

Once upon a time, there was the most beautiful girl in the world. She had white porcelain skin and nice thick red hair. On her feet, she wore purple colored Converse. On her legs, she had really cute denim shorts. Going up to her torso, she wore a University of Rutgers shirt that was two sizes too big. Her name was Grace and she was the love of my life. However, before I met her my life was just a big pile of dog crap. I had just dropped out of community college due to failing almost every single class. It was impossible to fail remedial English, pretty much anything you write was the greatest work of literature, even if it was complete bullshit. Anyway, after I dropped out of college, my mom and dad both died in a car crash. Let me just say, that saying it was the worst week of my life was a complete understatement. I was literally three seconds away from suicide, until she walked in the room. She screamed at the sight of the gun pointed to my chest. I was so freaked out by her presence that the gun slipped out of my completely stunned hands. She walked over to me and said “You know suicide is just a permanent solution to a temporary problem.”

“Yeah, well, you just did not have the week that I just had.” I replied.

“Well, you are probably right, but how about you tell me about your so called ‘bad’ week and I will compare it to mine.” She said.

So, I told this stranger everything that had happened to me from my parents dying to dropping out of school. It felt good to just get all of that off my chest, but I do not think that she had the same feeling. After I was finished the story, she just sat there, staring out into space not even moving a muscle. I expected her to just get up and leave the room because there are very few people who can handle that story. But she stayed, looked me straight into the eye, and just stared at me. We were staring into each other’s eyes for a solid six minutes, until she finally broke the silence.

“Wow, that was deep.” She finally said.

“I will not be surprised if you just leave the room right now and call me a depressed, pathetic loser.” I said, ashamed.

“That thought never even crossed my mind. You seem like the nicest person that I have ever met, the fact that all this stuff happened to you and you still exert some form of positive energy is amazing. I mean, I know that you just attempted suicide and all, but still you were willing to tell a stranger all that happened to you this week and not many so called ‘depressed’ people would do that.” She said.

“Wow, I never thought of it that way. So, maybe, I should use all of the negative stuff that happened to me as a motivator to do something positive.” I said.

“Exactly, and you could pick up a hobby like dancing or a musical instrument. Maybe, you could start now.” She said.

The girl walked over to the stereo in my small studio apartment and turned on the radio. Ironically, the song ‘Shut up and Dance’ by Walk the Moon was playing. She started to dance

first and I soon followed. Soon, we were both jamming out to the over played song. When the song was over, we both crashed on the white couch while breathing heavily.

“Shit that felt great!” I said.

“See what happens when you are positive and don’t let the negative energies fill your cute little head.” Said she.

“I’m Tom, by the way.” I said.

“Oh, I forgot we did not have a proper introduction. It seems like we have been friends for a while. But, anyways, my name is Grace.” Said Grace.

We talked some small talk for a little bit longer and then Grace had to leave. She did give me her number, so we could continue this positive track that we are on. After she left, the apartment was quiet and I did not what to do. I just paced back and forth, back and forth, until I was so tired that I fell asleep right on the floor.

I woke up roughly eight hours later. I thought that everything that happened to me yesterday was a dream. I mean when you think about the events yesterday, they probably could only happen in a book or movie.

Anyway, for breakfast I had three pancakes with exactly two teaspoons of butter on each of the cakes. Then I drizzle the syrup evenly over the perfectly stacked pancakes. When I eat them, I start in the middle and work my way out. I know, its crazy, right? But how I do is I use a knife to cut a nearly perfect circle about an inch in diameter. I eat those circles first, then cut triangles all around the cake clockwise.

I have OCD, otherwise known as Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. That was part of the reason for the attempted suicide and if you think that OCD is just an exaggerated disorder, just reread the paragraph above. Yeah, I go through that every day and I cannot stop myself. I have been having pancakes for breakfast every day for the past six years, because if I don’t my brain will pretty much just shut down. No, not literally, but my brain does get crowded with pancakes thoughts to the point where I can barely function.

After I finish my pancake ritual, I powered my phone on and texted Grace. Within the text I said, wanna hang out? I wanted to make it sound like I was not trying too hard to hang out with her, even though I clearly am. It’s weird that our minds work that way, we want something but don’t what other people to know that we want something.

I waited like a little puppy right by my phone for Grace to text me back. This got me thinking about how amazing it is that just one day ago I almost committed suicide. Then that thought reminded me of my parents and I started to cry like a little girl who fell while learning to ride a bike. Of course, the next thing that happened was, Grace calling.

‘Put yourself together Tom’ I thought while grabbing a tissue and blowing all the excess snot in my nose, onto the tissue. I answered the phone.

