

Trina Guharoy

My Red Book

*Dear new red blank book,
My parents died a few weeks ago. A car crash left me unscathed but them dead. Well, mother should have been wearing her seatbelt, I guess. Do I miss them? To tell the truth, at first I did but now they're just a faded memory for me. I really have nowhere to stay so I'm in government custody. I have been kept in some place with other kids. I have nothing in common with them except that fate has not been kind to any of us here. I don't like it here. The other kids are far too annoying for my liking, always wanting me to play games with them. Whenever they ask, I just grunt and burrow my face into my Gameboy.
"Oh, what a difficult child", they say.*

The last few weeks have not only taken my parents away from me but I have lost all my belongings, but the kind people at the shelter let me at least keep my Gameboy. I don't think they like me too much. The initial days after the tragedy, they tried talking to me, probing to know what exactly happened but I was not too receptive to their concerns. I just kept asking them if I could go home and get my Gameboy. I guess they got frustrated and just let me get it. The woman- in- charge just stares at me behind her thick lens and the man looks a bit like a weasel, which suits his personality, always wanting to find out things about me. None of his business, I tell myself. I call the woman thick-frame and the man weasel. "Oh, what a difficult child", I hear them say. Well, I don't like them either.

The Gameboy, in spite of being my only link to my life when it was normal cannot hold my attention for long so sometime I just get out a pen and draw works of art on the walls. But of course, the self-appointed guardians of this place do not appreciate my talent and rid the area around me of all sharp objects. How else am I supposed to write in this diary they

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gave me without any pen? Well, I could always use the pencil. I do draw on the walls with pencil but for some reason the next day when I'm back from school the work is gone. I like to think someone took it off the wall, and that it found a place in some gallery, somewhere in the world with paintings of the famous, just as my father said I would be.

Well I shall stay here till one of my relatives takes custody of me, which I am quite thankful of because I wouldn't really want to stay with a stranger. My parents' will had stated that in their absence they wanted me to stay with a relative, and all my relatives at the moment seem to be fighting over me. They usually meet up with "thick-frame" and "weasel", talk about me and sometimes I just walk into their little meetings saying, "I know you all want me, but only one of you will get to keep me." They all look at me for a second with a strange look, then turn away. They disagree on everything but say in unison, "Oh, what a difficult child".

*Dear 26 hours old new red quite blank book,
My Gameboy has got really boring, because the screen went black and it 'was flashing pictures of a red cylindrical object. I kept staring at it, uncomprehending. The boy who sleeps in the bed below mine pointed out that I had to charge it. I don't like people telling me what to do so I threw it at him. This did not go too well with the adults and they moved me to another room. It was probably so that the boy would leave me in peace.*

*Dear 82 hours old sort of new red book with writing in it,
Aunt Bertha won the battle of the custody and I moved into her house. I told her I didn't like it but she ignored my opinion and shooed me off to my room. Of course she doesn't want my helpful criticism. I unpacked my bag; I don't really have much with me. Just my toothbrush, broken Gameboy, a few clothes and this diary. Aunt Bertha tells me to stay up in my room and not to bother her too much. I start school on Monday, which is*

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approximately sixteen hours and forty-five minutes from now. Aunt Bertha is my mother's sister and she's fat. I had told her she should lose weight when I first saw her and she had glared at me, and then glared at weasel and thick-frame. They had smiled at my observation and had turned away, from the room and my life. Good riddance, I'm glad they're gone. But before they left did I see a pity for Aunt Bertha and did I hear them say, "Oh, what a difficult child. "

*Dear six-day red book with writing in it,
My new school is a lot of fun. The teachers love me. They are always yelling my name," Daniel". My classmates tell me they yell as they are mad at me but I rather like to believe that they like my name and like to call my name as though I'm a movie star. I want to be an artist though. My parents always said I was good at art. I do miss them saying that sometimes. They were the only ones who appreciated it.*

Monday was fun. I threw a plate of spaghetti on some girl because I didn't like the taste of it, and I didn't like the color of her shirt, green. She screamed and slapped me. You can't slap a movie star, so at English class I sat behind her and snipped off a bit of her hair. I ended up in a room with a bald man. He kept shaking his head at me and muttering my name. I told him that the girl didn't live up to my expectations, therefore I cut her hair. He told me normal people don't do that, and I told him I was a movie-star. He told me to stop being ridiculous and told me to stay in for "detention" in the study hall. I stayed in, and left him a portrait of his face on the desk. On his desk I found a note for his senior to see. It was short and simple. It said, "He is a difficult child".

On my way home, three kind big boys asked me if I wanted to "hang out" with them. I was not too sure what I should do but put all doubts aside, agreed to join them and they took

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me to the park. They pointed to a lady sitting on the bench and told me to take the brown ugly bag that was next to her. So, I walked up and took it, but I couldn't find my new friends. They probably had gone to tell everyone how brave I was. I walked down the path with the bag and found the lady huffing and puffing behind me. She snatched the bag and I told her it was not a very nice thing to do and that she had no manners. She told me stealing her bag wasn't either, then I told her that I didn't steal it just that I had taken it. She looked at me in a strange manner. Her big eyes seemed to have gotten even larger and there was a sense of fear. It felt great to be able to frighten someone who was twice my size. I was overjoyed with my new sense of power but then she said, "Oh, what a difficult child".

