**Out of Control**

*Trapped.*

*The doctors say that there is no cure. There’s pills and brain surgery, but I don’t have a severe enough case. My mild, mild Tourette’s is uncomfortable, but there is nothing anyone can do to help.*

*“The obsessive blinking and head jerking will gradually stop and in most cases people grow out of their tics around eighteen to twenty years old,” the impersonal doctor say as he looks at me blankly. His speech is rehearsed and I can tell by the way he stares at me – glazed over eyes that don’t even try to look deeper than my irises – that I am just another number in his busy day.*

*I am trapped in my body and all I can do is hope my bout with my tics will go away sooner rather than later.*

That was four years ago.

I am standing in my yellow-lit bathroom applying my make-up as I recall all the doctor visits that my innocent twelve-year old body sat through. I really don’t want to go out with my grandma tonight, but I promised her I would. My tics have returned again after almost two years of tic-free bliss and all I want to do is curl up on the couch and wallow in my own pity – *Real Housewives* reruns are perfect for pity-parties.

I am tired and sore from a rough day at swim practice and my mind is worn out from all stress my tics are causing me. Just once, I want my life to be easy.

I slowly saunter down the stairs, as happy with my make-up as I’ll ever be.

“Hi grandma. I think I’m finally ready.” I put on a fake smile as I pull my black sweatshirt material jacket over my gray sweater.

“Alright let’s get going then. I got the tickets, but I want to get there early just in case.” My grandma has been waiting for this for weeks. Evidently this new theater in Marshall is great – I’m not too thrilled.

“So Carol told me that all the actors are residents in Marshall and they are just fantastic…And Sue said the set is very beautiful, but everything is crammed together because it’s so small…Carol, not the one from before but the one you met last year at dinner, said that even though no one’s a professional it was very well put together…Are you having trouble will your tics?”

I am really having a hard time getting all that filtered through my head – it is a lot of information to take in in only five minutes of being on the road. And I’m pretty sure I met like four Carols last year, but I think she is already on a new topic. “Umm, yeah they came back. They haven’t been this bad since sixth grade when I first got them,” I reply self-consciously.

“Your mom told me. I remember how bad your tics were back then, but they don’t seem that bad now. I’m sure its just stress from swimming.” Just now my grandma’s phone rings and she is soon in a discussion with Carol – or is it Sue?

I look out the window and I miss most of the scenery because my eyes are blinking so fast, I can’t see a thing. I am really getting fed up with people telling me that tics are related to stress. I am not any more stressed than I was last year or last month.

We parallel park in front of the old brick building in downtown Marshall and step into the chilly October night air. The brisk breeze is a welcoming comfort because my tics seem to halt for the first few seconds.

And, wait…

Yup their back.

But hey, I’ll take every second I can get. As my grandma and I walk to the door, my head starts to jerk and my breath catches. I ride it out. It is so painful. My neck and jaw are excruciatingly tight because of how stiff they are when my head jerks and my eyelids feel so heavy and raw from the involuntary blinking. I want to cry, but I have never been much of a crier – you don’t cry, you get up and move on and suck it up like a woman.

Sue or Carol or whoever the heck it is, is right. The make shift theater is unbelievably tiny. I like it. No one is trying to flaunt their money, it is just quant and cute.

“Oh look they have cookies!” My grandma said.

Then, “Are you okay? You seem quiet?”

Then, “Oh my Tuesday golf group is here. I didn’t know they were coming.”

Then she said, “Are you hot, I’m going to take off my jacket. Here’s our seats.”

Then, “Haha now I really have to use the bathroom. Do you? I wonder where it is?”

Oh sweet Jesus, please help me. Which question do I answer first? I can’t help but smile at how ditzy my grandma is. But it just adds to my uncomfortability. I don’t like plays, even ones with professional actors, and now here I am, sitting in an old run down building surrounded by a bunch of old women with my tics going at full force. It would be nice to do something I want to do, but my grandma really insisted on coming to this play.

As I remove my jacket and sit down in my designated stained metal seat, I feel the stare of four ladies in their mid to late sixties. I look up and smile meekly just as my grandma gets up to talk.

