

Everyone Leaves This Place

R.B. Shifman

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Dedicated to:

My wife, Sheri Shifman, for her enduring support and love

Section I

Evee Mimi & Her Stalker

Chapter One

What Are You Then?

Friday, November 9th, 2018
Dairytown Borough, PA – Suburban Philadelphia Area
Dairytown High School West – Fallen Soldier Field

The rush of air thrilled her as she twirled at breakneck speed toward the ground. Something about the possibility she could be dropped—her arms broken, ribs jutting through her flesh, maybe even her spine severed—filled her with a sick delight. Katy and Carol Beth, always reliable, caught her though.

She leaped out of the girls' arms and stood statuesque, pumping one fist in the air, the other rigid by her side. She shouted the cheer, whatever it was, performing automatically for the roaring crowd. She didn't care whether they watched her or not. Her body tingled with new life, adrenaline from the fall still coursing through her veins.

The wave of noise continued. The Dairytown Deer must have scored a touchdown...or recovered a fumble. She truly had no idea who even had the ball. Never mind the score. She wished she could ask the girls to throw her into the air again.

Holy fuck! This is awesome! I'm gonna miss this. I gotta try to walk on at Temple University.

Evee jumped, kicking her legs out, finishing the cheer. Fellow cheerleader, Katy held out her palm, face high. She slapped Katy's hand and turned toward the field. Her boyfriend, Chipper Schmidt, Dairytown's star middle linebacker, trotted off the gridiron, the football in his hand. He flipped the ball to a stripe-shirted referee, jogged toward Evee, but stopped at the sideline. He yanked up his helmet, resting the chin-guard on his forehead, and winked at her. She grinned, dimples forming, and winked back. Chipper cradled an invisible baby with both arms, his signal to her he'd recovered a turnover. Her smile broadened.

Evee checked the scoreboard. Dairytown led 13-7. On the field, Bobby Perrino, the Deer quarterback, kneeled behind a victory formation. The scoreboard clock hit zero. Game over.

She smoothed her short, black-and-yellow skirt over the top of her naturally light-brown thighs. Somebody hurtled in from the right, knocking her back a step. "Awesome, bitch!" Her best friend, Simone, wrapped her arms around Evee and kissed her cheek.

Evee admired Simone's smiling face, with its rich, mahogany complexion and beautifully proportioned features. "Yep! God, I'm gonna miss this, Monie!" She moved one of Simone's braids out of the way and whispered into her friend's ear. "Time to get lit though. Smoothie Paradise. The garage!"

Simone laughed. "Is that all you think about?"

Evee slipped a lock of her chestnut brown hair, laced with blonde highlights, behind one ear. "Nah. I've been planning to skydive when it gets warm. Maybe this spring."

Simone pursed her lips and lowered her brow. "You are seriously demented, Evee."

Evee shrugged. She glanced down at her uniform. "I'm changing out of this thing. Wanna come?"

“No, I’m leaving mine on. Don’t you want the guys to try to look up your cheer skirt at Smoothie Paradise?”

“Oh, that’s all good. I brought a hot dress to change into. And I’m not sitting anywhere. We’ll be standing in the garage. I’m gonna use the locker room to change. Meet me by the corner of the school over on West Street. I’ll text my mom and tell her the game’s going to overtime.”

Simone shook her head. “Changing into a dress? That’s so you, Eevee. And one of these days your mom’s gonna wonder why there’s so many overtime games. Doesn’t she even check the scores?”

“Nah. Besides, no more games anyway, right? Wait for me. Chipper and Bobby are gonna meet us at the garage. I got the refreshments in my backpack.”

All the cheerleaders and football players had begun to exit the field. Eevee spun to her hands, cartwheeling into a backflip. She landed, raised her arms straight, and pumped her fists. “Football is over! Friday nights are mine again!” She beamed at Simone, who shook her head, waved a hand dismissively at her friend, and strolled away across the field.

“So, what are you then?”

Evee held the neck of the vodka bottle to her lips and allowed some of the alcohol to slip into her mouth. She gulped the burning liquid, handed the bottle to Simone, and placed her hands on the hips of her tight-fitting, black cocktail dress. “Who invited this guy again?” She glared at the thin young man asking the question.

Bobby raised his hand, palm out, like a traffic cop. “He’s my cousin, Eevee. Lighten up. I told you, Mark’s taking a semester off college.”

