

THE YELLOWJACKETS

The pulsating sound of their beating hearts vibrated the drum of ten-year-old April Moore's ears. She covered them, attempting to block the sound. It just intensified, generating a rapid heartbeat within her. Beads of sweat appeared just where her hairline met; the temperature of her body began to rise. *What is happening to me?* Her sharp brown eyes looked around the classroom noticing the minute things most people wouldn't; the specks of dust throughout the room the ventilation system was recirculating, the dirt that lay between the floor tiles, a tiny stain on Mrs. Mitchell's purse that the teacher hadn't even noticed.

She took a deep breath, trying to calm the racing of her heart and the warmth that had taken over her body. Breathing in, she could smell them. All of them. Her classmates and Mrs. Mitchell. The scent of them was enticing, a slight metallic smell. She wiped the sweat from her face and tugged at the collar of the light-blue shirt she wore underneath her school-provided navy blue Hexington Elementary school sweater. Her classmate and friend, Jasmine, turned around to give her a note she had gotten from their classmate Dexter who got it from Stephon, the boy in front of the class that liked April.

"You don't look good. You okay?" Jasmine whispered, putting the note on April's desk.

April winced, feeling sharp pains in her back.

Mrs. Mitchell walked up handing back graded quizzes. "April, are you okay?"

"May I be excused to use the bathroom?"

"Sure—"

April bolted from the room, down the corridor, and around the corner to the Girls' room. She burst into the bathroom. The rapid beating of her own heart vibrating against her eardrums. She went over to one of the many sinks that lined the bathroom wall, splashing water on her face trying to cool herself. She looked at her reflection in the mirror. *What is happening to me?* The pain in her back intensified, causing her to grimace. As the pain moved further down, she let out a scream as her back felt like it was suddenly on fire. It felt like something was trying to come through her skin. She lifted her shirt, trying to check her back in the mirror but was unable to get a clear view.

The school bell rang, signaling lunch. She quickly pulled her shirt down as a group of chatty girls walked in. She grabbed some paper towels from the dispenser and wiped her face clean of sweat. She walked out and headed back to Mrs. Mitchell's classroom to get her things. She had to cover her ears again as the many beating hearts of her classmates in the hallway overwhelmed her as she walked among them. Jasmine stopped her in the hallway holding her things.

“Hey, I got your stuff,” Jasmine said, handing April her things.

“Thank you,” April replied.

“Are you okay?”

“Yeah...” April said, taking a deep breath attempting to calm herself. “Can we go to lunch? I’m starving.”

April hungrily bit into the piece of bread that came with the day’s school-provided lunch. She quickly followed that bite with a scoop of corn, then rice, finally shoveling a piece of steak into her mouth, like a child who hadn’t eaten in weeks.

“Girl, slow down! You eatin’ like you’ve never ate before.” Jasmine said, watching April inhale her lunch rapidly.

“I can’t,” April mumbled around her mouthful of food. “You gonna eat that?”

Jasmine slid her tray of food over. “You can have it. I have a sandwich my mother made for me in my bag. I’ll just eat that.”

“Thanks,” April said, finishing her second tray in seconds before stacking it on top of the first one she had finished.

Jasmine stared at her friend, concerned, as April rushed through the third tray of food. Finally feeling full, April closed her eyes and took a deep breath in, slowly letting her tongue go over her top lip, her eyes gradually opening.

“Full?” Jasmine asked incredulously.

“Right now, yes.” April noticed some of the students at her table looking at her weird. “What? I was hungry.”

“Is that what you call it?” said a female student. “It looked more like you were starvin’” The other students laughed.

The students burst out of the doors as the school day ended. April waved to Jasmine as she made her way to the public bus stop headed home. She lived far enough that she couldn’t take a school bus. She liked catching the public bus even though her father didn’t. It made her feel older. The sound of her classmates’ heartbeats faded as she walked farther from the school. The temperature of her body was still warm, and her back still painful. She noticed her bus, the number #15, pulling up and hurried her pace. After a few passengers disembarked, she climbed the steps, tapped her bus card, and sat down. She tugged at her jacket, trying to relieve herself of the heat. She looked out the window as

the bus rode passed the local shops, stores, and other businesses. Following the traffic, the bus slowed its speed. In the distance, April and the other passengers noticed flashing blue lights. As the bus crept farther along, they saw more blue lights and yellow tape that read CRIME SCENE! DO NOT CROSS! Unable to make out the activity clearly, April wondered if her father was working the crime scene.

