


Sample Version - First 5 Chapters

## Prologue



I cannot make you believe the story I am about to tell you is true. However, I can tell you there are many things in the world that are beyond your comprehension and if you choose to open up your mind, you will see the possibilities.

For years, people have given you hints. They have shared their secrets but you have not noticed. They have tried to make you think and to make you question. However, you have not noticed. You go about your life, grabbing your smart phones, talking on your computers, surfing the Internet. You integrate yourself into technology, allowing it to absorb your life like minute microbes inserting themselves into your soul.

So now, the time has come in which I must share this story. It is my story to tell, and it is one that must be shared. You must understand and you must question. The very things you think are real might not be.

Do not ask where I got this story. Understand it was recorded. We have recorded every statement, every nuance, every spoken word, and every thought so we may share this story and make you understand. What I give you is a story about two souls who share the same secrets and must find the answers. This is their story.

- The Caretaker

## Chapter 1

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The sky had been threatening rain all morning when the woman set out for the memorial service. She had planned this for weeks, wanting just the right moment for her to say goodbye. She knew that death was imminent. It always was when they were born. Most lived to be about 15 or 16 but some were lucky and even lasted into their twenties. Her daughter, however, only lived to be eight years old. No one had expected such a sudden death but when the woman had gone in to wake her up, she found not her lovely daughter sleeping crosswise in her bed with the covers wrapped loosely around her body, but a cold, child lying peacefully on her back. Her arms had fallen to her side, a position in which she often began her night. The covers had barely moved, an indication that she had been dead for most of the night.

The woman sat on the edge of the bed and stared at the long red hair that lay tussled on the pillow. A single tear dropped out of the corner of the woman's eye. No matter how much mental preparation she had done, it didn't make this moment any easier. The pain was still there.

They had wanted to take her away when she was born. They had warned her of all the problems she might have such as mental disability, bi-polar disorder, and schizophrenia. They also mentioned the physical disabilities she might have. "She may never walk or talk, they explained. This might be all she is capable of doing," they warned. Yet, she persisted that she wanted to keep her daughter with her, no matter what and that she knew all of the risks. Still, they fought the woman and even went as far as threatening her. However, in the end, especially given who she was, she won, and her daughter was able to stay home.

In the end, her daughter had beaten almost all odds. She was a healthy little girl. There were no physical or mental disabilities. In fact, she was a very bright girl who appeared normal in almost all aspects, that is, until her cells began to deteriorate.

It began as an inability to heal promptly. A simple cut that would take most children only a week to heal, took months. This is when they knew that she in fact, did carry the disease, and the end was imminent.

The mother carefully stroked her child's hair. Quietly walking into the room, her husband stood behind her. "Is she gone?" he asked, already knowing the answer.

"Yes," she replied. "They will want to do an autopsy," she said without emotion.

"Are you alright?" he asked as he sat down next to her and put his hand on her shoulder.

The woman stood and went into the hallway. "We knew the risks." She said as she continued into the kitchen and picked up the phone. "I'll call the hospital."

Her husband walked up and took the phone out of her hands. He turned his wife towards her and stared into her eyes. He could see the pain, hidden deep behind their green color. "It's okay to cry. You don't have to be strong now." He meant it with sincerity, and as he spoke tears began to form in his own eyes.

His wife put her hand on his shoulder and spoke with as much compassion as she could muster. "We knew the risks, and we knew what should have been done. This is something that we can never repeat. We are not young you know, and while I appreciate your support, I have already cried enough tears. We will call the hospital and then move on with our own lives."

Anger filled every pore into her husband's body. "How can you be so cold? Your daughter just died, and you are acting like this is business."

"It's all business," she yelled. "It has been business all along, and we got careless. You know this should have never happened, and now we are paying the consequences!"

"So that's it? We just call the hospital and move on like nothing happened?" he yelled right back.

"What else am I supposed to do? Mourn for days? Cry and act like a complete depressed mess? I have seen enough death in my life. I knew this day would come, and now there is nothing more for me to do." With those words, she picked up the phone and began to call the hospital.

"No, I don't expect you to be a complete mess, but I do expect you to show some emotion," he yelled as he marched out of the room. He had rarely seen this side of his wife. It was a dark side, one that was cold, almost robotic, and he didn't like it.

Quietly leaving the room, he returned to his daughter's bedroom, sat down on her bed and began to cry. He cried for his daughter, the beautiful girl who only lived eight years. He cried for his wife, the woman who had seen so much death in her life but had never experienced this before. He cried for the other children, the ones that weren't ever supposed to be born, but were and received the same horrible fate. However, most of all he cried for himself, for the

*loss of his daughter and the loss of his life as he knew it.*

*As the men came and took away his child, he followed them out to the hearse. One last time, before they placed the tiny body into the car, he carefully lifted the sheet and gave a final kiss to his daughter. He knew he would never again have the opportunity to be a father. Never again will he be able to hold an infant in his arms or play with his child. His heart ached for the loss and for the loss to come.*

*"I want a memorial," he said as he walked past his wife and into the house after the car pulled away. She wouldn't fight him on this one thing. He deserved this. He was going to have a proper goodbye for his daughter, no matter what his wife wanted.*

*His wife followed him into the house and poured herself a glass of water. "I do too," she replied. "And I know exactly what I want to do."*

*A single raindrop fell as she held the urn in her hands. The minister handed her a black umbrella and other followed suit, shielding each attendee from the skies. The service was beautiful, as many had mentioned. Her best friend's mother sang a song from her favorite movie, *The Little Mermaid*, and her father had read her favorite book, *The Paperbag Princess* by Robert Munsch. When the service was over and it was time to scatter her ashes into the sea, the skies opened up allowing the sun to just peak through the clouds. The woman smiled as she saw a stream of light leading a way into heaven.*