“No. No. Let him speak for himself. What did you mean by that, Bobby’s cousin?”

The boy's head jerked back. "Uh, I meant, you know, where you're from." He pointed to Simone. "Like Simone's black, so—"

"You should quit while you're behind, Mark." Simone took a swig of the vodka and handed him the bottle.

"I just meant, like, where are your ancestors from, Eve—Evee. Like your skin's really tan, and you've got this kind of exotic look." Mark tipped the bottle back.

"Easy, brother." Chipper accepted the bottle from Mark. "That's my exotic look." He attempted to pinch Evee's thigh, and she slapped away his hand.

"Ugh. Forget I said anything." Mark examined the dirt at his feet.

Evee pulled a joint from her backpack. "All I got is this old-school weed. I'm out of dab carts." She lit the end, puffing on it. "Let me tell you something, whitey." She pointed at Mark, and Simone burst out laughing. "My ancestors came over on the motherfucking Mayflower. How's that for where I'm from? Put that empty bottle in the corner, Bobby."

Bobby ambled to a corner of the garage and placed the spent vodka bottle beside the fence, among tufts of grass sprouting between dirt and gravel. The garage, a codename, consisted of a secluded, ten-square foot space behind Smoothie Paradise, a shake shop about a two-minute walk from the high school. A fence bound two sides of the garage, and the back of the shake shop and a large dumpster enclosed the other two sides.

Evee observed Bobby's cousin, who shifted foot to foot. *I'm making him nervous. Good. He's not bad-looking, actually. Like a young Christian Slater from that old movie. Cool tattoo on his arm. A little more interesting than big, blond Chipper.*

Mark took a drag on the joint, held the smoke, and exhaled. "May what?"

“May-flower. The ship.”

“Yeah, right.” Mark offered the joint to Bobby.

Bobby lifted a well-muscled arm to rub his tightly curled brown hair, and he took the joint from his cousin. “Dude, it’s true. Her family’s like directly descended from the Pilgrims.”

“How come you’re so tanned then? Come on. You’re like Spanish. You better keep an eye out for ICE. They’re gonna build a wall around you.” Mark laughed.

Despite herself, Eevee laughed too. “You are such a racist dick, Bobby’s cousin. If you gotta know, my dad’s parents came from Cuba and Sicily. My last name is Salazar. I get my skin tone from my dad. My mom’s the one that’s mostly white bread. In fact, all the people descended from the Mayflower on my mom’s side were men until my Gramma Cynthia was born. My Gramma never got married, and she kept her maiden name, Bradford, right from the Mayflower. Good enough? God, such a stupid question in 2018, ‘Where you from?’” She stuck out her tongue and crossed her eyes. “The fuck, Mark?”

“Okay. Okay, ease up on the guy.” Chipper took a drag of the joint and wrapped his free arm around Eevee’s waist. He lowered his hand, resting his palm on her backside. A tingle shot down her legs.

“What does your dad do?” Mark persisted.

“He’s a mob boss. He kills smart-asses who ask too many stupid questions about where people are from.” Eevee produced a small, metal clip and placed the joint into it. She dragged on the roach and placed her mouth on Chipper’s. He opened his lips, and she blew a stream of smoke into his mouth. Chipper turned his head to the side, coughed, and turned back to her, searching for a real kiss. She pressed a hand against his cheek, guiding his face away from hers. “Later, Chipster.”

“Why doesn’t your family have old money then?” Mark simply wouldn’t stop.

“Depression. Great Depression.”

“So many people have that nowadays. They say it’s ‘cause of smartphones.” Bobby handed the roach to Simone.

All four other teens laughed. Mark, shaking his head, slapped his cousin’s shoulder. “Cuz, she meant they lost their money in the Great Depression in the 1930s.”

Bobby froze. He chuckled. Transforming to uproarious laughter. He stopped laughing, his eyes widening. “Dude, we should go to DADA’s and get fried chicken.”

Evee chuckled. “Munchies much, Bobby? Okay, I gotta get home. I don’t have a lot of time. Chipper, let’s head out.” She kissed Simone on the cheek, grabbed Chipper’s hand, and headed toward the slats in the fence. She rotated two of the slats, creating a space for them to squeeze through, and waved her hand over her head. “Buh bye, Bobs. Good game tonight. Buh bye, Bob’s hot cousin who asks too many fucking questions.”

Chipper followed her through the fence. “What’s this about hot?” he muttered.

