

# NEC ESS ARY

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# VIO LENCE

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image by Becky Webster

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dancing girl press & studio, 2019

# NECESSARY VIOLENCE



## Notes

*In May 2014, two 12-year old girls in Waukesha, Wisconsin led another girl into the woods where they stabbed her multiple times and left her for dead. When questioned by the police, the girls claimed they had attempted to murder their friend in an effort to appease the internet urban legend figure Slender Man, whose popularity as an internet sensation had grown on creepypasta.com and other similar sites devoted to horror in recent years.*



Outside town, the children leave the road for woods. Wander into bloody clearings, our hair tangling the branches of 200-year-old spruce. Our laps grown filthy from picnics of granola bars and green apples. The dappled light just enough to see flies gathering on the potato salad. How we lifted it from the fridge just this morning, the door covered with drawings of cats and magic eight balls. Such things must be eaten fast, and with gusto. What we thought was girlhood, just another kind of violence. What we thought violence, another summer morning crisp as a laundered sheet. Who expects death when our houses hug the streets at dawn, when we yawn and stretch into the great midwesternness.

At night, the fathers fall the trees. Fall from the openings between dreams. Open their mouths and try to eat everything not screwed shut. Even the daughters made of marzipan and starlight. The rope of a man's arms too loose to hold the girls who spill down the drainpipe, wiping their red mouths on the back of their sleeves. The backpacks filled with kitchen knives and ketchup packets. The fathers line up to catch each child thrown into the air, but they fall, soft thudded, to the ground.



