

My Father Will Come For Me

A short story of 5,120 words. A horror story that begins on a stormy winter's night in the small town of McGregor in Minnesota.....

No time to get comfortable, the police car is already using its siren.

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"Is she alright ? She looks pretty hysterical to me.....Can't you give her something ?"

Tina knew Jerry Peterman, the cop looking anxiously in the rear view mirror as he drove. Tina Chaidez knew everyone in McGregor; it was a fairly small town. The sign on highway sixty five said the population was four hundred and twenty four, though the sign hadn't been updated in a while. She looked at the small child sat next to her on the rear seat of the police car. Not for the first time she wondered what the Thompson family had done to get the entire town feeling scared. She felt it herself, the nervousness when that family name came up, anywhere.

"She's only three years old Jerry.....She's not going to try and grab the wheel or anything. The poor kid is probably terrified."

"I still think you should give her something Tina."

"I'm not going to drug a scared kid."

Not that Tina had anything to drug her with anyway, though Jerry didn't need to know that. Only the trained nursing staff at the orphanage were authorised to dispense drugs and give injections and she wasn't one of them. There were times when Tina didn't know what her job was, but her mom had been quite keen on her taking the position when it was offered.

"It's a good steady job. There will always be kids who need somewhere to take care of them."

Her mom had told her. Tina was eighteen years old and confused about so many parts of her job.

Like how she, a trainee, was in a police car with a scared looking cop driving her and poor Nicole Thompson to the orphanage. No one knew why McGregor had a large orphanage anyway, it was rarely more than half full and many of those kids should have been somewhere else. Kids with learning difficulties, kids who never talked, kids who seriously self-harmed, kids who.....Were just plain crazy. The McGregor Orphanage had the space and was funded by the state, so they couldn't even refuse to accept kids who really should have been sent somewhere else, somewhere better.

Some of the younger kids were adopted or fostered, but the kids with serious problems....They were there until the state kicked them out when they reached their eighteenth birthday.

"My father will come for me." Screeched Nicole.

"Crap.....That shit again. Give her something." Said Jerry.

She'd been saying it, or rather yelling it, since the cops had tried to take her out of the Thompson's house out near highway two ten. It might well have been a murder scene, so the kid had to be taken somewhere. Anyway, with her mother dead and no other relative rushing to take her in, Nicole had nowhere else to go other than the orphanage.

"Who is your father ?" Asked Tina.

Oh, those dark eyes, they'd seemed to bore into her while she'd dressed the child. Eyes that seemed to look through your skin, bone and deep into your soul.

"My father will come for me." Yelled Nicole. "You will be punished for taking me away."

“Well....That’s new.” Said Jerry. “I still think you should sedate her, or getting her out of the car might be difficult.”

Looking into those eyes had caused Tina to wonder if she should have brought a nurse, or asked for a syringe full on tranquiliser, even though she wasn’t qualified to use it. Nicole Thompson was only three years old, but there was something ancient and terrible about her eyes.

“We’ll be at the orphanage soon Jerry. I’ll carry her inside if I have to.”

The subject of their conversation ignored them, apart from once again saying that her father would be coming for her.

“Do you think she knows her mother is dead ?” Asked Jerry. “A few people told her, but do you think she understood ?”

“It might be a blessing if she didn’t.” Said Tina.

No one was sure if her mother had been killed, or died of a drug overdose, or even some kind of dreadful disease. Betsy Thompson was a known addict of just about anything she could get to swallow, smoke, or jam into her veins. Maybe there had been some sort of dreadful side effect of mixing together all those drugs ? Betsy had been found in a pool of her own blood, which appeared to have poured out of every orifice. Jerry drove the police car round the back of the orphanage and parked close to a set of double doors.

“I don’t want to be here.” Said Nicole.

“At least she’s stopped yelling.” Said Jerry.

“You’ll need to come in with me Jerry; there’ll be paperwork to sign.”

“There’s always paperwork.”