*After the memorial reception had ended, and after the last guest had left, the woman sat on the sofa. She picked up her drink and took a sip. The liquor was hard and it burned as it slid down her throat numbing both her lips and her pain. Her husband sat down next to her and stared off in space, clanking his ice against his glass. "I want to go back," she said without ever making eye contact. "It is the only way that I can heal. It is the only way that I can go on living."*

*Her husband did not move. He already knew this was coming. He continued to stare straight ahead, not knowing what will lie ahead for either of them. "Then I will go too," he responded.*

## Chapter 2



It was this strange dream that Lynn believed was the first thread of the unraveling of the carefully crafted life that she had woven for herself. She had awoken from that dream with a shock, the kind that tingles down your body and freezes your spine. She looked over at her clock radio, which read 2:00 a.m. She lay in bed for some time, trying to figure out what she just dreamt. As she had done for years, she began writing down this dream in her journal. The journal was something her mother had given her with strict instructions that she not share it with anyone. "These are your private thoughts, your private world," her mother instructed.

Therefore, as Lynn wrote down this latest dream, she realized how frightening it was for her to dream of death. What might it mean? Was it from something she saw? She thought about her day before, what she saw, what she read, searching for some fragment that might have wiggled its way into her subconscious, engaging it to create a dream about a dead girl.

Walking into the bathroom, she looked at herself in the mirror. She never saw the beauty that others said she had. Her hair was soft red, not the kind that looks like you dyed it, but the kind that is natural, from her Irish blood. She liked her hair, but not in the night. The sleep made the curls clump and stick up. To her, she looked more like a poodle. Quickly, she tied up her hair, pulling it away from her face and exposing her freckles that fell across her nose. Her face was not covered with them, but they were only dropped across her nose, as if someone had splattered light brown paint. Some friends had said it looked cute, but she thought it looked more like dirt. Besides, she didn't want to look cute, she wanted to look beautiful. Unfortunately, cute was probably the only adjective allowed to describe her.

The water she splashed on her face relieved a little bit of the cringing feeling that wrapped Lynn's body. She headed for the kitchen, creeping down the stairs, as if not to wake anyone. She decided a glass of milk and perhaps a snack of her mother's famous chocolate chip brownies might be just the thing to make her feel better. They always did.

She hadn't expected anyone to be awake, so she was startled to hear her father's voice coming from his office. He was quite agitated, almost yelling into the phone. "No," he hollered. "I'm not doing that."

Lynn approached her father's door and peaked in, smiling as if that could relieve his frustration. Quickly, her father hung up the phone, without ever saying goodbye. "Lynn, why are you up?" he asked in his usual soothing fatherly voice.

"I had another dream," she responded.

"How about some hot cocoa then?" Her father asked as he headed into the kitchen. She always liked her father's hot cocoa. It soothed her and did seem to help. Her dad had always made a special formula that, whenever she drank it, she was relaxed enough that she would fall asleep, usually having a dreamless night.

The next morning, Lynn awoke fresh and relaxed. The cocoa had worked its wonders and kept her from remembering any of her dreams, which was a good thing since she was about to start the first day

at her new school.

The halls were crowded but she was able to find her science class. The black lab tables were lined up in the traditional rows facing forward. Stools sat, two by two, behind each table, waiting for the students to file in and fill them. On one side of the room stood a locked, glass cabinet holding various containers of chemicals. The shelves were disorderly, and many looked like the chemicals had spilled onto the glass shelves. Some containers were covered in dust, most likely with expiration dates long past. The bottles were crammed into their positions, like people waiting to tell their stories. They were motionless people, gazing through the glass, each wishing, and hoping that someday they could be part of the world beyond. That was when another thought flooded her mind.

*She remembered the smell of the dank rag as it covered her mouth and nose. She held her breath trying to see her assailants. The acrid fumes from the rag burned her eyes, and she closed them. She couldn't hold her breath anymore and tried furiously to get away. She pushed, shoved, and then took a breath.*

*The girl woke in her bedroom. Her pink curtains were closed tightly across the windows, refusing to let the sun in. She snuggled under her soft bedspread and hugged her black teddy bear. He was a gift from her grandmother given on the day she was born. The bear was as real to her as the Velveteen Rabbit. Its fur had been loved off and, although she was fifteen years old, the bear was still a comfort to her.*

*Her room was eclectic. She was a teenager, but still had fragments of her childhood. Her Barbie dolls had been long gone, given away to the neighborhood children. However, along with her Teddy Bear, she had her American Girl doll. She had coveted the American Girl Felicity for years and still would occasionally brush her hair and change her clothes. She was always particular about making sure that she was true to her period. She never let her wear modern clothes. She was a doll from the Revolution, and she insisted she be dressed appropriately.*

*She thought about her bedroom. The pink bedspread had an eyelet dust ruffle that coordinated with the purple sheets. She stared at the colors. Did she like pink and purple? She couldn't remember choosing these colors or even when her room was decorated in the motif.*

Lynn was jolted back from her memory by a student bumping into her. Staring at the cabinet, she shook her head, wondering why she would remember some bedroom. Most people forgot their dreams, the story of their deep subconscious. Dreams were only for the night, a private game the mind played on itself. They provided a small glimpse of memory in the early waking moments, only to be forgotten minutes later.

