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Tragic Short Stories

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Broken: A True Story

Chapter One: A New School

The smell of chicken farms filled the morning air as we stepped off the bus. I will never get used to this smell, I thought. I can't believe we had to move to this little hick town where everyone is related to each other in some way or another. My sister and I exchanged a look of disgust while my brother smiled like a retard. Moving from a big school to a school where everyone knows what toilet paper you used to wipe was not exactly what we had in mind. My little brother, on the other hand, thought it was great! As we walked toward the school, my sister and I sighed and then came to a halt at

the front of the junior high. This was my school. My school was connected to the high school, my sister's school was diagonally to the left of the high school, and my brother's school was directly behind the junior high. Talk about isolation. As we said our goodbyes, I turned and walked into what I thought was the end of the world.

I took a deep breath and closed my eyes as I opened the doors. The handle was cool and the door made a loud squeak as I pulled back. The smell of old moth balls and coffee rushed to greet me making me wrinkle my freckled nose. The school was extremely old, I knew that, but it didn't have to look old. I pushed my way through the crowd of kids standing right in front of the doors and continued to the bathroom. The doors of the bathroom stalls consisted of a slab of painted wood on door hinges. The ceiling had brown spots and the vent had mold coming through at the bottom. The toilets looked as if something mutated could grow and there was writing all over the walls. "Okay time to get out of here," I thought. The hallway wasn't any better. I was so crowded but not as crowded as my old school hallways. I looked down at my schedule, *reading*, it said. Oh fun. As I walked into the classroom, people's eyes were darted at me sending a chill down my spine. They were the same looks I got when I got on the bus this morning. I quickly found a seat next to this

dark headed girl and her eyes never left my face. I could tell I was turning red but I didn't want to acknowledge her at all. I didn't want to acknowledge anybody. Finally I looked over and she just smiled. I didn't want to be rude so I just smiled back. A few seconds later, she handed me a folded piece of paper. I opened it to read and was kind of freaked out....okay very freaked out. "You're cute." The note read. "Umm thanks?" I tossed the note back over to her. "Do you have a girlfriend?" Okay now this was too much! "I'm sorry but I'm a girl, I like guys." I felt totally humiliated as I tossed it once again back over to her. "Oh I thought you were a boy! I mean your hair makes you look like one." "Umm...so? It's for softball." My face was now clearly clouded with embarrassment and anger. "Oh sorry, my bad. You look like a boy!" "Okay I get it! Honestly I don't really care! I like it!" I crumbled the paper up until it was this hard tight wad of lines and threw it at her. She just gave me a smirk and opened the paper. I was completely embarrassed. What, did my boobs not give it away? I mean honestly! She threw the note back and I shot it in the trash can. What a terrific start to my seventh grade year.

The rest of the day wasn't as bad as my first class. I got used to the snide remarks of the students and their weird faces. I

was so relieved when I got on the bus and sat next to my little sister. It turns out her day was better than mine. The ride home was not fun at all. The older kids kept throwing things at me and my sister. I turned around and asked them to please stop, but they kept throwing things and calling us names. What was with these people? I just sank down in my seat, closed my eyes, and allowed my thoughts to consume my entire body until everything else was closed out. I kept thinking and wishing that things would go back to normal. But things weren't ever going to be normal again. I didn't have any friends here and I was completely uncomfortable. I guess that's how we all feel when we move to a new school. Somehow, though, this was worse. This was Hicktown, USA.

Chapter Two: Disliked

I could already tell from the first day of school that I wasn't very well liked. I just couldn't understand why though. I hadn't done anything to anyone to make them dislike me, but they did. I mainly just kept to myself most of the time and paid attention to every word the teacher said. I even wrote most of what they said down word for word. The whole week was like this. No one really talked to me at all. I was invisible; an

apparition in a ghost town. It wasn't all that bad I guess, but being invisible did hurt, especially when I saw everyone laughing and joking with all of their friends. Yep, being invisible definitely sucked. Finally, Friday came and I was so happy to be going home, hoping that over the weekend I would somehow gain popularity. Well I got my popularity, but not the kind I asked for.

As I stepped on the bus, I saw my sister sitting towards the back and immediately took the seat next to her. A blonde girl from the very back came and told my sister to move and she simply replied with no. So the blonde girl sat right on my sister's out stretched legs and her first instinct was to pull back. Almost immediately the blonde girl pushed my sister so hard into the side of the bus that it knocked the wind out of her. I got up and pulled the girl away and started wailing on her. Then out of nowhere, a junior girl from the back of the bus grabbed my arms and started digging her nails into my skin. This girl looked seriously like a man. I stomped on her foot to get her to withdraw her nails from my skin. It didn't stop there, it just got worse. After that, she pinned me down in a seat over top of two people and started pounding on me as hard as she could. She hit me so hard in the back of the head that my contact had fallen out. Finally, the bus driver came back on the bus and pulled her off of

me. After I was seated, I heard clapping from the rest of the high school kids. They were clapping for that junior girl! Clapping because she worked up the guts to beat up a seventh grader! Every feeling in the world ran through me all at once, all except for happiness. When I came through the door, my mom saw what had happened and then asked how it happened. I told her everything that happened and before I knew it, my mom was out the door, in her car, and following the bus until it came to its next stop. I didn't hear the exchange of words between my mom and the junior girl, all I heard was shouting. I wanted to go home and just stay there.

