

*Carnations*

*Passage one - Stasis*

The students of Carnation Academy buzzed with life this morning, as they heard a new student would be joining. They wondered why a student was transferring so late in the year. Were they an outcast bullied out of their previous school? Perhaps a delinquent who got expelled or even a superhero who moved to stay undercover. The class placed bets on what they thought the new student would be like.

“I hope she’s hot. The girls in our class are such an eyesore.” Says one of the students, reclining a little too far in his chair.

“Like you’re any better. Didn’t your blind date stand you up?” A voice rebutted.

“Uhm...” He flails his arms pathetically as the chair under him loses balance, “O-objection hearsay!”

“What if the student is a boy?” Another student calls out.

“Oh, you’d like that wouldn’t you, dude.”

Suddenly, the professor slams a small stack of books on the desk in front of him. The sound echoes and the students’ laughter stops abruptly. He scans the room with stern eyes before beckoning me into the room.

Like a scene in a horror movie where the killer hides behind the door, the doorknob turns achingly slow.

The door swings open and the boys celebrate quietly amongst themselves as I walk to the front of the class.

I made sure to dress nicely for my first impression. I wore my hair down, dark locks falling gently over my shoulders. The school blazer hugs my waist tightly, and the pleated skirt accentuates my slender figure. A crimson red paints my lips with nail polish to match. I’ve been told that, at times, I look like a doll.

All the eyes in the room are on me. Either undressing me or trying to guess where I come from. One boy stares for a particularly long time, but I can’t tell what he wants. I don’t mind too much, but he’s a little bland for my taste.

“Why don’t you take the empty seat right there?” Says the professor.

A girl with wide eyes and wavy blonde hair gestures for me to head in her direction. “Hi, I’m Myra.” She whispers.

“Jane. Nice to meet you“

“You might have heard the class earlier, they’re a pretty rowdy bunch. You’ll get used to it soon enough though, I promise.”

“Honestly, it was kind of a shock. At a prestigious school like this, I expected everyone to be rather stuck up.”

“No way,” Myra says with a laugh, “We’re just like everyone else. Maybe even a little worse.”

The teacher clears his throat loudly and we take that as a sign to stop talking. When he began the lesson, I pulled a pink notebook out of my bag.

After what felt like forever, the lunch bell rings and students scramble to collect their belongings. Everyone rushes out of the door before the professor can get out his last sentence. I toss everything into my bag, except for my notebook, which I take special care after. With the bag slung over my shoulder, I step out into the corridor.

As I wander the halls, I marvel at the sight of my new school. Black flooring reflects flickering light from the chandeliers above. Bright red lockers line the halls, reminiscent of Remembrance Day poppies. The doors of each class are adorned with golden name plates as if every professor were the prime minister.

*No wonder the tuition cost is so high*, I murmur.

The echo of idle chatter bounces through the hall. That’s when I turn the corner and see Myra again.

She’s leaning against the lockers, a large group of students surrounding her. She stands out, like a white figure at a funeral.

The bland boy is there too, hovering over Myra’s shoulder. Even though she’s talking to someone else, he looks at her so attentively. He’s like a puppy waiting for his master’s command.

I try to turn back before anyone sees me, but Myra shoots her hand up, signaling me to stop where I am.

“Bye, Andrew! Bye, guys!”

She quickly waves to the group and does a little jog to catch up with me.

“Where are you headed?”

“Cafeteria. That’s where I think I’m going.”

“Just follow me, I know this place like the back of my hand. I can show you how to survive this place, too, if you'd like.”

I put up my hands in protest. “No it’s okay, I’ll figure it out,” I start before she physically cuts me off.

“As student council president, I, Myra Yuen, am obligated to make all students feel welcome here at Carnation Academy.”

“Do they make all the student council members recite that, or just you?”

She laughs. “Just me.”

“Sounds like a pain.”

She murmurs under her breath, “It is.”

I don’t think she meant for me to hear, but I did.

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*Passage two - Rising action / Midpoint reversal*

Andrew drags Myra into the empty classroom, leaving the door ajar.

I knew he wasn’t the brightest student, but God, I didn’t expect him to be this careless.

I crouch down, watching them through the gap.

“Okay, what was so important that you had to pull me away from my girlfriend?” Says Myra, rubbing her wrist.

“It’s... actually about her.”

“Oh my God, Jane was right. You are trying to pry us apart.”

“Yes, I- No, wait. I-it’s for your own good, Myra.”

She rolls her eyes, “How is sabotaging my relationship for my own good?”

Andrew takes a deep breath and rubs his hands on his pants.

“Jane’s insane.”

“What?”

“I know you think she's perfect, but it's all a facade.”

