

BIG AL

“Family”

(...continued...)

Photo by [Unhindered by Talent](#)



(continued)

**Part 2 of BIG AL, a FREE! short by
Christina Leigh Pritchard**

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Police gathered into our living room, their intercoms, buzzing. Cecelia lay on the stretcher with tubes coming from her small body. What happened to her? I tried to ask my mother but the words wouldn't escape my mouth. I could barely see the stretcher pass me in the hall.

“Step back,” one officer ordered. He pressed his arm against my chest. I struggled, resisting him.

“Ce!” I screamed, my body shaking. “Can you hear me?”

“I asked you to step back, young man. We're going to do our best to help her.”

My eyes glazed. “Your best? What does that mean? What's happened to her?”

“Sit down,” the officer or maybe this time it was a paramedic, said. He guided me towards a kitchen chair.

“We need you to stay calm.” A breathing mask hovered above me.

“I don't need that,” I said, swatting at it. “Get away, let me see my sister.” Two men stared down at me now. “What do you want? Go away!”

I don't remember how I got to the hospital but I do remember the swish from the automatic doors. Each time someone entered, I jumped, hoping it was news about Cecelia. Max did the same. My mother just paced--back and forth--wearing out the linoleum.

I narrowed my eyes at Max. What had he done to my sister? This had to be his fault. I was gone, literally, ten minutes.

Finally, someone called our names...

We hurried to the automatic doors, following two older women with “volunteer” badges. They smiled, guiding us into a room called “grievance”. My heart pounded. There was a couch and two club chairs. Magazines, books and brochures on death littered the coffee table. What the heck were we doing in this room? Did they want to discuss things privately with us? Was this the only available room, or?

I couldn't swallow. My skin thumped and my mind raced. Words ran together as the women spoke.

“Choked...toy...sorry...”

“What happened to Cecelia?” I stammered. My mother clutched my arm. “Where is she?”

The women’s faces portrayed the truth.

“No!”

I jerked away from my mom. “Not Cecelia,” I said. “She’s a baby still.” Tears escaped, my voice trembled. “Who kills a baby?” My eyes darted Max’s way. “He did it!” I screamed, lunging for my stepfather.

My mother and the little ladies blocked my path. “I’m sorry for your loss, young man.” One of the ladies placed her palm on my arm. I jerked back.

“Stop calling me a young man. I think this earns me the right of being just a man, don’t you agree?”

The elderly volunteers nodded. Their pained expressions swelled my insides. This was just a prank, Cecelia was in the back giggling, showing the nurses and doctors her latest ballet skit.

No, she wasn’t dead.

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School has a way of punishing you. It’s just a big prison where your family sends you so that they can a few short hours of peace without you. Everyone was sent to jail--guilty or not. No one was guiltier than Frank. His dark hair and eyes proved his true nature. He was evil in so many aspects that I can’t describe.

I know I’m fat. Everyone knows. Does he need to remind me of it every single day in the same class and in the same way? Especially, today? Ce’s death wasn’t even a day old yet. He knew it, too.

I trudged into home economics class. Frank spotted me, smiling. I cringed, ready for my daily assault. “It’s Big Al! Hide your food, he looks hungry!”

Everyone laughed--as usual. The only difference with today was, I wanted to be the one who laughed at them for a change. What did I ever do to them that they couldn’t let me be, for just one day? I only want one day to think about my sister.

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I stormed out of class, letting my books fall. I made sure to slam the door hard. Lunch was about to start. What I needed was to eat, finally. Donna and Kurt would be there for me. They understood.

“Hi Al,” Donna smiled. She pushed up her glasses, watching Frank enter the cafeteria.

Everything was sort of a blur after that moment... Maybe he spilled milk on my food (like every other day), maybe Frank made the other kids pile trays on top of my table (nothing new, surprise!), maybe... I can't really remember. The only words I hear racing around inside my mind are the ones he whispered in my ear...

“Wouldn't want you to get hungry again, I know what happened the last time--I mean, look at your poor sister. Fat man's lunch!”

My heart thumped in my chest and hatred filled my lungs. This was it, the last straw. I shoved him hard, sending him to the ground.

“I hate you!” I screamed. Silence filled the lunch room. Someone giggled, tossing milk my way.

“Not again,” Donna groaned. I glanced over. She was drenched in milk. Her glasses were smudged. “Every day, I end up dirty. Maybe we shouldn't even bother eating, Al, what do you think?”

I shrugged, flicking milk from my fingers. Would she ask me again, to join her plan to destroy our bullies? It didn't matter, now, whether she did or did not, because, with or without her help, I was going to kill Frank.

*Find out what happens to Big Al, Frank and Donna, and learn the truth behind Cecelia's mysterious death. You can learn all this with part 3 next month! **August 2016***

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