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The spinning blue lights illuminated the faces of spectators standing at the intersection of Sixth and Third Avenue in the downtown section of Boston. They watched as Police officers stretched the crime scene tape from one street pole to the other cordoning off Sixth Ave. Public Alley 417 was just off Sixth Ave. It was where the body laid, slowly becoming a silhouette as the sun lowered behind the surrounding buildings causing the alley to gradually darken.

A police siren chirped a few times as a black Ford sedan arrived. Detective Rahshad Moore turned off the engine. He took a deep breath and stuck a piece of gum in his mouth, glancing at the digital clock displayed on the dashboard. It read 2:30 P.M. *An hour and a half before the end of my shift. Never fails.* He straightened his yellow tie in the rearview mirror then stepped out of the car closing the door. He let out a breath, making his way towards the small crowd that had gathered just outside of the crime scene tape. He walked underneath the yellow tape.

“Let’s make this quick, I’m supposed to have dinner with my family in a couple of hours. What do we got?” He said to the patrol officer nearby who was fresh out of the academy.

“Yes, sir. We have a female, deceased who looks to be in her 20’s with a wound to the left side of her neck.”

“Do we have a name?”

“No, we don’t. No ID on her.”

Fifteen years on the force, eight in the Homicide Unit, and Detective Moore hated attending crime scenes, especially those with a female victim. He made his way down the darkening alley to the body now covered by a sheet while the Crime Scene unit worked the area leaving evidence markers where needed. “Can I get a pair of gloves?” He asked a crime scene tech standing nearby. Offering a quick thanks as the crime scene tech hands him a pair of blue latex gloves. He pulls them on as he squats down. Pulling the sheet back, revealing the young woman’s open, brown, lifeless eyes. He moved her head slightly, getting a better look at the injury. The sharp, precise lines were marks definitely caused by

teeth, but the puncture holes on either side made the wound distinctive and familiar. It was something he had seen before.

“People are saying it must’ve been some kind of wild animal, like a coyote or maybe even a pitbull,” said the patrol officer.

“Well, judging by the size of this wound, I don’t think this was a pitbull or a coyote.” Detective Moore said, re-covering the young lady’s body.

“What do you think it was that could’ve done that?”

Detective Moore stood up, taking off the latex gloves. “Definitely not a coyote.” He grabbed his cell phone from the inside pocket of his suit jacket. “Hey Siri, call Yolanda.”

He listened to a few rings before his wife answered. “Hello?”

“Hey, can we push dinner back an hour? I just caught a case.”

“That’s fine. I’ll text Joyce to let her and Stanley know.” Her voice emanated from the phone.

“Thanks, babe.”

“I’ll see you later.”

“Bye.”

Detective Moore hung up and placed the phone back in his inside pocket.

“There is a report of another body. Uptown.” Another patrol officer said, walking up. Detective Moore closed his eyes and sighed. “Tell them to notify Detective Madison of the 6-5.”

The Patrol officer walked away.

“Sir, if a wild dog or a coyote didn’t do this...” The first Patrol officer began.

Detective Moore let out a deep breath as he looked down at the sheet-covered body. “Nothing is going to be the same as it was...not really.”

Thirty minutes later, Detective Moore arrived uptown at the second crime scene. It, too, had been roped off with crime scene tape. He noticed Detective Dennis Madison talking to a uniformed patrolman, his yellow handkerchief stood out against his gray suit. *I hope it’s not another young woman.* Detective Moore thought, stepping out of his cruiser. *Can’t take two in one day.* He walked under the tape and over to Detective Madison. They had gone through the police academy together, and Madison was his best friend on the force.

“What you got, Dennis?” He asked, walking up.

“Antonio Ramirez, twenty-five-years-old. Heavy wound laceration, bite mark on his neck. He’s from the Styxs,” said Detective Madison.

“Another alley, huh.” Detective Moore said as they headed down the alley. “Whoever is doing this definitely doesn’t want to be seen.”

“Or maybe they do. It’s still light out,” said Detective Madison

They squat down near the body as Detective Madison puts on a pair of blue gloves and pulls back the blood-stained sheet revealing another set of open, lifeless eyes. He moved the victim’s head slightly, giving Detective Moore a better view of the wound.

“Same as my Jane Doe victim,” said Detective Moore

They looked at one another, concerned as Detective Madison re-covered the body.

