

Chapter One

⊗ LAST DAY FIRST VISION ⊗

Bump-bump, bump-bump, bump-bump, rattled Chris' head against the dingy window of the big yellow school bus, that roared down Ellington Road, delivering Chris and his little sister home after a long day of school. Although the blaring noise of the engine shuddered him sore, he became one with it and followed his heavy eyelids into a peaceful sleep, that is, until he was awakened by a poke in his side.

"Chris, wake up!" Casey whispered pulling her short brown hair back into a ponytail. "Cleofus is coming!"

Chris' eyes popped open and he sat up as if an alarm had gone off in his ear. It was the last day of school and he didn't want any trouble, however, everyone knew the name Cleofus was synonymous with trouble and Chris knew that's exactly what he was bringing. His little sister Casey sat with her arms folded and watched his every move.

Cleofus made his way down the aisle with his two loyal followers Pete and Everett in tow. This small, but villainous crew brought fear and intimidation to most of the kids on the bus and picked on those who let them.

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Actually, Cleofus was the one to be feared. The victims often looked into the bus driver's big rearview mirror hoping to make eye contact with her image - a trite cry for help. But instead, she would ignore the pitiful blushed faces, focusing her eyes back on the road, pretending she didn't see a thing because, she too, was intimidated by the bully and did not want to get involved. Instead, she often rushed Cleofus home first to put the children out of their misery and her out of her irritation.

Cleofus stopped at the seat in front of Chris and Casey, and grinned down at the helpless passenger who sat there. It was a boy named Emanuel Amin, small for his age, and frightened speechless at the sight of the bully. Not knowing what to expect he tightly clenched his empty book bag with a gaze of terror fixed on Cleofus' face.

"Hey Pete," Cleofus called turning around, "how much have we collected so far?"

The crony pulled a crumpled wad of money from his pocket and began to count.

"Thirty-two dollars and seventeen cents," he said giving Emanuel an unfriendly smile.

Cleofus turned back to Emanuel.

"Pay up little punk!" he spat. "It's the last day of school, and I need enough dough to get me through the summer!"

"I...I gave you five dollars this morning! That's all the money I had," he rebutted trying to control his breathing.

"Well," Cleofus said balling up his chubby fist, slowly hitting it inside of his other hand, "Looks like you're gonna have to pay ... for not paying up!"

"But I did, you took all I had!" Emanuel cried.

Chris had seen and heard enough. All eyes were glued and ears were peeled waiting to see what Cleofus might do to Emanuel if he could not produce anything. Even though the others truly felt sorry for him, they were too afraid to intervene and cast down the biggest bully in the entire school.

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However, Chris looked at Cleofus and tried to figure out what was it about him that had everyone so afraid.

Is it the big mole on his chin that looks as if it possesses some type of super power? He thought. Or, maybe it's his huge belly that peeks through the bottom of his shrunken shirt. He couldn't exactly figure out what it was, but he pondered crazy possibilities.

Chris looked at Pete now, who was tall and thin. Chris wondered,

Now why does this guy obey this guy's every command?... I know, I know, Cleofus probably told him he would feed him if he would listen to him. Chris laughed to himself.

Cleofus had Emanuel by the collar and was about to strike him when Chris jumped up from his seat.

"HEY!" he shouted, startling Cleofus.

He froze in mid-swing, fist in the air, and look at Chris as if he'd lost his mind. Emanuel's small body was rigid with fear and his eyes were shut tight anticipating a plunging blow when Cleofus answered, annoyed.

"How can I help you?"

"I just have a question for you," Chris stated sarcastically. "What makes *you* think *you* can just go around beating people up if they don't give you what doesn't belong to you?"

Embarrassed Cleofus looked around and saw that everyone on the bus was snickering.

"I'm about to shut that smart little mouth of yours," Cleofus said to Chris, releasing Emanuel's collar.

"Whoa, whoa wait a minute," Chris chuckled, "I don't do well with threats. It's three of you and one of me, and I'll still take you down!"

