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Timeline

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Author Bio
Robin Miller is a senior at Gettysburg with majors in English and Religious Studies. She enjoys fencing, singing, and writing stories that make her mother question her mental health. After graduation, Robin hopes to be working in publishing, but will probably settle for whatever gets her out of her parents’ basement in Ohio.
Now:

She needs to be warned. I need to warn her. She needs to know. I see her in my dreams. She wears a death-colored dress and I know they’re coming following and there are lights in my head on my face and I climb into a rotten ditch. It crawls up my legs and steals my other shoe.

My first shoe my other shoe the one not in the hole in the road is gone. I threw it down a creek a lake a water so they would think I drowned and stop following me. But they don’t ever stop. They are in the grass the whispers the stares they walk in shiny shoes made out of cows that made them mad and they never stop. That was long so long ago but they’ve always been right there hiding watching waiting for me for her.

They were close when I threw my shoe away. They are close now. I will lose my other shoe. I can lose my shoe again. But she can’t. The girl they’re going for the girl and I need to tell her show her wake her. She needs to listen to me or they’ll come for her. They have metal teeth and eyes that shine like black oil like fire like cars. They say they’re helping they say get out they say they talk too too loud pounding in my blood.

I start walking again. Not too near the road but I still can hide if they come by. Sometimes I swear they see me but they just laugh their clanging their metal laugh and zoom past me throwing cigarettes sharp cans black coins at my head.

Then:

Well Leanne I said, I want to go out on a walk, but she said now little lady there are hobos and losers out there, and I said mom I know I’ll just meet Leanne near the fence by the clubhouse and she said I couldn’t. Mom says we hafta pray for those people who eat rat guts and sleep in our fields. Mom says I can’t go anywhere near those freaks.

I think it would be nice to live outside though. We could camp the whole year, and then we wouldn’t hafta go back to school. I think my mom just left for shopping or something. Let’s go outside now. Do you wanna see the clubhouse? Well my daddy made it for me. He said I was a big girl and needed a house for my big-girl life, but my mom thought it was stupid. She said I could get up to all kinds of mischief on my own.
Now:

I’ve walked for days and days and am closer now. I see the school the girl hates. The walls are red and solid it’s not full yet not quite yet. There’s people cleaning putting out chalk yelling at glowing boxes. The world is swallowing is blocking the sun. I watch for a while. I am still tired. They will not come here right here now. They know better.

The girl is safe here. From them. They want her to tear to break to eat her. Blood on my feet. Some toenails were stolen away. Blood red brown wet. Mine. They cannot take that away.

I will keep going I am getting close now. He will come for her. He came for me then they came and it never stops. Like a clock tick-tocking or the rain drip-dropping. He came for me. His soft stabbing voice with green vomit muslin.

He and the others. They pushed themselves inside me begging and screaming and fucking fucking fucking. Drip-drop tick-tock. I don’t remember much.

There is one of them. He is right there. His eyes are not red but they can change that if they want to. His shoes are brown are heavy are skin. I am rabbit-still. He said something. My feet move back. He says something again, louder. He wants to know why I’m here. Ha! He knows. He knows about her. He comes rushes runs forward and I am gone. I’m good at being gone. She won’t know how to be gone like me. I can teach her.

He told me he’d come for her. He tells me every day. He told me he’d hurt her I need to make it stop. The little yellow house. It’s for her should be hers no one else. I’ll tell her.

Then:

NO WAY? You should tell your momma about what Tommy done. If Tommy tried kissin’ me, Ida bashed his brains in right there. Fine, I promise not to tell. My daddy says I’m too young for boys. Aren’t these the prettiest trees? That little willow’s the best, it gets nice pink flowers in the spring.

Ohhhh. Didja hear what Ms. Penelope said after math? We’re gonna have that ball next week! You know, the fairy tale one! We gotta pick what princess to be… You can’t be Rapunzel! Your hair’s too short. Mine’s perfect for Rapunzel and we can’t both do that. I’ll need a new dress. This one’s too boring and dark. You could wear it and be Snow White! And make your brothers be all the sleepy mopey dopeys. And maybe Taaawmmy could be the Prince. We’re almost there, it’s a little past that fence.

Now:
Trees fade into trees into taller trees into mud into fields into more trees. How many more trees is the school from the little house? I should be there by now. There are houses glowing I feel so tired so tired my feet scrape over every dagger in the grass. I sleep for now. I would climb a tree I can't climb trees anymore. It's too dark to sleep. I can't climb trees since I was since before I was since I remember.

Sometimes to scare them away I show my hand. Some of them run away some can chop off fingers and get more metal ones to match their laughs. Mine don't. It goes no no three four five. I don't remember but it hurt. I think I cried and cried.