“You don’t know anything about her,” Myra snarls. “She trusts me with everything, there’s nothing she hasn’t told me.”

Andrew scoffs, tongue in cheek. “Did she tell you that she held me at knifepoint?”

Myra stares at him, her eyes unreadable.

“She,” He freezes for a second. “She got jealous of how close we are. Hell, she got jealous of anyone who looked in your direction. Jane stalked you, controlled who you talked to, and got upset whenever you went somewhere without her. Is that not concerning to you at all?”

Myra watches him calmly, an amused grin creeping onto her face.

“You’re smiling? Seriously? Are you even listening to me?”

“Of course, I’m listening-”

“No, Myra, you’re not!” He was shaking now. “Jane pulled me into the science lab and held a box cutter up to my throat. S-she told me if I ever came in between you two, she would cripple me, that I would never be able to take care of my family again. And here I am risking it all, only for you to have that stupid look on your face.”

“Andrew, all my life I’ve sought the approval of others. No matter what I did I was never perfect enough for my parents, my professors, and apparently not for you.” She turns to the window, watching a spider spin a fly in its web. Her voice softens. “Jane... Jane gets me. She knows how hard all of this is on me.”

“I would too if you only told me.”

“No, you wouldn’t. Even now, you’re judging me. But Jane never would, because she loves me.”

Andrew paces back and forth, footsteps quickening alongside his heart rate.

“Myra, why do you think I’m doing all of this?” He stops in front of Myra, grabbing onto her shoulders as if trying to shake her back to reality. “It’s because I love you, I always have.”

*Oh.*

I feel every muscle tense. My blood pressure rises so high I feel like I'm about to burst.

"You don't love me, Andrew, you love the idea of me." Myra thrashes, "Everything you know about me is a lie I made up to get people to like me. You're just another boy who was dumb enough to believe it."

Andrew's arms fall to the side.

He opens his mouth to speak, but no words come out. The solemn atmosphere makes the vacant desks feel like tombstones.

"Is that all you wanted to tell me?" Myra asks quietly.

He nods.

She wipes her palms on her skirt before getting up and making her way to the door.

I slowly get up, praying my knees don't pop.

As I turn to duck inside another classroom, I hear the footsteps stop.

Myra pauses for a moment before speaking again.

"Thank you for everything."

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*Passage three - Critical choice / Climax*

"So why'd you call me into the lab? You couldn't wait until we got home?" Myra asks, caressing my cheek.

I grab her hand and shove her onto a chair. "I'm not stupid, Myra. I know what game you're playing."

She blinks in confusion. "What the hell are you talking about?"

"You're too close to Andrew."

"We're childhood friends, of course, we're going to be close."

“The way Andrew wipes food from your cheek, slings his arm over your shoulder, and asks questions he already knows the answer to just to hear your voice, that should be my job!”

She winces as my grip around her tightens.

“The poor boy is hopelessly in love with you and you are blatantly entertaining it!”

Myra yelps in pain and pulls her hand away.

“Ow, Jesus Christ, Jane!” She rubs the red handprint on her forearm. “It’s not my fault he’s in love with me! He’s liked me for years and has never done anything about it, you have nothing to worry about.”

“Nothing to worry about?” I turn my back to her, laughing in disbelief. Did she not care about my concerns at all? When I encouraged Myra to be selfish and prioritize herself, this wasn’t what I meant.

I start pacing back and forth, “I had to worry about him spreading lies about me, spending all his time with you, touching you, trying to flirt with you,” I whip my head around to face my girlfriend, “even confessing to you.”

Myra’s eyes widened, “H-how did you know about that?”

“I’ve always seen behind your smoke and mirrors, Myra, I just didn’t say anything. I thought maybe you’d come to your senses.”

“Why were you spying on us?” She yells.

I raise my volume to match hers. “Why weren’t you honest from the start?”

“Jane, I had everything under control. Why didn’t you trust me?”

I kneel to caress her cheek. “Myra, my love, it’s not that I don’t trust you. It’s him I don’t trust. I don’t trust any of those losers and creeps around you.” I tilt her chin up to face me. “Look at how they’ve already begun to corrupt you. Lying and manipulating me to act this way.”

Despite my force, she can’t bring herself to look at me directly. She’s not sure what to think, but I know this is what she wanted. Attention is one hell of a drug.

She shuts her eyes tight, bracing for something.

Suddenly, I crash into the desk behind me and fall to the floor. The force of her foot knocks the wind out of my lungs. They burn.

Myra shoots up out of the chair, looking at me in shock.

“Myra,” I start, chest still heaving. “What the HELL was that!?”

Her eyes dart back and forth between the door and me. I decided to take advantage of her hesitation.

“You won’t leave me here, will you?”

