

Two

The next thing I know is that Max's Black Lab, Brutus, is crawling up into my lap and enthusiastically licking my face. Eww, nasty dog slobber is getting all over me and down the front of my hoodie. I angrily shove him off me and look up as my Dad walks in from the garage. He stops and glances down at me. "Is there a reason you've decided to take up residence on the floor Megs?" He looks worried and I really don't want to tell him that I passed out so I just blow it off. "Um, nah, Brutus and Lacy were just so happy to see me that I kinda got knocked over."

He shakes his head, picks up the mail from the counter-top next to me, and starts to sort through it. My Mom walks in and my Border-Collie, Lacy, immediately starts to dance around Mom's feet, tail going ninety miles an hour as Mom reaches down and pets her. I get up off the floor and head over to the fridge to grab a soda. This all seems so normal for us, everyday stuff, yet there's the fact that I can't hear Max's laughter as he teases me, or my Mom and Dad, about who knows what like he always does. Even Brutus and Lacy seem to sense that something is really wrong, they won't leave us alone now. Usually it's 'greet me, pet me, feed me, oh and let me out to go potty and then I'll find a place to crash.' Now they're all tangled up around our feet, going back and forth between us, which is starting to get really annoying.

I grab a Dr. Pepper out of the fridge, open it, take a swig, and as I lean back against the counter watching my parents I can see out the front dining room window that faces the street. The press-parasites haven't left, actually there's more of them, oh joy. Crap, guess I'll have to dip out the backyard when I go to school if they're still out there in the morning. I let loose a huge disgusting belch. Dad looks up from the mail I'm sure to yell at me for being rude but before he can say anything I point them out to him. Mom walks up behind him and she hugs him as she leans into him and says to me; "They'll be gone in awhile Megs. Your father and I are going to head upstairs and you ought to head up too and get some rest. Don't worry about that nonsense sweetie, it'll go away, okay?"

I nod my head. Mom lets go of my Dad and comes over to me and gives me a hug and then smiles. She reaches up to gently brush my hair back out of my eyes like she always does.

"Meghan honey, it's going to be difficult for the next few days and I just want to say that you need to know that your father and I love you very much. We love both of you very much. I am going to trust God that he'll take good care of Max until Maxey wants to wakeup." She leans into me again and I squeeze her tightly. *'Maxey?! God he hates it when she calls him that, well, at least he says he does.'* She quickly releases me. "So, Meghan, you just need to trust God too. Now, do you want to go to school tomorrow or would you rather stay home?" I look at my Dad and he gives me that gentle smile of his, the one that makes his face all wrinkly. "I agree with Mom Megs, if you don't want to go, stay home. The staff will understand and I can call the school's office for you in the morning."

I take a swig from my soda and think about it for a minute. Nah, I'd rather have my friends and Max's too around me. "No thanks Dad, Mom. I'm gonna go if that's okay with you guys." Mom looks concerned. "Are you sure honey?" "Yeah Mom, I'll be okay, I'm sure." Okay Meghan, you go get some sleep and I'll drive you to school in the morning before I go back to the hospital."

"Thanks Mom, yeah that's cool." She smiles, then kisses me on my forehead and turns to my Dad. "Troy? I am going go upstairs now. The dogs need to be let out before we go to bed and don't forget to reset the alarm." He nods, gives her another hug, and then kisses her. He looks at me. "Megs? If you're hurting sweetie, let's hear it, okay? None of this is anywhere close to normal and I don't expect you to be able to handle it honey." I put my soda down on the counter and go over and grab my Dad and hug him hard. " I just don't understand Daddy why anybody would want to kill Max. He never hurt anyone and he is just so, well you know, he just..." I don't feel like crying 'cause now I feel a new sense of anger building up over all this and I tense up.

"Megs? We'll get thru this. Max," he sighs, "Max is gonna be okay honey and let's face it sweetie, he maybe small, but your brother is one tough little shit." I snort at his cussing.

He leans me back and looks into my eyes, "Sweetie, it's gonna be tough but you can do it. You need to be tough for yourself and for Max too. You can talk to me anytime that you need to Megs, don't hesitate, please? I'm gonna let the dogs out for their romp why don't you head up to your room. Okay? Oh and close the drapes, we really don't need an audience."

"Okay Dad. Thanks." He grins at me as I head into the front of the house to close the drapes. As I head back thru the kitchen to grab my soda I look out thru the sliding glass door to the backyard patio and can see the dogs running around. Then I notice that my Dad is smoking a cigarette. Oh boy, Mom is gonna give him some serious shit when she smells that on him. It's a major no-no in our house. Of course, nasty or not, I don't blame him. He turns around and sees that I'm staring at him and with a somewhat guilty expression on his face, shrugs and then makes a pointing gesture which I know means; 'Go to bed now.' I hold up my soda to show him that was why I was in the kitchen and then cheerfully wave at him, which makes him shake his head, and head upstairs to my room.