*Dear seven-day red book of which is half full,
Detentions are now an everyday routine .The other thing permanent is my new friends.*

They were nice enough to wait for me, and offered me water in a can. I was thirsty and drank it, funnily it tasted very different from normal water and I told them but they dismissed my observation and said that only strong boys drank this. I couldn't refuse, could I? For I had to prove that I was indeed strong. I drank it and started feeling a bit giddy. I told them I'm going home because the heat is getting to me and one of them told me I couldn't and I didn't like him telling me what to do so I slapped him. First his face turned a shade of scarlet red, then purple, but all that was gone in a flash and he smiled benevolently. He definitely has respect for me, I told myself.

The trio showed me a man in blue, wearing a golden badge on his shirt. They said I have to steal those silver bracelets in his pocket and that if I did, I would be the hero of Gotham city. I was truly perplexed, I told them that we don't live in Gotham city and it's just a

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fictional town from the "Batman" comics but they corrected me and said that it actually existed and the fat man in blue is the evil. Dr. Penguin. Convinced that they were right and the evil man needed to be taught a lesson, I went up to Dr. Penguin and hit his head with my Gameboy. He fell to the ground. Some super-villain he is. I took the silver bracelets out and they told me to put it on him so I did. Then they told me I had to take him home with me so I dragged him back the Aunt Bertha's. It's strange how he looked like a cop, but I didn't let his disguise fool me. I left him in the sitting room and duct-taped his shoes to the ground so he can't get away. Aunt Bertha would be so proud of me when she gets back from Scotland. My parents would have been proud of me. Maybe this would actually please Aunt Bertha. Maybe it would make her accept me like mother and father. I also found a gun in Dr. Penguin's pocket. I'll take it with me to school tomorrow. I will teach everybody a lesson. All those who said, "Oh, what a difficult child"

Dear seven day old almost-full red book,

School did not hold any interest for me. I found the teachers and the subjects boring. I told my history teacher that no one cares about the second world war, whatever it was and we should really much rather be learning about "World of War Craft." He told me silly games have nothing to do with history, then I told him medieval fighting skills, tactics and beliefs are learnt from that. He ignored me and kept talking about some man with a mustache. In English we learnt about some man. They call him Shakespeare. We were learning about Macbeth but I don't really care about this "Macbeth". He grows evil, he dies. That's about it. Our teacher started telling us about how symbolic blood is but I couldn't be bothered about the finer nuances of literature. We learned about characters named "Romeo and Juliet" as well but they were quite foolish. They both killed themselves because they didn't

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have their facts and priorities straight. They should have just run away in the first place instead of dragging all the drama on, or they could have just dealt with it. Simple.

In science class I threw hydrochloric acid at my teacher to see if her face would dissolve just like in the movies but it didn't and she just turned red and yelled at me. She first told me to go to the principal's office and when I refused to budge she dragged me there.

Strangely, the other students in the class did not seem to support me. They whispered to one another, "Oh what a difficult child."

The principal handed me a white paper stating that I had been expelled.

My intelligence was probably too high for this school so I strutted back home but I saw some more Mr. Penguins on the streets. In a flash I figured that the original Mr. Penguin downstairs had cloned himself so I shot all of the ones I saw on the leg so Batman or the SWAT team could imprison them. I rushed home and told the Mr. Penguin downstairs that I'd foiled his plan and that the army was coming for him and he just stared wide-eyed at me, unable to speak through his gag. But I could lip-read him. He was trying to say, "Oh, what a difficult child."

I just heard a scream. Aunt Bertha must sure be glad to be home. She probably found Mr. Penguin just now. I'd better go take in her kisses of gratitude and praise. But all I heard was she on the telephone saying, "I tried...but he was a very difficult child."

*Dear old, full red book,
I am now in a room meant for juvenile delinquents and this time they took everything but the pencil and book off me. They said it was a kind of prison meant for boys my age but I would like to think that they finally moved me into my Hollywood mansion where I belong because I am a hero and an artist. They don't care if I draw on walls here. It's a bit stuffy*

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but there are loads of other big boys to talk to. They have hairy faces and could be werewolves so I have to keep a close eye out for them. The book is now full so I shall stop writing in it and play with my new friends in orange jump-suits.

I lie back in my bed, closing the book. People here are just like me, and they are fun.

They must be all heroes in some way as well, since they are here with me. I think I'm going to like it here.

Wait.... Do I really like it here, this stuffy room with boys who are like me? A tiny little voice kept telling me that I was wrong and that I needed to do something right to make myself worthy. Is this my heart that was telling me, though very faintly to seek answers for my behavior? When did I go wrong the first time? Was it when my parents died or was I always like this, a confused kid? I don't know. The make-belief world had completely overtaken any logic I may have had. I don't even remember when the fact with the fiction got entwined. All I seem to remember was everybody saying, what a difficult child I was. That had given me a sense of power over the others who just nodded their head at dismay. Now the nodding heads, the hurt look of all those people seemed to overpower me and make me feel very small. The other delinquents made me feel at home but are that the life I ever wanted? Will life give me another chance? Only if I hadn't fallen that first time. "If" the most futile word in the dictionary.