

We Have Each Other  
By Jacqueline Valenzo-Castro

Jennifer - Chapter 1

“I only had him.” Said a drunken Jennifer. She never was a really strong drinker, with 3 shots of alcohol being her limit before she got dizzy to the point she’d laugh at almost anything said to her. But today was different though. She laid on the floor of her penthouse apartment, something her and her husband bought together. Tears were streaming down her face as the memory of earlier kept replaying in her head.

She was coming back from a meeting earlier than usual, she wanted to surprise her husband with food from their favorite restaurant, where they first met. She entered the apartment complex to a pair of unfamiliar heels, which she knew didn’t belong to her. It doesn't take a genius to know what was up, but she didn’t want to believe it. Her heart pounded like crazy as she got to the master bedroom at the end of the hallway. It was only a 10 second walk, so why did it feel like an eternity? She got to the door, which surprisingly, wasn’t locked. As soon as she opened the door, her life flashed before her eyes. The world was like one of those spinning cup rides in amusement parks; Only, this was going by super fast, and there seemed to be no sign of it ending soon.

This was a week ago, Jennifer hadn’t sobered up since. She was now regularly missing her own company’s meetings. It wasn’t like she couldn’t afford to do it, she had \$80 million to her name, self made.

“I have no one now” she had repeated under her breath one too many times. It wasn’t always like this. Since that day, she had one thing on her mind: memories of high school, where she never felt alone, like she was on top of the world.

May - Chapter 2

“Now don’t stay up too late May, you know you get so cranky when you're tired” said Amy, May’s roommate, as she was getting ready to go to sleep in their two-room college dorm.

“It’s not like I was going to sleep anyways, I’m used to this,” said May. “Besides, sleepless nights will be common for me once I finally become a full-fledged neurosurgeon.”

“Ok if you say so...”

May was always on top of things when it came to her dream job: becoming a neurosurgeon. She always thought about her success during high school, the grades she got, becoming valedictorian...

“That’s all in the past now” thought May as she remembered what also went down during that time. The walls of her white paint-chipped dorm seemed to cave in every time she reminisced those awful memories. If anything, she has had insomnia ever since the end of high school, was it because of the incident? May wondered everyday.

The next day, May was walking to her local gym, it was a pretty breezy but warm seventy-two degrees. The flowers were in spring bloom and everything seemed so perfect as she got closer to the gym. Just as she was about to go in, May got a call.

“Hello? May speaking.”

Her phone hit the concrete path as soon as she got a response.

Aurora - Chapter 3

“I’M LATE I’M LATE” Aurora thought to herself frantically as she ran through the rainy and gloomy city that was Seattle. Her black-cotton sweater wasn’t enough to cover herself from the waterfall of a storm. Finally, she had reached her destination soaking wet. She entered her workplace with a smile.

“What in the world Rora??” Said her boss, Mike. “This is your third lateness!”

“I know, I know, I’ll go get changed and I’ll be down as soon as possible”

“You might as well take your time with that as well! But If you need an umbrella, just ask.”

“That’s what you always say, but you never have one!” She said jokingly

Walking up into the girl’s changing room, Aurora, or Rora, she sighed with relief as she still had a job maintained. Her college classes had just ended and she had 30 minutes to get to ‘La Belle Cuisine’, the restaurant she worked at. The rain had slowed down the trains by 10 minutes, and the bus wasn’t going to come for another 13 minutes, so Aurora had no choice but to make a run for it if she wanted to make it at 4:00.

She served a tiring 5 hour shift waitressing; by now the rain had stopped and she made her way home.

“I’m homeeeeeee!” She said; no response. She was expecting Leah to come down all excited asking if she had brought any leftover dessert, but nothing happened.

“Maybe she’s sleeping?” Aurora thought to herself. As she got to her bedroom, she saw Leah in her bed, wheezing and panting with all her might.

“LEAH! IT’S GOING TO BE OKAY!”

As quickly as she could, Aurora speed-dialed Leah’s doctor and next thing you know, They were in a clean, all white modern hospital room. Leah was asleep with the oxygen mask letting her keep calm. Aurora’s thoughts raced as she paced back and forth in the room.

“Do I call her parents? Wait- what kind of question is that? Of course I should!” She then paused for a second.

“Do I call them...? It has never been this bad, I’m worried.” Her head was spinning as the question kept replaying. After 10 minutes of contemplating, she got out her phone.

“I wonder if their numbers are still the same...” That night, she relived every high school memory of “them” she could.

#### Angela - Chapter 4

“That is all for this food rating video! Make sure to follow me on Instagram and Tiktok! I’ll see you next time, bye now!” She shut her camera off and stood up

“Finally that’s over with” Angela thought to herself. For the past 5 years, she had become an internet sensation with the videos of her daily life. Behind that camera, Angela’s life was almost a fairytale. She had loving, supporting parents, she lived in this big house that almost resembled a disney princesses castle, and most of all, her boyfriend, Ethan. Angela had become the envy of celebrities, all because of her boyfriend of 10 years. He was everyone's dream guy; he was taller than the average guy, had these dreamy hazel eyes that anyone could fall for, and his looks overall could surpass the world’s handsomest man's face, he WAS the world’s handsomest man in people's eyes. Not only were his looks that made him attractive, his sweet and caring personality towards Angela was the cherry on top. Not only fans, EVERYONE knew that they were both head over heels for each other, or so they thought. Behind that camera, Angela couldn’t even remember the last time they had dinner together, which seemed like a good 3 years ago. The only times Ethan had kissed her and showed any affection was in front of the stupid camera. He was also seeing other girls and she knew it, clearly. Yet, she didn’t have the guts to let go of him. It was too late to do anything about it, she had an image to uphold. But aside from that, this was the punishment Angela was getting for what she did to Leah back in high school. The memory of the fight was too painful for her to relive. Guilt had made its way up to her for so long, she couldn’t take it anymore.