However, Lynn was different. She often remembered her dreams. She remembered them ever since that morning of her 15<sup>th</sup> birthday, when she awoke in the pink bedroom. On that morning, everything seemed so clear, that she had an answer for everything. The days were filled with intrigue and enjoyment, but the nights were filled with terror.

She shared her feelings with her mother, and she sought a doctor's advice but was told it was a hormonal thing, common in teens. He prescribed some sleeping pills. They worked and she was able to sleep, but the dreams continued. They were just buried deeper into her subconscious, resurrected by a simple present day clue like the bottles in the chemical cabinet.

Lynn continued to gaze around the room. Posters showing the scientific process, the chemistry

table, and why you should wear goggles (this one showed someone with their eyes popped out), decorated the walls. They were typical posters found in most high school science classrooms.

However, this room held something else. Mixed amongst these, were posters of 1980's bands. Some of the stars made it big such as George Michael, The Police, and Duran Duran. Mrs. Shock supposed she could take them down, but she still enjoyed them. To her, they represented a bygone era.

This was an era where all the band members looked alike. Each wore the same kind of running tights and mullet haircut, with short hair on the sides and long hair in the back. Their hair fell in front of their faces as they ran around the stage with their naked, hairy chests without a hint of muscles.

The girls wore their hair slicked back on the sides and part of it piled high on top. This was the era of big hair, the curlier and bigger, and the better. One hit wonders peppered the music scene and lyrics meant nothing. They were upbeat and danceable with songs such as "The Love Shack" and "Call Me."

It was all about excess and enjoying life. No one wanted for anything during the Reagan era. Computers were coming onto the scene with the onset of the APPLE IIE, people had exited out of the 70's recession, and everybody loved everybody. People had money to burn and the bands showed it.

Lynn stared at the posters. It's funny what people thought looked good at any given time. She wondered what future generations would laugh about in the way Lynn or her classmates were dressed. Better yet, what was the authentic look of today? She couldn't really answer that. While some wore skinny jeans and t-shirts, others wore baggy jeans and shirts. There really wasn't a look to put on the posters of today's generation. Maybe they would just show a big X followed by a question mark.

Her eyes followed to the corner of the classroom where a full size skeleton stood with his hands pointing in various directions. The skeleton wore a lab coat and a fedora. This was definitely an eclectic classroom and appeared as if it had stood still for the past 20 years. However, they are all wrong. The chemicals did find their way into the room, the posters still stood for the atmosphere of the room, and the skeleton smiled, as if he held secrets that he only shared with the teacher, Mrs. Shock.

Mrs. Shock realized it was time to get started as the students grabbed their seats. "Find your seat. Find your seat!" she instructed, ready to get her day underway.

She glanced at her students and began her lesson. "I'm Mrs. Shock," she said as she wrote her name on the board. She smiled as she thought of the millions of teachers that were doing the same action, introducing themselves and writing their names on the board.

Mrs. Shock loved being a teacher, but she knew that this wasn't the main reason she was there. Perhaps that is why she didn't look like most teachers. Some consider her short compared to the rest of the adults. Her hair was golden brown and short. Her many untamed curls were somewhat managed with a couple of barrettes.

She pushed up her small, square glasses that just barely covered her green eyes and stared out over the sea of students. She could feel her hoop earrings as they bounced off the side of her face. To some, she might look as if she had just stepped out of the 1980's, which would match the décor of her classroom. However, some say she looked rather hip for a woman in her 50's. She had been in this classroom since 1988, and she knew exactly what had happened and what was going to happen.

Mrs. Shock stood in front of the classroom and opened up a container of brown liquid. Holding a beaker in one hand, she began to pour the fluid into it. "This is my magical solution," she said as she

poured it. "And here," she continued as she opened another container, "is my other magical solution." All of a sudden, as the two mixtures met, a strange brown bubbly substance began to grow. It poured over the edge of cylinder and fell into the science tray below. She looked at her class with sheer delight and scanned each student's face. The students began to laugh and to talk amongst themselves. "This is chemistry!" she continued, "It's only one part of science, but, oh, the most fun, in my opinion! Now, if you take out your notebooks, I will give you the secrets to my magic potions and you, too, can amaze your families."

As quickly as they could, each student took out a spiral notebook and began writing notes as she lectured. In her discussion, she explained that an acid and base, when mixed together, could make an "explosion." She discussed the age-old science experiment of mixing together vinegar and baking soda. "This is the same experiment, but uses a different acid and a different base." In my experiment, I used a potassium iodide, with a little dish soap as the base and hydrogen peroxide as the acid. "The more pure the hydrogen peroxide, the better," she explained. As students wrote down her experiment, they began to talk quietly about the fun they could have creating volcanoes of brown ooze.

After note taking, she gave each table a tray of their own chemicals and allowed each group to create their own brown eruption. She watched as Lynn looked at the pretty girl sitting next to her. "Hi, I'm Lynn," she said with a smile.

"I'm Ann," the girl said as she smiled back. Ann was about the same height as Lynn but had short brown hair compared to Lynn's long red hair. Ann wore glasses, which looked like the end of coke bottles. Fortunately, the most striking thing about Ann was her smile. When she smiled, she seemed genuinely happy, and her happiness was contagious.

The ooze crept over the edge of the beaker and fell on the floor. The girls began to laugh as Lynn knelt down to wipe up the mess. Ann rubbed her cheek and look around to see two girls nearby laughing. "Sorry," one girl said. "I didn't realize how far it would fly," she said with a smile.

