

# The Before

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**First prize.**

## **Young writers under 15. 2022 Marysville BookNest Writing Competition**

Another boring school day, period 3, maths. And just like always, Damo is making a scene trying to get the attention of THE WHOLE SCHOOL. We are on our computers, catching up on homework when suddenly a loud car revving noise comes from his computer, then when he is told off, he plays a siren type noise, then when he is told off again, he claims it wasn't him. Mrs Evan looks at his computer and sees that there is nothing open on his nor his friends' computers that was making that noise. If I could describe the look on Mrs Evan's face it would be something like a baby about to start crying. The noise, or siren or whatever, was deafening. No volume a computer could make. It was almost like a fire truck but longer, a long wailing sound. Mrs Evan turned white as a sheet and yells at us to lock the doors and windows, turn the lights off and hide under desks. Confused, I run to the window, yank it shut and lock it and close the blinds and run back to my desk. It takes a while for Mrs Evan to get the boys to shut up, but they do once Mrs Evan tells them what is going on. They were never heard from after that moment. I saw the terror in their eyes, nothing like I have seen before like when they lose a footy match, or their laptop is confiscated. This was genuine terror.

We sit for around 5 minutes when there is a loud BANG, BANG, BANG. Like a gunshot. Followed by a scream of pure horror. More gunshots and loud screams. Gun. Scream. Gun. Scream. Silence. A loud bang of someone crashing into a door. More banging. Suddenly the door comes crashing down to the floor. A tall man with a large gun. A assault rifle I think the boys called it. BANG. The gun is fired. Again. And again. I hear gagging like someone is choking or about to vomit. Hesitantly I shift my head to see Mrs Evan drowning in her own blood on the floor. She is convulsing like a lunatic. Then she stops and seizes up. No more movement. Two kids start crying. 1 just starts screaming. Gunshot. Scream. Gunshot. Scream. I cover myself up and bury my head between my legs and cry. Softly like I am in a cave full of sleeping lions that could wake any moment. Gunshot. This time it was right next

to me, and I hear the cries of her -- my best friend. The love of my life. Screaming and crying as she bleeds out. Silence. And right as I think the man is going to leave, Gunshot. A sharp pain in the back of my neck, shooting down my spine like ink on wet paper. Spreading everywhere. I feel sort of numbness come to the impact zone. I lift my head up as best I can and see two, no three, maybe four bodies on the floor. Those are the ones in the room at least. I look over to her, to Miya, the absolute love of my life, my best friend. I grab her hand for the remaining moments of consciousness I have. My vision fades and it all goes to black as I drift off into a slumber I shall never wake.

That's what I thought at least...

"16 deaths, 5 teachers 11 students, 57 injured, a tragic school shooting took place in Canberra State Secondary College. The suspect has been placed in custody for further investigation."

I gasp heavily. Trying for air. It's dark and cramped. It's difficult to move. The air is extremely heavy. And I realise where I am. I am in a coffin. Yep. A coffin. Six feet in the ground under tons of dirt and rocks. I am in a coffin. I can't help but scream, I scream so loud my lungs nearly burst. Air is limited. VERY limited. So, screaming won't do much other than kill me. Or am I dead already. I have no idea because I can't see anything. Because I am in a coffin. Under the ground. Fun. I wonder about her. About Miya, if she is in the same situation, alive in a coffin, trying to get out. She was such a nerd. She was bullied for being smart. But it never affected her. She was always so positive. Even when it was hard to be. I close my eyes and smile as I think of her. *'I am so fucking obsessed with her'*.

A screen appeared, it was like a hologram, but I could touch it and move it. A face appeared and it spoke. A soft, warm tone.

"Ameera Stiffe, you are dead, and you are one of the few who can be reached in this state. You are in *the before*"

*'the before?'* *'What the hell does that mean?'*

"Only 16 have ever reached this state, this happens before passing on to the next world, when we are waiting for an entity to be ready to have a soul" "you see things don't have

souls until the moment before birth. So, when no entity is ready for a soul, the prepped soul is placed in this state.” “Do you have any question about your past life or life to be?”

*‘yes’*

“go on, I am ready to answer”

*‘what happened to her, to Miya I mean.? Did she live?’*

“You poor soul. Miya did not survive the injuries”

*‘who will she be sent to? Will I ever meet her again?’* I was yelling at that point. Tears swelling in my eyes.

“That I cannot tell, my poor child. It is up to fate to decide.” “Time is now limited; you will be passed on to the next world soon.”

*‘I NEED TO KNOW IF I WILL MEET HER AGAIN, PLEASE! I LOVE HER, I NEED HER PLEASE TELL ME I WILL MEET HER AGAIN! IM ONLY 13, MY LIFE HAD JUST BEGUN PLEASE I NEED TO BE WITH HER’ ‘please tell me if I will meet her again’*

“my child, that is not my place to say, all I can say is it’s more likely than not. And I am sure I can talk to fate and make an arrangement.”

*‘Thank you’*

“well looks like your new form is ready, are you ready to begin at stage 1?”

*‘yes’.*

“Once I disappear you will feel numb and like you are falling. Your memories will be wiped, but I will leave the memory of darling Miya with you to find her once the time is right”

*‘thank you’*

“good luck my child, on your next adventure”.

And like the voice said, I felt numb and felt like I was falling, and I started forgetting. Things like my parents, my school, my friends, everything. Everything but her. she was fresh in my mind. I could never forget her. suddenly I am standing. A tunnel. Filled with light at the end. I walk forwards knowing that what I should do.

*'This is level 1. I am ready'*

and from that moment my search for her begins.