"We'll, see about that," he said with a grin.

"Casey, move to the back," Chris demanded.

"No! I'm not moving anywhere. It looks like it'll be two on three," she said standing up looking Cleofus straight in the face.

"I don't have a problem hitting a girl – especially one that's out of

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line," Cleofus said.

"Three on three!" A voice yelled from the back.

A guy Chris recognized but didn't know stood up.

"Four on three!" another voice yelled.

"Five on three!" someone else chimed in.

Chris smiled as he watched the bus gain confidence; he looked up at the bus driver and saw her smiling too. She was so excited she decided to make Cleofus her last stop to make sure he got what he deserved. The children continued to count off, six... seven... eight... nine! Chris placed his hand in his brown hair, raised his thick eyebrows, and gave Cleofus a victory smile.

Emanuel stood up and said, "Fifteen on three!"

Cleofus jumped at him as if he was about to attack and Emanuel jumped back and hit his head on the window.

Cleofus laughed and said, "Looks like it's still fourteen on three."

"No matter what it is, you're out numbered," Chris said. "So if you're smart, you'll take your seat in the back."

"Not before giving me my money back!" a voice screamed from the front.

"Yeah! He took my money too!" another person shouted.

People started to complain about the money Cleofus had taken from them and how they weren't able to eat lunch. The bus became filled with loud, chattering complaints and kids clamoring to get their money back as Cleofus' face turned tomato red.

"Well, Cleofus, looks like your gonna have a broke summer after all," Chris said.

Those who had been bullied all year by Cleofus approached Pete with their hands out. Pete looked at Cleofus, and when he didn't say anything, he started returning the money back to them. Cleofus stomped to the back and took a seat, looking at Chris with rage in his eyes.

Chris held out his hand to Pete, "Five dollars please."

"We didn't take any money from you!" Pete complained.

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"Emanuel's money," Chris insisted and waved his head towards Emanuel.

Emanuel held his hand out; Pete rolled his eyes and shoved the money in his hand. Emanuel smiled as he looked up at Chris with a sigh of relief because Pete had given the whole thirty-two dollars and seventeen cents away; and there were still kids in line waiting for their money.

"I don't have anymore!" Pete shouted with his hands up.

"You should've thought about that before you started taking our money!" One little girl yelled.

"Yeah!" More kids retorted, as the angry mob ganged up on Pete and Everett forcing them to the back.

The bus pulled up to the middle class neighborhood where Chris and Casey finally got off. The bus came to a slow screeching halt as Chris left his seat and headed for the door. He looked back and saw one of the kids in a nose-to-nose combat with Cleofus and shook his head with a smirk.

"I don't care if you're outta money. Give me your watch!"

"But my dad gave me this watch," Cleofus argued.

"And my mom gave me the money you took!!"

"Yeah!!" The kids began chanting.

Chris and Casey made their way to the front of the bus.

"See ya later," Chris said to the bus driver.

"Have a nice summer," she said smiling at them.

They waved good-bye and got off the bus.

"Wait!" They heard a mealy voice call out. "I'm getting off here, too!"

Chris turned and saw Emanuel hurrying down the stairs of the bus just as it was preparing to leave. Just then, Cleofus let down his window and yelled out, "You're a dead man Chris!"

"Aw!" Chris hollered back, "why'd you wait until I got off the bus?" He flicked his hands in the air as the bus tore off down the street.

"Can't stand him, Chris," Casey said.

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"Ah, don't worry about him, he's no threat," he said to his little sister. He then turned to eye Emanuel and said. "So, I haven't seen you get off here before."

"I just want to thank you for what you did for me," Emanuel said timidly.

"Not a problem." Chris responded, "but you gotta learn to stand up for yourself or this will happen again."

Dropping his head Emanuel acknowledged that Chris was right.

"That's why he never messes with you, huh?" he asked Chris.