"That's okay" Ann replied. Lynn stood up and carefully looked at the girl who had apologized. Jennifer, the culprit, wore a tight t-shirt and short shorts. Her blond hair fell softly next to her face as she brushed it back. Watching this girl, Mrs. Shock walked over to the group. She couldn't help but to shake her head, knowing only too well this type of girl.

"Is there a problem girls?" Mrs. Shock asked Jennifer, the main culprit.

"No, Mrs. Shock. I was just trying to get some of the liquid off of my finger, and I guess I flicked it a little."

"I see," she said as she gave her a warning look. "I am certain that this kind of thing won't happen again. After all, I need to make sure that my students can handle chemicals. Can you handle them Jennifer?" she scolded.

"Of course, Mrs. Shock," Jennifer smiled. As she smiled, her brown eyes were cold, hard, and piercing. This was the kind of look only the fake girls could master, the ones that showed a false sense of sincerity. It came from the ones who knew just what they were doing and then showed their smirk, pretending it was an accident, all the while gleefully antagonizing their opponents.

Mrs. Shock turned around and moved to the front of the classroom. Lynn imagined herself "accidentally" tossing the entire container of liquid on top of the girl's head. The mean girl would get her just due, crying as the ooze dripped down her silky blond hair, staining it, and maybe causing it to frizz.



Lynn turned to her new friend and smiled. "She's really something, isn't she?" she said.

"It's okay," Ann replied. Lynn looked into Ann's eyes. Lynn could see that it was not okay. She appeared as if she were going to cry. Lynn's heart ached, and she knew that Jennifer was going to be a problem. She turned and looked at the girl who looked back and then quickly turned toward her friends, trying not to show she felt Lynn's ice-cold stare stabbing her in the back.

Lynn had a temper, and she usually held it in check along with her fantasies of getting even. Like many teens, she pouted and argued with her parents but she never would do anything violent. As much as she wanted to throw Jennifer against her locker, she would never do it.

Lynn turned towards Ann and smiled. She could tell she liked this girl and didn't want anyone hurting her.

When the bell rang, Lynn asked Ann what class they had next. "Math," Ann replied. Lynn looked at her schedule and saw she had music.

"Want to have lunch?" Lynn asked her.

Ann looked delighted and responded "Sure!" They agreed to meet after their next class and sit together. The bell was about to ring, which made Lynn hurry to her next class. Call it fate, but she walked around the corner and ran right into a tall, blonde haired boy.

Lynn's books flew all over the hall. The boy knelt down to help Lynn pick up her books. He was a tall boy, with strong facial features and a small dimple on his chin. His arms were strong and muscular. They weren't over built like some guys as he had just the right amount of muscles, lean and thick at the same time.

The girl from the science class, who had splattered Ann's face, began to laugh with her friends. The boy looked at the girl and said with defiance, "Jennifer, I wish you would just grow up." Lynn looked up at Jennifer, her eyes squinting with revenge. Jennifer tried to squint back, showing her own power, but she failed. Instead, the underlying discomfort of not knowing whom she was dealing with came through.

Jennifer huffed and proceeded to walk to her next class. "Come on Teresa and Erin," she blurted as she rushed past Lynn and the boy.

Lynn turned. "Thanks," she said. "It really wasn't necessary to stick up for me. I'm used to childish, girl behavior." Lynn stuck out her hand. "I'm Lynn West," she said.

The boy looked at her hand and chuckled. "Hi, I'm Rick Wilson," he said as he grasped her hand. "Don't I know you?" he asked.

Lynn looked into Rick's eyes. "No, I don't think so," she replied. "I'm new here. I've just transferred from St. Josephs.

"You just look so familiar," Rick replied.

"I'm sorry, but I don't know you."

St. Josephs was a college preparatory high school and Lynn hated it. She hated the pretentiousness of being in a private school and yearned for wanting a normal life. Her parents wanted her at the private school to keep her safe, they said. In fact, her parents talked a lot about keeping her safe and St. Josephs was an excellent school to do just that. The school was small and her every move was controlled by some larger authority. The building itself was a virtual prison with a tall locked fence, cameras and security guards. Apparently, wealthy people needed more security.

For Lynn, it was misery and after months of her refusing to talk to her parents, moping in her bedroom and not doing her school work, that her parents relented and moved her to Carson High School, the local high school that was closest to Lynn's house. Lynn was thrilled.

She had no friends from the private academy and knew no one from her neighborhood. At St. Joseph's, Lynn was picked up and dropped off at the front door.

It wasn't always like that. Prior to middle school, Lynn remembered going to a regular elementary school. She even walked to the school. She loved her 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, Mr. Crago. He was a wonderful teacher who loved science. Mr. Crago's class built rockets, created a model of a city and read books that were interesting and motivating. She loved Mr. Crago and knew after that year she wanted to be a schoolteacher as well.

There wasn't any reason given as to why Lynn attended a great elementary school and then ended up at the private school. She was just told there was no other choice and Lynn knew better than to argue.

"Well, thanks," Lynn sputtered as she stared at the boy in the hallway. She felt a blush come to her cheeks.

"Yea, I'll see you around," Rick responded as he handed her the last book. The conversation was awkward but not in the girl first meets boy way. It was awkward because there was such a connection there. It was a funny feeling and neither person was sure how to handle it. It was this feeling that brought such a strange moment to them. Finally, Lynn spun around, sighed, and smiled.

As Rick walked down the hall in front of Lynn, she stopped at the drinking fountain in hopes that it would appear that she wasn't following him. Looking up from the fountain, she noticed he was gone and with a sigh, headed off to her class. She was going to like Carson High School, especially with Rick Wilson attending.