“Hey, Grace!” I said, trying to conceal my sadness. I guess I did a terrible job, because she saw right through it.

“Hey Tom, what’s wrong? Why do you sound so sad?” said Grace in the sincerest voice I have ever heard.

“I just relapsed all of the bad shit that happened to me.” I said truthfully.

“Let’s try to do some positive exercises to help bounce you back to reality.” Said Grace

Truth be told, I think that therapy and all its “exercises” are complete horseshit. However, I am a guy who will do anything to hang out with a beautiful girl like Grace. I know, I am just contributing to the stereotype that all males will do anything if it opened even the slightest window for sexual intercourse. So, I of course say this in response to her proposition.

“That would be so beneficial my well-being, what exercises do you have in mind?” I said.

“I was thinking somewhere along the lines of a social exercise with a few ‘loops and turns.’” Said Grace.

“Wait, what?” I said, very confused.

“You know, roller-coaster and theme parks. I think you just need to get out of this house and have a great time.” Said Grace.

Holy crap! How the fuck did this girl and I come into contact and why have I not met her before? I mean, I know that I just met her a whole day ago, but I feel that I have a connection with this girl. However, just like in the movies, only time can tell.

“That sounds awesome! Are we going right now?” I said.

“Heck yeah we are going right now! I will drive there; my car is parked outside by the meter.” Said Grace.

So, that was it, I grabbed my jacket, keys, wallet, and got in the passenger seat of Grace’s 2002 Chrysler Voyager. The conversation in the car was mostly small talk, because she says that the more we talk about my depression, the more depressed I will become. I know, that is some mind-bending thoughts right there. I forgot to mention that I can be a bit of a douchebag inside my mind. Although I never say any of these out loud, thank God.

In no time at all we arrived at the amusement park. The park was some no name park called ‘Flying beyond Earth.’ I know, original name for a park with high flying roller coasters.

We were both just standing there, mouths agape, forgetting that we have legs to walk in. I can’t speak for Grace, but I have never been to an amusement park in my life. Although, judging by her having the same reaction as me, I would assume that she has not been to one either.

Growing up, my family never wealthy in terms of the financial aspect. My dad worked two jobs just to pay off the mortgage for our semi big house. I forgot to mention that I have five brothers and three sisters. Yeah, our family was big, which made it difficult for my mom and dad to all of

us fed and educated. My mom worked a night job to pay for all the food that we needed and believe me, ten people can eat a shit ton of food. Even though we barely got by with money, our love for each other is and forever the strongest of any family. Even though we didn't have the money to go to any amusement park, we had plenty of amusement in our house just talking and playing games with each other. As cliché as that sounds, it is as close to the truth as you are ever going to get to in life.

“Let's go!” screamed Grace in excitement.

We both sprang out of our frozen stance and run like cheetahs to the front ticket booth.

“Two tickets to the park, please.” Said Grace.

“You're in luck, we are having a special today. If you buy one ticket, you get one for free!” said the cashier.

“Awesome!” Grace says while handing the \$11.00 to the cashier.

“I'm Grace, by the way.” Said Grace

“Hey, Grace. I'm Eric. You two have some fun in there.” Said Eric

Eric handed both of us a ticket and we were off to the front gate. For being a Sunday afternoon, the park looks like a desert in New Mexico. We could go through security in record time and were in line for the first coaster in three minutes.

The first roller coaster that I will ever go on is called 'Fiery Death.' If that is not classified as bravado, I don't know what is.

“I am so psyched for Fiery Death! Who would have thought that I would say that sentence in my life?” said Grace.

“I'm hyped and nervous at the same time. You could say that I am hyvous.” I said.

“I was an English major in college, so that really offends me on a deep level.” Grace said.

“Oh, sorry about going against the English language like that.” I said

“Nah, I am just kidding you. I don't care about that kind of stuff. In fact, I am actually pretty hyvous myself.” Said Grace with a smile on her face.

“Holy crap! Holy crap! Holy crap! We are next in line for the ride. My stomach has literally millions of butterflies flying around in there.” I said

“I know my stomach figuratively has millions of butterflies flying around in it.” Said Grace with another one of her amazing smiles.

We got on the 'Fiery Death' and I swear to my own grave that I almost pissed my own pants. We got strapped in by the under-paid, miserable workers and we listened to the announcer explain about keeping your hands and feet inside the cart always will make you safe. Even in the

scenario where the cart goes off the track and we are about to fall to our death, but that is a highly unlikely scenario in these modern times.

When the ride departed from the starting gate, we both screamed like monkeys at the first turn. Both of our hands stayed up throughout the duration of the ride and I truly believe that the butterflies in my stomach flew out of my body and took my stomach with them.

