

Miss Dolly

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*'We begin with breaking news. 15-year-old Mia Donaldson was reported missing in Sydney's west at around 3:30pm yesterday afternoon. This morning, police came across her body in Cumberland State forest and they believe this is a suspicious death. Anyone with information is urged to call police immediately.'*

'Another murder,' Dad called from the kitchen. 'This is the fifth one in two weeks!' The deaths of these teenagers are all every news show has been reporting. I sat on my sofa and flicked the channel to friends. I could watch friends for hours but today all I could was think about was the deaths. Mia, just like Marcus and Jemma—two other victims—had gone to my school. She was a great student, but she didn't speak to many people. Why would anyone want to kill her?

At this thought, the doorbell rang. I got up and opened it to see Logan standing on the front porch. Logan and I have been best friends for 17 years. Since we were in nappies. He has no other friends; he's been bullied all through high school. He has me though. We're basically siblings.

'Hey Logan,' I said, as I stepped out of my house.

'Did you hear about Mia?' he asked as we walked down the street.

'Yeah, why would someone kill her? She didn't even talk to anyone.'

'Exactly,' he replied.

'Something is definitely up. I mean three of the five deaths have been from our school. That can't just be a coincidence. They've got to be linked some way or another.'

'Detective Riley is on the case. First it was the missing eraser and now the death of Mia Donaldson.' Logan looked at me laughing. He knew better than anyone that once I found out about something, I had to get to the bottom of it, no matter how long it might take.

'Ha. Very funny,' I said with a smirk. 'I've got to be home for dinner, so I'll see you at school.' With that I made my way back home.

Except I didn't see him the following day. All day I was by myself. He had some explaining to do. I got home and went to the phone. I had three voice mails, all from Logan's mum, Alyssa. I rang her back, hoping Logan would answer. 'Hello,' it was Alyssa. She sounded distraught.

'Hi Alyssa, how are you?' I asked.

She began sobbing down the line.

'What's wrong?'

There was still no answer from the other end of the phone.

Finally, she said, 'Piper, Logan's dead.'

My jaw dropped as I sat up in bed. *Dead.* No this couldn't be happening. Droplets began running down my cheek. 'How could this have happened?' I said in between jagged breaths.

‘They found him lying two blocks away from where Mia was found with stab wounds in his chest. They haven’t released too many details yet, but the detective, Rob, said that it was in a grassy area in the middle of dense trees to try and hide the crime from others.’

‘Can I come over please?’

‘Of course, Piper.’

I jumped on my bike and rode as fast as I could to Logan’s house. When I got there, Alyssa let me in and made me some tea. My hands shook as I reached for the cup and placed it to my lips. A knock on the door disturbed the silence.

As Alyssa left the kitchen, I saw a crumpled-up letter on the bench that read ‘The Chosen ones.’ I walked over and only got a glance of the first four names listed before she came back with two police officers who politely asked me to leave. I began my ride home and couldn’t stop thinking about the names. Riley was at the top with leader in brackets while Marcus, Jemma and Mia were only some of the names listed below. I stopped as I approached the crime scene left from Logan’s murder. The police were gone and so was the body, the forest was already sprinkled with flowers and teddy bears. Someone had even left a hand sewn doll. *So sweet of people to be caring about him now he is dead. What about when he was alive?*

Back home Mum and Dad were on the couch. When I walked through the door, they both came and hugged me so tight I couldn’t breathe. ‘You’re going to be okay, sweetie.’

I don’t know how—Logan was all I had. ‘Really?’

‘I know at the moment this is a sad situation, but just think of all the memories you have had with him.’ At this moment I remembered the time we snuck out to ride our bike to the park and he broke his arm on the flying fox and the day we went to the zoo in year 3 and he got so scared of the baboons that he peed himself. I laughed at these thoughts and became even more determined to find out what happened to him, not just for me, but for the memory of him.

*‘In Sydney’s west this morning, a boy by the name of Ryan has been found dead in a field about 2 blocks away from the crime scene of Logan...’*

I turned the TV off. I wasn’t in the mood to hear about more innocent people dying—losing Logan was bad enough. But two blocks away from his death? That was only a block away from my house. There had to be something there that could help me solve Logan’s death. The murders had to be linked. I raced down to the new crime scene in search of something, anything, that would help me get to the bottom of Logan’s death. I saw the police tap and began searching, the long grass itching my legs as I paced back and forth scanning the floor.

All I saw was some flowers and a doll. *A doll, Just like Logan’s.*

I was onto something; I could feel it. I took a closer look at this doll—it looked just like the victim I’d seen on TV. *That’s weird.* I then went to Logan’s scene and saw the doll sitting there. It looked just like him, too! His doll had a note pinned to its arm that read “The Chosen Ones”. The other crime scenes all had dolls just like his. I raced as fast as I could to the police station to tell them what I had found. As I stepped through the police station a shiver went down my spine. I walked to the lady behind the counter and asked to speak to detective Rob who sat back down on the chairs that reminded me of hospital waiting rooms.

They were itchy and I couldn't stop moving when Rob came out after ten minutes of waiting. He walked me down a long narrow corridor before veering left about three-quarters of the way down. The room was small with only a desk and 2 chairs. *The interrogation room.* As soon as I sat down, he asked why I had come. 'I was at the crime scene of Logan...'

'And what were you doing there?' a concerned look briefly crossed his face.

I was looking for clues. He was my best friend and I wanted to figure out what happened to him.'

'Continue.'

'I walked to the grass area in the middle of the forest like the news reporter had said and found a doll that looked just like him. They were at all the other scenes, too.'

'Piper, you're a clever girl, but I don't recommend nosing around in circumstances like these. You never know what might happen if someone found out you were on to them.'

'Sorry Detective, but Logan was my best friend and all I want is answers, don't you?' I smiled. If he had information there was no way it was getting past me.

He sighed and pulled out two lists. 'This is a list of people who have already died.' He then picked up the other list, one I recognised quite clearly.

'That was the note I saw on Logan's kitchen bench the day he died.'

The detective's eyes lit up. 'Almost all the people listed are dead, Piper. Do you know who's in charge of this group?' he asked.

'Riley Parker, she goes to my school.'

'We think she may be behind the deaths, but what we want to know is why. Would you have any idea?'

I thought for a moment. Nothing stood out to me. 'I don't have a clue, sorry officer.'

He looked at me then said, 'You can't repeat anything you have just found out, okay. We don't want her knowing she is a suspect just yet.'

'Yeah, of course,' I replied.

'Thank you for your help, Piper.' He led me back out of the station and waved me on my way. What he didn't know was that I wasn't done just yet. I was going to get down to the bottom of this no matter how long it took.

All day I looked out for Riley at school but had no luck. It wasn't until the end of the day that I saw her at her locker. I grabbed my bag and followed her to her house. I waited, and waited, and waited until she had left her house before making a dash to the back window. There had to be something in here that would tie her to the string of deaths. I searched everywhere—her laundry, bathrooms, dining area, even her kitchen. There was nothing. I then entered her bedroom. I checked under the bed and behind her curtains and finally inside her wardrobe. That's when I saw them. Dolls. Just like the ones at every murder site. There was only a set of twins left pushed up in the back corner. I looked at the dolls wondering where I had seen them before. Then it dawned on me. The dolls were replicas of my twin neighbours...and they were next.