Tina ignored the eyes, Nicole was just a scared three year old after all. No fighting, no tantrums. As she picked her up, the child put her arms around her neck. The poor thing weighed almost nothing. Jerry opened the doors and Tina took the kid into what was probably going to be her home until she was eighteen. She really couldn’t see anyone wanting to adopt, or even foster a Thompson child.

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“Oh, what has she done now ?”

The alarm had woken her and Tina was almost certain she was about to find out Nicole was at the bottom of whatever had gone on. The girl had turned eleven at her last birthday and she didn’t seem to be mellowing with age. She’d become a kicker and a biter, which meant she was a constant heap of trouble. The frantic banging on her door started less than a minute after the alarm, while she was still trying to wake up and put on her dressing gown. The McGregor Orphanage was short staffed, they always were. A worried looking trainee was stood outside her door.

“Sorry Miss Chaidez, it’s the Thompson girl. She’s bitten Liam.”

“Does it look bad ?”

“I think so.....There’s a lot of blood. Bruce said he’ll need to go to hospital.”

“I’ll get dressed.....Tell Bruce not to call anyone until I get there.”

“Yes Miss Chaidez.”

Tina had earned a few promotions over the years, but still seemed to end up with the shitty end of the stick. No husband and no kids, meant being expected to be the senior person on call during the night. She pulled on the same clothes she’d taken off only three hours before.

“Oh Nicole.....If your dad really is coming for you.....I hope he comes soon.” She muttered.

Tina wanted to yell at someone and the trainee had made the mistake of lurking outside of her door.

“Make yourself useful girl.....Get the damned alarm turned off.” She yelled.

“Yes Miss Chaidez, straight away.”

Nicole had a room to herself, so did a lot of the more troubled kids. They tended to sleep better than if they were in one of the dormitories and as now, anything unpleasant could be kept away from the other kids. It was a win-win situation, or should have been. None of the smaller rooms were locked at night. It was an orphanage after all, not a prison.

"So Bruce.....What seems to have happened?" She asked.

"Liam has been a bit over interested in Nicole for a while.....I think he tried to do something about it. She's given him a nasty bite to discourage him.....Really nasty and deep.....Like a dog bit him."

The alarm stopped just as Bruce had finished yelling his report at her. It seemed the new trainee was one of the brighter ones and able to use a bit of initiative. A few years at the orphanage would beat that out of her, if she stayed.

"He needs a proper doctor Tina." Said Bruce.

"Patch him up Bruce, stop the bleeding."

A trip to hospital would start the official circus rolling into town. There'd be questions about separating the sexes again, and proper night control again, and the need for a properly trained medical nurse on night duty.....Again. It all cost money though, money that simply wasn't in the budget.

"Are you alright Nicole?" She asked.

There was a lot of blood, much of it on the girl. The blood didn't unduly worry Tina, experience had taught her it usually looked worse than it was. Sadly most of her experience with bloody wounds had been gained by cleaning up after Nicole.

"I'm alright."

The girl had her nightdress wrapped round her, while she continued to glare at Liam. The boy was twelve and there was nothing intrinsically bad about the kid. He was just slow on the uptake and probably having feelings he didn't understand.

"Did he touch you?"

"A bit, but I sorted him out."

Tina had a unique relationship with the girl, it seemed to stem from that first night, when she'd held her in her arms to bring her into the orphanage. Few of the staff would even touch the child, yet Tina pulled her face round so they were looking at one another.

"This is important Nicole. Did Liam hurt you? I'm sure you know what I mean?"

She did of course, the child was bright, too bright to be in an institution where most of the inmates were at the bottom end of the IQ bell curve.

"No, he didn't....He just touched where he shouldn't touch."

Nicole who scared even the toughest of her staff, even Bruce, hugged her and began to cry. Why the girl had decided to treat her like some kind of surrogate favourite aunt was a mystery. Deep down though, Tina did quite like the kid. Bruce was looking at her as if she'd just pulled off an epic magic trick.

"How is Liam doing?" She asked.

"She bit right down to his collar bone." Said Bruce. "He needs to go to the hospital."

"You're sure?"

