

Time. Stop.

by Jake DeVries

The day started much the same as any other day. A quick glance at my grandfathers old pocket watch to make sure I wasn't running behind yet. It seems like these days I can't keep on top of it, always just a few minutes too late. Not today. Not for this.

A young girl stepped out the front door and began hopping up and down. "Daddy Daddy Daddy!" she cried joyfully, "To THE PARK!!!" Every Sunday the girls father would walk her across the busy streets to the neighborhood playground where the little girl loved to be pushed on the swing set. It was the one time they could really be together away from all the drama that suburban homes contain. "Hold on, hold on!" he laughed as he grabbed his jacket from the hall closet, "Imma coming!"

Shirley was back in town and against all odds had called me to catch up. Something I never would have expected considering the way we ended things six months ago. We made plans to grab some ice cream and walk around the park near her folks home. Things had been going really well between us until the time we will forever call 'the calculator incident,' after that things were never the same and then when she left, she left without a word. I grabbed my coat and car keys and headed for the door.

"Daddy?" asked the little girl as she swung his arm, "Why was mommy crying this morning?" The father slowed his step and looked sadly at his young daughter while trying to best describe the situation. "Mommy hasn't been feeling very well. She needs you to be strong for her. Ok?" Tears grabbed at the fathers eyes as he pulled on his brave face. The little girl looked up at him "Okey dokey!" So young. So innocent. How do you tell a little one that her mother is dying? The father seemed to be bathing in a sea of hopelessness lately.

"Fucking car! Start already!" I screamed as the engine finally cranked. Stupid piece of shit, I should of replaced it months ago. I sped quickly from my neighborhood and shot onto the avenue that would take me to sweet Shirley. She said she'd be wearing that blue turtleneck I bought her last Christmas. I can't wait to see her.

"Here you go!" The little girl handed her father a flower. "Thank you baby" Again fighting the sorrow he looked away. "Come on, we're almost there!" The father said mustering a bit of joy thinking of the impending swing set.

I stepped a bit too much on the gas as I caught sight of that lovely figure waiting for me on the right up about a block. I never saw her run out. I never heard the father yell. I just saw Shirley. That look of fright. That look of terror. That look of pain. That look of death. That look of hate.