On Monday, of course everyone knew about what happened. Some people said that they were sorry for what happened. Others just pointed and laughed while chanting "Ha ha you got beat up!" I felt humiliated. At lunch, I ate in the bathroom by myself. I just wanted to get away from everything! I seriously wanted to just die already and get it over with. I would never point at anyone and laugh because they got beat up. I didn't understand why they didn't like me or what I did wrong. It didn't matter though. After all of this, the rest of the year was a blur. It all went by so fast and this was only what I could remember. One thing I always will remember is that during my seventh grade year, I was disliked.

Chapter Three: High School-9th grade year

My breath was study for the first part of the morning and I was more than excited. Hictown had some how grown on me. I did my hair and then put on my cheer uniform. Today was game day and I was feeling confident. Being a cheerleader meant being treated differently. This year was going to be the best year. "Therone, the bus will be here in ten minuets and I have to use the bathroom!" Mischo shouted through the bathroom door. She was always impatient when it came to the bathroom. As a matter of fact, she was impatient with everything. Mischo and Tak, my little brother, we just alike. "Alright hold on for a few seconds!" I shouted

back. I finished doing my hair and unlocked the door. "Happy?" I asked. Mishco just smiled and flicked her golden blonde hair over her tanned shoulder. Two minuets later, the bus was at our house honking. Tak dashed out the door like he was taking off for a hundred meter dash in track. Mishco darted her pants upward and ran out of the house still zipping up the zipper. I casually walked out with my cheer bag on one shoulder and my backpack on the other. What was the rush? As I stepped on the bus, all eyes were on me, but it wasn't the awkward hate stare, it was an "awe" stare. I took my seat next to my sister, the bus doors squeaked shut, and we drove off. I let out a sigh of relief as I realized that my first day of high school was going to be sweet!

I was so glad when we let the lower elementary kids off first. There was more room and less noise. The next stop was the junior high and high school. As Mishco and I stepped off the bus, that same musty chicken farm smell filled the air. I still had not gotten used to that smell. We walked the graveled distance to the stairs that lead to the back of the high school, passing some horses on the way. The gravel area where the buses let us off was the parking lot for the horses, just in case someone did ride their horse to school. Trust me there were plenty of them in the parking lot. The

rocks felt hot under my shoes and dust flew up everywhere due to the horses and bustling kids. A wave of nerves finally hit my stomach, making me want to puke. I took a deep breath inhaling that chicken farm air and some how managed to keep all the puke down. Through the cafeteria doors, I spotted the girls that I had made friends with over the summer. They were other cheerleaders of course because that was who I spent most of my entire summer with. I had lost a lot of weight over the summer, so I didn't feel awkward wearing the uniform. I could have done without the skirts though. I walked over, a smile on my face, and sat next to Kiko. Telsha was on the left and Melsha sat next to her. Tel and Mel were best friends, they hardly went anywhere without each other. They were like the perfect little Barbie twins. The only difference was that Tel had blonde hair and Mel had dark brown hair. Kiko was kind of the third wheel trying to be the leader, which she pretty much was, and I was the right wing. We were all like the fantastic four without all of the weird superpowers. But we did have something just as powerful I guess. We were cheerleaders.

The first bell rang and we all stood up and slid our chairs under the table. I looked over and waved goodbye to Mishco and walked on with Kiko, Tel, and Mel. My first class was algebra. Oh great, just what I needed, I thought. Tel

walked in right behind me. "Sweet we have the same class!" she said. "That's awesome!" Naturally, Tel and I sat next to each other towards the middle of the class room. "So are you playing softball this year?" Tel asked. "Sure am. And I plan on starting varsity this year!" I replied. "Aim high, that's good." "Well it will happen!" I glared at Tel. "We'll see." she smiled then directed her attention toward the teacher. I didn't even notice the teacher had come in or the other students for that matter. I wasn't really nervous until now. "My name is Mr. Ferg." he started. "But ya'll can call me coach." Mr. Ferg helped out with basketball and football, so I remember him from last year. I tried the whole volleyball thing but I quit my seventh grade year. Then last year, I played basketball and got kicked off for hitting a girl in the nose from Concord. Mr. Ferg was the one who "let me down easy." "Hit anyone lately Shewmann?" "Not here lately coach." I answered. He just laughed and went on with his mumbling about where he was from and what not. "Now then, we are gonna go around the room and ya'll are gonna tell us where your from and about yourself." I felt like I was in kindergarten again. I didn't really pay attention to much; most people were really quiet and acted like we were going to shoot them if they spoke any

louder. Then it was my turn. As I stood up, this guy from across the room, Manuel something, asked if I was going to do a cheer for them. You know typical class clown. "Thank you for gracing us with your immaturity. Are you finished?" I said with a sarcastic twang. He just sank down in his chair and the class let out a low rumble of laughter. "My name is Therone Elizabeth Shewmann and this is my third year in Hicktown. As you can already tell I am a cheerleader and I play softball. I also sing exceptionally well and I can dance." As I took my seat, the bell rang. "Bring your stuff with you tomorrow!" Mr. Ferg shouted as we made our way out into the hall.

