



CORNERSTONE SCHOOLS OF AL
MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL

MARCH 2021
Issue No.1

SHINE - LITERARY NEWSLETTER

I'll Never Tell... by Angel Crenshaw

"Stacy Brookeman, please come to the office."

My chair scrapes against the floor as I push it out from under my desk and stand up. As I am walking through the aisle, someone kicks their leg out in front of me and I trip and fall. Then, there's the same laughter I hear everyday. Not the good kind of laughter, though. The kind of laughter that burns me up inside, because I know that it is directed at me. I pick myself back up and fight back the tears that always seem to be stabbing at my eyes trying to get break free. Laughter follows me all the way out of the classroom and into the hall as I make my pathetic way to the office.

Hi, I'm Stacy Brookeman, the girl that was just called to the office. If you've ever been to my school, you probably didn't notice me, anyway. I'm the girl hiding behind the thick black rimmed glasses who sits at the back of every class, waiting for school to be over. Teachers love to call on me to answer questions, and of course I have to answer, knowing that every word spoken from my lips will bring another round of snickers from my classmates. I'm not the most popular girl at my school - I don't even have any friends. I'm not exactly invisible, either. I mean, people see me; they just hate the sight of me. It didn't used to be like this, though. I wasn't always so pathetic. I used to have friends, people who loved me and enjoyed my presence. But that was before everything changed; before the secrets that would rip us all apart came to the light.

Okay well that's enough about me. Let me explain what is going on, and the reason that I am being called to the office.

We all have secrets that we don't want to get out, right? Well, at Cavanaugh Heights, everyone has a secret they would rather keep in the dark. One day, recently, those secrets started getting out mysteriously. No one knows exactly who let these secrets out, but everyone suspects three people.

The first suspect to be called down to the office today is Dakota Lockett. The second person is Gracie Sullivan, and the third is none other than myself. We are all in the 12th grade, though we've never actually really spoken to each other.



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So let your light shine

before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 5:16

About the Author



Angel
Crenshaw

Age: 16

C.S.A. Junior

English

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Mrs.
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Tony & Omeka
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Sisters:

Adriana &
Aliyah
Crenshaw

I'll Never Tell (continued from p. 1)

The three of us seem to have nothing in common except for two things: 1) we are the school's biggest outcasts, and 2) it was our own secrets that ruined us. We all have our own reasons for being shunned and thrown out like trash.

Dakota used to be popular back in 10th grade. She worked hard to make excellent grades in order to help her chances to get into a good university. She was feisty and ambitious. However, after discovering that many of the popular crowd had bought stolen answers to an important test, she burned with anger at the injustice. She had studied countless hours to make an excellent score, so she secretly told the principal about the cheating. Unfortunately for Dakota, her "friend," Tatiana Strife, one of the students who cheated, overheard her conversation with the principal and told the whole school. Now everyone calls her a backstabbing snitch.

Gracie Sullivan was never really that popular, but she had many friends. She was kind, patient, and always helped where help was needed. A normal person might think, *Well, how could such a nice person become an outcast?* I'd think the same thing, but let me tell you why. She was shunned in the beginning of her junior year simply because word got out that her mother was a drug addict. Her mother had been in and out of rehab, and she told one of her "friends" about it and then suddenly everyone knew. It became exaggerated up until the point where people started calling her a "drug baby."

And now it's time to share the secret that ruined me.

Cavanaugh Heights is a very prestigious school. In other words, it's a school for rich people. I am not rich. My mom's dead and dad works at the post office. My uncle is the principal of the school and he took pity on me and let me into Cavanaugh Heights. When I first came to this school as a freshman, I wanted so badly to fit in, so I let everyone believe that I was rich like them. I studied the way they talked, dressed, and acted and molded myself into "one of them". I was actually invited into the popular crew. I had lots of "friends", but no real *friends*. One day, the truth finally came out though. One of my "friends" found out about my secret by overhearing a conversation I was having with my uncle in the office. She told the whole school, and after that day, I earned a new nickname: *the Liar*.

So, I bet you're wondering why we're the ones that everybody is blaming for telling these secrets. Well, the ones that first started getting "hit" are the ones that told our secrets. I can kind of understand why they would think we did it because there is another thing that we have in common, now that I think about it: all three of us have a valid reason for wanting revenge, so it makes sense that we would want to take revenge against the ones that made us become these outcasts.

But alas, I did not. I'm not really sure about the others, but I couldn't have done it even if I had wanted to. I have neither the confidence nor the patience to sit around searching for people's deepest, darkest secrets.

When I walk into the office, I notice the other two girls already sitting in the chairs facing the principal's desk.

“Good morning, Ms. Brookeman, Please, have a seat,” says Principal James.

I quietly sit down in the only other seat available in the room and keep my eyes trained on the floor.

“Now, girls, I assume you all know why you have been called here today, right?” he says in a soft voice.

We all nod a simple, unspoken yes.

“Now, I want you to tell me honestly...do either of you girls have anything to do with this secret telling situation at all? I would really appreciate it if we were honest with each other right now,” says Principal James.

