

Here She Lies

by Luka Jamieson

I'm running away. Away from this place. Away from these people. Away from this life. I don't know why. I just am.

I wake up to the sound of my alarm clock. Dad has just gotten home from his nightshift at the hospital, and mom has already left for work. It's like this every morning. As I cross the hall to the bathroom, I notice that there is a fresh layer of snow on the ground.

I get dressed. Warm pants with tights underneath. T-shirt. Sweat shirt. Two pairs of socks. Another sweater. I pack windpants into my backpack.

Downstairs, I grab an apple and begin munching. I take a seat at one of the island stools. Mom and dad won't notice I'm gone until tomorrow, but I have to call the school.

I toss my apple core into the garbage and pick up the phone. Each button I press initiates the same dull tone.

Ring. I hold the phone to my ear, waiting to hear Mrs. Caldwell's voice on the other end of the line.

Mrs. Caldwell is the school secretary. She has blond curls that bounce when she talks, reminding me of the spiral phone cord she is so often talking through. She wears glasses that are too big for her, so they are constantly sliding down the bridge of her nose.

She answers on the third ring.

"Gracewood Secondary School. How may I help you?"

"Hello. This is Rachel Thornton," I reply in my best "mother voice." "I'm calling to say that my daughter, Kym, will be absent for three days. A family member died in the States, and we are driving down today to help organize the funeral."

Mrs. Caldwell inhales sharply. "Oh, of course, Mrs. Thornton. I'm sorry for your loss. I'll mark that down," she says in her high-pitched voice.

"Thank you for understanding," I say, then hang up.

Too easy.

Time to leave.

I stand up, placing the phone in its charging dock, and walk over to the door. I don't know when I'll be back. I tie my shoes and shrug on my warm coat. I grab a toque and put it on. I stuff thin gloves into my backpack and grab my keychain. I open the door and step outside. The cool spring breeze nips my cheeks, and I lock the door behind me, heading down the front steps.

Activity on the street is as per usual except for a woman walking her golden retriever and a cyclist rounding the corner. Since I walk to school every morning, I know the schedules of people in our neighbourhood, such as the blue Toyota Corolla that pulls out of the driveway of number seven at 8:05 every day. I've never seen the dog-walker before, however, and I can tell that the cyclist was not expecting to ride his bike today because he is not wearing a helmet or any reflective gear. But it's probably nothing.

I turn onto Doncaster Avenue, but instead of going left like I do every morning, I go right. It's a cloudy day, and my hands are getting cold. I grab my gloves out of my backpack and slip them on. They're also cold. Great.

I walk past the park. The trees glimmer with snow, as if a fairy has come along and sprinkled crushed diamond powder onto their bare branches. The path that winds through the trees has no footprints on it yet. A grey squirrel runs along the branch of a big old maple. Everything around me is so still, so peaceful, but inside I feel rushed, unsatisfied.

Cars are whizzing past to my left. They are all going somewhere, and I have to go somewhere too. I don't know why. I can't remember why...

But I can feel it in the air I breathe. "Leave! Go! Run!" it whispers silently.

I turn onto another street, one with huge beautiful houses and expensive cars parked in circular driveways that must have cost a fortune to build. This is the "posh" neighbourhood. The sidewalk is new. The hedges are well-maintained. Each house is stately, yet has a personality of its own.

"Hurry, hurry!" the wind calls.

I can see Main Street from here, with its restaurants, shops and continual traffic. The bus station is just beyond that. I walk through an empty parking lot and down some steps. What happened to the houses? I'm confused.

The wind is screaming now, "HURRY! HURRY! GET AWAY!" I walk faster.

I'm at Main Street. I know I should cross at the lights, but they're too far away. I don't have enough time. I look left, then right, then start to cross.

Suddenly, someone screams, and my blood runs cold. A car is racing toward me. I can see the driver through the dirty windshield: a young man, maybe 20 years old. He is frantically trying to pull the emergency brake, but the car does not stop. I can see the terror on his face.

Cold metal hits my body.

And then nothing.

I awake with a start. My alarm clock is beeping. My body is covered in sweat and I am breathing heavily. I realize that it was just a nightmare, just a bad dream.

I slam my hand down on top of the clock and get up to start my day. As I cross the hall to the bathroom, I notice that the snow has melted outside.

It's finally spring.