

The Forgotten Confession

Beep...beep....I blinked several times. My eyes are bleary and there's a slight buzzing in my ears that wasn't there before. I sit up only to crash back down in pain. Someone quickly comes running into the room I'm in. It's a nurse of some sort. She starts talking energetically but everything is hazy, and my head feels full of cotton. Drowsily, I close my eyes again and the lady leaves.

Once again the persistent beep of the heart monitor wakes me up. This time I'm able to look around my room and get my bearings. I'm in a sterile hospital room, with a bathroom in one corner, a recliner in the other, and a myriad of medical equipment in between. There's a mirror across from the bed, and my reflection makes me wonder. I looked completely fine. And I felt fine too, except for being super tired and dazed. Once again, the same nurse walked in, right on the hour. I guess they have a routine around here, or something. She seemed startled to see me awake, and began asking me a deluge of questions. I must have seemed so bewildered because she left the room, and brought in another person. "Hello, I am Doctor Stevens," he said. "I'm going to ask you a couple of routine questions to establish the situation, ok?" Numbly, I nodded my head.

"What is your name?"

"Ashley"

"How old are you?"

"Thirteen"

The nurse and Doctor Stevens looked at each other. He gently said, "No, Ashley, you are sixteen. It is 2018. You were born on May 19, 2002. You are sixteen." I stared at him dumbly. "How can it be 2018," I challenged him, "if it was 2015 yesterday?" He shook his head and the nurse left

the room. She rushed back in with both an ipad and another woman. She showed me the date. It was indeed 2018. Then the other woman spoke, “We think you have a case of short term memory loss. Can you remember anything that happened last year?” I realized I couldn’t. “The standard procedure is to let you leave the hospital with your family, and hope your memory comes back,” she said, “but with you, the situation is a bit more complicated. You see, you committed a crime with about ten other people. You were all from the same part of town, you all had at least one parent in jail, and you all went to the same school. Then nine of you fled town, right as twelve million dollars went missing from the bank, and you ended up here.” I can’t speak. This was not me. Both of my parents were good people. Neither one of them was in jail. And I went to a nice private school. How would I, a mere thirteen year old, or sixteen I guess, pull off a bank robbery? No, this wasn't right at all. Yet...three years is a lot of time. And Dad did always like to gamble. This can’t be happening. But a little voice in the back of my head says “Yes, yes it could. Look, this is how it happened: You were Ashley, a pretty private school girl. Then your dad gambled away your future, and you ended up in a gang in public school, with Dad in jail, robbing a bank to make ends meet for your prideful family.” I look up at all the faces staring down at me, and I ask the doctors, “So what now? I can’t remember anything, so you might as well let me go.”

As soon as I was discharged from the hospital, I headed to the address the doctors had given me. I walked up and down the streets, until I ended up in front of a random house. I felt the urge to look in the mailbox, and sure enough, there was a key. I walked in. No one was home, because according to the doctors, my family (a.k.a. my mom) had been on vacation, and I was living by myself for a week. It was a tiny house, but I immediately knew it was mine. There were photographs of me everywhere. Not my mom, not relatives or friends, just me. I had always been the

apple of my mom's eye. I was so tired that I crashed right then and there on the living room couch. That's when it all spilled out. I don't know if that's how it usually works, but in the dream I had, I remembered it all.

Ten people, clad in black, stealthily moved down the street. They were well equipped, with a ladder stolen from Mr. McGinley's lawn, a rope from the Thomas's backyard, and much more. They crept down to the bank, where the smallest of them all stepped forward. It was me. I picked the lock with skills I didn't even know I had and led them inside. The lazy guard was asleep, so one rope later he was trussed up like a turkey. Then they broke into the safe, and bolted out with the money. I stayed in the bank, according to the plan. Two doctors gave me a shot, and I blacked out.

I woke up with a start. It had all been a setup. The doctors at the hospital were in on the plan! They intentionally made me forget three years of my life to distract the police. They knew that the effects of the shot would only last forty-eight hours, but who would question a doctor's word? The police were so caught up with me that they completely disregarded the investigation until it was too late to follow the trail. I smiled at the cleverness of it all. And sure enough, when I went downstairs, hidden in a file marked "Savings for my Dementia-stricken Friend" was my cut of the money. One million dollars each, I'd call this one a success.

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