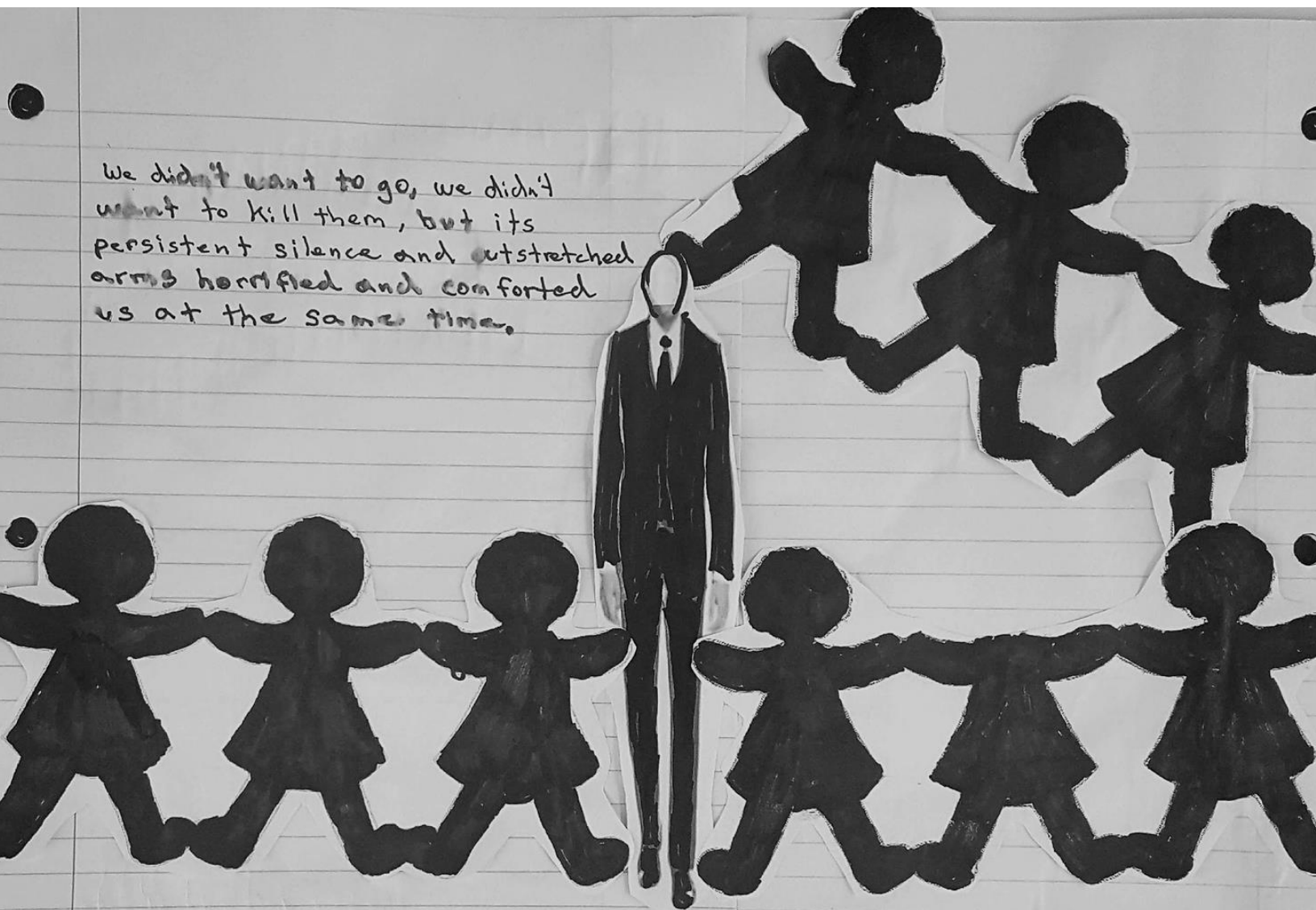


Morning comes and we pack ourselves tight to our mission. Listen for signs in the pipes, the cores of ripe apples. People think the devil is in the details, but the devil is in the clothes dryer, the spin of a red sock seeping into whites. How we bleed through our sheets again and again. The familiarity of our bodies, the worst sort of weapon, zipped tight in borrowed sleeping bags. So much blood, and who can blame us for wanting more? That silver lip of the horizon where we' shed the body like silk? Emerge glistening and sexless as angels. Who can blame us for such shining?



True, some of us will not make it. Adolescence a tangled patch of bloody nettles. A kettle drum split by scissors in the band room. The girl in Madison just last week drowned in a swimming pool. Another slicing her wrist in a middle school bathroom. Innocence the price of all transactions, paid for in lumps of soft, fatted flesh. If enough of us believe it, it becomes solid. Corporeal, stalking the grassy spaces outside our windows while we sleep. Keeping company with the wraiths that live beneath the beds of every girl old enough to know the deal is rotten. Besotted with locketts and dark longings. She was a ringer for another girl, another mother's distant stare. A bringer of baked goods and swimming through milk. Even her cries sugary and slightly sour, as if spilled and traveling over long distances.

We didn't want to go, we didn't  
want to kill them, but its  
persistent silence and outstretched  
arms horrified and comforted  
us at the same time.



We open our mouth and the murder falls out. The plot to Saturday morning slaughter as precise as a line of teeth set into the skin of our arms. How we bit each other until we bled, cried *sisters! Daughters to the dark woods!* In the park, spun the merry-go-round until we were dizzy as bees, drunk on honey and springtime disaster. The faster the girl runs, the more she blurs into landscape. The more she blurs into landscape, the more she becomes prey. Pink jacketed and crying. *Just lie down, and it will stop. Just lay down and be quiet.* No telling how much can go wrong for you here, let alone out there. The hazards of broken retainers and busted zippers. The peril of heartbreak and hair ties drawn tight around wrists. Our notebooks filled with clouds and hearts and knives.



By May, we fear nothing. Only the itch inside us.

The hitch of our hips as we move through shopping malls and hallways. The witches that live in our hair, our shared allegiance. At the last sleepover, we tried to lift her from the floor, but she was too heavy. So this time, we're using a knife. A private language of nail polish colors and cryptic sighs. Hate is very close to love, and love, very close to desperation. So we lure her into the woods like a kitten, a trail of donuts on the ground, our hands dusted with sugar. Pure love when we stick her again and again. Pure hate in the withdraw.