He knew what it would mean as well as she did. Lots of people poking into everything, treating them all as though they were guilty of laziness and neglect. The physical appearance of Nicole didn't help. The kid ate three good sized meals a day and still pestered the kitchen staff for extras. Yet she looked like a poorly nourished infant, the sort you see in warzones on the TV news.

"As someone who did all of six months as an army medic.....Yes Tina, Liam needs proper medical care." Said Bruce.

"Fine, get it arranged. Use the ambulance service we usually use."

"It's not that Liam is a bad kid....." Began Bruce.

"I know....He should be somewhere else. So should half the children we get to look after. Get him into hospital."

Tina wasn't that big herself, yet she lifted Nicole up off the bed with ease. An arm under the girl's legs, while she clung to her, arms around her neck. It was becoming an all too familiar situation, though the first where she'd bitten anyone down to the bone.

"Ellie has a spare bed in her room Nicole." She said. "You like Ellie..... Don't you?"

"Yes, she's alright."

"We'll get you into a shower first and then a clean nightdress."

Tina didn't know why she did it, but she hugged the girl harder and Nicole did something.....If Tina had sworn to it on a whole stack of bibles, none of the staff would have believed her. Nicole Thompson, feral child, feared by everyone.....Kissed her on the cheek.

"Sorry if I caused you more trouble Tina."

Tina decided it wasn't the time or the hour to go through the rights and wrongs of Nicole defending herself against boys who were a bit overfriendly. There would be a time for that conversation though and how biting couldn't be the first option.

"You're not so bad.....Just tell your dad I looked after you well....When he comes."

"Oh I will.....I definitely will."

For a second Nicole was just like any other eleven year old, if you ignored her small size and the whole undernourished thing. There were those eyes though, with their flecks of red. Eyes that had no place looking out of the head of any child.

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"I officially retire in two weeks' time." Said Mrs Wheeler. "Though we both know you've been running the place for the last year. I'm happy that you will do your best for the children sent here."

"I promise to look after them as best I can." Said Tina.

At thirty three she'd be the youngest ever head of the McGregor Orphanage, though Tina didn't feel comfortable mentioning that. Her grandmother had never liked to appear smug or self-satisfied, nor had her mother. Tina Chaidez had picked up a need for humility with her mother's milk.

"Have a good time in Chicago Tina and we'll talk again when you get back."

The alarm when it began wasn't a surprise, nor was the beeping of her phone to tell her the alarm had been triggered. Tina looked at Mrs Wheeler and shrugged, they'd both expected Nicole Thompson to kick off that morning.

"We know what that will be.....Oh, that girl." Said Mrs Wheeler.

"The funny thing is that I will miss her."

Trainees came and went, but Tina was glad it was Trixie waiting for her outside Mrs Wheeler's office. Like her Trixie was a realist when it came to trying to look after close to two hundred kids, with only a sensible budget for half that number.

"We all knew she was bound to do this.....But Doc T wants to sedate Nicole." Said Trixie. "I told him you'll have his teeth for cufflinks if he does."

"I'll do worse than that if he tries to stick a needle in her.....Not today of all days."

Someone up there was trying to improve her day; the alarm was turned off before they reached the room where Nicole was holding half the staff hostage. Not really, it just looked that way as Tina

walked into the room. Doc T had a nasty looking cut on his cheek, that might well be a bite and Bruce was holding his side in a meaningful way. Two trainees were also there and looking worried, but that seemed the natural look for trainees.

“You’re not sedating her; she wants you to do that.” Said Tina. “Sedate her and she won’t be allowed on the plane.”

Doc T was Doctor Trevor Becker- Müller, so everyone simply referred to him as Doc T. His arrival had been the result of one of Nicole’s many and varied attempts to bring anarchy and chaos to the orphanage. A qualified doctor on the premises two days a week was one of the few inquiry recommendations the state had actually agreed to fund.

“She bit me and kicked Bruce.” Said Doc T. “That can’t simply be ignored.”

“She’s like a wild thing today.” Added Bruce.

“Unless she actually kills someone, we’re not sedating her. She’s eighteen and should have left two months ago. As they’ve found a relative to look after her, I’m determined to get Nicole and myself onto the plane from Minneapolis Airport tonight.....Understood ?”

