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Composition 2: Service Learning

24 September 2012

What the Killer Clown Stole From Me

There is something surreal about watching the snowfall on the corpse of the boy you fell in love with.

It was 1968 when the first boy went missing. His name was Johnny Butkouich, and he was seventeen years old. I did not know him personally. My older sister said he was a normal kid, nothing special when you passed him in the halls, definitely not someone you imagine being the first of thirty-one missing boys. Other boys had gone missing but no one took it seriously. One of them was a young boy named Billy. I cannot seem to remember his last name, but he was a typical street thug. He stole purses and had a gun; there was even a rumor he organized gay sex between teen boys and older men, but who really knows. Even though he was a bad kid, I never would have thought that they would be digging him out from the crawl space of the man who was the clown at my 8th birthday party.
But I am getting ahead of myself. My name is Abby and I am a senior at Norwood High School. For a long time I was just known as Rob’s girl. The 5’2 brunette people saw walking down the hallway holding his hand. Of course I had my own merits I was recognized for, but when you have been dating someone for 3 years, that’s all people see. All people saw. Before they found his body. Now I am the girl with the dead boyfriend.

Robert loved horses; that is how I met him. Honestly that is why I dated him in the first place. My family owns a few horses and Rob had begged me to allow him to take care of the one that belonged to me. I did not take him seriously. A teen boy worries about having sex and chest hair, not the well being of prizewinning stallions. But I gave him a chance at taking care of Raven, our best mare. At first he has terrible at it. Horrible. She would kick and stamp her feet at him. But after hours of spending time with her, and me, we both came to love him. He took me for a ride like one I never took before. I was used to training to win, but the ride we took was so natural and wild. We took a ride just to feel the wind on our faces and whip through our hair. We flew through the mountains and jumped the creeks, just for fun, just because we could. After that we became inseparable. We saw each other every day and rode at least three times a week. Some how, even after three years, it never got boring. Everyday felt like the first ride we ever took together.

But taking care of horses is an expensive task and Rob knew if he wanted to continue he would need to find a job to supply his expenses. That is when he met John Wayne Gacy. On the surface Gacy seemed like any normal man. Your run of the mill, typical fat, jolly guy. He threw many parties and was always involved in town activities. He would even dress up as a clown named BoBo, his own creation he always said, more like bragged about.
Gacy owned a construction business in town that Robs friend Greg worked at. Greg had pulled some strings and got Rob a job. Looking back on it, I wish I had demanded Rob never work there, I had wanted him to work closer so I could see him, but he was content with the job he found and I let him keep it.

Throughout the year a few guys went missing. I guess when you are so consumed in the hustle and bustle of your own life you do not notice just how many boys went missing. That is until it is someone you love.

Robert was supposed to meet up with us on September 15 1977. We were all going to catch a bus to go riding; it was our three-year anniversary. But Rob never showed. I was furious, how could he ditch us and not even call. I called his house but he did not pick up. Instead the person who answered the phone was his father, Sergeant Gilroy. I told his father about how he did not ever show up, but I told him it was probably because he got distracted and lost track of time. But his father would not hear it; he immediately began a search for his son.

Days went by and we heard nothing from him. The worry consumed me. What could have happened to him? Where was he? Why would he not just tell us he was safe? I constantly felt like I was drowning in grief. Like I could never breath, suffocated by the not knowing. I was so desperate to find out the truth. I wanted to know; I needed to know.

On Friday December 22, 1978; a year after Rob disappeared I finally found him. Well I was not the one who found him. I simply watched as the police dragged out body bag number 6, Robert Gilroy. The police and news broadcasters say Gacy tricked him. He fooled him in to putting on a pair of handcuffs, stripped him naked and raped him while he asphyxiated him with a sock. They say every boy was gagged with their own undergarments or a wooden board was
pressed against their throat. I cannot even bring myself to imagine the terror and pain that went through their mind as they died slowing; what they must have felt as they were murdered while being violated.

It is ironic really, how much I needed to know what happened, and how soul crushingly horrific it was to finally discover the truth. Twenty-eight other bodies were pulled out of that home. Twenty-eight other sons and boyfriends, gagged, raped and murdered at that place. The place where the clown killer lived.