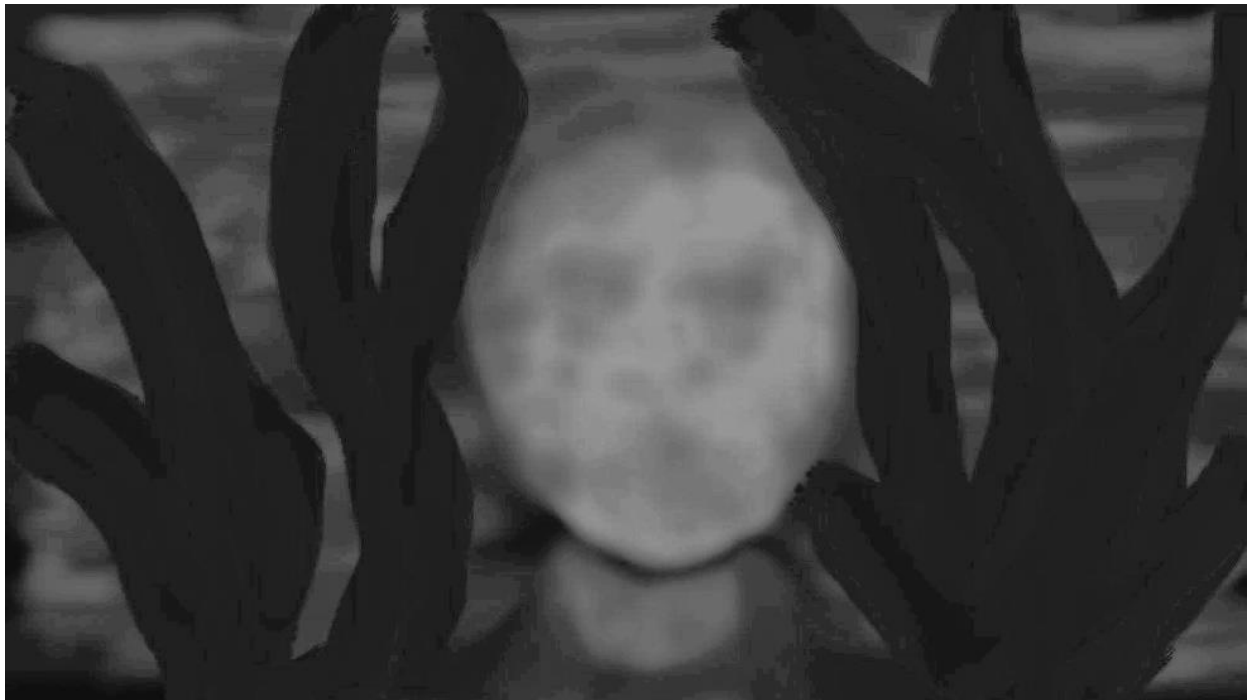
If the internet says it, it must be true. The thin blue light of the screen bathing us as we sleep. Harboring dark and wicked things. But no worse than our hearts. *The stabby, stab, stab.* The roulette of loves me, loves me not. It was hotter than it should be. So hot we removed our jackets and got blood on our shirts. It was later than it should be, so we hurried. The internet said it might take days to reach the forest. Days until they found the body. Days before anyone even noticed we were gone.





Up north, the sun can't even penetrate the trees to touch the ground. It's always night, or something like it, the mansion's windows glossed with dew and lined with moss. It's hard to be both pretty and terrifying at the same time, but we try endlessly. Even the forest tries, winds its vines around our legs. Invents us as killers, drops us into stories. One girl's tale, another girl's familiar nodding. The men who took to prodding us with their hands and worse. Slapped us when we wouldn't listen. Their fists hard against our stomachs. And here, this father that demands nothing but love, but that we burn bright and beautiful as sticks.

