

The Sapphire Eyes

By: Carley Woody

Here I am again. Violently shaking on the bathroom floor, tears streaming down my face. I cover my ears to block out any thoughts that may slip in but no matter how hard I try, it doesn't work. They've already found their way into the depths of my mind. The pain from the slits in my arms are hardly noticeable in comparison to the growing void in my chest. My blood and tears mixing together to paint a picture of a girl too scared to speak her mind. A girl who manages to screws everything up. Every. Single. Time. I'm crying harder than ever before, my vision blurred by tears. Screaming in pain and frustration, I notice my hearing start to fade until the screams are replaced by the ringing in my ears. Suddenly, everything just stops. I feel nothing. Numbness overwhelms every other feeling I had, the void in my chest taking over my entire body.

Without a sound, I begin to clean. I start by hiding the razor back in the jewelry box under the sink. Inside it holds no jewelry, only bandages and the blade that shines back at me with a devilish grin. I look away and push it behind everything else, moving to clean the blood off the cool tile floor. I turn on the shower. As I'm about to remove my soiled clothes and clean myself off, I catch the sight of something in the mirror.

Slowly, I turn to see a girl with tired sapphire eyes burning into the hollow shell that is my body. They look at me like everyone else. With all the hate, judgment, and disappointment in the world. I look away, no longer able to look into those penetrating eyes. I examine the rest of the lifeless body. Faded black streaks of mascara tears still present on her lightly freckled, rosy cheeks. Her little button nose is covered in tiny freckles as well. Her pink lips slightly parted, they take short shallow breaths. Attached to the corner of these lips is a single strand of hair that leads up to a swirl of different shades of dark and light brown. All of the locks of hair have been tossed around into a tangled mess. Some pieces still stuck to her forehead. Even while looking like a disaster, you could almost mistake her for pretty. I move down from her face, my eyes scanning her clothes and body.

Her blue crop top hangs off one shoulder, flowing around her narrow frame. I continue to scan when my eyes catch sight of several deep red trails covering her arms. I follow each one up to a different cut, each one made by a different thought that resulted in emotional carnage. It's in this moment that I realize the broken girl in the mirror is me.

I begin to hyperventilate again. I rip my eyes away from the mirror and look at the destruction I've inflicted on myself. I run into the shower as fast as I can, forgetting I'm still fully clothed. I shove my head under the water to calm myself. Most would probably make the water colder in my situation but I make it hotter. I'm already always cold. I feel like I can't melt the ice that's beginning to trap my body. *Hotter*. The water needs to be hotter. My skin turning bright red from the scalding water. It burns deep into the cuts but it still doesn't feel hot enough. I try to make it hotter but the knob won't move any further. "DAMN IT!" I scream aloud. I try to

make do and let the heat wash away everything bad about me. Maybe I can burn away all the flaws.

Once I've come to my senses, I notice just how painful the boiling water is. I remove my clothes and slowly begin to turn down the heat, not too fast to shock my now fully exposed body. I stand stiffly until the water is freezing and give the water heater a little break. I stand like this for a what feels like an eternity but in reality, it was probably only a few minutes. Eventually, I shut the water off and reach for my black robe. I've learned that this is the best way to hide newly self inflicted wounds. When you have Social Anxiety like I do, you learn how to get around these thing unnoticed.

Once dry, I slip into my most comforting pair of pajamas I own. I wear these every time events like today occur. I'm not referring to what happened on the bathroom floor or in the shower either. I'm referring to what happened today. Today was the mark for my first week back at a public high school. I was homeschooled for most of my high school career, due to my Social Anxiety Disorder. However, since it's my senior year, my mom is forcing me to go back to school to get a partial high school experience. *She* wants to see me go to prom. *She* wants to see me up on the stand receiving my high school diploma at graduation. I don't know how I'd be able to get through those experiences without having a single anxiety attack. I hate being back at a public school.