On the sidewalk, Evee stood toe-to-toe with Chipper, fixing her eyes on his. She adjusted the backpack on her back and shook out her hair. “Yeah, I said it. Kid’s annoying, but he’s a hottie. Same way you like this dress I’m wearing, right? Good thing it’s so warm out tonight.” She brought her mouth close to his ear. “But your hand was on my butt back there, not his, right?”

“I guess.”

“Don’t guess. It was. It’s wicked.” She imitated a New England accent. “Just like my Gramma Cynthia is a witch from Salem.”

“Wait. What? You never told me this.”

Eve's dark eyes danced under her well-plucked darker eyebrows. "Oh, yeah. It's an old, crazy story. Let's get to your car, and I'll tell you all about it."

Chapter Two

Holy Toledo, Clarkman, & Gal Gadot

“Chipper, give me my backpack, I’m gonna change into my school clothes here before you take me back to my car.” Eevee lifted her tiny black dress above her head.

“God, Eevee, you’ve got nothing but panties on!” Chipper swiveled his head to peer toward the far end of the Dairytown Library parking lot. “Eevee, cops come by here. Hurry and get dressed.”

“If cops come here, why do we always park here to fool around? Just gimme my clothes and quit your bitchin’. Hand me my sneakers, too, please. I’m getting out of these flats.”

Chipper passed Eevee a pair of ripped jeans, bra, tank top, and black sneakers from the large section of her backpack in the back seat of his car. “Okay, just hurry up.”

Eevee tugged the jeans over her slim legs and threw the tank top over her head. She slipped her sneakers on without socks.

Chipper reached over and traced his fingers through her wavy chestnut hair to where it ended a few inches below her shoulders. “You been thinking about what we talked about?”

Eevee stilled. “Yeah, yeah, okay. Sure.”

“Because—”

“Listen, yes! Okay? I made a doctor’s appointment to get a prescription on Monday. I’ll be eighteen Sunday, and I’m finally free to do what I want.”

“I mean, this is—”

“Chip! Drop it. Don’t say something stupid, okay?”

He placed his hands on the steering wheel. “I won’t be here next weekend.”

Her brow wrinkled. A new development. “Oh. Where are you going?”

“Toledo. Campus visit.”

“Like Toledo, Ohio?”

“Uh huh.”

“I thought Temple was your number one?”

“I dunno. I might have a better chance of starting as a true freshman at Toledo.” Chipper focused out the driver’s side window on the dark line of pine trees edging the parking lot.

Evee wrinkled her nose. “How come you always hit me with crap like this after you get what you want?” She huffed.

“Hey, that’s not fair. I gave you—”

“Okay. It was great if that’s what you want to hear. But you do this all the time, wait until we’ve fooled around then tell me something you should have told me earlier.” She took a drink of water, swallowing. “It’s fine. Check it out if it’s good for you. I might not go to Temple anyway. So, no big deal. My dad’s gonna take me to Miami over Thanksgiving break. Figure I’ll apply there too, get out of this crap weather. Maybe I’ll walk onto Miami’s football cheer squad. That’s a big-time program. They got the turnover chain, yeah? Savage!” She chortled and sang a line from the *Turnover Chain* song by SoLo D. Her eyes narrowed. Chipper, the best player on Dairytown West’s team, had been named first-team all-conference. But she knew the University of Miami football team would hardly salivate over a three-star, middle linebacker from Southeastern Pennsylvania.

He sniffed. “Miami lost the last three weeks in a row.” Chipper turned to her. “You’re bringing this up because I should have told you sooner about Toledo. Remember, I like Notre Dame, not Miami. I don’t need to wear junk around my neck if I pick up a fumble.”

She chuckled inwardly, remembering the times she'd heard him mumbling the *Turnover Chain* song. "Whatevs. I don't care. Really. I just might wanna get out of this cold, friggin' weather is all."

"Come on—"

"Let's just go, Chipper. My car's back at the school. My mom's gonna start worrying soon. It's okay." She raised her voice. "We'll still do it when you get back. Even if we plan to go to different schools. Besides, I could see you when Toledo plays Miami."

Chipper started the car. "They don't play Miami next year. I checked."

Evee nodded and placed her hand on his thigh. She spoke in a hushed voice. "Seriously, Chipper. It'll be fine. I still care about you. And I'm still gonna go on the pill Monday. You do what's best for you." She stared out the passenger window at the darkened library parking lot. "And I'll do the same for me."