Chris felt really sorry for him. Throughout the school year he had witnessed Emanuel being bullied at least a dozen times, not just by Cleofus, but by others too. They preyed on his size and his weakness.

"How old are you?" Chris asked him.

"Thirteen," he responded looking up at Chris.

"Thirteen?" Casey yelled. "I would've guessed ten!"

"I know, I'm small for my age," he said scratching his messy head.

"Why don't you tell your parents that he bullies you?" Casey asked,

"So they can contact the school - ya know - fix the problem!"

"My parents are in Israel, I live here with my aunt, who doesn't speak much English," he explained. "Plus...it's embarrassing. If she knew this was going on it would only upset her."

"You just need to gain a little confidence and stand your ground even if it's a little scary," Chris told him.

"You should hang out with us for the summer," Casey offered.

"I would really like that," Emanuel said nodding gratefully.

"Well alright! We look forward to it, but, for now we better head on home," Chris said.

"What's your name again?"

"Emanuel."

"E-man," Chris said matter-of-factly

"No, it's E-man-u-el," he said slowly.

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Chris smiled and patted him on the shoulder, "I know, but we will call you E-man from now on...it's more fitting."

E-man smiled back, as he accepted his new name. "Ok," he said, happy to have made some new friends, too.

"It's burning hot out here. You live far from here?" Chris asked.

"Oh, no I just live two blocks down," he said, turning to head on home.

"We'll see ya soon," Casey said waving good-bye.

When E-man was well on his way Chris turned to his sister, cracked a little smile and said, "Race ya home!" and took off running before she had the chance to agree.

Casey darted off swiftly to try and catch him, but she was too far behind.

"That's no fair! You got a head start!" she yelled as she watched his back getting farther into the distance ahead of her.

Moments later, Chris arrived at their house while Casey lagged behind. He was out of breath, crouched over, leaning on his knees trying to catch his breath when Casey arrived. But when he looked up and saw her coming, he threw his arms up and did a victory dance.

"Yeah, yeah!"

"Whatever, Chris," she said as she walked over and socked him in the stomach.

"Ugh!" he moaned, doubling over in more shock than pain. "What you do that for?" he asked, faking a cry.

"Because...you...you cheated!" she said out of breath.

He chuckled and yanked at her ponytail.

"No, you just lost," he declared.

"Come on, let's get inside. It's too hot out here."

Chris took the chain from around his neck with the key on it and unlocked the door. The house was still clean from the night before because mom had made them stay up half the night spring-cleaning, or in this case, summer-cleaning.

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Relieved to be home, they dropped their bags down in the foyer, as was their norm, and then Chris went straight into the game room to play his favorite video game—as was his norm. Casey trailed behind him for a minute until she turned off and found her spot on the big plush sofa in the living room. She snatched up the universal remote and began flipping through the channels and blurting out commands.

“Chris, call mom and let her know we’re home.”

“You do it, I’m busy!” Chris shouted as he was rumbling through his box of games.

“I always call. It’s your turn. Plus, you know if mom doesn’t get a call she’s gonna hold you responsible because you’re the oldest!” she smirked at her brilliant comeback.

Chris let out a hard sigh and stopped what he was doing. Dropping his games back into the box, he reluctantly meandered over to the phone in the kitchen to call his mother mainly because he knew Casey was right.

“Oh, she gets on my nerves!” he mumbled to himself then thought. Well, I have been fussed at a thousand times before for not calling...no point in taking another bullet.

On the way to the kitchen he turned and looked at her only to find a smart-aleckie smile splashed across her face and one little leg swinging from the edge of the huge sofa. Chris cut his eyes at her and said not a word as he went on to the kitchen.

“I thought you’d see it my way big brother,” she said rubbing it in.

He picked up the beige wall phone and dialed his mother’s work number. While he waited for an answer he scanned through the refrigerator looking for a snack.

“Hello?”

“Hey, Mom.”

“Hey, baby.”

“This is Chris, Mom,” he said grabbing a lime Gatorade and a hand full of white grapes out of the bunch.