As if I dared her, Myra dashes to the other side of the room. I scramble to my feet and chase after her.

Myra picks up a beaker and holds it above her head. “Don’t take another step, Jane. Don’t you fucking try it.”

“Myra, please please don’t do this. You won’t hurt me, right? You won’t judge me. You’re not like the others. You love me. You love all of me.” I run my fingers through my hair, desperately trying to hold onto my sanity. “I feel the same way! I’m the one who listens to you and- and supports you through everything. I know all your dirty secrets and hobbies and love you despite that.”

The arm above her shakes as she slowly starts to lower it.

“Please put the beaker down and we can talk this out. Get rid of that... distraction and let me take care of you-”

“JANE, DON’T TELL ME WHAT TO DO.” Every vein in her body looks like it’s about to burst, but her voice softens when she continues again. “Andrew was right. I can’t love you like this.”

*No... No, no, no, no, no, this can’t be happening. She can’t do this to me. Myra would never treat me this way. He’s brainwashed her.*

My head begins to spin and I take a step back, blinking rapidly in disbelief.

Suddenly, she throws the beaker to the ground, glass shattering around my feet. Without a moment's hesitation, Myra sprints out of the room.

“Get back here! You can’t leave me, too!”

I danced around the broken shards and ran out after Myra, but in an instant, she was gone.

Standing alone in the grandiose halls, my panting echoes throughout the abandoned school.

“This is all his fault,” I choke out. “This is all Andrew’s fault.”

Just then, it hit me. I know where Myra’s headed.

I dash out of the building and run down the street, stopping at a house two blocks away. I duck into the bushes and peek through the windows, spying on the people inside.

“Oh my god, Myra, what happened?”

Myra sputters some nonsense before Andrew grabs onto her shoulders. She gazes deeply into his eyes and lets him coach her through a few deep breaths.

“J- Jane was hysterical! She was yelling and bargaining, doing anything to get me to stay with her. She spied on our conversation earlier and...”

“She hurt you?!”

His eyes widen as he notices the handprint on her arm that’s begun to darken. Andrew reaches out to her and she flinches.

“Myra, you can trust me. You’ve seen me patch up my brother’s before,” he takes a deep breath before continuing. “I’m sorry I got upset with you before, but please, let me help you.”

Myra hesitantly takes his hand and I start seeing red again.

“Take a seat on the couch while I lock the door. I was in such a rush I nearly forgot-”

The two yelp as I barge through the door, one hand tucked behind my back.

“God, Andrew, you’re so forgetful. What is this, the second time you let me intrude in a conversation like this?” I say, before rushing towards Myra.

He runs in front of her, but I pick up the speed. The force of my body slams him to the ground, knocking the wind out of his chest.

Andrew gasps as I climb on top of him. I sit on his abdomen to stop him from getting up, but I have more trouble pinning down his arms. The boy thrashes about before punching me in the face and a familiar metallic taste fills my mouth.

I spit the blood into his face, blinding him temporarily. His hands rush to his eyes and start wiping them frantically.

I waste no time pulling out the boxcutter I hid behind my back. A quick slash across the forearms leaves him unable to curl his fingers, let alone hit me back. I also cover his face with a throw pillow to muffle his screams of agony. As Andrew lies helplessly on the floor, I turn my attention back to Myra.



Myra falls to her knees the second our eyes meet. Her focus darts back and forth between me and the boy I left battered and bruised. As I step closer, her face contorts with disgust and fear.

“What’s with that look? Do you really think I’m taking this too far?”

She suddenly latches onto my leg, nails digging into my skin. “Jane, don’t hurt him anymore,” she sobs. “He doesn’t deserve this. He was only trying to help me, please let him go.”

“Andrew knew exactly what he was getting into.” I say, prying her hands off of my leg, “I told him not to interfere, this is simply the consequence of his actions.”

I sit down next to Myra, gazing into her teary eyes. “What’s wrong, my angel? Isn’t this what you wanted?” I plant a soft kiss on her forehead. “This is what it means to be loved.”

She doesn’t speak but pulls me into an embrace. Admittedly, I hesitate before pulling her closer. Mere seconds pass, but we stay like that for what feels like forever. Suddenly, our peace is interrupted by Myra’s sharp gasps for air. She stares at me in disbelief as a blood stain grows on her shirt.

“I’m sorry, Myra, but you’re too perfect for this world. I hope you’ll forgive me.”

Myra uses the last bit of her strength to grab me by the collar and pulls me into one last kiss.

When her grip finally slips, I continue to hold her tight. Clinging desperately to her hair and clothes, breathing in every last bit of her.

*Dying on the lips of my lover doesn’t sound like a bad idea.*