The ride went on for what seemed like twenty minutes. The ride finished in about two minutes.

“That was fucking AWESOME!” screamed Grace.

In my mind, I thought that the fact Grace used a cuss word was kind of weird at first. However, the more that I had the thought roll in my mind, it weirdly made me more attracted to her.

“I know right!” I replied.

“Okay now it is your turn to pick the ride.” Questioned Grace.

We ended up going on every single ride in the park and each ride was more of a thriller than the last.

I went the whole day without having one bad thought, which was a record for me. There is something about Grace that makes me happy and stay positive. Is it her red hair? Is it her purple Converse? Is it her smile? Is it her sheer attractiveness? Is it the fact that she is a genius while being that attractive? Is it a combination of everything about her? I could not tell you why or how she makes me happy. All that I know for sure is that she does.

We walked back to her car while remembering about the awesome day that we just had.

When we got back to the car I, trying to revive the lost art of chivalry, attempted to open the driver’s side door. This was until she stopped me from doing so.

“I just wanted to open your door.” I said.

“I know what you were doing, I want to tell you that I am a strong, independent black woman who don’t need no man.” Said Grace with a straight face.

“Wait, what?” I said with the most confused look on my face.

“Tom, it’s a joke, haven’t you ever heard a joke before, Tom?” said Grace.

From that moment on, I realized that Grace was just a regular person like me and not some made up perfect fictional character that someone wrote in a book.

“I’ve heard of some jokes before. I even know a few jokes myself.” I replied.

“Oh, really, then why don’t you tell me some and I will be the judge on if it is funny or not.” Said Grace.

“Ummmm, your kind of putting me on the spot here.” I said.

“Okay, I am going to cut you a deal. If you think of a joke within the next minute, we will go back to your place for the final positive training session.” Said Grace.

My mind was going a million miles a minute at that moment. What did Grace mean by ‘the final positive training session’ and at my house as well? I do not have much in terms of material possessions at my house. I shouldn’t quibble about this right now; I have a joke to think of.

“So, one day there was this blind carpenter. He was going to work one day, right?” I said

“Right.” Said Grace

“When the blind carpenter arrived at work, he picked up a hammer and saw.” I said while snickering.

Judging by her reaction, she either thought that the joke was the funniest that she has ever heard or the least funny joke that she has ever heard. It’s like she was laughing and not laughing at the same time.

“Okay, I admit that I was skeptical about your funniness, but that joke was so bad that it was funny. Just like limits in Calculus, it is all about the approach and your approach to this bad dad joke was amazing.” Said Grace.

“Um, thank you.” I said with a hint of more skepticism in my voice.

“Just get in the car so we can go back to your house for your reward for being somewhat funny.” Said Grace while she showed her pearly white teeth.

The drive back to my house was uneventful, to say the least. We spent most the ride talking about each-others dead end jobs that we had to go back to tomorrow. I work at as a Mechanical Engineer at a University. She works as a Journalist for the New York Times.

When we got home, we immediately went up to my bedroom and what came next I will probably never forget.

“Do you really want to do that?” I said with hesitation.

“I mean, why not, it sounds like a great time!” said Grace.

“Okay, if you are okay with it. I would not want to force you to do anything that you don’t want to do.” I said.

I pulled out the Monopoly board and all the cards from the closet. Grace cleared my desk of all the papers with endless calculus problems on them.

“I don’t understand any of this. I mean, if you give me one dollar for every problem that I can get right from this packet; I would have zero dollars.” Said Grace.

“You’re probably right, not many people could get these problems right. You need to have the right mindset as well as a basic understanding of how limits work to complete the problems.” I said

“Wow, the last time that I learned about limits was in high school calculus. All that I remember from that is that limits are all about the approach. Is that right?” said Grace.

“Yeah, that is basically right, but just a little bit more complicated than that. Although, I am jealous of you. You get to write about anything that you want, with no limits involved. Ha Ha! Do you get it?” I said while snickering.

“Very funny, I get it. I guess you are right; I really do have a better job than you do.” Said Grace with a smile.

“Whoa, I never admitted to that statement. I still think that I have the better job out of the two of us. I get to build whatever my heart desires and if modern engineering does not allow me to do that: I could do the math and figure out how to build that thing in my imagination.” I said in rebuttal.

“There are no physical limitations in my line of work: it is all in my imagination. If I want the character to travel to the moon, I can do that. If I want the character to run a three-minute mile, I can do that. See where I am going with this, if I wanted to I could make a character who could make any machine no matter how complicated. In writing, anything is possible.” Said Grace.