“I know that, and you are my baby!” she said obviously smiling.

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"Mom, I told you already, I am not a baby," he complained, annoyed by her endearment. "I mean what if you slip up and say that in front of my friends?"

"That's right. Sorry. I forgot you're my little man. Is it okay to slip up and call you my 'little man?'"

Chris rolled his eyes and sighed.

"Anyway, you guys ok?"

"Yeah," he said throwing a grape into his mouth. "Casey is watching TV and I'm on an important mission to save the world!" he answered hoping to rush her off the phone.

"Oh, you're playing that video game, uh?"

"Yeah, so I'll see ya when you get home ok? Love you. Bye!" He clunked down the phone and popped another grape in his mouth. He flicked off the kitchen light and headed off to the game room. He was walking up the hallway with his mind on his game when he was suddenly stopped in his tracks.

All of a sudden, he was paralyzed, not able to move anything except his eyes. He could not call out to Casey for help either. He was like an upright mummy desperate to be unraveled.

Why can't I move? Chris panicked.

His eyes were wide and searching when suddenly a small screen resembling that of a transparent television appeared on his sight.

Oh! What is going on? What is this?!

Fear was beginning to grip him. He could not move or open his mouth; screaming was out of the question.

What in the world! Why can't I move...HELP! Chris thought to himself as he was being taken over by terror.

He kept telling himself to scream but his mouth just would not open and no sound would come out. He stared at the screen in front of him and noticed that he could actually see through it. He saw the back of Casey sitting on the sofa.

Casey turn around! Casey! Casey! Turn around so you can see this! He

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called from within himself, but she didn't turn from the entertainment on the real TV screen because she couldn't hear him, of course.

Right there before Chris' eyes the screen began to have moving figures and color changes. Chris felt like he would faint, but his neck stiffened tighter as he had no choice but to watch as a vision began to play out no differently than an action packed movie with all the cinematic effects. He watched the screen as it revealed his next door neighbor's mother rushing off to work. He saw her zipping out of her driveway and up the street to the interstate. He watched as she was singing to herself in the car. But, as she merged onto the highway he watched in horror as her little white car was slammed in the rear by a big dump truck thrusting her into the 18-wheeler truck driving directly in front of her. Her car slid underneath the 18-wheeler, where she became helplessly trapped, until a Life Flight helicopter arrived on the scene of the accident.

Chris could hardly believe the scene as his neighbor was rushed to the hospital hanging between life and death. He watched in horror as she was flown away by helicopter. The scene continued to play on and progressed into the night allowing him to see her in a hospital bed. Initially her eyes were at half-mast, but then they fell shut followed by the piercing sound of the life monitor. Chris watched in dismay as he then observed the green flat line rip across the face of the monitor.

Doctors and nurses did their level best to revive her, but to no avail. Mrs. Harris passed away right before Chris' eyes and he could do nothing about it but stand frozen and take it all in.

In a snap, as suddenly as the screen appeared, it disappeared and he was able to move again. As he turned around he found himself facing the kitchen window just in time to look out and see Mrs. Harris next door, alive and well, and fumbling with her keys in an apparent rush. She darted to her car and got in.

Oh, no! Chris thought and raced to the front door to try and stop her.

When he ripped past Casey, he grabbed her attention away from

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her TV show. She jumped off the sofa and followed behind him. Not knowing what was going on she looked back over her shoulder as perhaps an intruder had invaded the house or something.

"What's wrong Chris?" she asked fearfully running close behind, but Chris did not answer.

Chris dashed through the door and hit the ground running. He tore across the lawn in an all out effort to get to Mrs. Harris before she pulled off, but to his chagrin, her car was already backing out of her driveway. By the time he could get close enough she was already rolling down the street.

"Wait!" Chris cried out as he tried to catch her.

When Casey realized that he was running after Mrs. Harris, she stopped cold in the middle of the front yard and threw up her hands. She was not sure what was going on or what she should do, so she put her hands on her hips and watched and wondered.

