

The Artist's Descent © 2020

A *Dark Shadows* fan fiction story

By KI Acobbo

Late on Friday night in June in the tiny coastal Maine town of Collinsport, outside The Blue Whale bar and grill, a foreboding wind blows. The swirling Atlantic rocks dimly-lit docks and is bobbing a dozen sleepy boats as a pair of soaring gulls watch from above.

Inside the inviting atmosphere of crowded and cozy The Blue Whale are regular patrons and some visitors to the area.

Like characters in a Caravaggio painting, neighbors Jo Ann Curl, Lisa Anne Owens, Cynthia Roberson, Cynthia King, Fran Hoxie Eichorn, James Whittaker, Gina Marie, Fred Parsons, April Wade, Glenn Mohrlök, and Beverly Hayes are sitting at rough-hewn tables enjoying drinks, having a few laughs, and passionately planning the upcoming Collinsport Summer Music Festival.

At another table, other locals - James Kennedy Achey, Diane Bestany Kiernan, Larry D. Hardrick, Paul Sweeney Thorner, Jeff Kenny, David Cooper - are having a grand time celebrating Friday night and telling silly jokes.

In ear shot at a neighboring table, smiling pals Wally Helvey and Joe Escobar are swapping spine-tingling stories of the supernatural. Laughter is coming from an adjacent table, where locals Jackie Chapin Smith, Helen Samarass, and Guy Haines are reminiscing about their adventures hiking up north in Bar Harbor, Maine.

At the well-worn bar, ship captains Gary Woolard, Joe Flanagan, and Micah Harris are recounting their adventures on the rocky Maine coast, while Collins sherry company supervisors Aaron Wyst, Malcolm Monahan, and Dan Silvio are telling tales of their trade.

The tables surround the packed dance floor where a group of fun-loving friends, also locals, are celebrating summer. The hearts of the happy dancers are racing as their bodies are moving to the rhythm of The Rascals hit rock 'n roll song "Good Lovin" coming from the chunky jukebox. Beth Caster, Bob Issel, Joan Kutchmanich, Chad Hopkins, Cody Stover, Theresa Santitoro, Nina Ogle are gliding -dancing- the fad dance *The Skate*.

Crowded in with them are locals cutting the rug with the groovy new dances *The Pony* and *The Jerk* : Vivian F Hardwirck, Norma Drew, Cheryl Donato, Mary Jo McKinney Wasmer, Shelli La Torre, and Paul Sousa are having fun swinging and swaying.

The smiling new waitress, Barbie Bolero, 27, is swaying in sync to the blue-eyed soul from The Rascals as she balances a tray of drinks.

With long dark wavy hair, her small frame clad in hippie blouse and mini-skirt, Barbie looks like a singer in a folk rock band. But she's not laid-back like a calming breeze; instead, she's hyped like an invigorating wind from the Friday night vibe and music of the bustling bar.

She's looking for the good in everyone she meets, and smiles that she's working at her favorite cousin's establishment for the season. An imaginative young woman, raised on Bronte sister novels and dime-store Gothics, she's eager that one night in the quiet town of Collinsport, the man of her dreams, her own brooding Gothic hero, will walk in to The Blue Whale and sweep her off her feet.

Barbie, a summer visitor to Collinsport, would never believe a force was about to invade her summer - and stop her snappy swaying, stop her energetic vibrating, stop even her daily living.

Unsuspecting Barbie places a third round of beers on the table occupied by noisy preppy outsiders celebrating their participation in the regatta at the neighboring tourist town.

Suddenly, one of the preppies, a drunken 20ish guy in Bermuda shorts and a sailing team shirt, grabs Barbie hard by the waist, pulling her on to his lap.

"Give me a kiss, Barbie Baby!"

He forces a kiss on her, his boozy weather-dried lips parting hers before Barbie can pull away in disgust.

A man who could play Gary Cooper-type roles in the movies is witnessing the assault from a seat at the bar; without hesitating, he leaps from his bar stool, rushing to the rescue.

He pulls Barbie from the creep's lap; he grabs and twists backward the arm of the sleazy perpetrator, dragging him up and out of his seat.

"Owe!" the lecher preppy yells. The bully is now not so tough.

His yachtmen friends are laughing while moving fast out of the way. A few other patrons are watching with concern, ready to help, but see the rescuer has the situation under control. Most people at The Blue Whale, oblivious to what's happening, remain engaged in scintillating conversations.