When I was first diagnosed at the age of 10, it was only a mild case of Social Anxiety. However, over the years my anxiety only worsened and I had to be pulled out of school only a few weeks into my freshman year. I was the girl everyone knew for having an anxiety attack each time I came face to face with a crowd.

I was a *freak*. Everyone would point and laugh or they'd say, "Oh look, she's doing it again. Someone must be desperate for attention." That was the last thing I wanted. *Attention*. That word alone makes me nauseous. It's the last thing I could ever want. I just want to continue to go through life unnoticed. This way no one will look at me the way they used to and probably still do.

I look at the little white nightstand to the left of my bed where my alarm clock resides. I check for the time to see just how long I've been lost in my thoughts. "10:45..." I say to myself. It seems as though I'm always lost in thought. I can't speak to people so, I think to myself. Afterall, who else is going to listen? There's only one person I've learned to open up to and she has already gone off to college on the other side of the US. She's living out her dreams in NYC while I hide in my room in Southern California. That person was my older sister Lizzie. I called her Lizz for short. She calls me Junnie or June Bug. There's no specific reason. She's thought it was cute name for me ever since we were little. She thought June was too plain. So, after watching me as I played with lady bugs, she decided on the nickname June Bug.

We have a younger brother of the age of 16 named Jake. We always called him Jakey when he was younger. He doesn't mind if we called him that in the house when we're the only ones home, but he despises it when we say it around any of his friends. The main reason why I

haven't opened up to my brother is because I feel the need to be stronger around him and protect him. He's also not as understanding as Lizzy. I wish I didn't have to face my senior year without her. She's my best friend. She's my only friend now that I think about it.

When things first started getting worse, I remember asking my sister, "Lizz? Why is it that we say our lives are going downhill when things get bad and going down an actual hill is fun? It's the uphill that isn't fun but when things start to get better, we say things are starting to go uphill."

"You see, Junnie, when we start going down a steep hill, it seems fun at first because we still feel in control. When we start moving faster and faster, we start to lose that control and it's no longer fun. It becomes terrifying because you don't know how to stop or slow down. It's just like life. We make decisions that seem to be fun or for the better, not really knowing they could lead us downhill."

"What about the uphill?"

"Well, once you've reached the bottom of the hill or have finally stopped, you look forward to getting back uphill to the comfort of where you once were and as far away from that downhill as you possibly can." Those words have stuck with me ever since. Of course what she didn't tell me is that I would be curious enough to keep going back to that hill or a larger hill to see if I could go down but still somehow come out on top. This thought leads me back to the events of this past week. I hoped I wouldn't have to think about it any longer, but here I am. Thinking about it. *Again.*

Day one on its own was a wreck. My mom gave me my dad's rusty, old pickup truck after he passed away a few years back. Nobody objected to this because they all knew he was the only person besides Lizz that knew how to get me to open up. I drove his truck to school that day. When I pulled into the parking lot, I was horrified when I saw everyone had brand new cars. This meant my dad's stood out. I got out hoping no one would notice me anyway. I made my way up to the office to retrieve my schedule.

On my way to my first period class, I heard someone call out, "Hey look! Is that June Scott? I thought she didn't go here anymore."

"That can't be her. Why would that *freak* come back?" I kept moving. I didn't let myself freeze in my spot because that would only draw more attention and confirm their suspicions. At the start of each class, I handed my teachers a doctor's note concerning my Social Anxiety so I could avoid having to stand up in front of the whole class to introduce myself. I fear this only brought more attention to me. All day, people kept trying to get a better look at me. It got to the point that hiding behind my dark hoodie wasn't enough. I heard whispers of my return all day around the school. When lunch came around, things got much worse.

When I walked into the cafeteria, nearly everyone turned to face me and went silent. Everyone else turned to see what they were looking at and went silent too. *Oh no.* I felt my whole body go cold yet I was sweating profusely. My hands began to shake and that began to spread throughout my body like a wildfire. Soon, my whole body was quivering with fear. My

hearing was beginning to fade again. My heart was pounding so loud in my chest, I was sure everyone else could hear. *I'm gonna be sick.* Without thinking, I'm out the door running as fast as I can. I'm almost to the school exit when I slam into something. No. Definitely not a *something*. A *someone*.