The girl. Can she one two three four five? They will get her. That will happen then he will happen they will happen. She needs to go. She needs to leave with me. The girl with the death-dress. Before they fuck her. They fucked me. Drip-drop tick-tock. They left a thing with me. They left it and it got big and it hurt hurt more than lost fingers hurt every where. I was hiding from them out out far away farther than this place. Trees and trees and trees I couldn't climb. It had a siren so they could find me. I wanted to smash it so it would stop the scream the noise the loud. I left it there noising. It's quiet now. The last time there it was white white bones.

I will get up now. The squirrels run around chasing and humping each other. Little circus clowns. I laugh too loud. I move on. Close close close now.

Then:

*Finally.* See it? It's hidden back by those elm trees. The whole thing's yellow because we had leftover yellow from the baby's room. But daddy let me paint the door blue because I like it best. We couldn't tell mom about the new paint we bought so you can't tell either. She shouldn't be back for a while yet, you think? Well, I'll just show you around and go back and play by the barn so she doesn't get mad. See, it's yellow inside too, I was gonna spill the paint so we had to use another color. I shoulda. Do you like the ladybug clock? Daddy says I'm his little ladybug so I gotta have a clock to match. I think it's pretty.

See how nice the light is? It's nice for drawing, but I'm not s'posed keep the paper out here because it'll get all wet or some raccoon'll steal it. It seems fine though. Wanna draw for a while? Just till the ladybug arm's at the six? Mom won't be back for a bit.

Now:

I see it now. It's full of light and the yellow is too bright she doesn't like it. She'll come with me she'll say why are we going I'll tell her we have
to go because they’re coming for her. They told me with the whispers and the laughter and the lights shining in my head on the road. They’ll come drip-drop tick-tock.

The girl will be afraid. I will tell her to stay away from them where to hide what to eat. Leaves of three let it be. She will be free be whole. We can go to go so far away no one will know. They know I am coming will try and stop me. Will put me on a white table and squeeze out my throat. Will hold me forever take out my tongue keep my screams labeled on a cold shelf. She will be afraid will be strong. She will be strong we will run run forever like deer on ice. They are always here they are here now in the glowing in the houses hiding and laughing and watching and fucking. We will go so far and hide they will never leave us.

They are laughing laughing with their teeth too shiny too sharp to be people. They are the cars the pavement the boys pinning lizards to the floor with needles the sad women handing out flaccid burgers the ragged man with his hand down his pants my pants staring staring staring.

I can tell her this I can warn her that is her life my gift. The yellow comes closer I see blue.

Then:

Didja hear that? Musta been a rabbit or something.
Lemme see what you drew! I like it, you should show Taaawmmy. No hitting! I was just teasing… You liiiiiike him don't you? I'm teasing!
You could be Rapunzel if you really wanted. Daddy said I'd be a good Sleeping Beauty. He says he'll help me with the costume but only if we work on it out here in our secret clubhouse. He already bought nice bright green cloth. He says mom's no good at sewing, but she makes her own dresses and Ms. Penelope says mine mom makes are real nice. He says she would just get in the way, so I should keep it a big-girl secret so she doesn't get mad. So you can't tell either! You keep two secrets and I'll keep one extra good. He says we'll make the sleeves really long so no one will make fun of my hand. It'll look good as new he said. I think they'll still notice and poke fun at me.

Let's go back home, those clouds look scary and daddy said it's s'posed to rain buckets tonight.

Now:

It is a trick. It is a trick she is not here. The door is off its hinges I couldn't even knock to go in. The back the far boards are resting against tree fingers and I can't see where crayons paper coloring should be. The yellow isn't yellow as it should be. They were here. They came and destroyed and I am too late. She is gone. They have her and she is gone. This
place did not protect her. This fucking place was supposed to stay until I came. It was supposed to help be here be strong we would leave it would fall into dust and clown room and she is gone. And they will take her everything take her away kill her over and over and over and over and over until there's nothing left. There's nothing left.

There is an *it* on the floor. I will not look I will not it is red it is round it is quiet. *It* is there *it* sends biting ladybugs everywhere my clothes veins gums. I choke on paper wings on air on nothing. Destroy it wreck it burn it all. I stumble outside make the spark.

It's beautiful burning the yellow the blue the roof my shirt. I howl and throw myself against tree fingers and lacey green. She is gone they are killing her. Light echoes through my skull. She the girl the princess outside bug girl. They cut her fuck her wax away her skin she is tiny now she is disappearing she is me and I left her alone because they knew I was coming and won't ever stop she is gone she is dead dying hurt afraid monsters forming they are here they are all around with lights dogs barking reaching out with their hands iron eyes and tick-tock drip-drop from every mouth from the shining house from me inside outside screaming I will find her save her heal her what is left what is left.