

Summary: Told from the viewpoint of high school senior Lexi, not your typical girl. Smart, boyish, a good mechanic, ~~and discovering~~ discovers she ~~has~~ possesses a dangerous power.

I know it's coming when I spot the gang of turkeys in the field across the road. Birds always show up first. Doors slam inside the house, rattling windows and bisecting angry voices. The Dick is packing and Mom is crying, so I keep my brothers outside. They don't need to hear that crap.

"Lexi, will you draw me a truck?" Ben says, holding out a green stub of chalk.

I take the chalk and kneel on warm tar, stroking out lines as the light changes. No clouds block the sun, but my world darkens by the minute. Negative energy does that to me, and the Dick is a garbage truck of negative energy. Sure he's a good-looking lawyer, but his personality sucks.

Comment [s1]: good

In the field, the turkeys yelp and flap into a tighter circle.

Ben rubs my hair as I draw, something he likes to do since I dyed it indigo and shaved it into a Mohawk. Mom isn't crazy about it, but the best part is Dick totally hates it.

"What the hell have you done, Alexis?" he said when I came down to dinner that night.

"You look like a freak. How do you expect to amount to anything but a grease-monkey?"

Mom gasped, and Ben and Brody just about wet themselves laughing.

Mom's husband's real name is Douglas which, in a sick twist of fate, happens to be the name of my absolute favorite actor—the gorgeous and talented Douglas Spain. I can't call the

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step Douglas, so I gave him a nickname. Dick fits him much better. And I know I'm different from, like, ninety percent of the girls in my high school. I'm tall and bony with no boobs. My two best friends are guys. I wear black tees and holey jeans and Converse. I work on engines, and I'm the smartest one in my AP Anatomy class. My grandmother used to tell me to be myself and good people would see how great I am. God, I really loved her. But I don't think the Dick can see the good in anyone who isn't like him: slayer of the lowly malpractice accuser; slicer of a nine iron in an Armani suit.

"Is Dad leaving again?" Brody says, sitting next to me. His shorts reveal legs covered with scabs and bug bites from playing in the tree fort I made, a place the twins escape to whenever I'm not around to be Dick's verbal punching bag.

"He's not our dad." I glance up at the house. The windows reflect black and gray images like a photo negative. "A dad doesn't put down his wife because she wants to paint for a living instead of selling insurance. A dad doesn't swear at five-year-olds or run over toys on purpose because he's late for golf. A dad doesn't call his stepdaughter a dy—," I catch myself, "a bad name because she plays the guitar and looks different. A real dad loves his wife and kids, no matter what."

Ben nods, but Brody's eyebrows go up. "Where did our dad go?"

"Afghanistan," I say, wiping green dust on my Metallica shirt.

"When's he coming home?"

The word sticks in my throat, a painful nugget. "Never."

"I don't remember him," Ben says.

"He left when you guys were babies," I say. "He's a hero. He loved us. Remember that."

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Brody frowns. The murky light colors his sun-drenched face ash. In the field, turkeys creep toward the road. A few break from the stand of pines lining the field, keekee-ing in panicked staccato, charging the gang. Mother hens cluck at their errant young.

It took me a while to figure things out. The day Grandma died, I didn't recognize the signs. The birds, the changing light, the smells. When Dad died in an ambush half a world away, a huge flock of mourning doves gathered in the tree outside my English class. The room went red, and a slick coppery stench flooded my lungs. I smelled his aftershave, dropped to my knees, and puked. The nurse sent me home. The flu, she said, but I was so freaked I couldn't talk, couldn't tell Mom what I knew had happened. She found out the next day. Two National Guardsmen caught her when her legs buckled on our doorstep.

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birds

I look at my drawing, a logging truck filled with huge tree trunks defying gravity, like the trucks that zoom by our house every day.

Voices pierce the air. "I'm sick of it, Holly," the Dick says. "I would've made partner if wasn't for you and those kids suffocating me!"

