



Prologue

March 17, 1971

The wet fabric started to slip down across her face and she held her bound hands to her face and tried not to watch. It was too terrible, too terrible. She just wanted her mommy. Where was her mommy? Where were all their mommies?

"Fourteen is just too many," he growled as he lifted the body of Jimmy Rodriguez and set it next to the others.

There were eleven. She had counted. Eleven times she'd heard them scream, eleven times she'd heard them stop. She was last in line, but he was getting closer. Only Billy and Marcus were before her. He'd be to her soon. She shifted against the cold cement floor, the puddle she'd made like wet ice against her skin.

She heard Billy sobbing and she started again, too. She couldn't help it. She kept waiting for someone to come and save them, but no one did. He had killed Mrs. Cooney and Mr. Choy. He walked onto the school bus and shot them. And then he forced each of them to drink a cup of punch. He put something in it. She saw him. And she shook her head when he told her to drink it. But he hit her hard and she knew she had to or he'd shoot her like he did Mrs. Cooney.

He looked at her now and licked his lips. She started to cry harder, pushing herself away from him. "No," she whispered. "No, no, no."

"Can't I save some for later?" he called.

She stopped crying and looked around, peering out of the small gap in her blindfold. Why was he asking them that?

She nodded. Save some for later.

"Tomorrow, I'd be fresh and ready again."

She nodded. "Tomorrow," she whispered. "Tomorrow."

It was quiet for a moment and she moved her head to look out of the corner of her blindfold. She heard feet moving toward her. Was it him? Looking down, she saw white sneakers like Brittany's.

"What do you think you're doing?" he screamed.

She jumped, feeling someone behind her. But his voice was far away. Someone touched her hands and she could feel the rope on her wrists loosening.

"Billy?" she whispered, but no one answered.

Then, her hands were free. She rubbed them together. She wanted to pull at her blindfold but she was afraid he would see her so she didn't move.

"I said what do you think you're doing?" he repeated.

She held her hands together as though they were still tied. He was yelling at her. But he wasn't getting closer. Just stay still, she told herself.

"You can't shoot me, for God's sake," he screamed.

Suddenly, someone was behind her again. She heard a loud clacking sound and then it was silent. She whipped her head around but couldn't see. She started to shake.

There was something hard and cold in her hands. It was heavy. She remained silent, feeling her hands shake as she held the heavy thing. She looked out of the corner of her blindfold and saw all white. White with wings, she thought. Wings.

She didn't feel scared, though.

Someone moved her finger and she heard a loud pop. Then another. She dropped the heavy thing and pressed her hands to her ears.

And then it was over.