On that note, we started to set up the Monopoly board and debate for a solid three minutes on who should be the banker. In short, she won that debate just with the fact that she did make a good point that writers are very honest people. Honesty is the best policy when it comes to being a banker.

Once we got the banking situation in order, we tried to figure out to whom would get which game pieces. What are the odds that we both want to be car? Very greatly, in fact I calculated the true odds that two people would want the same game piece in a mix of eight pieces. I have a Master’s in engineering and a bachelor’s in statistics, so this very ‘complicated’ calculation will blow your mind. The calculation that I am talking about goes as follows:  $1/8$  times  $1/8$  equals  $1/64$ . So, there is a one in sixty-four chance that we want to pick the same piece.

Nah, who am I kidding, we both want to be the car because the car is clearly the best piece in the game. I ended up with the car because she was already the banker.

After those two long arguments, we finally started playing. To decide who would go first, we just went with whomever was the youngest: Grace.

“Come on, come on mama wants an eleven!” said Grace.

“Why, eleven, of all the numbers that you could want, you pick eleven?” I said

“An eleven gets me to St. Charles Place and I used to be a member of a church called St. Charles when I was a kid.” Said Grace.

“That is so crazy, because I used to be a member of that church when I was a kid. I remember that the priest was Father John Smith and before him it was Father Joe.” I said

“Holy Crap! Did we go to the same school too? I went to Springfield High School.” Said Grace.

“No fucking way! I went to Springfield High School as well.” I said.

“Wait, who was your favorite teacher to prove that you went to Springfield.” Said Grace

“My favorite teacher was most likely Mr. Horan. Now I know what you are thinking, why would my favorite teacher be Mr. Horan? Well, he was the one that truly taught me to be myself and not to care what other people think about me as a person. He not only taught me about mathematical limits, but also to not limit myself in life.” I said.

“Wow, I never really thought about Mr. Horan that way and I had him for AP Statistics. So, I guess we did go to the same high school together. I wonder if we ever said hi to each other in the hallway or even had a class together?” said Grace

“I don’t believe that we ever had a class together, but we might have said hi to each other at some point. I mean, come on, SHS is a pretty small school so it’s kind of hard not to know everyone in your class. I think that I remember that our class was only around 195 students.” I said.

“Yeah, our class was small, but at the same time I kind of liked our small class. Just like you said it is awesome to be able to know everyone in your grade by name. It gives school a comfort felling if you will.” Grace said.

The fact that Grace and I went to the same school blew my mind throughout the whole duration of the long, epic monopoly game. I wished that I talked to her more in high school, because she is probably the nicest human being I have met to this point in my life.

“No, how do you beat me at Monopoly? I never lost a game in my lifetime.” Said Grace.

Grace just rolled a seven. That will take her dog as well as her bank account down the dreadful boardwalk hotel. The rent on that space with a hotel on it, is enough to drain even the biggest bank account.

“That would be \$2000, please.” I said.

She had already mortgaged all her properties when she landed on the boardwalk the first time. I was thinking about how small the odds are to land on the boardwalk space two or more times in a single game. I didn’t do the math on that problem because I don’t take my work home with me, but I assume that the odds are small.

She handed me all the money that she had to her name at that point in the game: \$42.

“That’s all the money I have, maybe we could come up with some other agreement to cover the other \$1958?” said Grace.

“What did you have in mind?” I said with a bit of hesitation.

“I was thinking of something along the lines of taking this party down to the basement.” Said Grace.

“Wait, what is there to do down there besides watch television?” I said

“You will see.” Said Grace.

In my head, I was going through all the possibilities of what there is to do down in my basement. I came up with a solid list in my opinion: watch television, play another board game, or just sit and talk. I would have added, play video games, on to that list but I moved my PlayStation to the den.

We arrived at the top of the basement stairs and Grace told me to wait there until she got everything ready to go.

At this point, my mind was going 95 miles per hour with no discernable order to my thoughts. What could she possibly be getting ready? She has never even been in my basement before.

“Okay, I am ready for you to come downstairs.” Said Grace.

What I saw when I walked down those steps was unbelievable. How could this girl be this perfect in every way imaginable and what my eyes are witnessing right now just puts her on a whole new level of awesomeness.

“Holy crap, you are awesome for doing this! I completely forgot that I had a Nintendo 64 down here in the basement. You even set up the beanbags like my brother and I did when we were kids and played Super Mario 64 all day every day.” I said.

“I just wanted to make sure my debt was paid in full.” Said Grace.

All I could do was just stand and stare at her in disbelief of what just happened. A beautiful girl wants to play games on the N64 with me; how often is going to happen in my life. I cannot screw this relationship up this time.

“Are you just going to stand there or are you going to play some old-school video games?” Grace said with a big smile on her face.