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Mom follows him into the garage, pleading, and he barks his stupid, self-absorbed motto:
"I'm looking out for number one." I hate him.

The pungent stink of rotting apples descends. When the garage door rolls up, I hurry the boys through the mudroom door. Mom stands there crying.

"Take them to the den and stay there," I say. "Don't let them out of your sight."

Her eyes go like saucers. She kicks the door ~~shut on her way in from the garage to the garage closed and obeys.~~

I return to the driveway and watch the Dick back his Mercedes out ~~and turn it around.~~

Comment [s2]: Implied

The unrelenting stench reminds me of Candie Sparks. She bullied me for over a year, crapping ~~en-about~~ me all over Facebook. One day, I left my guitar in anatomy class. When I went back for it, it was smeared with frog guts from the dissection we'd just done. I was heading to work—mad as hell after cleaning entrails off my Jim Dandy Flat Top, the formaldehyde leaving pitted scars in the black finish—and I pulled into Flo's to grab a soda. The roof of the place was crowded with crows, which should've been a hint, but I was eager for the smell of pizza instead of pickling chemicals. Candie sat at a table with her friends, cawing at me. As I paid for my drink, I heard her say the anchovies on her pizza smelled a lot better than frog guts.

I agree with expanding this a bit.

"Choke on it," I muttered and ran for my car, shaking. The sky turned the color of mud, and the reek of fish descended. I sat gripping my steering wheel, and soon the siren calls of emergency vehicles echoed down the corridor of Route Nine. An ambulance screamed around the bend and into the parking lot.

Holy crap. Did I do that? I wondered, not waiting around to find out what happened. I sped out of there and cranked some Seether to break free of the negative energy. Later it was all

YOUNG ADULT SHORT STORY BY CATHRYN BONICA

over Facebook, how Candie choked on pizza and passed out in a puddle of piss. People tried CPR, but the EMTs had to stick a tube down her trachea to save her.

She came back to school last week. I doubt she'll bully anyone now. The EMT accidentally damaged her voice box. She talks like a bullfrog with laryngitis.

I looked it up, what a flock of crows is called.

A murder.

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The Dick's window is down. He's talking at me, but I haven't heard a word. Turkeys take flight, struggling to lift off, giant wings beating the air. Their cackles echo across the field.

Dick's face turns black. I've never seen this sign. I hesitate, then open my mouth to warn him, but he says, "Alexis, forget the stupid rock-star-wanna-be shit. You have a better chance of sprouting a penis than getting a scholarship for music school. You'll end up fixing cars for a living and won't catch a husband with that butch look. Then where will you be?" Without waiting for me to respond, he rockets the Mercedes out of the drive and across the center line, not bothering to look both ways, nearly getting T-boned by an approaching SUV blaring a horn.

Incredible. He dodged it. What kind of divine justice is this?

The turkeys cackle to a landing on the soft shoulder up the road thirty yards away, flitting and pecking at the ground.

"Douglas," I say.

As if responding to my voice, the gang darts across the road in front of the accelerating Mercedes, putting and yelping.

Loved this. Great voice. You put me right into the story. Love That The character is a mechanic, cares about her brothers, and the supernatural element.

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Cathryn-

You certainly have a complicated main character here. It's always convenient to have a dysfunctional family to create tension. You've done a very good job portraying the Dick. There's nothing at all to garner any sympathy for him from either the other characters in the story or from the reader. We're rooting for his end. I wonder if that happened too easily and too soon. Of course, I don't know where this story is going, but if you kill off an important character early, where do you go from there. Usually, you have to wait for a kind of vengeance from the main character on a bad guy. It's up to you to find another scene to raise the stakes, which means there has to be more suffering to justify the ends..

Again, as I read in the first five pages, it seems that Lexi's power is only to the negative. First mentioned is a premonition of death for her father. And then there's the vengeance angle in the bully and the crummy step-dad. Both are fine. Is there more to her power or will it be a repeat of these two venges that are seemingly out of Lexi's control?