“She punched one of the trainees.” Said Doc T.

His voice went higher when he knew he was on the losing end of an argument. Tina had been tempted to punch the occasional trainee over the course of the preceding fifteen years, so she wasn’t about to punish Nicole for doing it.

“Everyone go back to your usual duties, I need to talk to Nicole.” She said.

“But Tina.....” Began Bruce.

“Go....All of you.....Now !” She yelled.

They went, though Bruce was still holding his ribs and one of the male trainees was limping. The cause of all the noise and anger was stood next to her bed, fists held up like a boxer. Nicole was breathing in short rapid breaths and her face was flushed. Tina sat on the girl’s bed.

“Sit next to me Nicole.....Calm down or you’ll hyperventilate again.”

Betsy Thompson’s kid wasn’t a kid anymore. She was eighteen, a young woman, even if she still looked like a skinny twelve year old. She sat on the bed next to her and shuffled up close enough for their thighs to touch.

“If you make me go to Chicago, my father won’t be able to find me.”

There it was again, Nicole’s own personal OCD. Many of the kids arrived with weird ideas and beliefs. They were like scabs formed over sore wounds and Tina knew better than to pick at them. Nicole was different though, her weird idea hadn’t diminished even slightly over the last fifteen years. As for the mysterious father ? Betsy Thompson had been a prostitute for years to earn enough to feed her many addictions. It was generally assumed that one of her clients had been Nicole’s father.

“How do you know your father is coming for you ? Who told you Nicole ?”

“An angel.”

There were a lot of churches in McGregor and most of the population attended regularly. One of the main reasons people were wary of the Thompsons was because none of them had ever been known to stick their nose into a church.

“What did the angel look like ?”

“Not like in the books, he had no wings. But he suddenly appeared in my room and vanished after talking to me.....So he must have been an angel..... He seemed kind.”

Tina held the girl’s hand and wished they’d had the conversation many years previously.

“What did the angel say to you, exactly ?”

“He said my father would come for me. So I have to stay in McGregor, or he won’t be able to find me.”

“The angel found you though, didn’t he ?”

“I suppose so.”

“You were bound to leave here one day and get a job. I’ve spoken to Cynthia Gordon in Chicago a few times and she sounds very nice. She’s from your great grandmother’s side of the family. In her seventies with a nice house in the suburbs. You’ll probably love it there.”

“But my dad.....”

“Look Nicole, if the angel can find you once, he can find you again. He can then tell your dad where you are.....Angels aren’t stupid.”

“No, of course not.”

There was a budget for teachers, but most kids left with just enough reading and writing ability to buy groceries in Walmart. Nicole was different, she devoured books on everything from romance to science fiction. The girl was smart, which made keeping her in any institution a waste of her potential.

“You’re bound to meet someone one day and he might not want to live in McGregor.”

“Me !.....No boy will ever want me.”

That tugged gently at one of Tina’s personal scabs. There had been a few near misses, but she was approaching thirty four with no ring on her finger. Nicole had a certain look about her though, pretty in an unorthodox way as they say in fashion mags. Add on the attitude and troubled past and Tina could see a lot of young men wanting to be her friend.

“Nonsense, Chicago isn’t McGregor Nicole. No one will know about your past....There are three million people in Chicago and a lot of them will be attractive young men.”

“Three million Tina.....Wow.”

Miss Chaidez to everyone of course, but Tina to Nicole if they were alone. Tina would miss that when the young woman had moved to Chicago. She’d miss having one person who called her by her first name.

“Trust me... If your dad needs to find you, the angel can help him.”

“I see that now.”

“So..... Can we have an afternoon with no more dramas ? I believe one of the trainees made you a cake.”

“Was it the one I punched ?”

“Yes, sadly I think it was.”

“I’ll say sorry and.....I will be good, I promise.”

“Don’t let me down.”

“I won’t.”

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Someone was pulling at her face.

