

The Wall of Jerica

by Smo

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Chapters 1 - 6

Chapter 1 of 1

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1.

There's a spider hanging in front of my face. It's small, the size of a sesame seed, and is hanging by an invisible thread, giving it the appearance of hovering on thin air.

I don't like spiders usually. Even small ones. But I have the strongest urge to hold out my palm and let it crawl on me. Usually I kill these spiders. But here it is, small and delicate and no other spiders are visible.

However, instead of holding out my hand, I pinch the air above it and tug. The spider floats beneath my fist. I carefully carry it over to my father's fern and wipe my thumb on one of its feathery leaves. Standing back, I watch as the spider crawls up its invisible rope and disappears into the plants dark middle.

Sighing without emotion, I return to my computer, ready to hack out my History Essay. In capitals because Miss Wribbins says it's very important and worth a third of our grade.

Fantastic.

2.

The beeping seems shriller than it really is. Mr. Arlington glances over at his desk, his hand still clutching the chalk, poised right at the tail of an 'r'.

My school has this thing with bells. The Head Department claims that bells signaling the beginning and end of class are disruptive to the concentration and damage the student's hearing. In reality, it's because the chairman Mr. BigCheese (actually Mr. Bishop) aspires our school to be a British boarding school, where they don't have bells. So we simply change classes at the top of each hour. Most teachers, like Mr. Arlington, set their watches or cell phones to time it out.

Sounds of stiff polyester bags rustling and papers crumpling fill the room as we all wordlessly put our things away, ready to move on to the next class.

Mr. Arlington is a tall man, thin and gaunt, like a skeleton. He looks like a praying mantis the way he holds his hands, limp, at his chest. He's one of those people, those teachers that students mostly like. He's strict but fair, to be cliché. The troublemakers tend to not like him, only because they can't get away with stuff. But unlike other teachers that catch them, they don't retaliate for any punishments they get. There have even been past students of his, troublemakers, who come back and greet him as if he were their favorite teacher.

And he has a very good memory, remembering each student's name and greeting them each in turn if he passes them in the hallway. Even years after having them in

class. I had him freshman year and was as quiet then as I am now. He even sees the invisible people.

I am not certain if I like that. Being seen.

3.

No one really needs friends. They need acquaintances. People to be able to partner up with in class, so you don't look like a doofus. Same with lunch. People to be able to call if you need help moving.

But someone to whom you tell all your secrets, trust unconditionally, and with whom you are emotionally close? No, you don't really need those. I mean, your emotions are inside for a reason: they should remain there. They are yours and no one else can be trusted to handle them.

Here I am, eighteen years old, and I have discovered something few have.

4.

There's an old man that lives a few houses from mine.

His house is old and Victorian. It still has wooden shingles that darken with rain. Tall, plush trees completely surround the house, obscuring the entire first floor, and much of the second and third.

His name is Mr. Myrtle. No one knows anything about him except that he appears to be in his seventies and is a complete hermit. He never has his porch light on for Halloween, and we only see him leave to go to work. No one has even seen him at the grocery store.

He's the one person I haven't written about. He wants to be alone, and I feel, for some reason, that if I jot him down, I will somehow violate this.

5.

I have this thing.

A notebook. It's my character file.

I see a person and I write them down. What they look like, how they act, what they say. I then use these clues to figure out their persona. Who they are. Like, to fit them into my logical person.

I have thousands of slots in my mind, waiting for people to be categorized into. I don't put people in boxes.

There is never someone who is 'just a jock'. And these slots aren't pre-labeled. It's always 'the fabulous sports player whose deep ambition is to be a poet but his stupid friends will tease him'. I make up the slots as I go along.

Everyone in the world is so blatantly themselves it's shocking. I mean, no matter how well you think you are hiding the truth, you aren't. Every little shift of your gaze, every word, everything is just a sign of who you are.

From a lifetime of watching people, I have become a sort of expert on seeing the real people.

And this helps me hide.

If you know what reveals people, you can better learn not to do so.

I keep to myself. But not to a point of being the antisocial one. I talk when spoken to, returning everything with full, complete sentences. I use my alter ego, the façade I put up that is suited for polite society.

I call her Jerica.

It's my real name, actually. My mother gave it to me after she watched an eighties cartoon called Jem. It's about a record store owner who decides to start a band and goes by the name 'Jem'.

It's who everyone thinks I am. Jerica, not Jem. But in reality, I have given myself another name, a better-fitted name.

Jane.

Not plain, but the person, the real me, the one no one needs to see. The mean one, the conniving one, the bitch.

Jane.

6.

'Jerica!'

It's the first thing I hear as soon as I turn the key in my front door. I turn around to see a woman with a halo of pumpkin orange hair running toward me, her large bosoms flopping all over. That woman must really invest in a bra.

Today's muumuu is roughly the colour of Pepto Bismol and has a print of a fluffy panda bear on the bottom.

I settle my best polite smile on her. 'Hello Mrs. Knickles.'

Name: Elena Knickles

Age: Claims to be 32, is probably in mid-forties

Stats: Faux red hair (is really grey-brown), large protruding eyes and wide mouth. About five feet tall and two feet wide with muumuu.

Location: 2832 Swanson Street. Bright blue house with blindingly white porch. Various flowers clutter yard.

Persona: Loves to wear muumuus, despite the fact that they are out of style and never were in style. Prefers slippers to shoes and wears these everywhere. On surface: town gossip. In reality: self-conscious about weight (thus the ever-hiding muumuus) and appearance (the hair dying). Means good and tries to keep everyone happy by sticking her nose into situations and usually making things worse. Fantastic baker though works at US Bank. Watches Emeril and Martha Stewart religiously and can out-cook the both of them. Used to be in Marines and uses this to discipline neighbourhood brats. Dreams of becoming chef long lost because of unknown reason.

Likeability: 78%

Trustworthiness: 45%

She finally pants up to me and wrests her weight on her hand, which she clamps around my shoulder.

'There you are, sweetheart! I have been waiting all day for you to get home!' She smiles at me. There is dried spit at the corners of her mouth. 'I made this fantastic soufflé and here I am without a taste-tester! Be a dear and tell me how bad it is?'

I really shouldn't as I have homework, with History Essay (which I haven't even started yet) as well. However, I can't turn down cuisine when all my family eats is fast food.

Sensing my hesitation, but interpreting it wrong, Miss Knuckles adds, 'I invited Leslie too! She's waiting in my living room now, the doll!'

Oh.

Leslie.

'Sorry, Miss Knuckles. I would love to, but I have homework and my mum doesn't want me to spoil my dinner.'

Her smile wavers with disappointment. She's one of those cooks that love to have as many tasters as possible. But that's not why she's disappointed. Because her plan didn't work.

Sometimes that's just too damn bad.

A/N: I know that my chapters are short and that's why I have clumped a few of them together. Hope you like it.