As I walked down the hallway, I got high fives and "What's up's" all the way to my locker. Then out of no where, Trey slams up against the locker next to mine. "Can I be your football player? Please?" "Trey, I already told you to just wait. I will make my decision and let you know." "Okay." "Can I see your schedule?" he asked. "What for?" "I just want to see if we have any classes together." "Well unless you are taking freshman classes, Trey, I highly doubt we have any together." "Dang it!" "Bye Trey!" As I walked down the second hallway, I noticed Landon Phillips walking right behind me. I wasn't sure if he remembered me. After all, we did only meet on the

last day of school last year. But what the heck? I decided to just turn around and talk to him.

"Weren't you in the choir room on the last day of school last year?" I asked. "Yep, that's me. I didn't think you remembered who I was." he said with a surprised look on his face. "Well I did; Landon right?" "Yeah and you're....Therone! Do you still have choir as your last class?"

"Yep." "Good." With that he took off around the corner. I may be new at this whole talking to guys thing but I don't think that was how it was supposed to go. Slightly embarrassed, I walked into my next class. This class was just the same as the first. A lot of talking and introducing and a lot of boring. I couldn't help but think about the conversation that I had with Landon. I mean it didn't make any since. Could he tell that I had a crush on him? He could have been able to. I hid that fact very well. Maybe he just didn't want to talk.

As lunch came around, I was glad that already most of the day was finished. I only had two more classes after this. Lunch was counted as a class this year. I thought it was pretty cool. This would be an easy class. After I got my tray, I went to the far end of the cafeteria and sat with Kiko, Tel, Mel, and some other friends. Kiko could tell that I was distant and asked me what was up. I told her about Landon and the

conversation we had and she just shrugged and turned to Tel and Mel and started her gossip again. The whole lunch I was silent, thinking about Landon. I have liked him since the first time I saw him, but he wasn't going to know that. There was no way Landon and I would be together, I was sure of that. The bell rang and snapped me out of my daydream. I threw away my tray and hurried to my locker. Once again there was Trey. "So have you made a decision yet?" he asked impatiently. "No!" "But we only have one more hour!" "Okay, Trey. Fine you can be my football player!" "Yes!" he shouted. I have never seen someone so excited. I shook my head with a smile and headed down the hall to my next class. Of course this one was the same as all the others have been. The whole day was boring. As I came out of my class, Landon was standing across the hall. I figured he was waiting on someone else, so I just smiled and walked passed him. "Wait!" he shouted. "Do you mind if I walk you to choir?" I was totally speechless. I didn't know what to say. "No not at all." As we walked down the sidewalk and across the street to the annex building, Landon and I talked for what seemed like forever. Really it was only ten minuets. We stopped at the classroom and Landon just looked at me and smiled. He asked me a question but I couldn't quite make out what he was saying. "What?"

I asked. "Will you go out with me?" I was completely overwhelmed with joy. With a smile that seemed to take up my entire face I nodded my head up and down. "Cool, so I will see you after school then?" I just nodded my head again. "Okay, see ya." As I walked into class, everyone had already heard our conversation and Mel rushed over and shouted "I am so happy for you!" I was just smiling the whole time. This was the perfect end to my first day of school.

Four days later, Landon and I broke up. I broke up with him because I thought that I couldn't handle having a boyfriend. But within two hours we were back together. I was definitely feeling something stronger than just like. The whole year was like this. Landon and I fought so much. We dated off and on for nine months. Those nine months were the best and they were hell. But what could we do? We were each others first loves. This whole year was totally bogus and I really don't remember anything except for my first love.

Chapter 4: Highschool-10th grade year: A short overview

This year I wasn't nervous at all. I mean once you get to know everyone in the high school, there is really nothing left to be afraid of. Last year I started varsity softball. It was awesome except for the fact that our right/left fielder, Stormy, couldn't catch a cold if it hit her in the face and our third baseman couldn't move from the spot in which she stood. Oh yeah I lost my temper....a lot. We did go to state, which is a plus, but we lost. I got the only hit of the game breaking the pitcher's shut out. I was all conference and most defensive play. I also made the all state

tournament team. My batting average last year was a .333. Not bad for a freshman. Last year was a great year for me and this year was going to be even better.

As I walked the hall the first day, I wasn't even the least bit nervous. The guys I met last year still hung around and most of my friends this year were guys. Girls just got annoying with all of their gossip and drama. Guys were a lot easier to hang out with. This year we were in a new school which made Hicktown seem a little bit bigger. The first day wasn't hard at all. It was pretty much a description of how the class would work, what was needed, what was expected. My last class, foods, was a little hard. I am one girl who cannot cook. The teacher told us how to use the cooking lab and how our conduct should be. First she assigned us groups. Of course, I get assigned to a group where I am the only girl. The other three guys were Blake, Brently, and Lil Toney. This was going to be a nightmare. I have known Blake since last year, but he hardly ever noticed me. Landon and I were done for good, so I decided to move on. Blake and I knew each other for about two days and started dating. It was fun at first but when I saw how immature he was, I broke up with him. Then we were together again within a day. Naturally, we broke up again. High school relationships royally suck. Finally we just decided to take a break for a while and see

where things went. Later, Manuel and I started dating. He was the one that just had to be the class clown in 9th grade and make a complete idiot out of himself. Last year, I really couldn't stand him. This year, however, he was somewhat different.

