

Evil Things in the Happiest of Places

Kristin Cardino

“Stop it, Jeremy!” I managed to giggle out as the two of us were walking down Toronto Avenue. He kept trying to tickle me as we were walking closely next to one another on this chilly March evening.

“Oh stop it, Melis! You love when I tickle you,” Jeremy said to me as we continued on our stroll to the park. While we were walking, I kept getting the chills and, as we grew closer and closer to the park, more and more this feeling of uneasiness started to run throughout my body. With each step we gained toward the park, the more nervous I became. I wasn’t really sure what kept making me feel this way; the whole night had so far been perfect. Nothing out of the ordinary happened; it was just a typical Wednesday night for Jeremy and me.

“Melissa? Hello, earth-to-Melissa?” said Jeremy. I guess my thoughts were consuming me more than I realized.

“What? Sorry... I was just thinking about how funny that movie just was, and how excited I am to go to our spot at the park. It’s been forever since we’ve been there!” I said back to him, finally forgetting the uneasiness I felt. It really has been a long time since we’ve visited our own little spot – four months exactly – with all the winter’s snow and cold weather, the fifteen minute walk to the park was just so impractical.

“I know. I wonder if they changed anything this winter. Remember the first time we came back last year, and they had installed all those new benches? I hope they put some more in,” Jeremy said.

“I hope so, too. You know how much I hate sitting in the grass.” Jeremy laughed after I said this. He was probably thinking back to the time where we came to the park and were sitting in the grass all night talking, and the next morning I was covered in bug bites and couldn’t stop scratching for weeks. Just thinking about it makes me laugh.

This spot was always a positive place for us; it was somewhere in which we never fought and forgot about all of the evil things that can take place in this world. It was a place in which nothing mattered except the two of us and that nature that surrounded us.

But as we were rounding the corner to the park, that uneasy feeling I had shot right back through me like a ton of bricks, and this time I couldn’t shake it off.

“Jer, maybe we should just skip this tonight. For some reason, I just have a really bad feeling about coming here right now. It’s been bothering me the whole walk over here.”

“Calm down, Melissa. Nothing’s going to happen it’s our happy place. Plus, it’s 9 o’clock at night... who’s going to be in the park? Plus, you know I’d never let anything happen to you. Just relax.”

“I don’t know, Jeremy; I just don’t feel right about this. I just feel like something’s off balance and

it's really starting to make me uncomfortable." I said this just as we were entering the park. The street lights were on, so we were able to see a few feet in front of us, and as soon as we walked in, I could have sworn I heard someone yelping. And we both saw someone in the distance run off and hide.

At first, I thought my mind was playing tricks on me, until Jeremy grabbed my hand tight and stopped walking. He turned around, looked me in the eyes, and told me to stay where I was; he just wanted to move a little ahead of me to see why that guy took off as soon as we got somewhat near him.

Of course, being the chicken that I am, I refused to stay by myself and told Jeremy I'd walk with him but would let him lead the way. I couldn't stay there by myself! What if that guy came back from behind us and tried something?

The closer we moved toward the area in which the guy ran from, the more nervous I grew. The yelping sound started to grow weaker and weaker. And with each step, crazy ideas were running through my head about what could have just happened before us.

I was so deep in my thoughts of negative things that I didn't hear Jeremy telling me to turn around and look away! Before I could even react to the words I heard, I saw a young boy lying on the ground right in front of us, barely conscious and bleeding from the head. As soon as the scene before me registered, I looked away

as fast as I could and, like clockwork, tears automatically started streaming down my face.

Because now the spot Jeremy and I once thought of as peaceful and positive – a place in which all of the troubles we were facing in our everyday lives were just forgotten for a few moments – was now ruined. No longer was this our happy little home away from home, our safe haven. It was now a place in which we would no longer be able to escape to; it was a place we now had to escape from.