### Chapter 3



“Hurry up. Hurry Up!” cried Mrs. Kensington, the strings teacher. “You’ve got to see this.” The room was dark except for the projector, which showed a violin. Lynn looked around the room, waiting for her eyes to adjust. Folding chairs were lined up in a semicircle facing a platform that was obviously for the director. There were a few seats in the middle of the sections but Lynn decided to slip in a seat on the end. She looked up at the screen and saw the scroll of the violin. Instantly, Lynn knew it. “It’s a Petrus Antonius a Costa fecit Tarvisio, Anno from 1750,” the teacher continued. “It was recently purchased by an anonymous buyer but they say lives near here. This violin, this beautiful violin, this magnificent specimen of both music and art, was purchased for \$43,750.” Lynn gulped and wouldn’t dare correct the teacher in front of her. She knew the violin was actually from 1740, not 1750. Mrs. Kensington touched the screen as if stroking the violin and sighed. She was tall and had long, dark brown hair, coiled into a bun. She wore, at least 4 inch heels, which explained her tall height. “The maker, Petrus Antonio dalla Costa, most likely modeled his violins on another famous maker, Brothers Amati,” Mrs. Kensington continued. “The scroll is a weak imitation, but it does have originality.” Lynn had heard this speech before. She knew, all too well about this particular violin. “Its back is constructed of two pieces of maple, and its top is two pieces of pinewood with irregular pores.” Lynn continued the speech in her mind in unison with Mrs. Kensington. “The ribs and head are made of Maple. But what makes this violin so special is that it most possibly was played by the great Mozart himself.” Yes, Lynn had heard this speech before. This was the standard speech for collectors describing this violin. Mrs. Kensington had seen it in a catalogue.

Mrs. Kensington looked out at the class and sighed again. Slowly, she eyed each silhouette, as she sat down in front of the screen. The projector light was on and the room still dark. The picture of the Della Costa projected off her body as she picked up her violin and forlornly, began to play. Lynn listened to the most beautiful music she had heard, despite the low cost violin. Mrs. Kensington truly had a gift for the strings.

Listening to the music, Lynn’s mind began to wonder.

*It was the time of the revolution, and the auditorium was filling. Men were dressed in white stockings, breeches and ruffled jackets. Their heads were covered with white wigs, which held curls just above each ear.*

*Women wore gowns with such large skirts and undergarments that they flowed over the edges of their seat. The hair of their wigs was piled so high those behind them struggled to see the stage. Suddenly the lights dimmed, and the crowd applauded.*

*Excitement caused Lynn’s stomach to flutter as the great performer took center stage. He took a moment and stared out at the audience. Lynn could have sworn he looked directly at her.*

*“I can’t believe we are seeing the great Mozart himself,” the woman next to her said.*

*Lynn looked down at her dress. It was a simple dress with small floral designs, but the latest in fashion. The bodice was pulled tightly, and the sleeves fell open, with a cutaway. The dress was padded at the hips, as was the fashion of the era.*

Lynn remembered her parents watching a PBS shows on television, and this memory must have been from that. Her dreams usually held snippets of activities and memories from throughout the day. Often she woke up from having a dream about the civil war after discussing it in class. Nevertheless, her dreams were vivid. She was a nurse, on the battlefield, sawing off arms of wounded soldiers, always sticking a bullet between their teeth to help them handle the pain.

Other times, she just comforted them until they gave their last breath. Usually, Lynn woke up from her dreams, sitting up in her bed and sweating. Lynn began to write in her journal as she had every day for the past two years. It usually relaxed her, sometimes enough to fall back asleep. However, for Lynn to sleep the whole night, even with the sleep medicine was a rarity.

The class sat motionless, listening to Mrs. Kensington play softly, then with fierceness, as her hands brushed the bow across the strings. Finally, she finished her mini concert playing Mozart's A Major K 219. Lynn felt tears streaming down her face and quickly wiped them away before anyone noticed. She felt as if she had heard this piece played by the great Mozart, and Mrs. Kensington had done it just as much justice.

Wiping the tears from her eyes, she glanced around the room and noticed the boy sitting behind her. It was Rick. He had been staring at Lynn and saw her tears, as he held out a tissue.

"I won't tell a soul," he said with a smile. Lynn was intrigued. There was something so peculiar about this boy, a chemistry, but also the sense she knew him, and she trusted him.

Mrs. Kensington set down her violin and turned on the lights. "Who would like to play like that?" she asked.

She asked each student if they had a violin or if they could rent one. Rick told Mrs. Kensington he had his own violin that had belonged to his grandfather. He couldn't remember the name, but he said it was still in good condition. When Mrs. Kensington got to Lynn, she looked at her long red hair.

"You remind me of a five year old I once saw playing a Beethoven Violin Concerto. She had red hair just like yours."

Lynn looked into Mrs. Kensington's eyes. "I've never played the violin before," she replied. Mrs. Kensington gave her the order form for renting a violin and then continued with the class.

"I can help you to catch up with the rest of the class," Rick said to Lynn. "I've been playing since I was 6."

"Thanks," Lynn replied. Her palms felt sweaty as she looked into Rick's eyes and smiled. *What am I doing?* Lynn thought. *Why not just tell everyone the truth? But, what was the truth?* Lynn's dreams combined with her reality so often that she wasn't sure what was real or not. It was better to just play dumb and wait until she knew for sure if she could play or not.

She knew that were she to tell what was going on in her mind, everyone would treat her differently. She had to keep moving forward as if nothing were wrong. She learned from her mistakes, and knew she had to keep her dreams to herself. A few months ago, she mentioned to her father that she was having weird dreams. His concern was profound, and he immediately sent her to a hospital where Lynn underwent tests. She was hooked to several instruments and her dreams were monitored.