I'm sent crashing to the floor. I swear, whoever I ran into could be mistaken for a brick wall. I can practically feel the scrapes across my skin from its rough surface. It seems the force of the crash had little to no effect on this person. Groaning, I begin to pull myself up but of course I can't even do that without making an even bigger fool of myself. I lose my footing, slamming my shoulder back into the ground. I let out a small yelp. I feel my face heating up. I must look ridiculous to this person standing over from me. I'm surprised they haven't left or started laughing already. Maybe they are laughing. I hear them saying something but compared to the ringing in my ears and pounding of my heart, their voice is nothing more than a murmur. I'm almost too scared to look up at them. All I see of this person are their simple black converse and jeans. When I'm about to pull myself up again, they reach out and lend a hand. I stare blankly at the hand for a bit, unsure of what to make of this. I take their hand. I never noticed how small my hand was. It's so tiny in the palm of their large rough one.

They hoist me up onto my feet. The ringing is beginning to subside. I look up to meet the eyes of this person. My eyes lock with familiar emerald eyes. "*June?*" My heartbeat is so fast now that I fear it will soon burst from my chest. The ringing has returned. *Not again...* I rip my hand from theirs and sprint for the doors again. "WAIT! JUNE!" I don't turn back. Once outside, I keep running in the direction of where I hope my home is. I burst through the door of my house. My mom had the day off. I just skipped school and mom is home. *Great...* I hear her call from the kitchen, "*June? Is that you? What the hell are you doing back from school?*" My feet are still frozen in the doorway. She rushes out of the kitchen and up to me. She begins to flood me with questions before I can catch my breath. Suddenly everything goes black and I collapse to the floor.

When I wake up, I'm laying in bed, unsure of how I got here. I hear a gentle knock at my door. My mother slowly opens the door of my bedroom. "I see you're awake. How are you feeling?"

"What happened?"

"You came home early from school. I was really worried. I tried to ask you what happened but you fainted. I had to carry you up here to your room."

"Oh...I'm sorry mom. I didn't mean to worry you or put you through that."

"It's okay sweetie but can you tell me what happened today?" I wanted to tell her but I just couldn't I couldn't even look her in her eyes. I was sat up in bed, staring at my hands folded together in my lap. For a while, we sat in silence.

She's your mother and deserves to know.

She won't understand.

Maybe this time she will.

How could she? I don't even understand myself...

I go back and forth debating with myself, my mother still waiting for a response. My mother grows impatient. She stands abruptly, letting out an irritated sigh that says everything I feared.

I will *never* understand you. She storms out of my room, slamming the door on her way out.

I began to weep into my pillow. *I'm so sorry...I don't know why I'm like this...*

That night I let the tears wash over everything. I almost feel as if I'm drowning in a sea of my own tears and sorrow. I eventually let myself go completely numb and let myself drift away into nothingness.

I had to walk to school the next day since I left my car at the school. I felt like such an idiot. The rest of the week just seems to blur together. Each day similar to day 1. I do my best not to have a repeat of Monday though. I force myself to stay until the end of each day. I was able to convince one of my teachers to let me eat lunch in her class while everyone was in the cafeteria. Her name is Mrs. Todd. Everyone always said that teacher was cruel but she's actually a very kind and gentle woman. No one liked her because she gave out more homework than most teachers. It was all very simple work though. Sometimes I don't understand people. Then again, they don't understand me either so I guess we're even.

I'm brought back to reality, not wanting to remember today. I don't want to remember but my thoughts start wandering to the events of today, Friday. I keep trying to force myself to sleep but I can't. Why does my brain do this to me? Can I just get one night of sleep where I don't have to recall the humiliation that is my life? I went all week without running into those emerald eyes until today...

