying goodbyes, how I need to be careful, and do what I can when I have the chance," she gave a brief pause and continued, "You did something he would have done, I think. I didn't know him very well though, I never got the chance."

"From what you've described, you did something like that too," I said, "When you met me, you could've just ignored me, but you didn't, you wanted to be my friend even after all those cruel words that I said to you. You just grabbed on, like an annoying leech."

The surprised look in her eyes didn't surprise me much, but the glow did. *Time's up. She really is leaving now.* I gave her a smile, that at least, calmed her down a bit. She was panicking. To reassure her, I said, "Hey Bessie, see you later!"

As if she recognized those words for the very first time, she seemed shocked to hear them. With a deep breath and a bright smile, she replied, "Yeah! Let's meet up some time again later, okay?"

And with a flash she was gone. Leaving me alone in my room. It's different somehow. Even though I'm alone, I don't feel quite as lonely as I used to. Looking up at the cloudy sky, I noticed the sun peaking out. Walking into the living room, I'm ready to face my fears. Because, definitely, I will see her again and when that happens, I will bring her the joy that she brought me.

5 Years Later

Walking out of school, I noticed a weird little girl with a blue ribbon in her head sitting at the curb of the side walk. She seemed lonely and out of place in her dirty pastel dress and fairy backpack. Looking around, I saw nobody paying mind to the child. I walked up to her. Holding a hand out toward the girl to help her up, I said, "What are you doing here all alone?"

"I'm waiting for a friend!" she piped out excitedly, grabbing my hand to stand up.

"I don't your friend is in the school anymore, it's really late out already."

"I know!"

"Want my help to look for your friend? I know most of the people around this area, it's not safe for a little girl to go all alone this late, you know."

Puffing her cheeks the little girl said, "I'm not little! I'm four years old now!"

A sense of familiarity hit me, "Really now, it's fine if your little. Do you still want my help though?"

"Nope! I don't need your help anymore!" she sang out as she skipped next to me.

"Why is that?"

"Because I already found my friend," she replied oddly sober. Grabbing my hand as she pulled me along, she whispered, "Nice to meet you again, Gabe."

"Nice to meet you too," I replied. That, it was.