

# *The Paintbrush*

Hurried footsteps. Silence. Darkness.

The Paintbrush has never felt loneliness. It won't. It *can't*. But the children have all left. Shadows rule the empty school halls. And the Paintbrush feels loneliness to its very core. The dark world fades to a blur around it, and it waits, for the day to arrive.

The sunlight soon comes. It rises above the horizon, and streaming through the stained glass windows, it bathes the school in reds and blues, rousing it from its slumber, and children stream through its wide gates. The Paintbrush sits atop a shelf in the cluttered Art room. Paint is strewn across the floor, and the Paintbrush remembers the echoes of children's laughter that once filled the wide room. It sees and hears all in the cluttered room, but, though it watches on, cannot join the fray.

Students stream through the classroom door. They clump together like paint. The reds, the greens, the blues. All in perfect harmony. All except one. He stands out, all alone in the crowded classroom. Tears stream down his cheeks. He couldn't be older than five, and yet, there he was, experiencing pure misery, and not a sound escaping from his lips.

Ms. Connors, the art teacher, sees him. She runs towards the devastated child.

The other students see him. A hush falls upon the room.

Ms. Connors has reached the child. She comforts him, asking what's wrong. Her words drag him out of his misery. He barely stands, gulping in the fresh air like it's his only consolation. He strangles out a few whispered words, and the class leans in closer. "My Mother... sick... hospital." He bursts into silent sobbing.

The students lean even closer. They are all on their tiptoes in their desperation to be a part of the new drama.

One girl near the front falls forward onto her knees. She looks up, panic stricken all over her freckled face. She quickly scrambles upright but Ms. Connors still shoots the class a dirty look. She leads the boy to a quiet corner of the room.

The students look towards Mrs. Connors, worried about the sad boy, an opposite picture of the energetic younglings that had streamed into the classroom at the last bell.

The Paintbrush watches the students through the stained glass window.

The Paintbrush watches the boy and his teacher through the coloured glass.

The Paintbrush is alone.

It wants to help the boy. But the Paintbrush does not know how. *Yet*, it thinks. So the Paintbrush watches. And the Paintbrush thinks.

The boy leaves the art room. Ms. Connors watches him go. The others file out behind him, heads down. Then another enters. She is short, and wears flowery patterns that look like they are made from an old antique couch.

The teachers talk. They talk about many things. But the paintbrush hears one thing;

"Did you hear about that new girl? She's been here for 6 weeks and she hasn't made a single friend. Tragic, huh?"

"I suppose so."

The Paintbrush listens.

The Paintbrush remembers.

Today the children will be painting. The paintbrush is excited. It hopes the boy, or the girl will pick it to paint with. Ms. Connors hands out crusty paintbrushes to the children. The boy picks up the Paintbrush. A tear slithers down his face.

The Paintbrush and the boy sit at desk 1.

The girl sits next to him.

"You at desk 1, come pick your paint first." Calls Ms. Connors.

The boy leaves.

The Paintbrush wants to do something, *anything*.

So it rolls. It rolls with all its strength onto the girl's desk, and stops, exhausted.

The girl looks at the boy, who has returned to his desk.

"Is this your paintbrush?"

"Yes!"

The sun breaks on both of their faces. "Do you want to be friends?" They both ask, simultaneously. Their grins doubled, and they both happily walked out of the classroom to the sound of the lunch bell.

The Paintbrush lay on the desk, exhausted, but content for the first time in its life. It closed its eyes and lay to rest.

As it did, its mind filled with visions; the boy's mother, healthy, the girl and boy, happy and finally with a friend.

The Paintbrush had tried. It closed its eyes and lay back, contented and filled with peace.