Foods didn't really help the fact that Blake and I still liked each other and that I had a boyfriend. Manuel treated me like crap. My best friend, Brandon, kept telling me that I needed to end it with him and find someone better. I was naive though and kept saying that things would get better. He would always flirt with girls right in front of me and behind my back. Then he would ditch me and hang out with his friends and he never sat with me at lunch. Yet still, I thought that everything was going to be okay and perfect. My mom kept telling me that he was trash and that I needed to dump him. But I just couldn't. Parents didn't really understand how high school worked now and my mother couldn't understand that I was more mature than most of the people in my high school. Explaining my feelings about Manuel to her was not an option because she wouldn't understand. Well, a few days later Manuel broke up with me. He thought that another girl would be better so why should he settle for me? I didn't worry about it much. I mean I still had Blake and I had way too much to worry about anyway. I mean being a

cheerleader, being in Forensics (competitive acting), being in choir in which we had to go to competition, being in Dance in which we had to compete, and being in softball, and trying to keep my grades up was already too much to handle. My life was run by this school. I was always staying after school and going to softball before school and still managed to keep a 3.9 GPA. I still hated high school.

Before I knew it, dace was over, I quit cheerleading, and softball season was here. Naturally I started varsity again and I was even appointed to be the catching coach. Blake and I were no longer an item and everything was still going great. The whole season went by so fast that I felt that if I blinked, I would have missed the entire year. The awards banquet came around and over half of our team never showed up. Oh yeah they were really dedicated. My awards this year included, all state, all conference, most defensive, and most offensive player. My batting average for the year was a .529. I had it all. At the end of this year, goodbyes were harder than they were my freshman year. I however knew that I would see everyone again over the summer so it really wasn't like I was going away forever. Everything was perfect.

My junior year is the year that everything would change and an event so big that would change not

only my life, but my family's lives
as well.

Chapter 5: Victim

This is the year that I said
goodbye to Hicktown and hello to B-
ville. I transferred schools this
year so that I could play sports
and because of the academics. In
order to do so, I had to live with
my grandparents. Mishco and Tak
had stayed in Hicktown and
continued to do what they do.
Mischo and I were a lot closer this
year; just like best friends.

Mishco was finally popular in my old high school and earned the nickname "Lil Shewmann." Mine of course was Shewmann. Everything was perfect for her and everything was going great for me.

It was about six in the morning when my phone rang. It was my mother frantically talking and half screaming. Due to my half asleep body, I could not completely comprehend what she was saying, but I figured it out. "Therone!" she said. "Have you seen your sister?"

"No mom. Why?" "She's gone! She's not in her bed! I can't find her!" "Mom! Calm down. Maybe she is the bathroom." "No! No! She's not! I can't find her!" "Okay mom, I'm on my way." "Okay be careful!" I jumped out of bed not really caring what I looked like, grabbed a pair of shoes, and put on a jacket. My grandmother came rushing back to my bedroom to see what all the commotion was about. "What is going on?" "Mishco is missing!" "What!?! " "We have to leave now!" My grandmother quickly got her purse and jacket and followed me out the door. "Let's take my car." She said. We quickly got into the car and we were on our way within seconds. While we were on our way, I called the police to report my sister missing. Just as I was about to get finished telling the officer about my sister's physical characteristics, my grandmother's phone rang. It was my mother

telling us that they have found her. I was so relieved and thanked the officer for his time. My grandmother let out a sigh of relief and safely turned around. When we arrived back at our house, I decided to get ready for my doctor's appointment. Half an hour later, my phone rang. Mishco was balling uncontrollably and I couldn't understand a word she was saying. I knew that something was wrong because even when she cries I have always been able to understand what she was saying. "Mishco, do you want me to come out there?" Yes was the only answer that I got before the connection failed. "I'm going out to the Hicktown house. Mishco wants me out there." "Is she okay?" my grandmother asked. "I don't know, but I will tell you as soon as I find out." "Okay, be careful." "I will."

As I was driving I kept thinking what could have possibly happened. I couldn't quite put my finger on it. The dreaded word went through my head and shot a painstaking chill down my spine. "Rape," I thought, but I knew that, that could not possibly be it. I mean who would do such a thing? Mishco didn't have very many enemies and her enemies were too afraid of me to mess with her. My thoughts consumed me until it felt as if someone else were driving the car. I was in a dream-like state until I arrived in the driveway.

The house was quiet except for the soft sobbing sounds that

greeted me as I entered the house. Mishco was there on the couch curled up in a little ball. Her body seemed to be limp and her face was as pale as white rice in a snow storm. "Mishco, what's wrong?" No answer escaped her purple lips. All she could do was cry. I sat down beside her to give her a hug and when she reached up to hug me back, it was like all the life had been taken from her very body. "Therone, I can't feel my face." "Mishco, you need to tell me what happened okay?" Mishco just looked up at me and her eyes began to water even more. "I went to a party and they said that Zac was going to be there. Then the next thing I remember, I woke up at Brina's house and Dad was standing over me." "Mishco, did mom and dad know that you went to this party?" "No." "I need you to tell me if you drank anything that they gave you." "Well, I did have some vodka and they gave me moonshine." She started crying again and asked me if I was mad at her. I told her that I was not mad at all. How could I be mad at her for doing what every teenager does? I mean, I did it. So she snuck out of the house, big deal. So she went to a party, I did the same thing last year. "Therone I can't feel my face at all." "It's okay Mishco, everything will be fine." I met my mom in the hall as she was coming down stairs. "Mom, we need to take her to a doctor." She just shook her head with agreement and I