"**W**hat is this, Evee?" Evee's mother, Joan, pressed the button on the answering machine.

"Hello, this message is for Evee Mary Salazar. This is Nicole at Doctor Clarkman's office calling to confirm your appointment for Monday, November 12th at three forty-five PM. Please call us if you need to change this appointment for any reason. Thank you.—beep."

Evee folded her arms across her chest. *Dammit! Think quick.*

"I said, what is this? Why do you have an appointment to see Monica Clarkman?" Joan's face turned crimson beneath her short, coiffed, blonde hair. She crossed her arms, inadvertently mimicking Evee.

"It's...private. I don't want to talk about it."

“Well, you do—”

“But I don’t! I’m eighteen on Sunday. I don’t need to tell you anything anymore!” Eeve shouted, uncrossing her arms, and balling her fists at her sides.

Joan pointed, her finger a foot from Eeve’s face. “I know what you’re doing. You better be careful, Eeve Mary.”

“Maybe that’s what I’m doing, being careful.” Eeve slung her backpack over her shoulder. “Going to my room.” She hopped up the stairs, two at a time.

“We’re not finished with this conversation, Eeve!” Joan stood at the bottom of the stairs and yelled toward the second floor. Eeve’s bedroom door slammed shut. “Ugh. Mikey acted the same way his senior year.” She passed her son, Mikey’s photo, hanging slightly off-level on the wall between the foyer and the kitchen. Mikey, a college junior at Suffolk University, had light-brown skin and chestnut hair like his sister. Joan tapped his photo to straighten it.

Why? Why is this the worst year, right before they leave? Why do they have to be such little monsters? I want her to be safe and happy. Doesn’t she realize how much I love her? Why is she shoving me away so...hard? Joan shook her head and headed into the kitchen to open a bottle of red wine.

Monday, November 12th, 2018
Dairytown Borough, PA
Clarkman & Associates OBGYN

Evee opened the office door, setting off jingling bells. She peeked at the small, golden chimes over the door. Facing forward, she recognized the person sitting in a chair in front of her. Her head jerked back in surprise, and she chuckled.

The young man’s eyes lifted from the *People* magazine in his hands. He flashed all his teeth at her.

Ignoring him, Eeve stepped to the open, glass partition at the reception counter. “I’m here to see Doctor Clarkman. I have an appointment at three forty-five.” Eeve scrawled her name illegibly across the sign-in sheet.

She sauntered toward the young man, who sat alone in a row of light-blue, cushioned chairs. “Hello, Bobby’s cousin.”

“Hello, Mayflower. How’s John Adams?”

“John Adams was *descended* from a Mayflower passenger. He wasn’t actually on the Mayflower.” She snickered again and plopped herself into a chair beside him.

The two sat in silence for a minute. Eeve leaned over and whispered in his ear. “Is the doctor going to check your vagina for you today?”

He stifled a laugh, causing him to snort. His slate-blue eyes twinkled. “No, you?”

She raised her eyebrows. “Perhaps.” Let him believe she had come for a standard check-up, not because she planned to start taking the pill.

She nodded. “Seriously, what are you doing here? Following me? Trying to find out more about me? Don’t worry, my dad’s a lawyer, not a mob guy.”

Mark pointed to the reception office. “My mom’s coming off her shift in fifteen minutes. That’s her you just spoke with at the front desk. I’m using her car, so I’m picking her up.”

“You don’t have a car?”

“It’s in the shop. It got banged up.”

“Hmmm.” Eeve browsed the Instagram feed on her phone.

“Did everything go all right the other night? You guys took off in a rush.” His eyes sparkled mischievously.

Oh, my God, he’s flirting with me or something. He knows Chipper and I left them to screw around.

“Yeah, it went okay. My mom gave me a hard time for being late. She doesn’t like me out past eleven. Not like my dad. He doesn’t care what time I come in.”

“Oh, yeah?”

“Yeah. She ripped me a new one yesterday about staying out late and some other stuff. And that sucked ‘cause it was my birthday.”

“Happy birthday.”

“Thank you. My mom’s, like, jammed at work, which of course must be my fault,” Eevee’s voice rang sharply through the office. Noticing the uneasiness in Mark’s eyes, she leaned toward him and lowered her tone. “Anyway, because she’s so crazy busy at work, she tells me I gotta visit my Gramma Cynthia at her old folks’ home every Friday night. Happy friggin’ birthday, right? She wants me to bond with Gramma.” Eevee also figured Joan intended to keep her from seeing Chipper on Friday nights. She left this part out of her explanation to Mark.