“How do you want to handle this?” Detective Madison asked.

They both stood up.

“Let’s work them separately and cross-reference the evidence.”

“Ok.” Detective Madison removed the gloves from his hands. “The work of a young’n?” He said lowly.

“Or an elder,” said Detective Moore.

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Yolanda pressed the end call button on the steering wheel of her SUV. Rahshad catching that end-of-shift case brought her some relief. She lowered the visor, blocking the sun from her eyes. She disliked this time of year. The short and late suns and the early and long moons.

The street lamps that lined Wellesley Park flickered on illuminating the quiet, idyllic street in Boston’s largest neighborhood. Victorian-styled homes with their manicured lawns lined the street as Yolanda turned into the driveway of the only yellow house. She stepped from the car and noticed that neither Stanley nor Joyce had arrived home yet. She grabbed her cell phone from her purse and texted Joyce about pushing the dinner back. The Browns: Stanley, Joyce, and their 10-year-old daughter Angela were the perfect neighbors. Their daughters were best friends and did everything together. They even attended the same school up until Angela was selected into an alternative school program and had to travel to the suburbs for education.

Yolanda grabbed her workbag and the groceries from the car, closing the door. Her cell phone dinged, alerting her to a text. She entered the three-bedroom, two and a half-bath dwelling she shared with her husband of fifteen years and their 10-year-old daughter April. She kicked off her black pumps, dropped her workbag near the door, and headed straight to the kitchen with the groceries. She put the bags on the counter and checked her phone. Joyce had replied.

It gives me more time to prepare my dish, lol, read the text.

“Alexa...play my cooking playlist.”

The music began as Yolanda grabbed the pots and pans from the lower cabinets. She placed the groceries from the bags on the counter, and washed her hands, began preparing dinner. *Front Door...* Alexa spoke.

“Ma, I don’t feel good. I’m hungry. Is dinner ready yet?” April said, entering the kitchen, her braids pulled back into a ponytail.

“Ah, no, I just started preparing dinner. And hello, Mom, how are you? How was your day?” Yolanda responded jokingly as she glanced up, noticing for the first time that April was glistening with sweat. “What’s wrong? She asked with alarm. “Alexa, pause the music.”

“I don’t know. I was in class, and I started sweating, my back felt like it was on fire ... I don’t know. I’m starving. I’m hot.”

“Come here.” Yolanda wipes her hands on the towel hanging near the sink. April walks closer as Yolanda reaches to touch her face and neck. “You’re burning up. You think you might’ve caught an illness from someone at school?” Yolanda grabbed a clean towel and dampened it with cold water.

“No. It just all started happening at once.”

“Did you eat?”

“Yeah, three lunches, and I’m still hungry.”

Slowly, Yolanda shut the water off and rung out the towel handing it to her. “Put that on your head and face.”

April applied the towel to her face and then placed it on top of her head.

“Turn around. Let me see your back.” April turned and lifted up her shirt, exposing her permanently-tanned back. Yolanda scanned her back but saw nothing. “Where do you feel the pain?”

“All over, but more in my upper back.”

Yolanda touches her back near the shoulder blades. “Does it hurt when I press here?”

“It does. A lot.”

Everything her daughter was experiencing Yolanda had as well when she was younger. But not as early as April apparently was. “Grab a protein shake and some red syrup from the fridge. That should help calm everything down.”

April grabbed a protein shake from the refrigerator and downed it quickly. “Where’s the red syrup?”

“In the bottom freezer under the frozen meat and veggies.”

April grabbed one of the small packs filled with the thick red substance from the freezer. “Is this...?” April questioned.

“No, it’s not. It’s just a thick red juice.”

April downed it, feeling instant relief.

“Better?” asked her mother.

“Better.”

“Good. Now, go on upstairs and clean your room before Angela and her family gets here.”

“Do I have to? Angela’s seen my messy room.”

“Well, go get clean your room like I just told you.”

April walked out of the kitchen, grumbling.

“And you know I’ll be up there to check!” Yolanda yelled. “And let me know if you feel uncomfortable again!” She listened for April’s response. Nothing. “Alexa, play music,”

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Detective Moore sat at his desk inside Precinct 44, studying the photos from his crime scene. The six images spread evenly across the 24-inch computer monitor. He clicked the pen in his hand as his eyes moved over the images: a wide shot of the woman’s body; an over-the-body shot of her head to her torso; a medium close-up of her head, neck, and wound area; a medium shot of her body opposite of the alley’s entrance; and finally a close-up of the gristly injury.