told Mishco to come with me. My mom followed Mishco and I to the doctor's office to see if she could get in. Mishco had no idea where she was and she looked as if she were going to pass out and die at any time. I grew up around people who have been drunk before and no matter how much they drank, they still didn't look this bad in the morning. Mishco was drugged. The doctor told my mom to take her to the hospital and to have her looked at. I stayed at the doctor for my appointment and my mom and Mishco left for the emergency room. Just before I was finished with my appointment, my phone rang with a call from my mother. She was crying and I only heard one word clearly. It was a word that immediately left me breathless in a world full of oxygen. It was the dreaded word that haunted my thoughts this morning. Mishco was raped. I dropped to my knees and began to cry. Mixed feelings of pain and anger overwhelmed my entire body consuming me in a cocoon of darkness.

I didn't go to school that day. I wasn't going to leave Mishco alone. I wasn't there when this happened and I was going to be there from now on. These guys that did this to her, she only remembered some of their names. They were guys that I knew, guys that were our friends. I couldn't believe it. I wanted to kill these guys and make them suffer for what they did to her. They took her life

away and I wanted to take theirs away. Mishco reminded me however that judgment day comes for everyone and I just have to be patient. I knew that it would be hard to wait, but I will do it just for her. I will be strong and not let this get me down. I have to be strong for her sake.

Chapter 6: The unknown verdict

The state pressed charges against these guys and the case is taking forever. They say the seventeen year olds that were

involved may get away with it because they were not exactly three years older than she was. This is what makes me extremely mad. Basically what they are saying is any one can get away with raping someone just as long as they are not three or more years older than their victim. A sixteen year old boy could go out and rape a fourteen year old girl and get away with it. Many people wonder why many girls never tell anyone if they have been raped. What's the point in telling when the justice system is just going to overlook them? The verdict for these guys is still unknown. If they walk free it will just show the many people of this county that our justice system really could care less what happens in a trial of a rape victim as long as they get paid. If they are put away, then it will show this country that just because you are a juvenile and have committed a crime does not mean that you will get away with a slap on the wrist. It will show people that our justice system does care and that they aren't just there because they have to work.

Samantha Larraine Koosmann was a victim of rape. She is my little sister and her story was told in this short story. She suffers from sever anxiety attacks and depression. A part of her life was taken away from her because of what these boys decided to do. Nobody knows my sister as well as I do and

I will forever stand by her and
make sure that she feels the least
bit of happiness. To those guys
that did this to her, your judgment
day is coming so don't just walk
around with your head held high. Be
prepared to burn for an eternity
and if you don't believe me, then
just wait and see.

I love you Sammy and I will be here
to make sure
That no one hurts you again.

Ashwin Brice

To be a Jew meant that you would be annihilated during this time. I still remember the first time the Nazis came to our neighborhood. Everywhere there were people screaming and windows being broken. It was so hot outside. We were not allowed to bring anything at all. Everything was left behind for the Nazis to take as they pleased and there was nothing we could do about it. My mother screamed as one Nazi soldier grabbed her by the hair and threw her out. My father tried to stop him but it was no use. He was almost shot and killed by the other four soldiers that surrounded our home. I was thrown hard against the ground and a chain was thrown around my feet and arms. We sat there for what seemed like ten thousand years in the blistering heat. No water and no food for hours. My muscles could barely stand the exhaustion of my body and I could barely lift myself when they told us that it was time to move. Everything was a blur; everything except for the fact that we were going to be killed like pests that had invaded a radiant garden.

The sound of a train rolled down the long railroad and everyone just stood there in awe. No one moved; not a single inch. As the conductor shouted that it was time to get on, we were all shoved into a cattle car. There were two hundred of us all squeezed tightly into this small wooded car. There

was no breath to be had when smashed between so many people. For a while we never got even a crumb. Many people just died on the way to the concentration camp and were thrown like a sack of garbage out the side of the cattle car. After a few days, there was enough room to sit down. Finally after the first stop, we got our ration of bread. We were all so hungry. Some of the soldiers would throw a single piece of bread into a cattle car and watch people kill each other for it. It wasn't long before we were moving again.

The concentration camp smelled of decaying bodies, feces, and other rotten odors that were not tended to. As we were pulled off the cattle cars like rag dolls, we were each given a number. This was our new name. No more would I be Ashwin Brice, Instead I would be 2456. We were separated based on our condition and strength. If you were strong and muscular, then you would do the manual labor. If you were skinny and weak, then you would be doing the cleaning and whatever else the soldiers made you feel like doing. I was assigned to cell 4 with about three other people. There was already an overcrowding problem, why not add three more to the bunch? The cell smelled of vomit and diarrhea from the victims of dysentery. The smell was disgusting. I slept on the floor away from my cell mate that had diarrhea all over her bed and

mine. I wanted to go home, I just wanted this all to be over.