She was then taken into a room where the doctors said they could perform a simple medical procedure. Lynn really didn't think it was a big deal and didn't warrant some strange medical procedure,

but her father insisted.

What appeared to be his overreaction, seemed strange. The dreams subsided for a while but then gradually came back in full force. Her father still asked her if she is having strange dreams and Lynn, not wanting to go through the turmoil of the hospital replied no. However, they were back and with a vengeance. She heard about schizophrenia and the idea that she might have it, was very frightening.

Therefore, it was only for the best that Lynn remained silent. Knowing this, she picked up the borrowed violin and began to play, screeching through the first set of music.

## Chapter 4



The halls were filled with what appeared to be chaos but was actually the normal noise of 1000 students passing between classes. Students were trained to walk on the right side of the hallway, but many just walked in mass groups, forcing the crowds to part because of the sheer volume of students. A few teachers were standing in their classroom doorways shouting orders to students. "Spit out the gum." "Walk please." "Keep your hands to yourself." How often have students heard those orders during their years of school? How many times a day do teachers give the same orders? It would be easier if there were an intercom tape that played the same commands repeatedly. It would save teachers' voices.

Lynn imagined students on moving walkways. The tape could play the same cautions and then some. "Please stay on the right. No gum chewing. Please walk only on the left. Please blah blah blah." Suddenly Lynn stopped. A feeling of déjà vu washed over her.

*Dressed in a gray hospital gown, the group moved slowly on the moving sidewalks, never speaking a word, everyone looking forward. The sidewalk ended and the patients stepped off their path and moved to their beds as if they were automatons unaware of their surroundings.*

Lynn shook her head. It must have been some science fiction movie she saw. What was the name of that? Lynn liked science fiction movies and with her memory issues, she could never quite remember which one was which. "I suppose," she surmised, "that after a while, they all get combined into a mass of strange fiction."

She looked around the hallways. She liked this place. It was full of bustling energy, not like her last school. At St. Joseph's, students wore uniforms and walked silently on the right side of the hallway. Teachers were rarely seen and if they were around, they completely ignored the students. There was no need to redirect students who were so fearful about the potential for expulsion that they wouldn't dare break the slightest rule.

Carson High School was much more lax in its dress code and its rules. The school was so large that only a third of the students could go to lunch at a one time. Fortunately, for Lynn, she and Ann had the same lunchtime.

As planned, Lynn met Ann in the lunch line. School lunch at Lynn's old school was more like mush than a real meal, but at this school, it seemed like the lunch was actually edible. *At least it smelled good*, thought Lynn.

"What's your favorite?" Ann asked while they were grabbing their lunch trays.

"I don't know as I usually don't get hot lunch, but today I didn't have time to make mine," Lynn said.

The girls headed inside. The lunch woman was a short round woman with a thick German accent.

"Velkem! Ve haf a lot uf goot food here, jah! Und vat would you like?"

Lynn selected the chicken salad and Ann grabbed the spaghetti. Each girl chose a fruit as her side and milk to drink. With their trays full, the girls set out for the first table with two empty seats.

The lunchroom was crowded with students sitting in their cliques. The cheerleaders all sat at one table near the athletes. They were dressed in their cheer tops, and jeans. Lynn studied them with wonderment. Six girls, dressed exactly alike, sat chatting and giggling. Their hair was pulled back into ponytails and their make-up was thickly applied. They looked more like Barbie dolls than real people. Lynn remembered her Barbie doll collection. She had at least eight different dolls and a huge 3-story house. She thought about the dolls sitting around a table in their Barbie kitchen. But, what were they doing? Lynn reached into the depths of her memory and remembered that she was making the girls cry. *Why?* Lynn thought. Then Lynn remembered. In the corner stood Ken, dressed in a doctor's scrubs. Lynn had Ken grab the first Barbie. Suddenly, the memory went blank. *Then what?* Lynn thought to herself. What happened? Why didn't this story continue?

One cheerleader stood and began shouting something to the athletes. They were too far for Lynn to hear but she was sure it was some silly comment judging by the reaction of the boys. The boys shouted something back and the jousting game continued with the two groups shouting back and forth to each other. Lynn thought it silly. Why don't they just get up and go over there?

She glanced around the room. At another table, Jennifer sat with her evil clones, Erin and Theresa. She noticed how these three girls looked alike as well with their tight Calvin Kline jeans, Prada shoes, highlighted long hair, and French manicured nails. Lynn rolled her eyes with disdain. "What was that for?" asked Ann. She had noticed Lynn's response and followed her gaze in the direction of the trio. "Oh, now I understand." With that, Ann rolled her eyes as well.

A group of boys joined them, who were, for a lack of better words, complete slobs. Lynn tried not to look snobbish and pulled her tray closer. One boy, whose shoulder length hair was greased back, wore a torn, black t-shirt with a picture of a skull on it. She could not see his shorts or his shoes, but pictured them as equally dingy. She watched as the boy ate his lunch. He lifted his fork of spaghetti to his mouth but only a small portion of the food actually made it to his mouth. The remainder of the spaghetti just hung below his lip, until he slurped it into his mouth. As he chewed, his jaws were wide open, showing the food being crushed by his teeth.

"You like seafood?" the boy asked Lynn.

"Yes, I do." She curiously replied.

The boy then opened his mouth wide and showed his crushed up lunch to Lynn. "See? Food!" he snorted, pointing to his mouth. Laughing at his joke, bits of food spewed out of his mouth and some of it landed in Lynn's salad. Disgusted, the girls disposed of their lunch and went outside.