“Well hi ladies! I didn’t know you all were coming tonight.”

The older women wear tight smiles and their laughs are taunting as if to say that we don’t matter and that they are better than us. Every word out their mouths is an unemotional attempt at conversation.

“…Hi Jackie…”

“…Yeah we had this planned for a while…”

“…You missed the tournament on Tuesday, we missed you…”

“Oh yeah. Reiny and I were busy redecorating the house and then Madi had a swim meet that night,” my grandma grabs me in a hug.

She is so short that I feel like I’m hugging a little elementary student. Her highlighted bob just adds to her cheery facial features and it is impossible to not smile around her. She is exactly what a grandma should be: talkative, clueless, plump, and adorable.

“That’s nice. Well we’re going outside to get some air before the play starts. See you soon.” The four ladies walk away after throwing fake smiles over their shoulders. They are all so phony and rude. It is the weekend and I am still stuck in high school. This day is just getting better and better.

“They aren’t the nicest women in the world. I can’t stand the one with the short white hair.” My grandma makes her way to the bathroom and I grin. She is the last person in the world I would have suspected to say that.

We chat for about twenty minutes before the play starts – well she talks and I occasionally mumble – after she uses the bathroom.

The actors are actually quit talented for their lack of experience and I really am enjoying the play. However, I can’t concentrate for more than a few minutes. My mind keeps wandering to my aching neck and heavy lids. I can hear the noises my throat is making when I can’t breathe because of the jerking – I hope nobody else can.

I shift and move in my seat.

I am so aggravatingly antsy and I just want to leave. I am driving myself crazy. I feel so incredibly trapped in my own body and I don’t even have that bad of Tourette’s. How can people with severe cases stand it? I want to scream.

I hold my eyes shut with my pointer and middle fingers and try desperately to stop the convulsive blinking. When I open my eyes I feel ok at first, but the next thing I know, my eyelids are blinking so furiously that it seems like they’re not opening at all. I only see darkness.

To top it off, my head starts in on it too and now I am blind, jerking, and suffocating. It only lasts for maybe ten seconds and then they slow and go back to their steady rhythm.

I close my eyes and pray. I pray to God to help me through my tics; I pray to God to end my tics before I literally go crazy; I pray to God to speed up the play so I can go cuddle up in my bed and try to put my mind at peace for a few hours.

All the while my eyes still blink.

And my eyes are closed.

I glance around quickly as the lights come on and the actors walk off the stage that is literally a foot in front of the rows of seats. Intermission. I am half way through the play. *Crap*! *I am only half way through the play*.

My grandma is yacking my ear off: “Do like it so far? Did you hear how they sometimes got pitchy when they sang? I love their costumes. Oooh, do you want a cookie?”

I really can’t focus on the play or my grandma. I need to be outside because I am burning up in this small theater. We walk out onto the sidewalk and I think I might just cry tears of joy.

Suddenly my grandma’s Tuesday golf group comes outside and starts chatting with us. I interject a couple of times and they just glance at me and smile. I can feel how uncomfortable they are around me. They stare at me not knowing how to react.

My eyes are spasming again and I can hear my loud breathy noises as the air gets caught in my throat. It is so painful.

God bless my grandma though. My squat, bubbly blonde grandma is absolutely clueless to my tics and I love her for that. After being laughed at by friends and having a friend’s parent say I should try Canine Advantix, I need someone to not notice.

The little old women scurry away quickly and I almost laugh at how awkward they are around me. I can just imagine what they are saying:

“…Did you see Jackie’s granddaughter...”

“…Oh my poor thing. I never knew she had that Tourette’s thingy…”

“…I can’t imagine how terrible Jackie feels. Everyone must stare…”

I sigh and we walk back to the play. I barely pay attention for the second and just sit in my seat driving myself mad thinking about my tics.

I want them gone. I want to have control again. Everyone laughs and makes jokes – even me occasionally – but no one has any idea what it is like to have no control over your own body. I hope the doctors were right when they all said I would eventually grow out of my tics. I hope I won’t have to deal with these random bouts for the rest of my life. I feel helpless.

Trapped.