Many weeks went by before I actually forgot my name. I did not shower or get to bathe at all. The smell didn't bother me as much any more and when people died, not one single tear left my eye. I was used to everything. Finally today we get to shower. A soldier came by and got everyone ready. Everyone was so excited, everyone but me. I knew where were going. I have seen the big building in the back. I kept wondering why the people that showered never came back. Others said that it was because they were transferred to another camp. I believed them until I actually saw the building. We were all going to die; burned alive. As we all neared the building, fear swept through my heart and tears made their way to my brown eyes. I didn't want to die. Not right now. I thought of an escape route and played it over and over in my head. There was a place by the fence where a hole was dug. I can't believe the officers haven't noticed it yet. One, two, three! I ran out of the line and headed toward the hole. I am almost there. I almost made it when there was a soldier that grabbed by arm and started pulling me back to the giant furnace. All I saw was the big brick building coming closer and closer. Finally the soldier let go of my arm and.....

Africa Akiva

"There are no devils left in hell.
They are all in Rwanda."
-Roman Catholic missionary

May 16, 1994

Rwanda was a quiet, safe place before hell was brought up from the very core of the earth and on our lands. I am only one of few survivors of this mass genocide. 1994 was the year that everyone thought the apocalypse was here and for many, it was.

I went for days without food. I had been hiding to save my life. The Hutu were so power hungry. Every now and then some Hutu would walk through the area in which I was hiding and each time they did not find me. I was very grateful for this. I never got used to the sound of someone from my tribe

being hacked to death with clubs and machetes. A spray of blood would invite itself to my face and body but I would not dare let out a sound. I used to love the dark. The stars would shine so bright serving as a backlight to the brilliant moon. The temperature was perfect; not too hot and not too cold. Now, the darkness would be my prison in a jail of murders. I fell asleep standing up and this is how I would be for weeks.

After a few weeks, I could no longer hear anyone in my village speaking, screaming, or pleading. This meant that the Hutu were no longer here. When I stepped out from my hiding place, the sun blinded me with its bright rays. As my eyes adjusted, I only wished they would be blind once more. Everywhere I looked, I saw nothing but blood and hacked bodies. Neighbors and friends all lay lifeless on the ground, even their children. Children I once looked after were all dead. What happened to my peaceful Rwanda? What happened to my tribe? What happened to my life?

A convoy passed and allowed me to hide once again. I peaked out though the sides and the blood was everywhere. There was no end to the chaotic nightmare that was Rwanda. As we passed through other domains, I saw small children of the Hutu hacking women to their death, as slowly as possible. How could these children do this and still go on with their lives? This was the

bloodiest sight to see. Everywhere you looked there was a never ending sea of bodies and a never ending pool of blood.

Once the convoy stopped, I had to get off. I was not safe in the place to hide and wait. Wait to live; wait to die. Once again I had to wait for the smallest crumb to grace the floor with its presence. I was tired of waiting and tired of living in fear, but my heart knew better than to let my mind get the best of me. My stomach was very empty and my legs screamed for a chance to sit down and rest. There was no way I could do that though. The only thing I could do was wait.

Finally after three months of standing and barely eating, the Rwanda genocide came to an end. For one hundred days I lived my life in fear. I have no idea what happened to my family. My guess is that they all died with the rest of the Tutsi people. Eight hundred thousand deaths occurred in this genocide. One murder was committed every two seconds of every minute, of every hour, for days. Rwanda was never the same again. Everywhere I went I saw the faces of my hacked neighbors laying lifeless in the dead sea of people. I saw the babies that didn't have time to grow. I saw people who didn't have a chance to grow old. Then I saw the survivors who and myself. Running and hiding in fear for those eternal one hundred days of terror.

Jack's Ranch

This whole war is why I have lost everything that I have ever loved with the exception of two people. To get what I mean, I guess I will have to start from the time my parents died. That is when everything went chaotic. My world suddenly went gray that day and stayed that way for a long while.

It was the morning of March 19, 1861. I was out in the fields

working when I heard shots fired and screams come from the cabin. When I arrived, my father had been shot and his body laid face first into our wooden floor. My mother was hanged in the corner and the two men we were hiding were nowhere to be seen. As I looked at the two bodies, not one tear escaped my eye. I don't know why exactly. Instead, everything just turned gray. I was no longer able to see color. -The only reason I did not have to go fight this stupid war was because I agreed to cooperate with the soldiers and give them whatever they wanted, whenever. - I stood in silence for what seemed like an eternity then turned and walked away from the cabin and my parents resting place. Not a single tear graced my cheek until I arrived at Grandpa Jack's and only then did a small droplet pounce on my cheek for a mere second. From the looks of the ranch, grandpa hasn't been here in a few months. Grandma has only seen him twice since he left for the war and each time she always wore her special linen shirt. As I walked up to the porch, grandma had a look of bewilderment on her face. "Mom and dad are dead." I said. Grandma broke into tears, but I still held my composure. "I'll be stayin' here with you if you don't mind." Grandma turned without saying anything and nodded towards the house. We didn't talk much that night. Grandma was probably trying to avoid the discussion of my

parents. I just left her to herself and went to bed. Beside my bed was a picture of me and grandpa. "Come back soon grandpa." I said as I turned out the light. "I love you."

The next morning I woke up to grandma's cooking and immediately shot up out of bed. I knew grandma had started chewing tobacco again because I could see her spit bottle beside the stove. I couldn't figure out for the life of me why she was in her white linen shirt today. Grandpa wasn't coming home and it wasn't Sunday. Maybe she just felt like looking nice today. "You sure look nice today grandma." "Thank you Gabe." "What's the occasion?" "I just felt like looking nice today." "Okay. Well, you look very beautiful." "Thank you."

