

# **THE KINDNESS OF A STRANGER**

**Grade 11 final short story writing assignment**

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"Okay let's make this quick. My children are still waiting for me at school." A police woman leaves the morgue and walks into the interrogation room. There is a 11-year-old boy sitting near the table. His arms are crossed and he is poker faced. Police woman is surprised to see such a cold face from an 11-year-old boy. Like thick unbreakable ice. He is looking outside through the small window in the interrogation room.

"What is your name?"

"Bryan. Bryan Keen Reddington."

Bryan is an orphan. When he was five, he lost his family and the ability to walk normally. His right foot was damaged at that time and now he is lame. There were no relatives who could take him and so he was sent to the orphanage on the outskirts of the town.

"What do you know about Elizabeth Keen? "

The police officer writes down the name quickly and at Bryan. But Bryan still looks outside. The clouds look quite heavy today. Apparently today is not a good day.

"After my parents died, she treated me the best. She moved to the house in the back of our orphanage at the same year I went into the orphanage. She had a nice little garden and raised five chickens, one ginger yellow cat and a Pekingese dog. She was very good at baking and I know this because I have tasted her food. I didn't know that was her full name."

The police officer is very surprised by Bryan's answer. The Elizabeth Keen that Bryan describes is quite different to how others describe her.

"Do you know what other people think about her? "

"At first we all called her Mrs Creepy because our teacher in the orphanage called her that. They tried to talk to her but she acted very creepy. 'She wore an apron which was white with black spots, like cowhide. When she spoke she mumbled and when she fed the chicken she liked to mumble too. I heard her laugh one time and it sounded like a chicken. Oh and the house looks horrible too. When it is foggy in the forest it looks like a monster.' That is the reason why they never bring us to that area for games anymore and told us to not go in that area. They are all stupid. They are always wrong about other people." Apparently according to Bryan's face, he doesn't like the people in orphanage.

"So how did you meet her?"

"I didn't go to that area at first." Bryan looks back to the police officer. "I didn't leave the orphanage much because no boys want to play with a lame boy who is not as fast as they are. But three years ago at noon, the boys told me they needed one more person to play hide-and-seek and asked me if I wanted to play and I joined them. In fact they just wanted me to stay in the forest for several hours so they left



without telling me. I was the person who was going to find everyone. After I searched the other parts of the forest I went toward Mrs. Creepy's house."

It was a great day. It was the beginning of spring and there were not many leaves yet so the forest was full of sunshine. The stream had started to melt and the birds had come back to this area. Under the sunshine the house was not as horrible as the teacher said. Chickens were walking and relaxing in the garden. The tulips surrounding the garden hedge were open. Bryan could tell that there were some cookies just finished and it smelled just like the cookies his mom made for him. This reminded Bryan of weekends before his parents died. On those weekends, he hung out with his friends at the park near the house and when he was tired he could walk back to the house and enjoy the chocolate cookies his mom made. Bryan's mom always knew what time Bryan would come home.

"I stood there longer than I was supposed to and the Pekingese found me. He started to bark at me and after that she came out of the house and saw me. She was still wearing her apron and oven gloves. Her grey hair was shining under the sunshine and her smile looked really nice. I felt like she was not creepy as others said. She invited me into the house and let me try her cookies. She also grabbed a cup of milk and turned on the TV to play cartoons. Her cookies tasted just like my mom's and I stayed there a little bit longer. I actually stayed until dinner time and she sent me back and gave me some more cookies. She told me I could go visit her and I did." Bryan's face is softer now. He looks at police officer. Police officer finds sunshine in his eyes.

"What did you do?"

"At first we just watched TV. She always made me some sweets, like cupcakes or chocolate cookies. During the ads we always chatted. She told me about her



family. Most of her family had died. The worst story was about her granddaughter. There was a thief who broke into her granddaughter's house at night when her granddaughter was up to drink some water. The thief killed her and her husband. Then the thief tortured their only son. He tried to kill the boy but a neighbor happened to come by and knock the door. The thief ran away. She wanted to raise that child but the people told her not to. She was too old to even

take care of herself and it would not be possible to take care of another child. She didn't get a chance to raise the boy. So sad." Bryan turns his face to the window again. The clouds are starting to close in on each other and the sky becomes heavier and heavier.