His eyes scratchy from staring at the gruesome images, he rubbed them and checked the time on his watch. It had been two and a half hours since he got the case, and he was already 45 minutes past the rescheduled dinner time. “Shit...” He picked up the desk phone and dialed home.

“Hey, y’all can start without me. I’m sorry, honey, tell Stan and Joyce I’m sorry. I’ll be there as soon as I can. Ok then, bye.”

As he resumes looking at the images, an email alert chirps from the computer. He maneuvers the mouse across the screen and opens his inbox. Crime scene photos from Detective Madison. He opens the email and enlarges the images. Sitting back, he studies the images, looking for any correlation between the two crime scenes.

“We don’t do this. Who are you? Why now? And who are you following?”

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Time had passed since dinner as Yolanda, Stanley, and Joyce made their way from the kitchen to the living room. “Thanks for helping me clean up,” Yolanda said as they sat down, accompanied by a bottle of wine and glasses.

“Glad we could help,” said Stanley

“The girls couldn’t wait to get up from the dinner table and run upstairs,” said Joyce

"I know, tell me about it," said Yolanda. "They're up there for hours on end in their own little world."

The front door unlocked, and Rahshad walked in.

"Hey, honey," said Yolanda

"Hey. Sorry, I'm late." He took his shoes near the door. He kissed Yolanda on the cheek and sat down.

"Work got you at the last minute," said Stanley.

"You know it. Caught a case right before the end of my shift."

"I left you a plate in the fridge," said Yolanda.

"Thanks." He poured himself a glass of wine. "What's this? The Chateau 45."

"Yeah. Isn't it good?" asked Yolanda

"Yeah. We should've opened this sooner. Damn, this is good."

"So, who is the cutest boy at your school?" April asked, lying on her bed, tossing a small stuffed animal towards the ceiling.

"Ryan Lopes," Angela said, sitting on the floor, flipping through a magazine. "He is so gorgeous. But he's already dating Melissa." She huffed, mocking her schoolmate. "She is so irritating," Angela complained.

"I miss not going to the same school," April said, rolling over on the bed to face Angela.

"I do too." Angela got up and laid across April's bed. "It's definitely not the same. I have to get up super early just to get to the bus stop. It's not cute." Angela flipped through a few more pages of the magazine before announcing, "I have to use the bathroom, be right back." And headed down the hall.

April felt her body temperature rising, and sweat began to drip down her face. She tugged at her shirt as she sat up. *Not again.* She took her top layer off, revealing a white tee underneath. The sharp pain returned to her back, unbearable as she dropped to the floor on her hands and knees. Heart racing and breathing heavily. She groaned as her teeth shifted, stretching and changing into sharp, thin-like razor versions of themselves. Her brown eyes flooding to black.

Angela came back into the room, shutting the door behind her. Noticing April's new yellow dress hanging on the back of the door, she says. "When did you get this? This is cute."

Silence.

She takes the dress off the door and holds it against herself as she looks in the mirror. April slowly rises from the floor and moves towards her.

"I'm gonna see if my Mom will get me a dress like this. This is nice. Where did your Mom get it?"

Again, no answer.

The floor creaked, breaking the silence as April stepped forward, causing Angela to glance back.

“April? You okay?” Angela asked nervously, looking into April’s black eyes. “April?”

April covered Angela’s mouth with her hand, muffling her screams as her razor-sharp teeth and tentacles extended from the dimples in her face and tore into her Angela’s neck, causing blood to splatter across the wall. Wings extended from April’s back as she lowered her friend down to the floor, feeding on her.

“I think it’s about time for us to head home, honey,” Joyce said to Stanley. “It’s getting late.”

“Angela! Come on, honey, it’s time to go.” Stanley shouted from the living room. He and Joyce stood up, getting ready to leave.

“You know those two, stuck in their own world.” Yolanda chuckled, walking over to the bottom of the stairs. “Angela! April!” Silence. “I’ll be right back. Let me go up there and get these two.”

“I’ll come with you,” Joyce said, following Yolanda up the stairs.

“They’re probably watching a movie with the damn headphones on,” said Yolanda
“Probably.”

“Didn’t you hear us calling you?” Yolanda asked, opening the door to her daughter’s blood-stained room and the most horrific thing she could have ever imagined.