Chris kept running with all his might. He waved and hollered out,

"MRS. HARRIS! STOP...STOP! PLEASE! MRS. HARRIS STOP!!"

After running halfway down the street, Chris accepted that it was not humanly possible to catch up to a speeding car. His sprint turned into a jog, and his jog into a walk. Panting, Chris put his hands on the top of his head and closed his eyes tight. He was devastated by what he had seen and upset because he was unable to stop her. A single tear streamed down the side of his face. Batting his eyes he slowly walked back to the house. He passed by Casey as though he didn't even see her.

She threw her hands up and asked, "What's wrong with you? What exactly did Mom say to you on the phone?"

Chris kept walking but shook his head with frustration in response to her and remained wordless. Casey stayed on his heels relentlessly determined to get to the bottom of his strange behavior.

"Chris, what is wrong?" she practically begged him.

But he kept silent. He sat down on the couch and recalled the intrusive vision trying to make sense of it.

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Casey began to panic, "Chris you are scaring me! Please...talk to me!"

"I saw Mrs. Harris, she...she was crushed by the truck," he stammered.

"WHAT? There was no truck out there?" she said pointing outside.

Chris sighed and dropped his face into his hands.

"No, not out there. It was in front of my face," he said massaging his temples.

"In front of your face?" she responded. "Well...where was your face when you saw this?"

"In the hallway."

"The hallway?" she repeated sarcastically.

He turned and glared at her, again wordless.

"I just want to understand you Chris. You saw Ms. Harris get crushed - by a truck - in this hallway," she said pointing behind her.

"Yes," Chris said knowing just how crazy it sounded.

"Ok. Mom is right about those video games rotting your brain out."

"For the first time you might be right," he said reclining on the couch.

"Glad I never got into those video games," she mumbled under her breath as she took a seat next to Chris on the sofa.

"Well, how about we just watch some TV, now. I think that's safe," Casey suggested hoping Chris would feel better.

At 5:14 p.m. Ms. Prentice pulled into the cluttered garage. Casey heard all the commotion and ran out to meet her to tell her what had happened earlier, but Chris remained sunken in the sofa. He flipped through the news channels to see if there were any accidents reported. Ms. Prentice came through the kitchen door and dropped her briefcase on the kitchen table and went into the living room to check on Chris.

"How ya doing?" she lovingly inquired.

Chris said nothing and sprawled himself out on the sofa. Concerned, his

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mother found a spot, sat down next to him, and put her arm around him.

"You ok, sweetie?"

"Casey told you what happened, didn't she?" he finally responded.

Casey gave a guilty shrug upon hearing her name as she had been standing in the doorway eavesdropping.

"Yes, she did, but I am asking you how you are doing," his mother insisted.

"It was clear as day Mom! I saw Mrs. Harris get crushed by a truck! I tried to run and warn her, but I wasn't fast enough...I couldn't catch her!" he lamented. "I feel like it's all my fault."

"Listen Chris, Ms. Harris is going to be fine. People sometimes imagine that bad things might happen to people, but they usually don't. When your father was still with us and we'd fight, I use to wish that bad things would happen to him but they never came true. That was wrong of me, of course. My point is: just because a little thought runs through your head, doesn't mean that it will happen, ok?" she said rubbing Chris' back.

"Mom, it wasn't a thought that ran through my mind! It was a..." Chris hesitated. "Something popped up in front of my face!"

"Chris, you have always had a vivid imagination," she said getting up. "You should be grateful that you are not like a lot of people who can't see past what's in front of them. Look, I will even call the Harris' to prove it to you."

"Yeah, okay! That will make me feel a whole lot better," Chris quipped.

Ms. Prentice walked over and picked up the phone and dialed Mrs. Harris while Chris and Casey watched from the doorway of the kitchen, but there was no answer. She hung up the phone and turned to assure Chris, "Honey, everything will be fine," she assured him.

"No one picked up because she left an hour ago. I thought you were calling her cell phone, mom!"