The television in Mom and Dad's room is blaring away as I walk down the hallway. I stop and stick my head in my parent's room and see that Mom is sitting in front of her vanity taking off her make-up. She looks up and sees that I'm leaning up against the doorway staring at her. "Are you okay honey? Do you need to talk about it?" Wow, she looks so different without her make-up on. "Um, nah Mom, it's cool. Ah, goodnight, um, I love you." "I love you too Meghan, get some rest and I'll see you in the morning." She turns back to the mirror and it's so sad to me the way she looks, like seriously Grandma-age old right now. As I walk into my room my cell vibrates at me. I can see a ton more new texts and missed calls on its screen but I just don't feel like dealing with all that crap right now. I turn the thing off and plug it into its charger on my desk. As I change for bed I can hear Dad coming up the stairs and then their TV's volume suddenly seems to get louder. I poke my head out to listen and I can hear the eleven o'clock news coming on;

"Live and in HD, it's ABC7News at 11 with Leon Harris and Maureen Bunyan. ABC7 News; always on your side."

"Good Evening, Maureen has the night off. Tonight Montgomery County Maryland Police, are searching for the person or persons, who shot and seriously wounded a seventeen year old Bethesda high school student, who was walking on his way to school early this morning at around seven am. Reporting live from the scene of the shooting is ABC7's, Kris Van Cleave."

Good evening Leon. I'm standing at the corner of Whitter Blvd and Lenox Roads in Bethesda, approximately a half mile from the victim's home. According to a spokes-person for the Montgomery County Police Department; seventeen year old Maxwell Galloway, a junior at Walt Whitman Senior High- located just three blocks north on Whitter Blvd behind me, was walking west here along Lenox Road when a small, silver colored sedan pulled up alongside of him and fired at least five shots, critically wounding the teenager.

According to witnesses, there was some profanity shouted from inside the car directed at Galloway prior to shots ringing out, including some slurs that were described as homophobic in nature. As the witnesses, a majority of whom were also Whitman students dove for cover, one of them managed to get a partial license plate number and a description of the vehicle. The witnesses also described the vehicle as having more than one occupant besides the driver. For more on that, we go to ABC7's Gail Pennybacker, who is standing by live at Montgomery County Police Headquarters in Rockville. Gail?

Good evening Kris, Leon. A Montgomery County Police spokes-person, speaking for Chief Thomas Manger's office, told AB7 News that detectives are searching tonight for either a 2003 or 2004, silver Honda Accord four door sedan with Maryland tags. Police said that the partial letters and numbers on the license plates were JCR dash 6 and two unknown numbers. Police are asking for the public's help in this case. Anyone who has seen this vehicle or knows anything about this shooting is asked to please contact them, or the Montgomery County Crime-stoppers program. Reporting live from Rockville, I'm Gail Pennybacker, ABC7 News. Back to you Leon.

Thanks Gail. For more reaction to today's shooting we now go live to ABC7's Kathy Park, who is standing by in front of the Galloway home in Bethesda. Kathy?

Good evening Leon. Tonight this normally quiet suburban neighborhood is stunned and shocked at the violence that filled its streets earlier today. Residents that we spoke to, said that they found this incident frightening, and are alarmed that the shooting happened at a time when so many children were headed for school. We also spoke with the Principal of Walt Whitman High School, who told us that extra counselors and crisis intervention teams will be available to assist students and parents tomorrow, and for the rest of this week.

Earlier this evening we tried to get a response from the Galloway family as they exited from Bethesda National Naval Hospital Center, but they declined to comment, and have not returned phone calls from us. Reporting Live in Bethesda, I'm Kathy Park, ABC7 News. Back to you.

Thank-you Kathy. According to Bethesda Naval Hospital spokesman, Lieutenant Commander Richard Perkins, since the time factor was extremely critical due to the life threatening injuries sustained, the decision to transport Galloway there was made because of the volume of the heavy rush hour traffic, combined with the ongoing road construction along Old Georgetown Road, which was causing major delays leading to Suburban Hospital's ER. Perkins also said that Galloway underwent six hours of emergency surgery and is tonight recovering in the Intensive Care Unit. This evening his condition is listed as critical and Perkins said that doctors are not saying what long terms effects the teen faces. Perkins further stated, citing the family wishes for privacy, doctors and hospital personnel will not be disclosing any additional information other than to say that his recovery is expected take some time.

Now, for our first look at tomorrow's weather, we go live to Doug Hill in the ABC7 News Doppler Weather Center. So Doug, can we look forward to more of the...

The TV is suddenly quiet and I can hear mom and Dad talking in low voices.