We both jumped onto the beanbags like we were kids again, Mario Party was already loaded in and started up. We played N64 games literally all night long, when we stopped playing the sun was coming up on the horizon. In short, it was the best day/night of my life.

Grace had to leave early, since her work was located across town.

“I had a blast last night!” I said

“Yeah and hopefully there is many more nights like this one in the future.” Said Grace

I was kind of confused that she said ‘hopefully,’ I thought that this would be a sure repeat thing.

“Yeah, that would be awesome!” I said

“Well, I guess this is a goodbye than?” said Grace.

“This is not a goodbye; this is a see you later. I never like using the word ‘goodbye’ because it implies that I will never see that person ever again or at least just a long time.” I said.

“It does not matter that much, I am not going anywhere, anytime soon.” Said Grace.

“That is good to know, see you later.” I said with a bit a hesitation in my voice because I had a feeling that she was lying.

“See you later!” said Grace

She left. The house felt strangely empty without her. Even though I only just met her a mere two nights ago, I felt a personal connection with her and when she left it was a piece of me left as well.

I have work in two hours. That gives me just an enough time to get back into my engineering mindset. The key to any mathematical profession is to first work and master the basics before you move on to bigger and better problems. In college, my calculus professor taught me that while he rambled on another one his tangents.

For breakfast, I had my standard: pancakes with equal butter and syrup on each of the three cakes. When I finished my insanity, I took a shower and put on my work clothes: jeans and a polo. If I did not have to teach a class at the University, I would be wearing a t-shirt instead of a polo. I work as a researcher/teacher at MIT or the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. I teach two classes: Advanced Calculus II as well as Physics II.

I went to work for nine hours and came back home. There were no revelations in my research. My classes were the same as always: the students were confused with every new concept and I got frustrated when they did not get it no matter how simplistic I teach the material.

What got me through this day, was the fact that when I got back home I would call Grace to see if she would like to hang out.

I punched in the number into my phone and waited for her to answer.

She did not answer the first time.

So, I waited a little bit, thinking that she just is working late on a story for tomorrow’s paper.

It has been one hour since I had last called, so I tried calling her a second time. The second time had the same result, ringing until it went to voicemail. I did not leave a voicemail because I do not want to sound too desperate. Even though calling her every hour, on the hour, is totally not desperate at all, right?

So, I just started to cook dinner for myself. I was having my usual meal consisting of: an egg salad sandwich and a coke. Simple from my very intricate breakfast, I know, but when I get home from a hectic day at work I just want to enjoy a nice and simple meal for dinner.

After I finished the meal, I turned on the television and watched my favorite cartoon of all time: SpongeBob SquarePants. That show gives me the comfort feeling that got me through some tough times growing up. Every bad moment in my childhood, was taken away by the joy of that little sea sponge and his sea-star best friend.

I went to sleep at 10, dreaming about when I will next see Grace's beautiful face.

*Dream State:*

*I am at an ice cream parlor with Grace. I was having some great tasting cinnamon bun ice cream and she was having some strawberry ice cream. I thought to myself that the fact that Grace got strawberry ice cream was kind of ironic, in the sense that she has the red hair that resembles the color of a strawberry. After we got our ice cream, I payed for the ice cream, and we both took a seat in one of the booths that the parlor had. We were talking about some pretty random topics: work, video games, volunteer opportunities, high school memories, etc. Although, while we were chatting away, I could not help but notice that the people around us were staring at Grace. I just assumed that they were staring because they never saw a beautiful person before, so I forgot about it. When we both finished our ice cream, I took both cups and throw them out in the trash. Grace and I left the parlor and proceeded to my car. Being a gentleman, I opened the passenger side door for Grace to get in. However yet again, the people around us were staring at Grace. When I got in the car, I woke up.*

As the alarm went off and I was reaching the sneeze button, I thought to myself about how the dream that I just had was so peculiar. Why was everyone staring at Grace? That was about as much questioning for the dream as I did that morning because I had to prepare my breakfast and make it to work on time.

I arrived at work at exactly 8:01 in the morning, marking the very first day at this job I was late. I wonder what is the correlation analysis of the fact that the event of Grace coming into my life and the event of me being late to work is? I will make a mental note in my head to figure out that when I get home. Time to focus on work now.

Focusing on engineering problems while having Grace on the mind can be a bit tricky. It is not even noon and I have made exactly twenty-two near disastrous mistakes in the lab. This is a problem because I am currently working on a secret government funded project for NASA.

At lunch, I sat by myself since my coworkers were otherwise occupied with their projects. I was having just a plain peanut butter and jelly sandwich with a carton of two percent fat milk. I could not help what Grace would get to eat here if I give her a tour of my "office" someday.

