Olivia Haglund

December 19, 2013

B2

 Penelope sat alone in her room, reading, when she felt her phone vibrate in notification of a text message. Her friends had been planning a camping trip to Riverview Falls as a celebration of the end of another school year. Although they were set to leave that night, some, including Penelope, had some concern, as someone had drowned in the falls just a week before. This would not have been such a concern if this death was a first time thing; however, in the ten years that Riverview was open for camping, more than fifteen people had drowned in the water, and even more had fallen to their deaths off of the many cliffs on the hiking trails. For the past week Penelope, Spencer, Rose, and Sophie, had been arguing on if they should follow through with their plans or not. The day they had been awaiting for months had finally came, yet they remained unable to decide.

 *Let’s just go*, Rose said. *We’ve been planning this trip for forever, we already paid for the camping spot, and I’m not going unless everyone does.* Being the kind of person who didn’t like to let people down, and the only person still hesitant to go, Penelope reluctantly responded, *Fine. I’ll go.* “It’ll be fine,” She said out loud, trying to reassure herself. *Yay. It’s settled. I’ll be there to pick you up in ten minutes.* Rose instantly sent back. Penelope sighed and rolled off her bed, grabbed her duffle bag, and went downstairs to say goodbye to her mom for the weekend.

 “Rose is gonna be here in, like, ten minutes, I’ll see you on Monday,” she said.

 “Um, Penelope, I don’t really think that’s a great idea…” Her mom said. “I don’t really want you going. There’s just so many deaths there… Someone just died.”

 “Mom, what are the chances of anything happening to me? I’ll text and call you if I have service to check up. It’ll be fine.” She reassured her mother.

 Her mother sighed but still allowed her daughter to go. “Alright, bye. I love you.”

 “Love you, too,” Pennelope called before shutting the door to wait for her friend outside. Just as she stepped outside, her phone rang with an incoming call from an unknown number. “Hello?” She answered.

 “Don’t go,” a voice said on the other end.

 “Huh? Who’s this?” Penelope asked. A bit shaken up.

 “Don’t go to Riverview. Don’t go.”

 “Who is this?” Penelope yelled just before the caller hung up.

 Just then, Rose pulled up in the driveway. Penelope, deep in thought, slowly put her phone away and got in the car. Who could that have been?

“Penelope, you know this is going to be fine. Stop looking so scared,” Rose scolded, pulling Penelope from her daze.

 “Huh? Oh, um, sorry.”

 Rose sighed. “Look, we’re already in the car. We’re going. End of discussion,” she said, locking the car doors for emphasis.

 For the few minutes neither said anything, then Penelope broke the silence. “Did you tell anyone about our trip?” she asked.

 Rose shot Penelope a confused look. “Um… No? Why?”

 “Nothing…” Penelope turned on the radio and turned the volume up until the music was blaring. *I’m going to have fun. I’m going to forget the call. I’m going to have fun….* She repeated in her head, a determination to shake the anxious feeling. Soon, Penelope found herself screaming along to the songs with Rose, the memories of the weird caller behind her.

 The car ride seemed to last anytime at all, although it was nearly forty-five minutes to the campsite. Once they got their, Penelope’s phone went off with another anonymous call. “Hello?” she answered.

 “Turn around,” the voice whispered. “Leave.”

 “Who is this?!” Penelope demanded.

 “You know it’s wrong.” The whispering voice sent chills down Penelope’s spine. “You know you shouldn’t be here. Don’t let your friends bring you down.”

 “Stop calling me!” Penelope screamed and hung up.

 “Whoa, who was that?” Rose asked, her voice full of concern.

 “I have no idea,” Penelope muttered.

 “What did they want?”

 “Nothing,” Penelope said and got out of the car, quickly followed by Rose.

 “Penelope, stop that. Just tell me.”

 “I don’t know, they called me before you picked me up too. They keep saying not to go on this trip. I don’t really know. It doesn’t make sense. They said ‘don’t let your friends bring you down’ or something like that.”

 Rose didn’t know how to respond at first. The calls were so bizarre, that was not an answer she was expecting. “Does the voice sound familiar at all?” she finally asked.

 “No! It’s like a weird whisper.”