"The second year she realized that I like reading novels. There are not many books in the library in the school so sometimes she would borrow some for me from the town library. She also bought me books for Christmas presents. She was not creepy at all, really. She made my life full of hope. She was just like my family."

Bryan's eyes are a little bit red and so is the police officer's. She is starting to feel sorry for this boy and the lady. As a mother she could imagine the feeling of losing your whole family.

"Is there anything weird happened before yesterday? Has she been acting strangely recently?"

"A few days ago, she told me she was going to leave for about 4 days. Right after she came back she went to the orphanage find me. She said would bring me to the town and walk around. She said she had already talked to my teacher and they had allowed her to do that. She was really happy when she said it."

"So she took you out yesterday?"

"Yes. She got me after breakfast time. We went to the bookstore in the town and she bought me some books. We also went to the ice cream shop on the street. The good one. We were...so happy."

"What time did you go to the hardware store?"

"On the way back and that was our last stop. She said she wanted to get another good knife and when she was deciding, those people came in with guns. If I could go back to that time, I would rather just go home."

“What happened?”

“Everyone was screaming at first because suddenly there were guns pointed at their heads. We were told to get down and not scream. That was the time I saw that devil.” Bryan starts to shake. So does the window. The police officer just realizes that it has become really dark outside and there is lightening breaking the sky into two pieces. She sees the face of Bryan. It is struggling. And the thunder comes. But there is no rain yet.

“It was him. After so many years I knew it was him! He had shaved his hair but I remember his tattoo and his face. He was the person who killed my parents! Thank God I was so close to him and there were a lot of weapons near me. I was behind him and there were two counters between us. He was hurrying the shop owner to put money in the bag. The other robbers were grabbing things from the counters. If I climbed slowly and quietly no one would notice me. It was the perfect time for revenge.”

“Elizabeth was going to pay for the knife. I told her that the person who killed my parents was standing right there and thanked her for her care by silently mouthing out the words. She seemed shocked. I secretly grabbed a sharp knife in my hand and slowly moved in his direction.”

Bryan tried to control his breath but the sound of his breath and his heart beating resounded through his whole world. The devil who destroyed his family and ruined his life was in front of him and it was time to finish it. He knew he would probably go to jail but the life he was living had no future. Elizabeth was good but she could not take care of him forever. She was not his relative. It was really kind of her to look after him and he appreciated that but he needed to finish this devil and end the nightmare that he lived everyday. He no longer felt disabled by his damaged leg.

“I was close to him and that was the time I heard the gunshot and there was blood on me. I thought he had found me but a few seconds later I realized that it was not mine. It was the devil’s and...Elizabeth’s.” Droplets of rain start to fall.

Bryan takes a deep breath. “She held the knife and thrust it into his heart. The devil..... killed Elizabeth by his gun.”

People screamed again and the robbers were shocked. They grabbed the money from the owner’s hand and left the shop quickly. But Bryan didn’t realize that. He ran to Elizabeth and held her. He tried to stop the bleeding with his hands but it didn’t work.

“Don’t cry Bryan.” Elizabeth was smiling but her laugh was stopped because of the blood flowing out from her mouth. “Remember to be kind and courageous for the rest of your life. You love books. You should read more. Try to go to a university

and there is still some money in my bank account. I found lawyers a few days ago to make you become my heir. It should support you for the first year of university. Use that.....”

The police officer wipes her eyes and Bryan starts to sob. “She said she was not there at the day my parents died and she could imagine how hard it was for me. She said... ‘You know your middle name is my family name right.’...”

Bryan uses his hands to cover his face. He cries out loud.

“She was my great-grandmother.”

The rain starts to pour down.