After breakfast, I went up to the fields to do some plowing. The field was in really bad condition and it will take at least a month or two before I get the whole thing finished. I took breaks here and there to get a drink, and then it was back to work. The sun beat down on my uncovered back turning my skin tan. A few hours of silence went by and finally grandma called for me from the porch. "Gabe," she shouted, "can you do something for me real quick?" I ran to her and answered her out of breath. "Sure what do you need?" "I need you to go in and get that picture of you and your grandpa." "Okay?" Why would she want that

picture? As I was on my way back out with the picture, I noticed grandpa's side of the bed all made up for him for when he came home. He wasn't coming home, I knew that. I looked down at the picture and then looked over to the fireplace. I remember the stories grandpa used to tell me when I was younger. He would always tell me that one day I would meet the girl of my dreams, just like he met his. I always waited for her to come, but she never did. Now I'm almost eighteen and I am certain that it was just a story. I smiled at the memory and continued to walk out. When I got outside, grandma was sitting with her head down. "Grandma?" There was no response. As I went closer to her and touched her arm, I felt her skin; hard and cold. Grandma was dead. The tears finally strolled down my face as I placed the picture of me and grandpa on her lap. Now I knew why she wore the white linen shirt. I decided to stay here and take care of things, that way when grandpa comes back, he won't have to do so much. A few more weeks went by and I finished the top field. About the time I started the second, I received word that my grandpa died. It was then that I hit my knees and started to cry every tear that I had in my body. At seventeen, I had nothing left but this hole in my heart. I didn't let that bring me down though. I knew that I had to keep working hard if I was going to

survive. My world was still in gray.

Chapter Two

July was one of the hottest months of the season and as always, I was out in the fields working once again. I had gained a lot of muscle from working in those fields. I have gotten almost everything done that needs to be done. I was starting to think that my grandpa was wrong about the whole love thing because I have tried and things are just not working out. Then on July 18th, everything changed.

Her hair was dark and her skin was a light tan which showed that she could work. Her eyes were a glossy hazel, but in the sun, the green showed more apparent. She was beautiful. At first, I didn't want to talk to her. I was afraid to. Then I finally worked up the courage to ask her for her name. "Brenna." She said with a voice so sweet it made the birds sing. The first moment I met Brenna was the first moment since the death of my family that I saw color. I knew right then that she would be the one I would marry. I didn't want to tell her that because then I might scare her away. We were together

for six months before I asked for her hand and she immediately agreed. Brenna was seventeen then and I was eighteen. I have never been more in love in my life. She was the most amazing girl that I have ever known. I could not picture my life without her.

By the end of the war, Brenna and I had enough money saved to buy food for the next year. And just a few days after our four year anniversary, Brenna gave birth to a baby boy. We named him Jack after my grandpa and that was one of the happiest moments of my life. The war was over and Brenna, Jack, and I were happy together on my grandpa's ranch. If anything, I'm glad the war brought me Brenna, but I hate that it took away my family. They would have really liked Brenna and I'm sure that grandpa would have loved to be here to see little Jack.

This whole war is why I lost a family but gained a new one. In a way, I am thankful; but in another, I am not. Losing my family was hard but falling in love with the girl of my dreams was easy. It was finding her that was the hard part. And all this happened on Jack's Ranch.

Bahari's Journal: A slave story

-June 22 Monday

This is my first writin'. My name is Bahari 'n I am 16 years old. I think. I know how to write n' spell because Haben taught me. I'm not allowed to let masta James see because he might put me in the barrel again. I was lucky not to die the first time. Oh I live in South Carolina. I don't like be'in here at all. But who likes be'in a slave? I only get time to write because I sneak off. If my momma ever finds this, I love her. Masta James house is so big that they'd never be able to find me. I am the sitter. I watch after Logan and Sophie. I don't

know why I gave to watch after Logan. He is 17. Sophie is same age as me but I do everything for them. Talk about rotten kids. Haben is the other slave boy that helps me and keeps Logan company. The masta's wife, Genet, is really mean just like the masta. I need to leave, they are lookin for me.

-June 22 nite

I am finally done for the day. I'm glad I'm not a field slave because masta has them workin' till the middle of the nite. I am so glad Haben gave me this jornal. I really like Haben. I hope one day that he will like me too. But there is a problem with the field slave girl. Haben likes her. Masta Logan is bein' really nice here lately and I don't know why. To day I had to go to the bathroom and he let me use his. I thought that maybe he was gonna tell on me but he didn't. Haben had this real sour look on his face like he don't like Logan. Sophie didn't know I used Logans bathroom. If she did, she would have turned me in. I'd be dead for sure. I ate my dinner with the cook. We had our fish and cornmeal. We only had a little left so we didn't get to eat that much. I am still hungry. I go to sleep most nights hungry tho. I still don't know why masta Logan is bein so nice. Oh well, I will worry about it later.

I am really tired so I have to sleep now.

-June 25 nite

I got beeten again today. I was just standin' there when masta James punched me across the face. He almost killed me but Logan did a divrshon again. I'm tired of almost dyin. I wish he would just get it over with. Haben asked me if I loved him. I told him I did and I really do. But I hav feelings for Logan too. Its wrong tho. I'm not supposed to feel this way but I do. Logan aint supposed to be nice to the help either but he is. I don't get it. Not one bit. Shold I tell Logan? No that would only make things worse. He only feels sorry for me. But why? I guess I wont really find out.