Tina had already been tired; it had been a long day at the McGregor Orphanage. Add on a long trip to the airport and the inevitable flight delay and she couldn’t wait to get to sleep. As soon as it seemed to be acceptable to recline her seat, she was leaning against the headrest and into a deep slumber. Not an untroubled sleep, her dreams were full of shouting people, the sound of screaming and even a few muffled bangs.

Someone or something was definitely pulling at her face.

“Wake up Tina, there’s something wrong with the plane.”

So difficult to come out of such a wonderfully deep sleep, but there was that person pulling at her face again. Tina forced her eyes open to find what looked like a monster leaning over her. Huge eyes and finger that were all over her face. She grabbed the fingers, trying to push them away.

“No....No...You need the oxygen mask or you’ll die.”

Slowly the monster became a worried looking Nicole, looking at her over the top of a mask. Tina was no expert at flying; it had been two years since a conference on Orphanage Management had meant a wonderful excuse for a trip to Atlantic City.

The airline the orphanage had booked her and Nicole on had been Delta; she remembered that from the check-in desk. As for the plane ? It had looked fairly new, with a nice colour scheme and everything had been so clean and tidy. Now Tina was looking at a scene of chaos and somewhere behind them, someone was still screaming. Worst of all were the two passengers who were leaning right out of their seats. No movement, even when a woman collided with them. She was no medical expert, but Tina knew she was looking at two dead people. She leant her head against Nicole’s.

“What the hell happened ?”

“There was a loud bang, several loud bangs. Someone talked to us, a stewardess I think. She said the plane had hit something.....Someone mentioned high flying geese. Everyone seemed calm until no one could breathe. After the masks came down, we never heard from the stewardess again.....Or anyone.”

“You must have been terrified.”

“I was, especially when you wouldn’t wake up.”

Tina found the girl’s hand and squeezed it. If Nicole hadn’t put on her mask and been so determined to wake her up, it might have been her leaning out into the aisle with those dreadful dead eyes.

“The pilot is probably descending so that people can breathe again.” Said Tina.

The aircraft jumped around as though caught in some kind of massive turbulence and the engine noise briefly changed to a high pitched whine.

“What’s happening ?”

“I have no idea Nicole. We just have to stay in our seats and trust the pilot.”

Easy to say, but Tina felt so helpless. No one was talking to them over the intercom, but the plane was definitely descending. Or crashing of course, there was no way to tell the difference. More screaming from behind them and a young man appeared, grabbing hold of seat backs to stay on his feet. He had no mask on, so Tina experimented with removing hers. Breathing was a bit of an effort, but there was just about enough air to stay live. Nicole copied her and smiled as she took a deep breath.

“Just getting rid of that thing makes me feel better.” Said Nicole.

“Me too.”

Luck wasn’t on the side of the young man. He was halfway between two rows of seats with nothing to hold onto, when the plane bucked, before dropping like a stone. The man collided with the ceiling and Tina was sure she’d heard the sound of breaking bones. The aircraft twitched again, just before he collided with the floor. She wasn’t imagining it, there was a pool of blood where he’d landed. Up again to hit the ceiling, before he hit a row of seats on the way down. Tina shut her eyes.

“Don’t look Nicole, don’t watch.”

The whine of the engines hid any sounds, but Tina could imagine what was happening to the young man. When she did eventually open her eyes, it took her a few moments to realise the heap of crumpled clothing near an emergency door was the body of the young man.

“Crap..... Did you see that Tina ?” Yelled Nicole. “Did you see that ?”

“There was nothing.....No way we could have helped him.”

At least breathing and talking were now easier, the plane was definitely still descending. Tina refused to even consider the likelihood that the aircraft was simply falling out of the sky.

“But the pilot.” Yelled Nicole. “Supposing that happened to him.”

“There are co-pilots and they have rules about staying strapped in....I saw a TV documentary once. They even eat different foods in case one thing has gone bad.”

It was no good, Nicole was in a full on panic and Tina had seen that happen before. The girl was out of her seatbelt and away, before Tina could stop her.

“Nicole.....Come back ! It’s not safe !”

Where was safe though ? Tina didn’t feel safe in her seat, even with the seatbelt as tight as she could get it, without it hurting her stomach.

