

Tess DeHaan

Age: 13, Grade: 8

School Name: Byron Center West Middle School, Byron Center, MI

Educator: Kelli Day

Category: Short Story

Disclosed Wall

I flop down onto my creaky bed with a groan. I flip on my side and glare at the white wall that has been written on, drawn on, and cried on if I'm being completely honest. One glance into my room and my life would be destroyed. My room is officially off-limits to anybody, my feelings were hard enough for me to know about, but other people? Not happening. I stare at the wall, thinking about everything I've written on it. My whole life is on that wall, from the meaningless scribbles on the wall to the messy paragraphs I wrote out of frustration, anger, or whatever else I felt. I curl up, hugging myself.

"Why am I like this?" I whisper to myself, my voice wobbling. I hear a soft creaking coming from the door. I shoot up and sprint to the door but it's too late.

"Mom, get out," I command in a voice that I wish was cold, but trembles as I watch my mom's eyes flit from me to the exposed wall. She's already reading, her eyes follow the lines of writing. Her eyes wander off, but they begin to trail across the writing again. They become glossy quickly as she reads further in. I close my eyes tight and feel a tear squeeze out. The possibilities of what she's thinking about me run through my mind. *Will she think I'm depressed? Or will she think I've gone mad?*

Reading. Reading. Reading

Judging eyes gaze up at me.

"Avali, get your shoes on and get in the car." I bite my lip and will myself not to start crying.

"Mom, no, I-" I begin, she cuts me off smoothly, her voice cold enough to freeze.

"It wasn't a question." I walk from the room slowly, gritting my teeth. I don't look down, scared of my tears falling out as I slide my shoes on. I sit stiffly in the leather seat of the car, my mom gets in shortly after. I stare out the window, showing no signs of emotion or movement. I glance into the rearview mirror, she has a scared look on her face, and her worry lines are starting to show. She tests the speed limit as she pulls into the parking lot of a building. Curious, I look up, reading the sign.

"Mental Hospital"

"Mom, what? You're so wrong. It's not what it looks like. How do you even get to this point?" I start, my lip trembling. A hot tear escapes from my eye, I quickly wipe it away, willing myself to calm down, to forget about where I am, to pretend what's happening is normal. We walk into a bleach white room, tiled on the walls, ceilings, and floors. Staring straight ahead, a too-happy nurse catches my eye, sitting behind a desk, smiling at me. I immediately smell the rubbing alcohol, *but what for?* I grimace and look around, taking in the (disturbing) view. I see a little girl, who looks to be about 4, shaking her head back and forth, and rocking, curled up in a ball in the corner. I let my eyes linger on her for a moment. I turn quickly, not being able to handle the saddening view of the girl with a tortured past, or future. I look to a hallway with doors gaping open, inviting me in. A little boy sobbing makes my head snap to attention. Duck tape covers his mouth, muffling any sound he dares to attempt to get to the outside world. I move to run, to escape this insane asylum. I immediately feel an ice-cold grip on my arms, I whirl around, prepared to start punching and kicking. It's a nurse with pleading eyes, she begs.

"I know sweetie, please don't run, we can help you." She whispers lies to me through her mask. I sneer back at her, "Like you're helping the rest of these people here, the little girl, the boy with duct-tape over his mouth?" I cry, wondering what the punishments are in this place. My mom grabs my arm and pulls me to the desk, her fingernails leaving drops of blood sitting on my

arm and she releases me. I see my mom scrawl "Avali" on a line. I see her looking at the "Mental State" column. The options are Healthy, Normal, Abnormal, Depressed, Suicidal. I tear the pen out of my mother's hands.

"If you loved me you wouldn't do this." Tears start to fall from her eyes, I see a new pen being handed to my

mother. Depressed, she decides. My eyes widen in shock. My own mother would never do this, not if she hadn't seen that wall. *I'm not depressed*, I tell myself over and over. I turn around and see a grown woman attempting to pry open a door to the outside in another room. A hefty man in a white coat wrenches her hands loose from the handle and carries her to another room as she screams, sobbing, threatening to starve herself to death, or kill herself. I shudder. My eyes gaze over, wondering why they won't let anybody leave.

"Done." My mom's voice interrupts my thoughts. The assistant chirps,

"Great! All set!" She smiles kindly at me, almost making me believe I will be safe. But any hope of that quickly disintegrates as I hear the echo of the screams from the lady trying to escape.

"Goodbye, sweetie..." She says before beginning to sob, she reaches out in an attempt to hug me. I immediately step back out of the way, avoiding her touch. Tears well up in her eyes.

"Honey, I'm sorry. I'm doing this to help you, remember that. Okay?" She whispers to me as I make a disgusted sound. A nurse comes out and grabs my arm, walking me down the hallway. *What will this place do to me? What life can I even live in this insane asylum?*

"I love you." My mom says in a mute tone. But I don't turn around, I won't. I am now an emotionless girl, who has learned her lesson in trust.

"Good girl, don't look back. It's a lesson better taught sooner than later." I look up at the male nurse, his features soften as he whispers to me.

"It's not as bad as it looks, we're just trying to help you, you need to understand that." I try to rip my arm out of his death grip, but he just holds on tighter, cutting off my blood circulation. Quickly I have been moved from the hallway onto a cot in a room that smells of bleaching powder. Many doctors are surrounding me, mumbling statistics that I try to understand. A sharp needle presses into my arm, I immediately sit up and grab at my arm, trying to tug it out.

"Somebody lay that girl back down!!" I hear a man shout. I'm immediately shoved onto my back again as I feel needles shoved into countless places on my arms and legs. I'm being attached to too many tubes, I have no idea what they do, and I'm praying they won't tell me. I struggle against the grasp of a nurse with soft eyes, playing the part of my restrainer.

"It gets easier. But for now, say goodbye to everything you knew before this." I grasp at myself aimlessly, trying to rip out any and every wire hooked to me. My eyes flutter as my hand becomes still. My memories fly past me, my Mom, my Dad, my sweet little sister! I didn't even get to say goodbye to them. I shed one final tear, for every single person, thing, and moment in my life. Everybody's words and movements around me fade away, and I blink my eyes in an attempt to keep myself awake.

"Shhh, it's for the better..." I hear the indifferent nurse say as I drift off to sleep, a sleep without dreams, and a sleep without nightmares.