"Why don't you go on up and get some rest," his mother suggested as kindly as she could, considering that Chris was becoming frantic and

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even a little rude.

Chris schlepped on to his room feeling somewhat defeated and plopped across his bed until dinner.



Later on that night the house was dimly lit as Ms. Prentice enjoyed the peaceful hush that had fallen over her home, especially now that Chris and Casey were fast asleep after a hearty spaghetti dinner. Ms. Prentice decided to take a seat on the sofa and brush her hair in front of the Eleven o'clock news before retiring for the night.

My sweet Chris, she thought. I pray he has peaceful sleep and will be done with all that nonsense by morning.

She raked her brush through her long thick hair and heard the ending of a T.V. commercial that she hardly paid attention to. She threw her head, tossing her hair over her lap and began sectioning her hair when she heard the music typical of a nightly news breaking story.

"BREAKING NEWS...a fatal traffic accident earlier today has claimed the life of one of Atlanta's own citizens..."

Ms. Prentice lifted her sights toward the television and was perplexed as she saw swarms of police and story hungry reporters on the scene.

"Two Eighty Five's northbound traffic was brought to a standstill earlier today. Traffic was backed up for hours," the news anchor reported.

As the reporter explained the accident the view was panned over to the wreckage still on the scene. Ms. Prentice was aghast when she saw the mangled car.

"Oh, my God!" she lamented covering her mouth.

It looks exactly like Ms. Harris's car! But, I'm not sure. It's demolished almost! Ms. Prentice stood to her feet oblivious of her falling hairbrush and rollers. "IT'S HER! NO!" she whaled.

She stood in the middle of the floor, screaming with her watery

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eyes glued to the television. Chris jumped out of bed and ran over to the staircase and hooded over the banister to see what was wrong. It took no time for Casey to follow suit. With her face crumpled with concern she shot out of her room and darted around the corner to where Chris was still looking over the banister. He held on to Casey as they both took in an aerial view of the T.V. and saw what their mom was watching.

"Oh, my God! I don't believe this," Ms. Prentice screamed.

She fell back into her seated position on the sofa. The kids watched as their mother sat on the edge of the sofa with both hands over her mouth sobbing.

"No, no, this can't be!" she lamented.

Recognizing the scene on T.V. to be the same as the one he saw during that frozen moment in the hallway, Chris dashed down the stairs leaving Casey behind. Ms. Prentice turned and stared at him speechless through red weakened eyes, speechless.

As a mother, she felt helpless; she had no answers. Her mind quickly scanned the day that her husband abandoned her and their children. That was the last time she remembered feeling so helpless and void of answers. Chris drew closer to the television peering at the familiar scene while Casey looked on from the top of the stairs, afraid.

Ms. Prentice took off to the kitchen and dialed next door to the Harris' residence all the while looking out the window into their yard, into the windows hoping for some activity, any activity. The phone rang and rang, but there was still no answer.

"Sean might be home," Chris said.

"They wouldn't leave him home alone, you think?"

"Mom, he's almost eleven."

"Well, let's go see," she said wiping her eyes with the back of her hand.

They left Casey and ran over to the house and knocked on the door. After a moment Sean peeked through the window and opened up the door.

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"Hi Sean, are your parents home?" Ms. Prentice asked.

"No, my dad got a phone call and said he had to go to the hospital and he would be back. I asked him could I go but he said that I had to stay here."

He turned his gaze to Chris, then back at Ms. Prentice.

"Why are you looking for my parents, and why are you crying?" he asked suspiciously.

Completely ignoring his questions Ms. Prentice asked, "Have you heard from your mother?" She was still hoping that she had mistakenly identified the car on the news.

"She doesn't get home from work until later on tonight. What's going on? Why are you asking me these questions?"

"Oh, just need a dessert recipe," she lied. "Well, I'll just stop by tomorrow."