-June 28 erly

Sophie told masta James bout me and Haben. Masta says that hes gonna give hem away(sell him) cuz he aint havin no niggers that like each other together. I really don't like that word. Why does Sophie have to cause all the problems all the time? I cried before I wrote and Logan was there with me. He said not to cry and that everything would be fine. I no I love Haben but now I love masta Logan even more. It is wrong for a colored to

love a white. So why do I feel
this way?

-June 28 nite

Well, masta Logan
knows that I love him. Sophie
showed him my jornal. He didn't
really talk to me after that. I
hope masta James doesn't kno. He
will kill me for sure. Someone is
comin;

It was
Logan. He loves me too! He said
we could run away if I wanted. And
I do so badly! I told hem that we
shold run away. We leave in a
couple hours.

July 1st

This is Haben. I found
Bahari's journal on the side of the
river along with her and Logan.
They never made it pass the tall
oak tree in the middle of the
second field. They was both shot
dead by Masta James and Missus
Genet. Course they were both drunk.
I loved Bahari with all my heart
and I know she loved me but
somehow, Black wasn't good enough.
I just wanted everyone to know that
I will never stop loving her and I
will gain my freedom for her. She
may have loved Logan but as long as
she was happy then I am happy too.
I wuld never want to see her hurt.

Like the time she cried cuz Masta
James was goin to be rid of me.
That tore my heart out. I will keep
this with me wherever I go and I
will have a piece of her with me. I
love you Bahari.

September 7th
Bahari,

I am finally free and I will
see you someday. Till then, I am
livin' for you

The Last Flight: Based on a true story

The sun peaked just through
the horizon of the Katmi National
park and the air pierced Mohan's
nose as he drew in deep breath.
Mohan loved the smell of the forest
air and running water from the

Little Chu River. As his feet hit the hardwood floor of the lodge, a surprise of cold numbness went through his feet. He shivered as he went and shut the window. The morning was beautiful and today was the day that Byron, Brice, Alden, and Aden would be coming back from the Little Chu River with their fish. The river was quite a ways from the lodge, so a plane had to be taken to get there. Mohan was really good friends with Byron, the pilot, and Brice, the guide. Alden and Aden were the fishermen that Byron and Brice had taken out to the Little Chu.

Mohan jumped into the shower and washed his long, thick Indian hair. His hair always took him the longest. Then Mohan rubbed a thick lather of body wash over his naturally tanned skin. When he was finished, he stepped out and slipped on the bar of soap that had been laying there for weeks now. He kept his balance, however, and just laughed at himself as he wrapped a towel around his waist. Within minuets Mohan was dressed and ready to do his duties as owner of the lodge.

He was the first to arrive just as always. As he opened the big wooden door, a small squeak escaped from the door's hinges. "Needs fixed." He said to himself. He walked in and laid the keys on the front counter and began to count the money in the cash register. "Everything's here." He said into thin air. After finishing

his normal routine, the other employees showed up wearing the usual camouflage uniform. Mohan was pleased to see everyone smiling today. No one had a rueful look or a look of sorrow on their face. "Today is going to be a great day." Mohan said to everyone.

As the morning progressed, more and more people entered the lodge. Everyone wanted to welcome back the four men that had been fishing for twenty-one days. It was a record. No one had ever been fishing that long except Mohan. Mohan was a trained pilot as well. Now the air smelled of bacon and a thick cloud of egg filled the front lobby. Due to the smell, the guests were all salivating, waiting for the breakfast to be ready. The four men out would not be in till noon and already people were packed to the hill. Some only wanted to food but most wanted to welcome back Byron and Brice most of all. Brice taught disabled children how to ski, so he was very popular among the many people at the lodge.

"Mohan this is flight 220, do you copy? Over." The radio crackled. Everyone fell silent and Mohan responded. "This is Mohan. Over." "Flight 220 should be landing in about three minuets sir." "Thanks 220. Over and out." Excitement soon filled the room and many conversations took off all at once. After five minuets, people got restless and began to worry. "Just relax," Mohan said, "I'm sure they are all

just taking their time." Relief swept across the room. Another five minuets went by and still they didn't show up. Mohan decided to fly out himself and see if he could spot them. Not long after taking off he saw the crash. Smoke filled the clean air with a dirt cloud of death. The many people at the lodge all sat and waited patiently for any news. A few of them tried to radio Mohan, but for a long time all they got was the muffled crackle of the radio.

"This is flight 221 to the lodge, over." An employee picked up the radio. "Mohan, it is great to hear from you. How is everything?" A few seconds went by before Mohan came back on the radio. "It is with a heavy heart that I announce the death of every passenger on flight 220." There was silence throughout the entire lodge. Mohan did not speck another word. Instead, he just fell to his knees in the soggy mud and cried. His bold brown eyes were clouded with tears of sorrow. For a long while Mohan did not respond to the employee shouting back to him over the radio. He just sat there with his eyes clouded and his body completely paralyzed. "I am here." He finally responded. "Come on back to the lodge pal." The employee said. "I will." Mohan could not find the strength of his legs, nor could he feel the strength of his arms. Tears streamed down his face as he made his way back to his plane.

Mohan made it back to the lodge. Over and Over he kept thinking how this would not be his last flight but for his friends, the flight was over. That was their last flight.