You've presented an enormous number of situations that include a sort of conclusion – revenge.

Where do you go from here without repeating the same message? That's where your creativity and writing chops come in.

Good luck with this worthy story.

Dave

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Ben rubs my hair as I draw, something he likes to do since I dyed it indigo and shaved it into a Mohawk. Mom isn't crazy about it, but the best part is *(the)* Dick totally hates it. "What the hell have you done, Alexis?" he *'d* said when I *'d come* came down to dinner that night. "You look like a freak. How do you expect to amount to anything but a grease-monkey?"

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Mom's husband's real name is Douglas which, in a sick twist of fate, happens to be the name of my absolute favorite actor—the gorgeous and talented Douglas Spain. I can't call *(him)* the step Douglas, so I gave him a nickname. *The* Dick fits him much better. *(New paragraph)* And I know I'm different from, like, ninety percent of the girls in my high school. I'm tall and bony with no boobs. My two best friends are guys. I wear black tees and holey jeans and Converse. I work on engines, and I'm the smartest one in my AP Anatomy class. My grandmother used to tell me to be myself and good people would see how great I am. God, I really loved her. But I don't think the Dick can see the good in anyone who isn't like him: slayer of the lowly malpractice accuser; slicer of a nine iron in an Armani suit.

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perched along the fence at the horse farm. The sun was high, but the whole sky turned pink as sunset and the smell of chlorine made me gag so hard I nearly drove off the road. *(New paragraph)* I was wrist-deep in a carburetor when I got the text. My good friend Julia Frost was dead. Freak accident during diving practice. No blood relations there.

I look at my drawing, a logging truck filled with huge tree trunks defying gravity, like the trucks that zoom by our house every day. *(Is this the drawing Ben asks that she draw? A little connection would help here)*

Voices pierce the air. *(When? Is this the result of the visions? Or is this a flashback?)* “I’m sick of it, Holly,” the Dick says. “I would’ve made partner if wasn’t for you and those kids suffocating me!” Mom follows him into the garage, pleading, and he barks his stupid, self-absorbed motto: “I’m looking out for number one.” I hate him.

The pungent stink of rotting apples descends. When the garage door rolls up, I hurry the boys through the mudroom door. Mom stands there crying. “Take them to the den and stay there,” I say *(to Mom? Mom says it to Lexi? Needs clarification. You have a lot going on here. The reader needs help to follow.)*. “Don’t let them out of your sight.”

Her eyes go like saucers. She kicks the door to the garage closed and obeys.

I return to the driveway and watch the Dick back his Mercedes out and turn it around. The unrelenting stench reminds me of Candie Sparks. She bullied me for over a year, crapping on me all over Facebook. One day, I left my guitar in anatomy class. When I went back for it, it was smeared with frog guts from the dissection we’d just done. I was heading to work—mad as hell after cleaning entrails off my Jim Dandy Flat Top, the formaldehyde leaving pitted scars in the black finish—and I pulled into Flo’s to grab a soda. The roof of the place was crowded with crows, which should’ve been a hint, but I was eager for the smell of pizza instead of pickling

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She came back to school last week. I doubt she'll bully anyone now. The EMT accidentally damaged her voice box. She talks like a bullfrog with laryngitis.

I looked it up, what a flock of crows is called. *(you already used the term earlier. This explanation needs to come out earlier.)*

A murder.

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Julie

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Good start.
Dick intrigued.

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segue

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Ben nods, but Brody's eyebrows go up. "Where did our dad go?"

"Afghanistan," I say, wiping green dust on my Metallica shirt.

"When's he coming home?"

The word sticks in my throat, a painful nugget. "Never."

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JULIE

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Why?
now?

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Hmm!

INTERESTING PREMISE.

GOOD BIRD IMAGES.