"You've had enough to drink!" Gary Cooper tells the lecher, shoving the young culprit towards the exit, then pushing him out the door and slamming it after him. Barbie, her adrenaline rushing like a wild river in her veins and unable to form words, stares wide-eyed at the scene.

The other waitress, Lucia, a sixtyish Maine native with intelligent eyes who's as vigilant about trouble as her signer of the Declaration of Independence ancestor was - pulls Barbie away from the table.

"Sweetie, that pervert needs his teeth knocked down his throat!" Lucia says, placing a protective arm around her friend Barbie.

I've hardly seen one as sleazy as that creature."

Lucia's husband – the Blue Whale owner Angelo Bolero - just now aware of the commotion, glances at his gun hidden under the bar before rushing like a superhero from behind the bar.

He gently wraps his strong arms around his fairy-like cousin Barbie.

“Barbs, it’s okay, Babe. You’re okay.”

She’s shaking, and tears are streaming down her face, but she’s comforted.
“I’m okay, Ang.”

“That guy is not even worth an empty bottle of beer,” says Lucia Bolero, her usual playful smile on her Italian face.

Cousin Angelo isn’t smiling.

“Anything like that ever happens again, Babs, I will jump over the bar. You got to kick the *cafone* where it counts,” he says, using the Italian slang word for “ignorant”.

“Better yet, you let me take care of him. You know the bum? Where he’s from?” -

Barbie’s protective cousin demands to know.

“Here for the regatta.”

“Drunken sailor out from his yacht to make trouble in our little town. Just what we don’t need,” Lucia adds.

The other yachtsmen are at the bar, waiting to pay their tab.

Angelo takes their money.

“Tell your dirt bag friend he ever shows his face in here, or in Collinsport, ever again- I’ll be ready.”

Without a word, and with faces showing they agree, and that they see formidable-looking, in-shape amateur athlete Angelo means action, they pay their bill and leave The Blue Whale.

Barbie, still speechless, turns her moist eyes to Gary Cooper: her handsome and calm rescuer, about her age, who is now ordering shots at the bar from Cousin Ang.

The smiling hero waves her over.

Eager to show appreciation, she goes to him.

“Sorry you had to go through that,” the rescuer says, sounding earnest.

Angelo hands him the drinks, smiles, shakes his hand, and says,
“On the house, Hero.”

The hero winks at Barbie, who blushes.

Meanwhile, no one in The Blue Whale sees the figure outside peering into the window at Barbie. The male figure with shaggy hair and dressed in a long denim coat breathes hard. Waiting for just the right moment to make his move, he stands at the dock by the entrance of the bar and grill and tosses his cigarette into the water. A gull goes for it, maybe hoping it's food, and the figure smirks, hoping the gull chokes on the cigarette.

Inside The Blue Whale, the rescuing stranger is taking care of his damsel in distress.

"Here take a sip. This always calms my nerves," Gary Cooper says offering Barbie a shot of glistening Collins sherry, which she accepts.

"Name's Jennings. Chris Jennings," he says extending his hand.

"Barbara, I mean Barbie Bolero. Thank you, Mr. Jennings. You, you saved me from that, that creature."

She takes Chris's hand, and for a moment longer than socially usual they look into each other's eyes.

"It's Chris, please. Glad to meet you Barbie, just wish the circumstances were more pleasant."

He lets go of her hand. She smiles, wishing the circumstances were better, but thinking they're pretty pleasant now.

"You must be new in town," Chris says in the New England small town polite way of asking without asking.

"From Providence. I'm an artist, a painter, taking the summer off before delving into more networking in Providence, Boston, New York."

Chris nods approval.

"An artist! Marvelous! And from Providence, Rhode Island - home of freedom of conscience. "

"Roger Williams, right, 1636; I like history, too."

"So," he says, "a painter?"

"No paintings of history, yet, but had a couple of shows of my paintings of Providence."

"Shows! And so young - wonderful! Now you are up here in this tiny town. Not headed for Greenwich Village or Haight-Ashbury?"

She laughs shaking her head. "Not my scene, and marijuana makes me sneeze."

He smiles.

She wants to know about this enigmatic hero. "Are you a local?"

"Yes," he says sounding unsure.

"Collinwood is part of, part of my blood."