At first, there’s complete silence for about a good ten seconds. Finally, Dakota speaks.

“Well, I ain’t got nothing to do with it, Principal. And besides, I’m not the liar here,” she says, glaring at me with that last remark.

I stay silent, because I really can’t say anything. I’ve been in way too many arguments about this one, and I’m surely not about to have another verbal brawl, especially not in front of my uncle.

Instead, I answer my uncle saying, “No, sir. I honestly have nothing to do with this.”

Gracie then speaks up saying, “I believe you, Stacy. In fact, I don’t think either of us is doing this. If you ask me, I think we’re all being framed.”

I look at her with my head tilted, thinking. *Hmm...Gracie has always seemed to be smarter than the rest of us. Maybe she knows something we don’t.*

Instead of voicing my thoughts, though, I turn my attention back to Principal James.

“You know what? I believe you girls, too. And we’re going to get to the bottom of this. We will find out who’s behind this. I just hope neither of you girls are withholding any part of the truth,” Principal James says, looking pointedly at each of us.

We all nod. My mind is elsewhere when Principal James dismisses us from the office. The words “I think we’re all being framed” are stuck in my head as I leave.

“Hey, Gracie,” I say, catching her in the hallway before she walks away.

“Yeah?” she replies, stopping.

“Do you have any idea who could be doing this?” I ask.

She hesitates before replying and says, “I have a way to find out who it is.”

This makes Dakota stop in her tracks. She turns back and joins us.

“What are you thinking?” says Dakota.

“Before I say anything, let’s go somewhere more private so we can talk,” Gracie says.

We go to the library and sit in the bean bag chairs on the far side of the room by the window.

“Alright, go,” Dakota says as we turn our full attention on Gracie.

A few hours later, we have developed a plan to figure out who’s behind this secret telling business. But in order to do this, we have to be really sneaky and quiet. We’ve set ourselves up in specific locations. I am in one of the stalls in the bathroom. Gracie is positioned underneath the stairs, and Dakota is stuffed in Gracie’s locker (this was Dakota’s own idea). Suddenly, I got a text.

Dakota: Hey, u guys ready? U turn ur voice recorders on yet?

Me: Yeah I’m all set up

Gracie: Yes!



Dakota: Alrite, get ready... bell's about to ring in 3..2..

RINGGGG

The bell goes off. It's time.

Gracie: Remember guys STAY SILENT

Me: Got it

Dakota: We know



GABRIELLE

...We're all excited about what is about to be uncovered.

As students start filing out of classrooms and the halls get loud, we stay silent and wait. People walk in and out of the rest room and I wait patiently for that person to walk in. I wait for so long that my legs get tired. I'm thinking about just giving up and walking out of the restroom when I get a text from Gracie.

Gracie: GUYSSS

Me: WHAT

Dakota: !!! What happened? Did u get something?

Gracie: I GOT SOMETHING.. MEET ME BACK IN THE LIBRARY NOWW!!

YESSSS, I think as I burst out of the stalls and run out of the restroom. When we meet in the library, I can tell that we're all excited about what is about to be uncovered. We sit down in the bean bag chairs and wait for Gracie to tell us what she has.

"So....what'd you get?" asks Dakota.

"Ok, so I was waiting under the staircase waiting and was just about to just give up when something dropped down beside me. So I look down and guess what I see....," she pauses for a moment.

"What?" I ask.

"This," she says, pulling something out from behind her back.

It's a book. I take it from her hands, open it up, and flip to a random page. Inside are a bunch of names with little sentences written beside them. I read the first one.

"Qwenn Anderson....still wets the bed. Colette Spencer...has an eating disorder. Marcia Gonzalez- wait, is this what I think it is?" I gasp.

Gracie nods and says, "Yep. This book has almost everyone's secrets in here."

"Well, do we know whose this is?" asks Dakota.

Gracie flips the book over and turns to the first page and points to a name written on the page. It reads Gabrielle M. Love.

GABRIELLE??!!" Dakota and I exclaim.

"Yep," replies Gracie with a nod of her head.

This shocks us because Gabrielle is known to be one of the nicest girls in our school. No one could ever expect it to be her. She and I used to be friends a long time ago, actually. She is also the one person who doesn't seem to hate my existence at this school.

"Wow," I say.

"Okay, so what do we do now?" asks Dakota.

"Now, we find a way to talk to her and ask her why she's doing this.

"Does anybody have any idea how we do that?" Gracie asks.

"I may be able to talk to her," I say quietly.

Their heads both turn in my direction, eyes full of questioning.

"She and I used to be friends, even though that was a very long time ago. But I think I may be able to still talk to her," I explain, "I can try and talk to her today after school. Let's hope she doesn't feel embarrassed enough to ignore me."

So when the final bell rings, I catch Gabrielle outside of class while she's talking with a group of friends.

"Oh my gosh, she really said that? What a loser!" laughs Hannah, one of Gabrielle's ignorant friends.

