

THREE DAYS

a novel by
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Four a.m.

Four o'clock in the morning, with nowhere to go or be or do. Sitting in Ryder Park on a bench, a piece of paper in one hand, a newspaper on my knee. The morning is night and the air is cold wind. This is a dream.

This is a dream because the bench overlooks not a river, but an open grave. It is my roommate's grave. I am here to give her eulogy, and I've done it before. I have that dream a lot. This dream is different.

The newspaper is real.

The newspaper is real, I bought it for fifty cents because I needed to see it in print, I needed the words, indifferent, impersonal, written by someone else, to start the story. In the dream, I run my fingers down the page, and the words cling to my hand. I can see them, like the red webbing between my fingers when I shine a light against my skin. I can see the words, but now the words are reforming, becoming accusatory. No longer saying "accident," "drunk driving," "case closed." Now saying "murder," "murder," "murder." I try to wipe my hand on my pants, and I move the newspaper. I look down again.

As I look at it, the picture changes. No longer a car dragged from a river, it is now a face. A face I know. I can't read the words, but I know what they say, because this

newspaper is also real. It is even more recent than the first. It says, "Family Mourns Loss of Only Daughter." It speaks of grade point averages, chess club memberships, it does not mention the last nine months of her life, it neglects the gestation period of her depression, and it glosses over her suicide. I went to her funeral. I gave her eulogy.

In the dream, it is time for me to speak over my roommate's grave. In the dream, I look at the other piece of paper, the one in my hand. There is blood on this paper. The blood is not real. I do not try to wipe it away as I did the words of accusation. The paper is a suicide note. It is real. It was mailed to me the day she died. In it, she asked me to give her eulogy. In it, she said many strange things. In the dream, both papers vanish. The blood and the newsprint vanish. I am wearing a pair of low-slung shoes; they sink into the dirt as I move to the gravesite. At the bottom of the grave, I see a scarf, caught on the branches of a shadow tree stretched out over a coffin. It is her coffin. It is his name on the tombstone. Those words, too, are indifferent, cold. I trace them with my eyes as I speak.

The story begins.