He looks away, flicking a few stray hairs from his eyes.

She's wondering what he means.

He looks at his watch like he's in a hurry, then he gazes into her eyes. Barbie feels herself smiling and blushing. After a moment, Chris shakes her hand again, lingering.

"Maybe I'll see you around, Barbie."

Her name sounds delightful from his lips. She's nodding, hoping she will see him around town.

Chris Jennings turns and leaves The Blue Whale.

He's a gentleman, and beautiful, and courageous - why can't he stay, Barbie is wondering. Married?

She asks her cousin Ang about the charming mystery man.

"He's been in here before. Jennings. Odd kind of guy. Seen him a few times with one of the Collins clan, Caroline Stoddard, from the wealthy family that lives in that haunted house on top of the hill. Good-looking chick, lots of dough-re-me and lots of loony relatives - least that's what everyone 'round here says. Who knows? Just watch yourself with Jennings, Babe. And with that Collins clan."

The night wears down. Most locals have departed for home or are on to house parties, and some of the partying out-of-towners have retreated for the night to the Collinsport Inn or other accommodations.

Angelo smiles watching lingering regular customer Captain Gary Woolard and friend sailor Marge Hicks leaning on each other singing with the jukebox to "Hungry", the hit rock song from Paul Revere and the Raiders.

Regular customer Captain Joe Flanagan is finishing telling a funny story to out-of-town friends in Collinsport scouting a movie shoot: Amanda Trujillo, Gregory Drew, Al Olsen, Alex Cho, Michael Comella, Chris Durham. Then the little group downs their last drinks of the night, and they get up and head out.

Outside the wind whistles. The Blue Whale is just about empty: customers are gone for the night, and safe in their vehicles, or strolling the waterfront before heading back to their inns or on to parties.

The last customers bid Angelo a good night. They walk out the exit.

A moment later, the figure lurking outside, a man with an intense look in his eyes, struts into The Blue Whale like he owns the world.

Angelo without smiling looks him over saying, "Sorry buddy, we're closing"

"A Shot of whiskey doesn't take long." The cocky stranger interrupts.

"Just one shot and you're out of here," warns Angelo. He pours the drink and leaves the man to his shot and goes into the kitchen to find Lucia.

The strange man turns his eyes to Barbie, staring at her as she's wiping down an empty table.

She feels the stare and glances up at him. Suddenly Barbie feels a chill in the almost too-warm establishment. Something about the stranger is familiar and not right. Barbie moves to clean the table nearest to the bar. The stranger's staring is more intense. She tries to ignore him as she wipes the table.

"You don't remember me do you?"

"Have we met?" Who is he? she's asking herself.

"Three years ago, we were in Dr. Smith's impressionism class. I'm Stan Diab."

She can't quite recall, but, then, yes, something about him - and his name - is ringing alarm bells.

"My hair was long then." He motions to his middle back. "You still painting

Ashcan?"

She's remembers: Stan Diab!

At school he was drugged-out looking, some sort of abstract artist. In front of the class and her famous artist teacher - he made fun of her Ashcan school style painting of Providence. Now she was clearly remembering! He told her the painting was worthless! What in the world, Barbie wonders, is Too Cool Mr. Abstract Artist doing in nowheresville Collinsport, Maine?

"Are you with the regatta?" she asks.

Stan Diab smirks.

"Do I look like a spoiled brat preppie?"

She's unsure if he's serious, sarcastic, or anti-social.

He seems to sense her unease and lightens up.

“Not into racing. Not yachts. Not a Collins.”

Barbie doesn't know what to say.

Seeing she's not responding, Stan swigs down his drink, puts money on the bar, gets up, and leaves without saying anything. Barbie is relieved the rude artist is gone.

Later she's in her room at the Collinsport Inn, dabbing at a landscape painting of the Collinsport waterfront and thinking of Chris Jennings. She readies her clothes for the morning when she'll be up with the sun at her second job, housekeeping at the inn in exchange for room and board.

Weary from the long night waitressing, she tucks herself into bed. In a few minutes, she's deep into dreaming.

Barbie's panting, sweating in her nightgown. In her mind, she's running, running through woods outside an 18th Century mansion on the estate at Widow's Hill. She's running from something not seen, but felt in every inch of her body. Her heart is pounding like drummers in a Memorial Day parade. Her neck and back and hair are dripping with sweat. Her legs are burning, and the pain in her side is sharp. She has to keep running; she must keep running! Whatever it is, it is close behind her; she can hear it running and breathing hard!