"Yeah, sure," he responded dryly. Ms. Prentice and Chris turned and walked briskly back to their house. As soon as they entered the house, Ms. Prentice ran into her room and retrieved her purse and cell phone.

"Where are you going?" Chris asked.

"To the hospital, I have to know if it is Mrs. Harris."

"I'm going too," Chris said.

"No! You stay here and watch Casey," she said snatching the couple of rollers out of her hair that she'd put in earlier.

"She can stay here and go back to sleep. She won't get into anything. She knows better," he argued.

"No, Chris" she said grabbing her keys off the table.

"Well, let her come too!"

"No, Chris," his mother insisted. Chris stood looking into his mother's face obviously hurt and quite irritated.

Ms. Prentice took in a deep breath and blew it out hard, not sure how to make her son understand.

"Chris," she said breathy, "please, don't be mad, sweetheart. This is the type of stuff you just don't need to see."

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"I already did!" he snapped, and stormed off.

When Ms. Prentice arrived at the hospital it was not long before she knew for sure that Mrs. Harris was indeed the subject of that ghastly news story on T.V. as she heard the wails and sobs of someone who had obviously been given woeful news. When she turned the corner of the long corridor she spotted Mr. Harris bowled over as if he was sick. Nurses and orderlies surrounded him, some holding him, others scrapping with him just to ensure that he'd stay put and not return to the room where Mrs. Harris's battered body lay still beneath a winding sheet.

Mr. Harris wailed and cried uncontrollably. He weaved and bobbed like a man lost and without hope now. All Ms. Prentice could do was watch writhing at the sight of a good friend in the throes of pain. She too cried continuously because she could do nothing to help. "My God!" she cried clasping her hands, bringing them to her chin. The more she listened to Mr. Harris's sobs the weaker she became.

"Oh, Mr. Harris," she whispered walking over toward the crowd in which he was the center. Mr. Harris was bent across the shoulder of an orderly, weak with sorrow, when he lifted his eyes enough to see Ms. Prentice. She stood and stared, her eyes equally teary. She reached her hand out and placed it gently on his head, the other over her mouth. At the feel of her touch, he went into rolls of sobbing.

The small crowd of helpers walked Mr. Harris over to a lounge chair and folded him into it then gave him a sedative. Ms. Prentice could not take another moment of grief especially since she could not do anything to change it, and made a bee line to the exit.

Heavy hearted, she drove at a snail's pace all the way back home. When she arrived Chris was still up and met her at the door.

"Is it true? Was it her? Did you see her?" Chris asked beginning to cry.

"Yes," she whispered, nodding. The two of them fell into each other's arms and wept until they were drained.

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For the next couple of days Chris was numb to everyday life, he didn't eat, he didn't sleep. He lounged in front of the television in an almost unconscious gaze and took in nothing. Walking by and seeing her son in the same posture she'd seen now for the past couple of days caused Ms. Prentice to grow more and more concerned.

"Baby, you want to talk about it?"

"Nope," Chris responded. "there's nothing to talk about. She's gone and I didn't stop it."

Upon hearing this, Ms. Prentice was not only painfully surprised, but she decided that now was the time to let Chris in on a little secret of her own.

"Chris, sweetheart. I've been talking to someone who I believe can help you and all you have to do is talk," she explained.

"Help me with what?"

"This obvious trauma you have experienced through first seeing all that happened, before it actually happened, and then it coming to pass. Honey, that's a bit much for anyone especially a young guy like you," she explained rustling the top of his head. "I'm worried about you, so, I've gotten some help..."

"... in the form of..." Chris pressed.

"Well, a therapist. A nice lady who specializes in traumatized children, Honey."

"What's her name?"

"Dr. Gabriella Host. She is one of the best therapists in the town and came highly recommended."

"What if I don't want to go, Mom?"

"Well, son, that is when I would say, 'I am the mother and you are the child who I care the world for.' Just trust me on this one, okay? I've heard that her clients always get results."

Sighing, Chris agreed. Just then his mother put him in a playful headlock and began covering his forehead with kisses.