Joyce let out a horrible scream as Rahshad and Stanley rushed up the stairs to the scene their wives were witnessing.

“Oh my God,” said Rahshad.

“No! No!” Stanley exclaimed.

“Great. Just what I need.” Rahshad sighed. He grabbed Stanley and mauled his neck as Yolanda did the same to Joyce. Wings fluttered from their backs as they lowered their lifeless bodies to the floor. Finished, Rahshad and Yolanda’s darkened eyes and teeth returned to normal as the tentacles withdrew slowly back into the dimples in their face and wings into their back.

Normal again, April walks out from her bedroom into the hallway, nervous and terrified. “Mom? Dad?”

“April,” said her mother.

“What’ve I done?” She cried.

“Baby, it’s okay.” Her mother reached out and engulfed her in a tight embrace.

“Oh, my God!” April screamed, noticing Angela’s parents. “What’ve WE done?”

“I’m gonna go call Frank,” said Rahshad. “You stay with her.”

“Ok,” replied Yolanda as Rahshad headed downstairs.

"Baby, it's okay. I know you're scared right now. Your body and mind are going through a lot right now. But it's gonna be okay." Yolanda tried to reassure April.

"No, it isn't. You killed them. We...killed them."

"Yes. Your father and I had to do what we had to do to protect you. To protect us."

April just sobbed in response.

"Honey, listen, do me a favor, and go downstairs? Wait for your father and me in the kitchen. We gonna handle some things." She caresses April's face. "Everything is gonna be okay. I promise. We'll explain everything to you in a bit."

April slowly makes her way down the stairs, pasting her father as returns.

"I told her to wait for us in the kitchen," said Yolanda

"Ok." Rahshad sighed, frustrated at this turn of events. "Frank said he'd be here within the hour."

"Ok." Yolanda sighed, looking at Joyce and Stanley on the floor and feeling sadness well up. "I really liked them. I really did."

"Me too," Rahshad says quietly.

Yolanda knelt beside Joyce. "I'm so sorry." She wiped away the welling tears in her eyes. "When was the last time we had to do this? She said to Rahshad.

"It was way before I joined the Police Academy."

"We still have any equipment left? I think we threw most of it out."

"I think we just have plastic wrap and gloves in the shed. I believe that's it." Rahshad looked at Stanley. "Man, this sucks. Was she showing any symptoms at all prior?" asked Rahshad.

"Who?" Yolanda sniffled.

"April. I mean, how did we not see this coming?"

"She came home and said she hadn't been feeling well all day at school. She was sweaty; she said she ate 3 lunches and was still hungry, that her body at one point felt like it was on fire."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"I gave her some red syrup and a protein shake, and she was fine. I didn't think this would happen. I mean, what would you have me do? Chain her in the basement? We're not werewolves. We're jackets. I mean, we didn't expect it to manifest in her this early in life."

"I know, I know."

"Most of us don't hit our urges and cravings until we're teenagers. I don't even think she's had her period yet."

"I know, I know. Dammit!" said Rahshad. "Let me go to the shed and see what we got. I'll be back." Rahshad loosened his yellow tie as headed back downstairs.

Moments later, he returned with a bundle of plastic wrap and some gloves. He made his way back up the stairs to a crying Yolanda. Dropping the plastic wrap and gloves, he goes over and comforts her.

“She’s gonna need therapy. A lot of therapy. We’re gonna have to be there for her, to help her through this.”

“And we will, but right now, we need to get them ready for Frank,” said Rahshad.

“What about their house?” Yolanda asked, concerned. “Their families? I mean, we’ve met them. We know them! They know us, well, not this part. What are we gonna do, Rahshad?”

“Listen, right now, let’s just find their keys and get them ready. Frank will take care of everything else.” Rahshad reassured her. “We’ll have time to freak out later, okay.”

“Okay.”

Rahshad quickly searched Stanley’s clothes, finding the keys in his jacket. Sticking them in his pocket as he hands Yolanda a bundle of plastic wrap and a pair of black gloves. Opening the plastic wrap together, Rahshad moves to lay a portion over Stanley’s body as Yolanda does the same with Joyce. They silently roll the bodies up, taking care to ensure they’re both fully covered in plastic. Rahshad glances over to his wife who has tears streaming down her face as she stares her former friend and neighbor, now wrapped in plastic like a piece of meat.