“Knock-knock-knock!”

The sound of loud knocks on her door jar her from the nightmare. She wipes her moist brow with her hand and looks at the clock. Three A.M.

“What the --?”

Who is knocking at her door? The bad dream lingers in her mind.

Another knock.

Assuring her jittery self that the hotel manager must be at the door, she grabs and pulls on her robe and opens the door. The cocky strange former student who was at the bar - Stan Diab - with a look of despair on his attractive face is standing in front of her. Still groggy but alarmed, she pulls her robe tighter and manages to speak.

“What are you doing here?”

Tears roll down Stan's face. A guitar is on the floor in front of him in the corridor. Stan's tears touch Barbie's romantic heart, but her stomach that she ignores is wrenching, saying something different.

“You can't come in here, and, we, we can't stand here. Let's go to the lobby.”

They're sitting alone in oversize antique upholstered chairs. The lobby is chilly. She puts a log on the hearth, feeding the fire that had fizzled for the night.

He pulls his polished guitar out from its battered case. Stan plays and sings:

And like a dying lady, lean and pale,
Who totters forth, wrapped in a gauzy veil,
Out of her chamber, led by the insane
And feeble wanderings of her fading brain,
The moon arose up in the murky east,
A white and shapeless mast.

“That’s a sad tale,” Barbie says bathed in the glow of the firelight. She perceives Stan is telling his own story.

“Shelley,” he says, “the dead poet. *The Waning Moon*.
His wife lost him, and I, well, let’s say I lost my last, my last love,”

Stan says, looking like he’ll cry. Barbie lowers her head for the sorrowful souls.
He reaches out and embraces her. They kiss. She is uncertain she wants to, but she’s compelled, finding the odd man irresistible.

An hour of kisses later, she sees Stan has fallen asleep. She leaves him in front of the waning fire in the hearth and goes to her room.

His eyes open: he’s watching her walking away. Stan smirks and his attractive face looks cruel.

He remains in the lobby and curls up on the sofa by the hearth.
She’s out of ear shot. Stan laughs.

Sleepy and cuddled beneath a warm blanket in her room, Barbie’s thoughts are racing.
Something of what he said rings hollow, her gut is warning. But she’s feeling so bad for him, such empathy, sympathy, so attracted to the vulnerable and good-looking man, that she puts away the in-congruent warning.

She will soon come face-to-face with the true reason the strangely compelling man is in Collinsport -and seeking her out.

Next morning, Stan rises and departs from the inn before the day manager comes to the desk at six and before Barbie begins her housekeeping shift.

A little later, Barbie is on her break drinking a cup of tea at the Collinsport Inn cafe.
Stan enters.

“Thank you for last night; been awhile since anyone was interested in listening to my song, let alone caring,” he says looking like a child without any love in the world.

His pained face again touches Barbie’s soul. Stan questions her and finds out it’s her night off from The Blue Whale; he offers to take her to out after her day job.

“Let me take you for a ride, a drive, a tour of Collinsport.”

He is driving his top-down convertible, Barbie by his side taking in the green scenery. The radio is tuned to the local FM college rock album station playing a long song from The Doors, the haunting record titled "The End."

Stan parks at the edge of the woods and ocean and points to a heavily treed winding road: "The Collins estate."

After a while, he starts the engine; they ride up the road far enough to glimpse the estate without worrying of being seen from anyone who might be inside the old mansion.

"The locals told me strange tales; silliness, legends," she says, unsure why she's talking.

"Believe them," he says with a cold and faraway look on his face.

"You're not serious," she says, not wanting to believe supernatural stories.

He stares into her eyes. She wants to look away and feeling magnetized, cannot.

"Quit your job," he commands.

Compelled to do as he says, and not understanding why, Barbie lets him bring her to The Blue Whale just before opening time.

In a daze, she gets of his car and enters her evening workplace.

Lucia, setting up glasses on the bar, looks up from her work.

"Whatcha doing here this early, Babs? You crazy?"

"Morning Lucia," Barbie says and sits on a bar stool looking like she might nod off.

Lucia notices and sees the Barbie's blank expression on the face that's usually cheerful. And she sees the dazed look in the usually sparkling eyes.

"I'm not one to pry, but you okay?"