I would imagine that Grace would get the most exciting thing on the menu: a slice of pineapple pizza with sausage on top. Just because Grace seems to be the person to take a different path than everyone else, she would get the one item on the menu that has not been ordered in a solid two months.

Just at that thought, something incredibly weird happened. A woman came up to me and asked to sit down right across from me at the table. That was not the incredible part about it. The incredible part was what she had on her plate: a slice of pineapple pizza with sausage on top.

“Hey, can I sit here?” the woman asked.

“Sure, go right ahead!” I said questioning why she would pick here to sit, when there are a lot of other open seats in this big cafeteria.

“I just want to say that I love your work!” she said very enthusiastically.

“What do mean? You have seen my work before?” I said, even more confused.

“Yeah, I read scientific journals every time they are published and I always look forward to seeing your engineering projects.” She said.

“Wait, what is your name? I assume you know that my name is Tom.” I said.

“Oh, my name is Grace.” She said.

Holy crap! How is this even possible? How could this woman have the exact same name as the other Grace and eat the same weird dish that I thought the original Grace would eat? It does not make any sense. The other weird thing about this experience is that the only other person to take even the slightest interest, outside of coworkers, in my work is Grace. So, the only explanation for this moment is that Grace came to the University and is trying to surprise me by changing her face with makeup to make her unrecognizable.

“Have we ever met before?” I said.

“I am almost positive that if I would have met Professor Palladino, I would have remembered it. So, no I don’t believe we met before.” Grace 2 said.

“Oh, the reason that I asked that question is actually a pretty funny story. You see, over the weekend, I met this girl and she had the same red hair as you, styled in the same fashion. And she showed similar interest in my work as you. The incredible part is that both of you have the name Grace.” I said

“Wow, what are the odds that this scenario happens?” Grace 2 said.

I have no idea, but I take a mental note to further research this question when I get home tonight.

“I have no clue.” I said.

At this moment, I drop my fork on the ground. When I went to go pick up the fork, I noticed Grace 2’s shoes; they were purple Converse as well.

“This is really strange, how is it possible that your name is Grace and you wear purple Converse as well? This is really starting to freak me out.” I said panicking.

“Calm down, you are starting to make me freak out to. I really want to meet this girl; she seems like a dynamite gal!” Grace 2 said.

“Yeah, maybe if you two meet each other, this whole fucked up situation will get better. Pardon my French by the way.” I said at

“Nah, it’s okay, this situation is pretty fucked up if I see what you are seeing.” Said Grace 2

“What is your number so I can text you when the other Grace is out of work?” I said

“My number is (434) 987831. By the way, where does the other Grace work, if you don’t mind me asking?” Grace 2 said.

“Grace works for the New York Times as a journalist.” I said

“OMG! That is, like, my dream job! I am a creative writing major here at University, wanting to become a journalist for a big brand newspaper like the New York Times!” Grace 2 said.

“I am really sorry, but I have to go and teach my class. That is if I can Fucking concentrate with you and Grace number one in my bloody head now! I am sorry for the language again by the way.” I said in complete frustration.

“You know; people say that a person that uses profanity is just a moron trying to act all tough.” Said Grace 2

“Well, I think that the use of profanity is just to let off a little steam.” I said

“On that note, I am going to walk away before I start to get really mad.” said Grace 2.

That was strange, I thought.

As I was walking to the next class that I teach, this other girl spotted me and started to talk to me. She looked exactly like Grace and Grace 2.

"Hey, I am a huge fan of yours. I read all your papers a good three to four times. I even wrote five different papers about you and your work." said random girl.

“Okay, okay, I really need to go to my next class right now. So, thank you for being to a fan but I have to go.” I said

I started to run away as that girl screamed “See you soon!”

Why would that girl say that she would “see me soon,” I don’t know her? I mean, she looks the same as a girl that I do know, but she can’t be Grace. She just can’t be her, because Grace is at work at now writing some beautifully written stories for the New York Times.

Maybe I am going crazy, maybe this is all just a dream and I am still in bed with Grace. I have no clue what is happening right now and that thought scares the crap out of me.

I finished up my class around supper time, so after the class I went to the café to buy myself some dinner like I did every night that I taught a late class.

When I got home, I immediately attempted to call Grace for the umpteenth time. To no shocker, she never picked up the phone. I should be worried by this situation, but I am not worried at all. Maybe she decided that she needed a little space from me and that I was being too clingy this whole time. Or maybe, she was kidnapped by some thieves like in the book that she is writing at the current moment.