“Nicole.....Please listen to me !”

Damn, she’d gone and Tina hadn’t even seen the direction she’d run off in. There was a movement in front of her though, quite close to the emergency doors near the wings. Crazy to undo her own seatbelt of course, but Nicole had been given into her care. She was going to deliver her safely to her relative in Chicago, or die in the attempt.

“Damn girl, fifteen years of nothing but trouble.” She muttered.

Tina realised the contradiction between her actions and what she’d said, she wasn’t stupid. Betsy Thompson’s kid was a nonstop problem making machine, but she’d managed to work her way into Tina’s heart.

“Father coming for her my ass.” She muttered, as she undid her seat belt.

Once on her feet, she realised the plane was constantly moving about, mainly from side to side. Tina grabbed the seats in front of her and carefully stepped out into the aisle. There was a problem associated with standing up, she could see the carnage far easier. There was blood everywhere and quite a few people twisted in ways that meant they had to be dead.

“Help me !”

The woman yelling at her was clutching her seat as though letting go would be fatal. She was glaring at her with a look Tina had seen far too often on the faces of kids at the orphanage. She’d loved to have helped her, but knew there was nothing she could do other than a hug and a few kind words. Tina ignored the cry for help and carried on towards where she thought she’d seen Nicole.

“Nicole..... Is that you ? You need to get into a seat and get strapped down.”

Tina tripped, but managed to grab a seat back. She looked at what she’d fallen over and saw a lower arm inside the sleeve of a suit jacket. No torso to go with it, just a lower arm in what remained of an expensive suit.

“What the hell happened when I was asleep ?” She muttered. “Hit a goose..... Yeah right.”

The plane twitched, but Tina was due some good luck. She had a good firm hold of a seat and her foot jammed under it for good measure. She had the air knocked out of her a little, but there was no bouncing against the ceiling.

“Nicole....is that you ? Talk to me child.” She yelled.

“Tina.”

“Where are you ?”

The engines were making the high pitched whining sound again. There was a movement though, close to the hole in the side of the plane. A large hole, big enough to climb through and it might have been there since she’d been asleep. She didn’t remember seeing it before though. Through the hole she could see the top of the wing and one of the engines. There was smoke coming out of the engine

and a few streaks of flame. They were low, she could see the lights of a small town through the hole in the fuselage, or perhaps the suburbs of a city.

“Tina.....He came for me. I knew he would.”

How had she failed to see him ? The man was big, huge didn't seem too extreme a word to describe him. Muscled like a pro-wrestler and well over six feet tall. Broad at the shoulders he seemed to fill the space in front of the emergency doors. Huge, yes that word did suit him perfectly. There were the eyes too, the same colour eyes that Nicole looked at her with and there was the same intensity.

“Is this your father ?”

“Yes, of course it is....Who else would it be ?”

His clothes were far too small and looked borrowed, probably from the passengers. Had he arrived naked ? He didn't talk to her, yet she didn't feel threatened. He had Nicole held in the crook of his left arm, while she clung to his neck.

“We're going now Tina.....You can come with us, if you want to ?”

Did she want to go wherever they were going ? Tina was no more religious than most in McGregor, though that did mean attending church services more often than most city people. All those sermons had sunk in, she'd picked up ideas without being conscious of it. Learning by osmosis one of her teachers had called it, sucking up information without realising it. Nicole's father, or at least the creature she was calling her father, had a slight reddish tone to his skin. As he put his right hand out towards her, she stepped back. He turned and carried Nicole towards the hole in the side of the plane. Nicole was talking to him, shouting something into his ear. He turned and once again offered an outstretched hand.

“Please come with us Tina.” Said Nicole. “You'll die if you stay here.”

Tina wanted to live and after holding his hand, she got a good firm hold on the creature's upper arm. She closed her eyes as he turned towards the hole in the fuselage.

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~ The End ~

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There is a town called McGregor in Minnesota, but as far as I'm aware, they've never been home to a large state run orphanage. As with all my short stories, any similarity to real people is entirely unintended.