"What?"

"Something wrong, Hon?"

"Cousin Ang here?"

"Owner is always here hours before everyone else, Barbie Baby!" Angelo says playfully as he comes out of the kitchen. He kisses Barbie, then Lucia.

"Did he pick the right gal, or what?" Lucia asks knowing the answer.

“The family couldn’t believe Ang would leave Federal Hill to follow his love from Providence to Maine,” Lucia says, retelling a piece of the well-loved story of how the married couple met.

Angelo kisses Lucia. He glances at the clock over the bar, then at Barbie’s unusual unresponsiveness and less-than-energetic looking posture.

“Did you eat?” he asks, worry creasing his brow.

She shakes her head.

“No wonder you look pale this morning. Mangia! Let me get your favorite oatmeal with fresh Maine blueberries and maple syrup. A nice drop of anisette will get blood flowing to those cute cheeks.”

He gently touches her face.

“Thanks, Cuz. Can’t stay. Gotta take a leave from my job, just a week or two. Personal problem.”

“Babe, we’re family. You deserting me for one of the Italian restaurants on The Hill? Going back to Providence?”

“I’m okay, Ang, really.”

He sighs.

“Whatever you say, My Little Anisette. But remember, we’re blood; cousin Angelo is always here.”

She hugs him. Then Barbie turns to Lucia who is wiping glasses. They hug.

“Thanks you, Guys,” Barbie says holding back tears and not understanding why she is taking a leave from the people and place she loves.

“Make sure you hurry back, Barbie,” Lucia says as Barbie exits The Blue Whale. Lucia and Angelo exchange worried glances.

That night Barbie’s in her bed tangled in a nightmare. She’s surrounded by a swirling red cloud She is so weak, she falls off the bed. Landing with a thud, she’s uninjured but shaking.

Next day, Stan takes her on a picnic on the deserted shore below the Collinwood cliff at Widow’s Hill. She picks a wild rose then calls out in pain, pricked by a thorn.

“Devils walk the world disguised in beauty,” Stan says, showing no empathy.

His words rankle. Is he talking about himself? Her? She tells herself he's poetic, a musician - so, therefore, moody.

They're lying together on the beach, kissing, a blanket beneath them and beach towels above against the chill wind on a sunny day that has turned gray.

Later, she stands up; she's falling, weak and dizzy.
He catches her, then sets her straight. She notices he seems stronger the weaker she is getting.

Chris Jennings is walking the beach down the coast a little way and sees the couple.

"Well Hello, Barbie!"

Smiling, she weakly waves and keeps walking without saying a word, without stopping.

Chris looks slighted but keeps walking, alone.

Next day, she's wandering along the docks in a daze, unsure how she got there.

Driving by, Chris spots her.
He pulls up at the dock and gets out of his sports car.

"I haven't seen you at The Blue Whale. So I hope you don't mind, but I asked Angelo, didn't know he's your cousin. A good man and -"

She staggers. He puts his arm around her.

"Something is wrong. Would you like to talk?"

"It's okay."

"I know about hard times. How about a nice soothing shot of Collins sherry?"
He sees she wants to, then she says, "some other day, I am not feeling 100%."

"Sorry to hear that."

"Me too."

That night, tucked into her Collinsport Inn bed, she dreams of Stan.
Somehow, she knows she is in the year 1810, on June 3rd.

Next day, not knowing why, she is compelled to go to the Collinsport library microfilm machine. Looking through newspapers, she finds 1810.
June 3rd: She stares at the illustration: Stan - a sea captain! But his name is Jones!

She tells herself Stan has to be a descendant of this Captain Jones who was accused of piracy, then mysteriously disappeared from Collinsport!

Barbie confronts Stan with a mimeographed copy of the image from the newspaper. He denies any relation to Captain Jones.

Later that night, he enters her room without knocking. He pushes at her until she awakes with a start.

“Do you think someone with my talent, my looks, should spend his life as a nobody, a nobody artist or just a nobody nothing? So, I made a deal. And why not?”

“What are you talking about; what are you doing to me?” she yells but weakly.

“I stay alive by the life energy of others - yours! People like you, with your empathy, your sympathy, your kindness, you’re nothing but weak! I knew you would be easy prey, was going to get you three years ago, but, let’s say I was busy; then I heard about your, your art success - so I tracked you here.”

She runs for the exit.