Never underestimate a teenage girl. We've killed more demons than you can count. Stuffed them in closets and bottom drawers. Dragged their bodies across the parking lot of the Pick N Save. Bled out in the aisles. Even our dying is quiet and orderly. Ordinary, you would think, except for all the leftover carnage. The girl covered in blood beside the road more common than you'd imagine. What is left after everyone has left the party, amongst the strewn solo cups and sticky streamers. What recourse for our bodies broken, floating in the quarry, but our own wicked ends?



In Walmart, we wipe the red from our hands, brush the sticks from our hair. All the aisles gleam and stretch, wind their way through housewares and hunting rifles. The blunt objects of our bodies moving between tampons and toothpaste in the personal care section. Our reflections in the bathroom mirror blurry and determined by distance from mothers, even now, just beginning to miss us. To ponder the rivers and ditches of our demise. By mid-afternoon, we've climbed the stretch of ramp to the highway, buried our bloody clothes at the bottoms of our bags. Burned everything we never needed, yet nonetheless carried.



By May, we've cut our way into more birthday cakes than we can eat. Every weekend, another girl falls asleep and wakes up, eyeshadowed, and fully formed like a doll in the factory, freshly pressed. We dress her quickly in the dark of morning bedrooms. Stuff her cries back into the tiny purse of her throat. Feed her soggy salad in the cafeteria and still she shakes. How many cakes does it take to undo us?. How many slices to gain 5 lbs?. How many until our bones grow sweet with frosting? Til all the houses go soft with sugar?

Something stalks us from the trees, walks the perimeters of dreams, slick with pine sap and black. We stack chairs against our windows and climb down to the river, shiver in the damp air, where we build rings of foxglove and ferns, burn them with matches lifted from the kitchen drawers at dawn. Each of us, our own killer. How we cut the girl from the cocoon again and again, stood her up, and tried to make her speak. The shadow that moved in the woods our own humming hearts. The father that gathers us carefully at his knee.