“I have to go find her and apologize, I hope it isn’t too late.” But she didn’t know where to start.

“What college does she go to? Does she even go to college? Is she still living in Seattle?” All these thoughts filled up her head, and none of them could be answered for her.

She was taking a peaceful nap on her couch when all of a sudden, she got a phone call. Tiringly, she answered the call without looking at the number.

“Hello, Angela speaking” Angela said mindlessly

“Angela...it’s me...Rora..”

Angela’s heart skipped a beat, she got up in an instant

“RORA! HEY HOW ARE YOU? HOW’S LIFE? DO YOU STI-

She paused for a moment.

“Do you still keep in contact with Leah?”

“Angela...” Aurora said while whispering. Angela could hear her weeping over the phone. She froze.

“Angela.....Leah died.”

Jennifer - Chapter 5

“Thank you for the ride sir” said Jennifer as she handed the taxi driver a fifty dollar bill. She was finally here, in front of Aurora’s, and Leah’s apartment. She had left Seattle as soon as possible as she got that heartstopping call from Aurora.

“W-what do you mean she died?? Was her heart condition that bad”

“Dr. Shiji said that the heart condition was incurable, that this was bound to happen. But it happened too soon Jenni, too soon..” Said Aurora while whispering. She could barely speak up from all the crying she had done all night.

Jennifer walked in front of the apartment number Aurora had given her.

“Apartment 145, here goes nothing.” Jennifer thought. She rang the doorbell. The door whipped open not even a second later to reveal a short-haired girl with visible eyebags.

“JENNIFER! I’M SO GLAD TO SEE YOU! Come in! We’re all waiting for you!”

“We’re? Wait do you mean-”

She entered the room to be revealed to May and Angela, both looking so disheveled.

“Hey Jenni.” They both said in unison.

“Oh. my. goodness” Jennifer said out loud. She ran with all her might and hugged them all.

“It’s been so long...how’s everyone been?” Jennifer asked.

“I’m doing sort of good. I’m on my way to becoming a neurosurgeon so that’s something.” Said May.

“That’s- that’s awesome! How ‘bout you Angela?”

Angela didn’t respond, she just stared at the three of them. Tears started streaming down a second later.

“I’m so, so sorry.” She stated “It’s all my fault...”

“What are you saying?” Asked Jennifer.

“I- I didn’t apologize soon enough. It was because of me that she died heartbroken!” Said Angela as she sobbed with no end in sight.

“Hey hey, we were so reckless back in high school, it was a mistake right? I’m sure Leah would have forgiven you if she was still here.” May said.

“I TOOK HER BOYFRIEND MAY! WHAT WAS SO MISTAKEN ABOUT THAT???” She shouted. The room went quiet after that.

“You’re not the only one with regrets...” said Aurora. “I should’ve confessed to Leah sooner..  
And maybe, just maybe, I would’ve had a chance.”

“You liked Leah..Aurora?”

“With all my heart.”

“Well if we’re now confessing things, I’ve had insomnia for the past 8 years.” Said May.

“Anything about you Jenn?”

“Well um- my husband cheated on me with one of his coworkers. I was lonely at first but I think  
after today, I won’t be! Because I have you guys, we have each other.”

The girls went into an embrace. That one spinning world Jennifer had, had finally come to an  
end. She finally got out and went onto a new chapter of her life.

## Artist's Statement

In this story, Jennifer is like the leader of the pack. Her first line in the story and her last line are all connected if you see carefully. I wanted May to go second then Angela because Angela was a more significant character since she had to do something with them fighting back in high school. She was the falling action of the story. Aurora was roommates with Leah all along, not to mention that she was in love with her. Aurora being the climax and the resolution seemed right for the story to end that way. The essential question for this story was "What does it mean to be a family?" Family doesn't always mean that you need to be by blood. These 5 friends were so close back in high school, then a fight made them collapse. But because of their struggles and another big incident happening in their life, they were able to communicate and reunite once again, kind of like a family. Families fight all the time! But, they communicate and make up. I think and hope that all readers knew that all of them were going to meet up and reunite at the end as the story got deeper. The dramatic irony of them not knowing this coincidence was going to happen is something I tried to create subtly! For example, at the end of Aurora's chapter, she calls all the friends for them to meet up, Angela and the rest don't know this, but us readers do! May walking to the gym in the beginning of her chapter was meant to be a snapshot! I tried my best to incorporate our five senses to imagine the scene as you are reading. This line in May's chapter:

"The next day, May was walking to her local gym, it was a pretty breezy but warm seventy-two degrees. The flowers were in spring bloom and everything seemed so perfect as she got closer to the gym."

Was a more significant snapshot as I tried to create this image in your mind. The dialogue, if you didn't notice, got a lot more sentimental as we got to the end. The use of exclamation marks and capitalization also played with the tone of the dialogue, so readers could know when it was happy, moody, or playful! The ending experienced less of those exclamation marks and capitalization as the ending came to a close. While reading the story, the word "high school" comes up a lot. High school is a place where people tend to be reckless and it's said to be one of the most memorable parts of life. Well, memories are one of the themes in this story. They want to be free from all their struggles and the things that keep them up the most. High school is also the place where this fight between Leah and Angela happened, which is important to the story since it is what led to all of the plot happening. At the end, they all go back to being their old selves, their teenage selves.