“No one will believe you, Barbie! They’ll say you’re crazy, lock you away at Windcliff Sanitarium. You wouldn’t be the first girl I had sent to the looney bin, ranting about a man from the 19th century, yelling hysterically about magic. Locals say that woman doctor Hoffman is tough: she’ll throw away the key!”

Barbie manages to throw her empty suitcase at him and escapes from the room.

She runs and runs heading to Chris’s cottage through dark woods. At the point of collapse, she reaches Chris’s cottage in the woods on the Collinwood estate.

“Chris, Chris please please help me!”

She knocks hard at his front door. Nothing. Again. Nothing. Then, the door opens.

“Barbie? What’s wrong?” He catches her as she collapses and carries her to the sofa.

Half out of it, she tells Chris her story. He hugs her, stroking her back.

“It’s okay. You’re safe here, safe with me. Always.”

“Then you believe me? Thank God!”

“I have no doubts about the supernatural, absurd at it seems.”

He asks her to stay, and she can sleep in his room; he’ll take the sofa. She wants to so much, but not understanding her own decision, she declines.

Chris drives her back to the inn and stays with her in her room until she’s asleep, after promising to stop by in the morning.

But when he arrives the next day, she's gone. Her things are still in her room, but the innkeeper doesn't know why she didn't report for work.

It's dark out. In a daze, Barbie's walking through the woods towards the cliff - Widow's Hill - the legendary haunted precipice at the Collinwood estate. By evil magnetism, Stan is leading her, ready to finish off stealing her energy and her talent.

They're at the edge. His arms are around her. He's kissing her.

"Too bad. Would have liked to have kept you around a while. But it's either you or me. And I'm worth more than you. I'm the one who should have art shows - should be famous, celebrated! With your energy, your talent in me - I will be acknowledged and the world will forget you, Barbie!"

She's too depleted to understand the danger. He moves from hugging her to standing behind her, ready to push her from the cliff!

Suddenly, Chris springs out from the dark!

"I know what you are! I've been watching you! Leave her, leave here, or you'll be taken out in a pine box!"

Chris yells, brandishing his pistol.

Stan rushes away, looking back, yelling to Barbie, who is now awakened and trembling:

"You have broken my heart. I love you, Barbie, forever!"

"You don't know what love is, Buster!" Chris shouts back.

The predator is gone.

Barbie collapses into Chris's arms, aware enough to know she's safe with her hero.

"I should kill him before he can hurt anyone else!"

"What of that talk you promised me?" She asks, her weakened voice barely audible.

Love swells in her heart for her hero.

"I can't stay, Barbie. One day I will just be gone without notice. Someday, if fate allows, I will return."

He touches her hand, kisses her face, hugs her. She doesn't want to ever let go.

"I do have to leave, Barbie. I'm sorry."

She knows and just nods.

He brings her up to the Collinwood mansion and enters with a key. No one is home, and he calls for a cab.

Soon, the cab arrives.

“It’s okay, Chris.”

They hug and kiss again. He runs off, and she knows he is after her enemy.

The next day, feeling better, she drives to his cottage. A beautiful young woman with long blond hair dressed in an abstract print mini-dress answers the door.

“May I help you?”

“I’m Barbie; I’m looking for a friend. Chris, Chris Jennings.”

“Aren’t we all.”

Barbie recognizes the blonde. Someone she once glimpsed on the way out of The Blue Whale.

“Forgive my rudeness. I am Caroline Stoddard.”

She is as beautiful as they say, Barbie notices and introduces herself. They shake hands.

“Chris is gone.”

“Do you know?” Barbie starts to ask.

“No one knows where he goes, or when he’ll be back, if he ever returns. I am sorry,” says Caroline, heiress to the Collins family.

Walking swiftly back through the woods to her vehicle at the parking lot of the great estate, Barbie’s mind races.

Had the monster gotten to him, was Chris now the victim? Chris’s words from their conversation echo in her mind.

“I can’t stay. One day I will just be gone without notice. Someday, if fate allows I will return.”

Her instinct tells her the danger to her is over, Stan has run away. Chris is away, somewhere, and safe.

She hopes and prays fate means they will meet again. Tomorrow is another day, she thinks, glad to be alive, and skips like a girl into her car. She’s eager to get back to her life at The Blue Whale and to see her family-cousin Ang and his wife Lucia.