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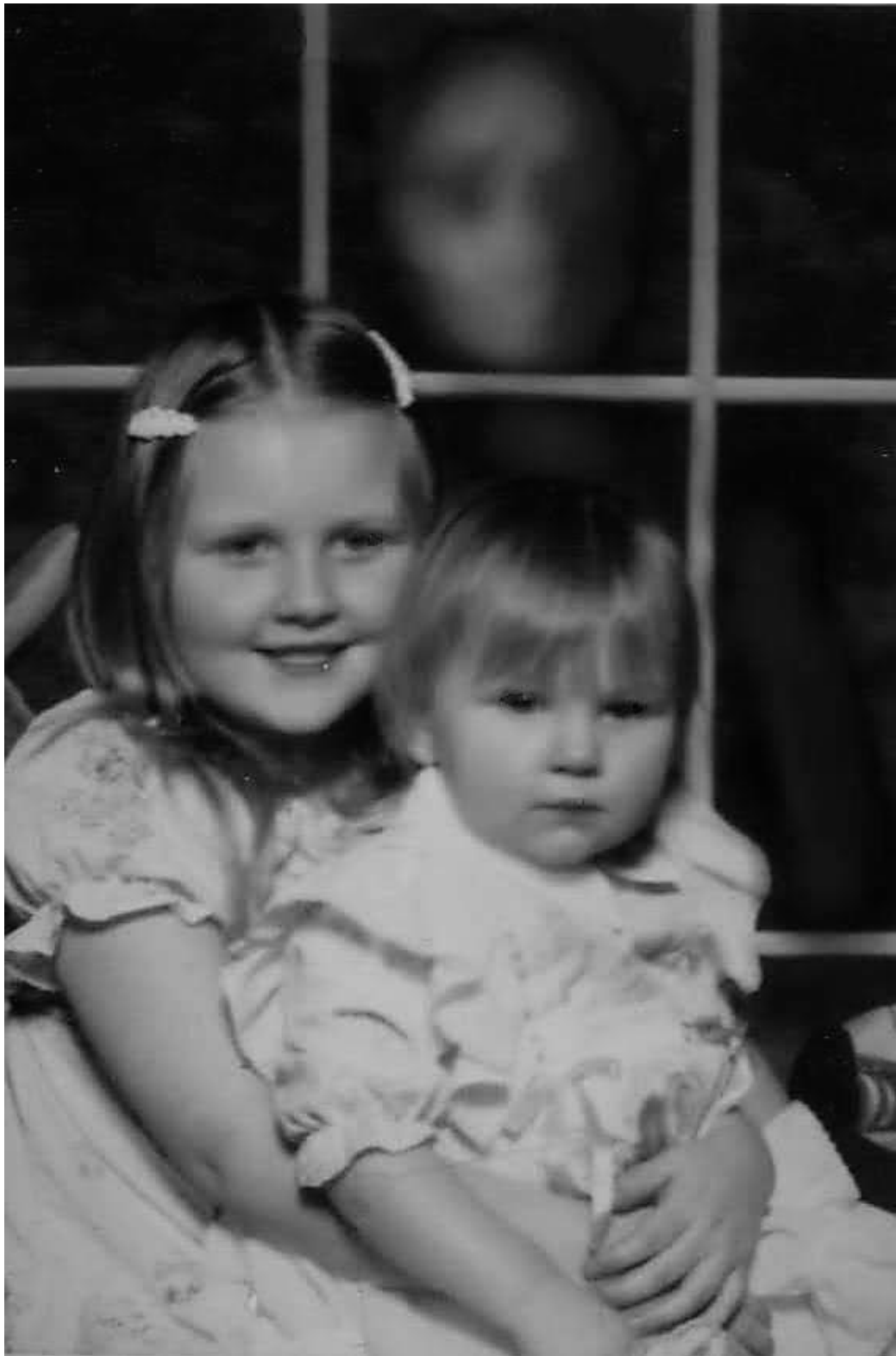
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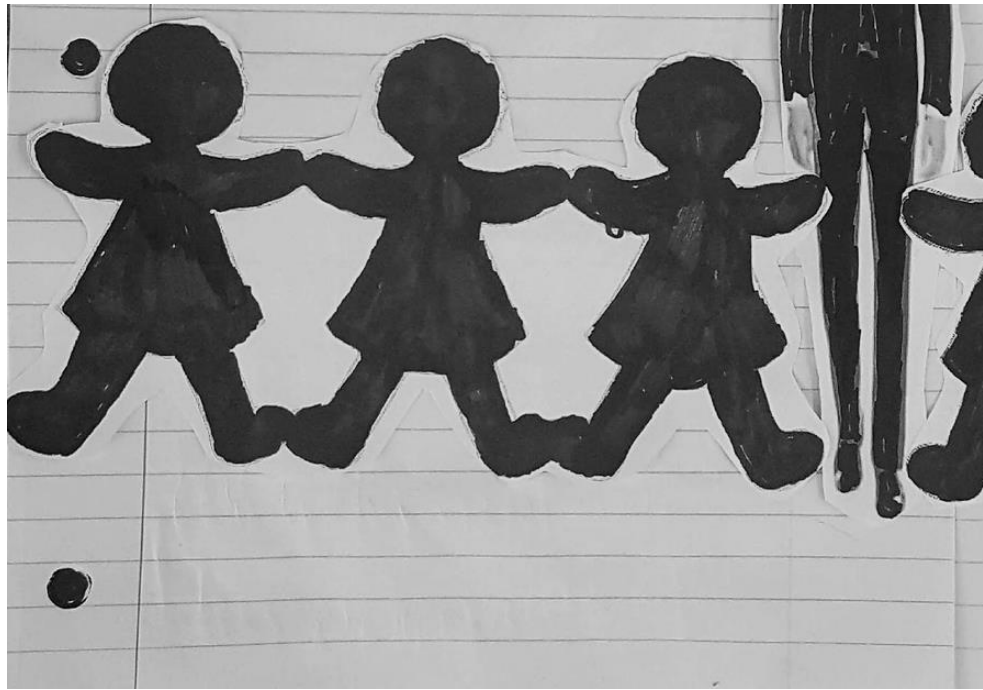
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