Yeah, did I mention that she was writing a book. We were talking about that during that awesome night that we shared together. Which, come to think of it, that was the only night we ever spent together.

This whole time I am worried about a random girl that I nearly just met and only hung out with one time. How is it that a girl could have such an impact on me in seemingly an instant?

I pondered that same question for the remainder of the night.

The next morning it was normal; I mean it was too normal. It felt as though this whole experience with Grace has all been but a dream. A dream in which I never want to wake up from again. The day went on just like it has been before I met Grace. I got up, made/ate my breakfast, and went to work. This would be the routine that I will be in for the next several months while Grace has been away doing something that probably involves writing.

The only times where I almost been into contact with Grace has been when I been in contact with the Grace lookalikes throughout the day. I am starting to wonder if Grace was just a figment of my imagination. That was the case until I met a Grace lookalike that even had Grace's personality. Her name was even Grace as well!

This other Grace and I met in a restaurant that I always go to on every Saturday night after church. The restaurant is called Applebee's. In case you never heard of such a restaurant, the Applebee's is a place that is a mix of a diner and a pub. It sounds weird but the food there is good.

Anyway, I walked into the restaurant as usually on a Saturday night. Even the hostess' there knew me and my face so they already had a table ready for me. So, as the hostess is directing me to my usual table, I spot this girl that looks exactly like Grace. Now, at first, I didn't take anything of it because I always see Grace lookalikes in the world.

I was sitting down at my usual table that I always sit at every week, when I spot another Grace lookalike in the table across from my own. Thinking that I was going crazy, I ran to the bathroom to wash some water onto my face and try to make some sense of this whole situation. I just saw two Grace lookalikes in the same restaurant. I thought that my mind was just playing tricks on me, so I decided to investigate further with the two Graces.

I walked back to my table and sat down; the waitress already brought me my food and beverage since I always order the same exact meal every single time that I come into the restaurant. I

always get the BBQ cheeseburger with fries and a Coke, every single time. A thought popped into my head at that moment: what if I was just hungry? Maybe my hunger was the root cause for these hallucinations? That was the theory that I wanted to believe, so I just sat at the table and began to eat my food and drink my beverage.

After I finished consuming the meal, I took a walk around the restaurant to see if I spotted any more Grace lookalikes: I did. In fact, there was twice the amount of Graces in the place then there was before I ate the food. Four Grace lookalikes in the same place is hardly an anomaly, something is seriously wrong with my mind.

I originally hesitated to go up and speak to one of the Graces, but I made myself do it just to confirm my theory that I was going insane. So, I started talking to the Grace sitting at the bar.

The conversation was going well; I confirmed that she was indeed named Grace and has natural red hair. She also has been wearing purple Converse for most of her life. I ended the conversation abruptly because I didn't want this girl to see the mental breakdown that I was about to experience in the coming seconds.

I quickly paid for the food and beverage that I ordered and fast walked to my car outside. I got into the car and started to talk to myself and try to calm myself down. Phrases like this were said, "Come on, Tom, you are not crazy! There is no possible way that all of the women in the restaurant were named Grace and looked exactly like the Grace that saved your life a couple of weeks ago!"

"You're not crazy, Tom, I'm right here in the living flesh." Said the girl in the passenger seat.

"What the actual fuck! How did you get into my car that was locked!" I said.

"I have my ways, remember." Said the girl as she winked at me.

When this girl said that, I did remember that I gave Grace a spare key to my car in case I lost my key. I guess that she never gave it back when she left. But this couldn't be the real Grace, because the real Grace is in New York at right now.

I decided to dive deeper into the question of finding if this was the real Grace who came from New York.

"I did come from New York, yes, but I am not the Grace that you think that I am." Said Grace.

"How so?" said I.

At this point I was so confused, I completely forgot that this girl got into my locked car and looks exactly like Grace but was not Grace.

"I am no more than a projection in your mind. I am here because the real Grace, who is still in New York, is trying to mess with your mind. She wants to see how far she can take you until you finally crack and go up to New York." Said fake Grace.

What the heck is going on? How is the real Grace putting these projections in my mind? From New York City, none the less? Why does she want me to come to New York? Does she plan to kill me? Is this the ultimate catfish story? Am I being punked? Can she read my mind at this moment?

These were the questions that were filling my mind at that moment in time. My emotions were all over the place. I was angry at the real Grace for controlling me with her mind. I was confused in the fact that the real Grace could read someone's mind. With these emotions in my mind, I started to scream my head off in frustration out my car window. That tantrum lasted about ten whole minutes, I completely forgot about the other Grace in the car.

Even though she wasn't Grace and therefore was not there. I began to feel more and more self-conscious because Grace could now know my every move in her mind.