"Why are boys so disgusting?" asked Lynn.

"Who knows? I had a little brother and he was always listening to my phone calls or getting into my things in my bedroom."

"You had a brother?"

"Yes, but he passed away," Ann responded.

Lynn could see the pain was still in Ann's eyes. "What happened?"

"It's a long story. He got sick." Ann sighed. "So, how about you? Any brothers?"

Lynn could tell that her friend didn't want to talk freely about what happened. "No. No brothers or sisters."

“Well, I guess that’s something else we have in common,” Ann said.

“Yes, I suppose we do,” Lynn replied as the two walked to the courtyard.



## Chapter 5



Lynn sat on her bed and thought about the day. It had been a month since she arrived at Carson High School. Carson High School was one of two schools located in the small town of Middleton, Indiana. The town boasted a population of 30,000 people, but Lynn thought that it had to be smaller than that. After the local furniture factory closed its doors, people had fled the town for the big city. It was strange that she would move into a town in which there were so few jobs. Her father explained that it didn't really matter where they lived since he telecommuted and traveled. Middleton offered cheap housing and a low cost of living. "Besides," he told Lynn, "the schools are the best in the state."

She thought about this best school since the beginning of the year. It was strange. Lynn could remember everything so clearly from the previous months, but things were so sketchy prior to that.

Lynn remembered being admitted to the hospital. When she woke, her mind was clear. She could remember things that happened years before, as if they had just occurred. Slowly, the memories began to fade, and Lynn was left with bits and sketches, memories that seemed so out of context. She was sure she was never in Paris but she had a memory of walking through the Louvre. After the first procedure, she was left with such a horrible, long lasting migraine that she didn't want to tell her parents about the memory issues again. The second procedure was sure to be worse. She just had to learn to live with her illness.

For the most part, Lynn had kept herself under the radar, and no one was suspicious about her. After all, why should they be? It's not that she was schizophrenic or anything. It's just that she had these strange memories and lapses of other memories. Lynn knew how to cope. When she didn't really know a part of her life, she just made it up. No one was the wiser. Rick Wilson was the exception. He became more suspicious of her and was constantly pointing out inconsistencies. Most recently during social studies class another one of these inconsistencies occurred.

Lynn found a seat in the back of the room. She decided this was the safest location, enabling her to blend into the class. Social studies was the easiest class in which to get lost, as their teacher never noticed any of the students in her room.

Mrs. Ice was a nice enough teacher and as long as the class was relatively quiet, she never raised her voice. She had a small build and couldn't weigh more than 110 pounds. Her black hair was cut into a shoulder length bob, and her tailored suits, with impeccably shined shoes, reeked of class. She looked more like a professional speaker than a teacher.

Mrs. Ice seemed to enjoy the sound of her own voice. She began her lessons as soon as the bell rang and didn't stop talking until the dismissal bell. She would shout her last statement as the class was walking out the door. PowerPoint presentations were her mode of operation, and it was evident that she used the same ones repeatedly from year to year. They were full of pictures taken years ago and contained the scripted words she read from each slide. She had been teaching American History for twenty years and used the same worksheets, tests, and presentations each year.

Many students spent this class time as a study hall, while others listened to their iPods, passed notes and some even fell asleep. Very few students, usually the ones who sat in the front row, actually

paid attention to her discourse. No one worried about needing to study for the tests because the answers could all be found online. Mrs. Ice didn't seem to mind, as she could show excellent test scores and in her mind, they were all learning something. Lynn easily melted into the background of the class.

That is, until Rick Wilson came and sat by her. Lynn noticed, from her side vision, Rick staring at her. She tried to pretend she was interested in the lecture about Monticello, but actually, she could probably tell the teacher more about the famous home of Thomas Jefferson than Mrs. Ice knew. Lynn remembered visiting the famous house. The slave quarters were set to the side of the back lawn, below the mound, out of sight of the big house. It's not that Mr. Jefferson was against slavery or for it. He just didn't want to be reminded of it. Each room in the quarters was made of plastered brick, painted white and a bare stone floor. Some rooms had fireplaces, while others did not. The slaves were never seen in the main house unless they were the special servants. When those select few entered, they did so through a tunnel into the basement. One special servant was the wine steward. It was his job to send up bottles of wine through the wine pulley to the dining room above. That way, the important guests never had to be bothered by the sight of any servants or unsightly people.

Lynn thought of the room where Mr. Jefferson slept. His bed was set in the middle of an enclave, open from both sides. On one side was his library, filled to the ceiling with shelves of books and the other his dressing room. It was a strange bedroom, not fancy at all, but probably appropriate for the bachelor that he was. Lynn remembered the small telescope in the corner. That's when the memory hit.

*"Put that down," Lynn heard the shout behind her. A fat, African American woman, dressed in a long skirt with a dirty apron tied around her waist and a turban on her head, grabbed her hand.*

*"Them is Mr. Jefferson's, and you shouldn't be in here child. Where you come from anyway?"*

*"I'm sorry miss," the girl replied. "My pappy is here visiting with Mr. Jefferson, and I got bored. Please don't tell. I was just so drawn to by the beauty of such a thing."*

*"Don't worry, miss," replied the voice in the back. The girl spun around and looked at the former President of the United States standing in the doorway. "That's a telescope," he said softly as he picked up the item off the shelf. "You can see the heavens through this." Mr. Thomas Jefferson spent the next few minutes sharing his knowledge of the stars with this young girl. Together they looked through books, explaining the constellations and the planets, peering through the telescope and answering all of her questions.*

Jostled out of her thoughts, a note landed in front of Lynn, who carefully unwrapped it. "Nice backpack. Where'd you get it, Wal-Mart?" Lynn just smiled and looked over at Jennifer. By now, she was used to Jennifer always trying to put her down.