 “Well, just try to forget about it. We’re finally here. We’ve been planning this trip for months. Let’s enjoy it!” Rose tried to sound positive for her friend, but even she was a bit shaken up from the calls. No one else knew about the trip… Who could that have been?

 Just then, Spencer and Sophie sped into the campsite parking lot, the car shaking from the booming music on the inside. Penelope quickly moved over to Rose and whispered, “don’t tell them about the calls. Just keep it between us,” just before Spencer and Sophie bolted from the car.

 “Heyyy!” Spencer yelled.

 “Well hey, punk,” Penelope said.

 “Dude, turn that down!” Rose yelled over the still blaring music coming from the car. “Are you trying to get everyone else here to hate us?”

 Sophie laughed. “‘Everyone else’? You do realize that no one else is here, right? Everyone who had reserved a spot here bailed. Apparently most people don’t want to camp here a week after a death,” Sophie said, looking directly at Penelope, who quickly looked away. “But we’re here now! And I don’t care who doesn’t want to be! We’re going to have fun.” Her glaring eyes never left Penelope until she looked back up and met her gaze.

 “Well…” Spencer said, breaking the awkward silence. “Let’s go set up…” and with that, the group dragged their bags to the empty site. Sophie was right. They quickly set up their tent and were ready to jump into the falls when Penelope got another call.

 “What do you want?!” she demanded immediately.

 “You’re letting them bring you down, Penelope,” the familiar whisper echoed through her ears.

 “How do you know my name?!”

 The caller ignored her question. “You don’t have to listen to your friends. You don’t have to do what everyone tells you. Leave.”

 By this point, Penelope was beyond done with this unknown caller. “I swear to god, if you don’t tell me who you are *right now* I will call the police!” she threatened.

 “Mark Foster,” he said and hung up.

 Penelope, shaking with fear and confusion, threw her phone into her bag and let out a scream.

 Her friends instantly ran over, “What happened? What’s wrong?” they asked.

 “Who is Mark Foster?” she yelled, accusation dripping from her voice. “Who is Mark Foster and why is he calling me?”

 Spencer, Rose, and Sophie looked at Penelope, an identical look of confusion on all of their faces.

 “I don’t know…?” Sophie said, her voice going up like it was a question.

 “Should we know?” Sophie asked.

 “I don’t know! Ugh!” Penelope yelled. “Whatever, forget it.”

 “Whatever. Sophie said. “Let’s go swimming!”

 Already shaken up from the calls and the death, Penelope really didn’t want to go in the falls. “Didn’t that guy drown in there?” she asked.

 “Yeah, but that’s never stopped you before,” Sophie argued.

 “Sophie, if she doesn’t want to go, she doesn’t have to,” Spencer defended Penelope.

 “No!” Sophie pushed. “We came here to have fun, and we are *all* going to.” She glared at Penelope.

 “Whatever. I’ll be down in a minute,” Penelope muttered.

 Spencer and Sophie started walking down to the falls, but Rose stayed with Penelope. “You okay?” she asked.

 “Yeah, I’m fine…”

 “Um, Penelope?” Rose said quietly.

 “Yeah?”

 “I think it’s just a prank caller or something. Mark Foster was the guy who drowned here last week. It can’t be him.” Rose’s voice was quiet and comforting, but it didn’t help Penelope much.

 “Oh. Well whatever. Let’s just go before Sophie has a fit.”

 The two walked down to the water, Rose ran in, but Penelope stayed on the beach, looking down at the sand. She had too much on her mind. Too many questions. Why did that guy keep calling her? Who was it? How did he know her number? How did he know they were there? How could Sophie expect her to go swim in the falls as if someone hadn’t just died there?

 “Penelope, get in here!” Sophie screamed. Penelope looked up to see her three friends nearly fifty yards out in the water.

 Penelope sighed slowly waded into the water. The current from the waterfall was hard to fight against at first, but she quickly grew used to it. *Why are they so far out there?* She mentally complained.

 Just when the water lapping at the bottom of her face, Penelope tripped over a rock and fell under the water, her head hitting the cliff next to her, sending her into an eternal darkness. If only she hadn’t been pressured by her friends...