I needed to go find the real Grace now and figure out how she is making these projections in my mind. Even though that would exactly what she wanted me to do, I cannot sit around here and continue to be tortured by a girl that I was in contact with for only about one week in time.

I said goodbye to the Grace projection in the car and I immediately sped down the highway towards my home.

Once I arrived at my home, I got onto my computer and looked up the closest flight to New York today. I found a flight departing in about three hours, so I booked it and immediately started to pack a bag for the trip to New York.

I just packed a small bag because I only expected to be in New York for about a couple of days at most.

I quickly packed my laptop and phone as well as the respective chargers. I also packed a book to read on the flight. The book that I packed was *Every Day* by David Leviathan, which is my favorite book of all time.

Once I packed everything into my car, I rushed over to the airport and made it to my flight just as they started to board.

I could achieve a window seat, so I could zone out during the flight watching all the clouds float by the plane.

The flight lasted about two hours and I could finish *Every Day* for the fifth time in my life. That story never fails to be good, no matter how many times I read it. "A" is one of those characters that never fails to wrap you into the storyline.

As I was boarding off the plane and into the airport terminal, I saw another Grace lookalike and immediately went over to her. I was hoping that the real Grace set up these projections of herself in the airport to get me closer to the real Grace's location.

However, as I walked up to this Grace, I could tell that she was different from the other Grace projections. She still had the same physical appearance as the other Graces, but the way she stood was off. Usually each Grace would stand tall and proud, but for some reason this Grace kind of cowered down at everyone.

The conversation that I had with this Grace projection was very like her appearance: depressing. This projection talked in a very sullen voice and seemed to only state questions instead of actual statements. For example, when I asked her about the city and where I should go on my "vacation," she responded like this, "There is a nice bar down on 5<sup>th</sup> street, you should start there?" This projection of Grace concerned me that the real Grace might be as depressed as I was when she first encountered me just a few weeks ago.

This thought of Grace being depressed made me walk faster to get to that bar quicker. Even though I have not a clue as to what lies ahead of me on this journey, one thing is for certain: I will find Grace to see what is wrong and how she is projecting images in my mind.

I took a taxi through Manhattan traffic to reach the bar on 5<sup>th</sup> street. It was only a ten-mile trip but it took about twenty-five minutes to get there.

Once I got settled in the bar with a drink to calm my nerves, I started to look around in search for another clue.

Another twenty minutes and three drinks later, I finally found some hope of a clue in the form of another Grace projection that just walked into the bar.

I finished my third drink in one more gulp and walked right up to the Grace projection. Grace must be getting happier because this projection had a bright smile on her face.

We exchanged introductions and began to talk about the city of New York and cool places to go in the city. She always fixated on this one church called St. Peters. She talked about going there every week when she first moved out here and she was always amazed each week at the architecture. I think that the next place that I need to go to would be St. Peters church.

The Grace projection and I continued to drink at the bar for another hour before we parted ways. It was weird because this was the first projection that reminded me of the real Grace's personality.

My theory to this point would be that the real Grace gets happier the closer that I get to her location. In a sense, I am like her second half and both of us make up a full piece of the puzzle of life. This is a corny analogy but I believe that it is the most logical thought process as to why this is happening. And by logical, I mean that it is the only thought that makes some sense even if it is farfetched.

I am a little tipsy at this point so I stumbled my way from the bar to St. Peters Church. It is not a very good idea to be intoxicated and walk across the streets of New York. For one thing, the taxi drivers always beep at you when you decide to stop in the middle of the rode because you "got distracted" by the stars.

I finally made it to the church, in piece I might add. I walked into the church and took note that there was no one in the building. This kind of represents the cold, bitterness of the New York citizens. I took a seat in the pew and kneeled. I looked up at the Cross with Jesus Christ and I started to pray to look for the answers about the whereabouts of the real Grace. I also wanted to figure out how in the world could Grace be able to use telekinetic powers.

Suddenly, while I was kneeling and praying, the Cross suddenly crashed down and smashed into a million pieces. I was in shock and I could barely move as well as speak. Then, in the middle of the rubble, there she was: Grace.

This was the real Grace; I believe that it is. However, I was dead wrong.

The person that stood before me was not from this world. It had a human head that resembled the real Grace that I met just a couple of weeks ago. This was where the Grace/human resemblance ended.

The rest of the body of this creature was made up of a body like an octopus. Yes, this thing had eight slimy tentacles that spread out of its body.

I started to retreat out of the church and find someone who can help me out of this situation. However, before I could even move, the creature lunged at me and entangled me in its tentacles. It engulfed me and I could not move or even scream for help.

It was all going black and then I fainted.