“Not so bad. Hanging out with a little old lady.”

Evee moved her face even closer to Mark’s, her lips hovering several inches from his lips. She realized she’d invaded his space in a way he would find confusing. But she didn’t care. His aftershave, a subtle minty fragrance, wafted into her nostrils, and a lightheadedness rushed through her. Eevee licked her top lip. “She’s a witch.” She suddenly recalled she had meant to tell Chipper this story the other night.

“A witch? Come on. She can’t be that bad.”

“Seriously, dude. She’s not all there. She tells stories about how her family has kept magic alive for the last few hundred years. Says her great-great-great-great-grandfather, or something, handed down the power of witchcraft to her. He used to live in Salem and moved to Philadelphia forever ago before the United States even got together.”

“The witch that got away.”

“Xactly. She seems sharp, but she’s a little crae.”

“Tell me more.”

“I don’t know much more. It’s hush-hush.” She backed her face away from his and held her index finger to her lips. Eeve eyed him, enjoying his slate-blue eyes beneath dark eyebrows. “You ever see the movie *Heathers*?”

“The old one? From 1988? With the woman from *Stranger Things*?”

“Yeah.”

“Nah. Never heard of it.”

She tapped his arm. “Seriously, though.”

“I get that a lot. That I look like Christian Slater.”

“What? Oh, my God. You’re so vain. How do you even know I meant that?”

He shrugged. “It’s a little cliché, comparing me to a movie star, isn’t it?”

She lowered her voice. “That’s something the character from *Heathers* would say.”

He chuckled. “Yeah, guess you’re right.” He cleared his throat. “So, uh, you want to go out and get dinner sometime, Gal Gadot?” He ran his eyes from her head to her feet. “Perhaps the five-foot-seven-inch version of Gal Gadot.”

Although they now sat alone in the waiting room, Eeve continued to whisper. “You’re a stud, Christian, with those three-quarter inch biceps. But I don’t cheat.”

Mark shrugged again. “I wasn’t sure of the arrangement you guys had. Figured I’d give it a shot. Nice that you’re loyal, though. It’s a good quality.”

A twinge ached inside Eeve’s chest. “Unfaithfulness...” She turned her face away from Mark to hide the sudden and unexpected tears pooling in her eyes. She breathed deeply and turned back to him. “Cheating hurts people. It breaks up families.” She rubbed at her right eye. “I don’t wanna be that kind of person. You get me?”

Mark cocked his head to the side and nodded, almost imperceptibly. He paused. “I heard Christian Slater lives around here.”

The corners of Evee’s mouth turned up. “Apparently, he’s sitting right in front of me.”

“Well, if your arrangement ever changes, what’s your number?”

“Evee?” A nurse in magenta scrubs stood at the open door, a clipboard in her hand.

Evee chuckled. “I’m sure it’s online somewhere.” She stood and headed toward the nurse.

“Have fun with grandma on Friday!” he shouted after her.

Evee turned her head. “*Gramma*, not grandma. Thanks, Bobby’s cousin. I’m sure it’ll be lit hanging with her. Have fun with yourself on Friday.”

She nodded at the nurse and stepped through the door into the back office. A smile stole its way onto her face. *Gal Gadot. I’ll take it.*

Playlist – “Everyone Leaves this Place” (no lyrics used)

- Turnover Chain* – SoLo D
- High Hopes* – Panic! at the Disco
- God’s Plan* – Drake
- I Don’t Know How to Love Him* – fr. *Jesus Christ Superstar*
- Ain’t That a Kick in the Head* - Dean Martin
- It’s Some Canes Over Here* – SoLo D, ft. Truthh Talkk & No Good
- Close to Me* – Ellie Goulding x Diplo, ft. Swae Lee
- Breath of Heaven* – Amy Grant
- It’s the Most Wonderful Time of the Year* – wr. by Edward Pola & George Wyle
- Joy to The World* - Third Day
- Breath of Heaven* (reprise) - Amy Grant
- Both Sides Now* - Joni Mitchell
- Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves* (fr. *Nabucco*, wr. by Giuseppe Verdi)
- Hallelujah* - Jeff Buckley (wr. by Leonard Cohen)
- It’s Some Canes Over Here* (reprise) – SoLo D, ft. Truthh Talkk & No Good