Rahshad closed his eyes and lowered his head. “Lord, we ask that you allow Stanley, Joyce, and their daughter Angela into your kingdom. And that you can find it in your heart to forgive us for the unfortunate actions we had to partake in tonight.” Rahshad sighed. “I’ll take care of Angela.”

“Thank you,” Yolanda spoke softly.

Rahshad grabbed more plastic wrap and headed into his daughter’s bedroom, where ten-year-old Angela’s lifeless body laid on the floor. His eyes welled with tears as he knelt beside her. For a brief moment, he allowed himself to feel. Then, gathering his emotions once more, he proceeded to wrap her thin frame in plastic as they had done her mother and father. He noticed the blood splatter on the walls and some of the furniture as he stood up. He couldn’t fathom what had happened in his own house. He walked out of the room and put his arm around Yolanda’s shoulders as she continued to gaze at her former friend.

“Come on. Let’s go downstairs. Frank will be here soon.” Rahshad walked her down the stairs to the living room where she sat on the loveseat, and he opted for the couch. Silence formed between them.

“You know she ain’t going to school until we get this under control,” said Yolanda.

“I know.”

“And we’re not going to work. I’ll have Mrs. Johnson handle things for me tomorrow.”

“And I’ll have Maurice cover for me,” Rahshad said, rubbing his face with his hands, exhausted. “The case I got today was...this.” With his hands, he motioned to their current situation.

“What? Really?” Do you think it was...on her way home from school?”

“No. It happened while April was still in school.”

“Thank God.”

“Well, someone is definitely trying to make a name for themselves. Killing two people in broad daylight,” said Rahshad.

“Two people?”

“Yeah, one uptown. My case is downtown.”

“You think it was an elder or a young’n?”

“Most likely, a young’n. Elders move at night if they move at all.”

The doorbell rang.

“Probably, Frank. That was fast.” Rahshad got up to answer the door. Frank Ross and his team of six heavily muscled men dressed in black entered the house. “Earlier than expected,” Rahshad says as they walk past. It was completely dark outside, not a single light to be seen. “What’d you do ... cut the power to the entire neighborhood?”

“Just the street. Can’t risk being seen.” Frank rumbled in a low baritone. “Hey, Landee.”

“Hey, Frank,” responded Yolanda.

“How’s April?” Frank inquired.

“Changed,” Rahshad said quickly, looking at Yolanda.

“Oh. So, where are the dearly departed?” Frank asked

“Upstairs,” said Rahshad. “The parents are in the hallway. Angela is in April’s room.

Frank motioned for his guys to head upstairs.

“Handle them with care guys,” said Rahshad.

“We always do,” said Frank

“Here are their keys. Their house is directly across the street,” said Rahshad as he handed over the keys.

“Ok.”

Frank opened the door, preparing to head back out. “You might want to leave the door open; my guys will be down in a few with the bodies. And kill the lights, It’ll draw attention in this power outage.” Frank said before stepping out, partially closing the door, and quietly disappearing into the blackness of the night.

Rahshad went to turn off the lights as Frank’s crew, wearing night-vision goggles, carried the bodies out of the house. Rahshad and Yolanda watched from the window as

they placed the bodies into a blacked-out van before returning to the home with cleaning equipment. They proceeded to scrub clean the areas where the bodies had been laying, removing every spot of blood from the walls and floor. A half-hour later, they finished and made their way back downstairs.

“Thanks, guys,” said Rahshad. “Tell Frank I’ll talk to him later.”

“Will do.” One of the guys said as they left.

Rahshad shut the door and turned the lights back on. He and Yolanda looked at one another, knowing the time had arrived.

“April! Come here, baby.” Yolanda yelled. April came out of the kitchen. “Come sit down. We need to talk to you.”

She sat down between them.

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The birds sang as the sun rose the next morning. The residents of Wellesley Park exited their homes to begin days filled with work and school as Rahshad stepped out in his robe and pajamas. He greeted a nearby neighbor with a wave as he walked over and grabbed his case file from his police cruiser. He looked over at the now-vacant house that used to belong to The Browns and felt a range of emotions. A man slightly older exited the house, locking the door behind him. He walked down the stairs and placed a For Sale sign on the front lawn. He looked at Rahshad and gave him a quick head nod. Rahshad responded in kind. The man got in his car and drove away. Rahshad gave a quick glance around as he walked back inside the house and shut the door.