"Why yes," she replied. "It's amazing, but there are items that look just like your Vera Bradley. It's as efficient and still holds all of my things. Imagine what good you could do by giving the money you needlessly spent on that backpack to those in need." Jennifer looked chagrined at Lynn and turned her head with a huff. Hearing the entire exchange, Rick smiled and glanced down.

After class, Lynn quickly ran out the door and tried to disappear into the crowded hallways. Seeing Lynn, Rick raced up the hall. "I just don't get you Lynn West," he said with a sigh. Lynn pretended she didn't hear him. Rick patted her on the arm. "Lynn?" he asked. "Are you in there?"

"Oh, hi!" she finally responded, trying to pretend she was just involved in her own thoughts. "I'm sorry, I was just thinking."

"You must have been thinking about something pretty important." Rick replied.

Lynn reached her locker and began turning the combination lock. Rick stood next to her, as if he was waiting for her to open her mind and pour out the contents. "You know," she continued very carefully. "Sometimes it's really difficult to find a way to be alone in such a crowded school." She had hoped that Rick might get the idea to leave her alone but he was still there. She continued to pretend to be busy with her locker. She thought if she took long enough, Rick might leave her alone. All Lynn wanted was for everyone to leave her alone so she could figure out what was going on inside her head. Things were so confusing and until she was certain, she didn't know who to trust, even this boy.

"I'm curious," Rick began cautiously. He knew that by asking this question, he was either going to upset Lynn or bring her closer. She seemed so distant, yet so close, as if he had known her before. He couldn't put his finger on it, but Lynn was definitely someone he'd like to get to know much better. "I'm curious, as to why you have a cheap backpack, but yet \$200.00 shoes?" Rick knew this as he spent a summer working in the women's shoe section at Nordstrom. It was not the best of jobs, but Rick needed the money for insurance.

"Maybe they are knock offs too." Lynn said with hostility. She dared Rick to go where he shouldn't. Shoes were something no boy should know anything about. No boy would dare say whether he knew the difference between a designer pair of shoes and a knock off.

"Knock off?" Rick replied. "I thought you couldn't use the same insignia as the designer on knock offs? But, what do I know about designer shoes? It's just that they look exactly like the ones I put on the shelf at Nordstrom's, where I worked in the shoe department last summer."

Lynn didn't have any other pairs of nice shoes. Her father had bought these shoes for her when she was discharged from the hospital. They had gone to the mall for lunch, and Lynn had admired them in the window. On a whim, and probably because he was feeling guilty, he bought the shoes for her. She was both astonished that he would do such a thing and excited at the same time. However, this boy intimidated her so much, she wasn't about to share such private details of her life. Lynn looked down at her shoes and realized that she couldn't say anything more than "I have to go." With that, she rushed down the hall, dropping a paper on the ground behind her.

Rick picked up the paper. The bell had rung, and he knew he was going to be tardy, unless he could get to his next class before the teacher finished writing on the board. Shoving the paper in his back pocket and racing into the classroom, Rick slipped into the closest chair he could find just before Mr. Smith turned around.

It wasn't until after school that Rick took the paper out of his back pocket to read it. It was a list of some sort.

1. *Colonial America*
2. *Land rushes*
3. *The Civil War*
4. *Woodstock?*
5. *Why?*

The list made no sense to Rick, but he was sure it was a key to who Lynn West was. Rick decided this was one mystery for which he would find the answer and his first stop would be his computer. After all, if you want to know something about someone, Google will give you the best answer.

As Rick rushed through the door of his house, he threw his backpack onto the sofa and ran up the stairs. "Do you have any homework?" his dad called up the stairs. "I'll do it later," he replied. He knew his father would be dissatisfied with that response, and he quickly shouted down the stairs.

"I have to do some research on the computer." He was hoping that would appease his father so he wouldn't nose around and look at what he was doing.

Rick shut his bedroom door, a sign that you should knock first before entering, and plopped down on his bed. It took forever to boot up his laptop. His curiosity about Lynn was annoying and exciting to him. Why was he so fixated on this girl he hardly knew? What was it about her that made him not able to stop thinking about her?

He stared ahead, thinking of this girl, as the famous Windows tune chimed from his computer. With a click, he brought up Internet Explorer and typed in the Google address.

Lynn West brought up thousands of web pages. He began perusing the titles. "The Colonial Era, The Civil War, the Tudor's..." There were other websites about a Lynn West, inventor, Lynn West, teacher, Lynn West, doctor, but there was nothing about a Lynn West, current high school student. *Most people have Facebook pages*, Rick thought to himself. "But, she has nothing." There's nothing about this Lynn West. Then something curious caught Rick's eye. He opened up the first webpage and began reading it.

It turned out to be an artist's website giving details about a Lynn West, an Early American Artist. He stared at the screen. A strange feeling came over him as he looked at the paintings from the website, feeling as if he had been at each of the places.

Continuing to read, he saw that most of Lynn West's paintings had been mysteriously destroyed and that only a few secretly remained. No one knows who owns the paintings that may exist today but if they are found, they should be turned over to the United States government.

Rick decided to bookmark this page. He wasn't sure why, but something was peculiar about it. Hearing his father call him to dinner, Rick closed his computer before his dad entered the room. "I'm on my way," he said with a smile, trying not to give any clue as to what he was doing.