"Hey she's not a loser, she just struggles with maintaining relationships," says Gabrielle, defending whoever it is that they are talking about.

See, this is what I don't understand about Gabrielle. She is such a nice person, but she hangs out with such terrible people. I also wonder how being around those kinds of people never changed her.

I tap her on the shoulder and she turns around.

"Oh. My. God. It's the Liar. What does this rat want?" snickers Hannah.

"Hey, don't call her that!" Gabrielle exclaims.

"Gabrielle, you can't be serious. You're not really going to talk to this...this trash, are you?" says another one of her friends named Lisa.

"Yes. I mean no. I mean ... I'm going to talk to her because is a human being, not trash," says Gabrielle, turning back to me.

"Whatever, lets go. I can't be seen with liars," says another one of her friends. Gabrielle stays as the rest of them walk away whispering.

"Anyways, what did you want, Stacy?" she asks, leaning against one of the lockers.

"Actually, can we talk somewhere else? Somewhere more private?" I ask.

"Sure," she agrees.

I begin walking to the library and she follows me. We walk in to see Dakota and Gracie already seated in the bean bag chairs on the far side of the room. I lead Gabrielle over to them. Gabrielle looks a bit both worried and suspicious, but she sits down with us anyway.

Dakota pulls out the book and places it in front of Gabrielle silently. Gabrielle's face goes pale.

"Where did you get this?" she asks in a panicked voice.

"That doesn't matter. What matters is the stuff you have inside of it," Dakota says with a mean glare.

Where did you get this?" she asks in a panicked voice.

"Gabrielle, why are you doing this?" Gracie asks in a soft voice.

"Doing what?" Gabrielle asks in an innocent voice.

"Oh, please. Do not play dumb, okay? We know you're the one who's been spreading the secrets, so just drop the act already," Dakota scoffs.

There's a moment of silence, then with a sigh, Gabrielle says, "Fine, you caught me. I'm the one who's been spreading the secrets, okay? Happy?"

This infuriates Dakota, and she roars, "No, actually. In fact, I'm livid. You filthy piece of - "

"Gabrielle, I don't understand. Why? Why do any of this? You're popular, and you have friends. Tell me, what is your reasoning for all of this?" I ask Gabrielle before Dakota can finish her sentence.

"You wanna know why? Fine, I'll tell you why. I get sick and tired of watching those hateful people taunt people like you everyday, and I just - "

"People like us?! What do you mean people like us?" screams Dakota.

Cornerstone Schools of AL
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This newsletter is dedicated to promoting excellence in Cornerstone students' literary submissions.

...Whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God.
Colossians 3:17

**Congratulations,
Angel Crenshaw for
your wonderful
example of**

Letting your light

shine!


"I mean the less fortunate. No, I mean people who get bullied for no reason. I see them laugh at you, and make a daily effort to embarrass and humiliate you. I even saw them throw you out like trash. So, I befriended the very same hateful people so that I could get close to them because I knew people who talk that much would definitely tell me things. None of them are true friends. They talk about each other behind each other's backs constantly. I figured if I could get close to them and figure out their secrets, I could give them a taste of their own medicine, and turn the tables on them, you know?" Gabrielle explains.

We take a moment of silence to let it all soak in before Dakota breaks the silence.

"Okay, so you realize that makes absolutely no sense, right? If you hate those kinds of people so much then why would you do the exact same thing to them that you hate them for doing? And everybody's secrets are getting told, not just the ones who bullied us. Therefore, your little explanation doesn't make sense," she says.

"Actually, now that I think about it, the people whose secrets are getting told are bullies, or at least people who talk about other people like crap," says Gracie.

"Yeah, I'm realizing that also. I can kind of see where you're coming from. Your intentions were to help us, right? But the thing is, you're not actually helping us, Gabrielle," I say in the calmest voice I can muster.

"I'm not?" she asks.

"No, you're not. Because is any of what you're doing going to make people like us again, or at least start speaking to us again? Is this going to make them welcome us back with open arms? No, it's not. And also, if you haven't noticed, we're the one getting blamed for all of this when we had nothing to do with this whole thing. So actually, you're hurting us more than helping us, you see?" says Dakota.

"Huh. I guess I didn't think about that. I'm so sorry. I thought you guys would be happy that they were getting a taste of their own medicine, since you are the ones that they bully and make feel terrible," says Gabrielle.

"Yeah, I would love to teach them a lesson, but I at least want to do it myself if I'm going to be blamed," says Dakota.

"Yeah, I agree. I'm all for them learning their lessons, but you're making us suffer for this as well, Gabrielle," says Gracie.

"Wow, guys. I am so very sorry. What can I do to make this right?" Gabrielle asks.

"Well, for starters, you can turn yourself in," Dakota says.

"Okay, I will. Is that all?" says Gabrielle.

"Well, there is one more thing you need to do..." says Gracie.

"What? I'll do anything," says Gabrielle.

The three of us look at each other, then back at Gabrielle and say three words, "Burn the book."