I had managed to get to lunch without coming too close to an anxiety attack. I used my music to drown out the gossip of my return. I made sure to keep my head down to stay out of everyone's way and avoid their judgmental gazes that struck fear into my very soul. I sat in my usual classroom for lunch. I was actually having a decent day all things considered. Suddenly, the door opens and it's *him*. His eyes lock with mine and he's frozen in the doorway. He plays it off, walking over to Mrs. Todd. He whispers something to her. Her eyes flick over to me. I suddenly feel more self-conscious than I should. I know they're talking about me. Both of them have their eyes locked on me like I'm some sort of target. I'm just waiting for them to shoot. Mrs. Todd stands up from her desk across from me. "This gentleman has politely asked that I leave you two to talk in private for a moment. I feel it would be best if I respected his wish." She walks closer to me and whispers into my ear, "It might be good for you to talk to someone. Don't be scared, everything will be okay. I know this young man." I stare at her in complete shock and terror as she exits the room.

Once the door had been closed, the boy moved to sit at a desk next to me. I turn to face him and immediately begin to apologize for running into him and taking off without a simple apology or 'thank you' for helping me up. I'm rambling so fast that I almost don't catch him say my name. I quickly silence myself and look away, my face red hot from embarrassment. "June,"

he says it again. "Please look at me." Slowly, I turn to face him yet again. "You don't remember me, do you?" He's smiling but something behind his eyes seems sad.

"I'm not sure. I'm sorry. Should I remember?" I feel terrible not remembering him past Monday.

"No worries. I'm surprised you don't remember your old friend. Then again, it has been a few years." That's when it hit me all at once. *James...* "Yup, that's me." *Dammit.* I must have said that outloud. "But...how? The last time I saw you was before..."

"I know...again, it's been a long time. I'm sorry for leaving....You haven't been alone all this time, have you?" Concern thick within his voice. I let out a tiny laugh that I hope isn't too loud. I don't need to embarrass myself and lose him *again*. "I still have my mom and brother at home. Lizz went off to college last year in the fall."

"What about your dad? Don't you talk to him?" I look away. I can't look him in the eyes when I respond to this. "I can't..."

"What? Since when? You've always been able to open up to him." I feel tears stinging my eyes, threatening to spill over. "He died a two years ago in the summer..." The tears drip down onto the desk below me. Suddenly, James is has managed to wrap his arms around me. I'm brought closer to him. My head rests on his chest. He holds me tight. I never thought I'd feel his gentle embrace again...

I'm lost in his arms that show no sign of letting me go. Without warning, I'm brought back from my sense of security when the door swings open and I hear someone call, "Hey look! It's James and the giant *freak*." In that moment, James has pushed me away and is now shoving past the incoming flow of students. It's as if he wishes he hadn't been seen with me. "*You really are an embarrassment.*" I hear these old nearly forgotten words of the past. I stare back at the crowd of students they continue to surrounding me. They laugh at me as I now stand alone in a classroom full of teens. They begin ripping me apart with their words like sharks that are desperate for a meal and have just found themselves a whale carcass floating in the middle of the sea. They begin to move in on me. I feel as if I'm suffocating. *I can't breath.* I break into a sprint, shoving past the students. I keep moving towards the doors. Just like Monday. I break through the double doors and I'm engulfed in the blinding light of the sun. This time, I'm sure to jump in my truck and speed home.

My truck screeches as I whip into the driveway. I shut off the engine and race inside and up the stairs to my bedroom. I shut my door and immediately head to the bathroom. I crouch down in front of the toilet and immediately my lunch has come back up and stares at me from inside the toilet. I let it come until it's all out of my body and my stomach is empty like the rest of me. I rip off my jacket to reveal a blue crop top. I reach under my sink and pull out the old jewelry box. Inside hides that devilish blade. I it out and drag it across several sections of my skin, cutting deeper with each slash. I cry out, hot tears rolling over my cheeks. The pain is unbearable. I drop to my knees. The blade falls from my hand. Soon, I feel myself following after the blade. I lay on my side and begin to remember everything I wish I could forget. History just seems to keep repeating itself with me. Think I'm joking? Well...

Here I am again...