

## Fallin' For Ya

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I look into the mirror and evaluate my carefully chosen outfit, a lime green suit, matching with a mini skirt. My unruly hair is tucked neatly into a white hat. A name tag printed BONNIE ANDERSON gleams in the sunlight reaching through the open window. Not a bad way to start your eighteenth birthday. It's a wonder I got this far. I squint closer to my reflection. My face is not exactly what you would describe as pretty. Sure, I have lengthy lashes, but no one can see them due to the blond tips that make them seem like they are shorter. Sure, my hair is curly and glows different colors in the sun, but it frizzes up whenever it has a chance. I am, and will always be average, so the only conclusion is that God got my genes mixed up. But I have to be thankful for what I have. My light tan skin is what keeps me from being treated like the other mixed-raced kids in my high school who have a richer tone. My somewhat mediocre appearance keeps me safe. I can still hear the shrieks of my classmate when the white football team cornered him.

"Please. Please don't hurt me," he had whimpered, "Don't let them hurt me" The teacher had just stood there, watching as the boys had thrown him to the ground with a sickening thud.

"Please..."

The light in his eyes faded. They had ruled his death as an accident. That's when I figured it would be better to stay under the radar. I was a freshman then. Still hopeful that the world would change even if it didn't then. I guess a sliver of hope that the world has improved is what brings me here now, Kent University. Not too far from my town. The state's "best" college. They had scheduled my interview on the same day as my birthday. I guess that is pretty lucky. Maybe 1960 is the year of change. What's the worst that can happen?

There's a mob on the hill. Chanting and everything, and on the other side of the hill, SWAT soldiers, with shields and their guns loaded.

I cross the middle of a wide field on the way to the admissions office and pause to listen to what the racket was. There is constant screaming of "Free the soldiers!" and "Stop murdering our brothers!".

Those idiots. Can't they see that they're powerless against the government? We all are. It doesn't matter what color we are anymore. Even the whites are utterly ignored. But those fools keep at it and soon enough start throwing stones and newspapers at the soldiers as they begin to approach the students.

"This is getting out of hand!" I yell to a girl close to me who is lighting an alcohol-soaked newspaper on fire.

They begin to throw what looks like cans back. One of the "cans" roll to a stop next to me. I only have a second to read the label before it starts hissing. Tear gas. I fumble with my jacket to try to cover my face

and start running to the bus stop. I'm midway across the field of students when I hear it. Echoing through the now-silent crowd was a gunshot. As slow as the first one was, millions suddenly rang out and protesting wasn't a problem anymore. The crowd was screaming and running.

A girl stands, screaming at the body of a boy, no more than nineteen, bleeding out on the concrete. Crumpled. Lifeless. How could a bullet have reached back here?

Almost there. It is so close. I could almost touch it.

I... A sharp pain hits me near my chest. I look down and see blood blooming through my birthday outfit. The birthday clothes I had so carefully laid out for my 18th birthday.

Deafening ringing overtakes my ears while I crumple to my knees. I just have to get to the parking lot. The parking lot is safe. It's safe. I try to make myself stand up, but my eyes become dotted with speckles of black. I grab at the grass and pull my failing body to the nearest structure, a tree. I lean against it and my vision swirls. Just one more minute, Mom. I'll be there in a second.

No. I'm not in my bed. I'm in Kent. I just want to go home. My eyelids try to crash close, but I won't let them. I know if I do, I won't open them again.

A blurry figure with flaming red hair appears by my side. His frightened, emerald eyes stare into my soul, as he bites into his wrist. Crimson blood drips from his arm and then raises it to my mouth. My eyes droop a bit more and without thinking I take a sip of his blood. Sweet, metallic deliciousness. I continue drinking it and feel the wound in my chest close up. But it's not enough to stop the tiredness from catching up to me.

"I'm so afraid," I say, slumping back into the prickly bark of the tree.

"No. No!" the boy cries, his words comforting the ringing like a melody. Tears roll down his freckled cheek, touching his blood-stained lips, revealing a set of thin, sharpened canines.

He's upset about something. I wish I could comfort him. My eyes droop.

Good night Mom. See you in the morning. Love you.

And blackness consumes me and only the sound of the boy's voice echos through my mind, slowly fading out.

"I'm too late. I'm always too late."

"Please, Bonnie. Please."

Light. Almost blinding. The boy stands over me, hands on his face, leaning on the tree. He silently sobs onto the tree and starts turning to leave. The roar of ringing I heard almost a moment ago has slowly died out.

"Please," I whisper, building enough strength to raise my hand and rest it on his leg. "Don't leave me alone."