REMINDS ME A BIT OF HITCHCOCK'S "THE BIRDS".

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↳ could be a novel beginning. please!

Ed

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- I really like this!

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- we get such a sense of her without you telling us. ya

Show her so well.

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- this could be a novel beginning.

- I feel fatherly toward her: it will be all right!

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YOUNG ADULT SHORT STORY BY CATHRYN BONICA

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It took me a while to figure things out. The day Grandma died, I didn't recognize the signs. The birds, the changing light, the smells. When Dad died in an ambush half a world away, a huge flock of mourning doves gathered in the tree outside my English class. The room went red, and a slick coppery stench flooded my lungs. I smelled his aftershave, dropped to my knees, and puked. The nurse sent me home. The flu, she said, but I was so freaked I couldn't talk, couldn't tell Mom what I knew had happened. She found out the next day. Two National Guardsmen caught her when her legs buckled on our doorstep. ✓

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I look at my drawing, a logging truck filled with huge tree trunks defying gravity, like the trucks that zoom by our house every day.

Voices pierce the air. "I'm sick of it, Holly," the Dick says. "I would've made partner if wasn't for you and those kids suffocating me!" Mom follows him into the garage, pleading, and he barks his stupid, self-absorbed motto: "I'm looking out for number one." I hate him.

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Her eyes go like saucers. She kicks the door to the garage closed and obeys.

I return to the driveway and watch the Dick back his Mercedes out and turn it around.

The unrelenting stench reminds me of Candie Sparks. She bullied me for over a year, crapping on me all over Facebook. One day, I left my guitar in anatomy class. When I went back for it, it was smeared with frog guts from the dissection we'd just done. I was heading to work—mad as hell after cleaning entrails off my Jim Dandy Flat Top, the formaldehyde leaving pitted scars in the black finish—and I pulled into Flo's to grab a soda. The roof of the place was crowded with crows, which should've been a hint, but I was eager for the smell of pizza instead of pickling chemicals. Candie sat at a table with her friends, cawing at me. As I paid for my drink, I heard her say the anchovies on her pizza smelled a lot better than frog guts.

"Choke on it," I muttered and ran for my car, shaking. The sky turned the color of mud, and the reek of fish descended. I sat gripping my steering wheel, and soon the siren calls of emergency vehicles echoed down the corridor of Route Nine. An ambulance screamed around the bend and into the parking lot.

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She came back to school last week. I doubt she'll bully anyone now. The EMT accidentally damaged her voice box. She talks like a bullfrog with laryngitis.

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I looked it up, what a flock of crows is called.

A murder.

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Dick's face turns black. I've never seen this sign. I hesitate, then open my mouth to warn him, but he says, "Alexis, forget the stupid rock-star-wanna-be shit. You have a better chance of sprouting a penis than getting a scholarship for music school. You'll end up fixing cars for a living and won't catch a husband with that butch look. Then where will you be?" Without waiting for me to respond he rockets the Mercedes out of the drive and across the center line, not bothering to look both ways, nearly getting T-boned by an approaching SUV blaring a horn.

Incredible. He dodged it. What kind of divine justice is this?

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Cathryn-

You certainly have a complicated main character here. It's always convenient to have a dysfunctional family to create tension. You've done a very good job portraying the Dick. There's nothing at all to garner any sympathy for him from either the other characters in the story or from the reader. We're rooting for his end. I wonder if that happened too easily and too soon. Of course, I don't know where this story is going, but if you kill off an important character early, where do you go from there. Usually, you have to wait for a kind of vengeance from the main character on a bad guy. It's up to you to find another scene to raise the stakes, which means there has to be more suffering to justify the ends..

Again, as I read in the first five pages, it seems that Lexi's power is only to the negative. First mentioned is a premonition of death for her father. And then there's the vengeance angle in the bully and the crummy step-dad. Both are fine. Is there more to her power or will it be a repeat of these two venges that are seemingly out of Lexi's control?

You've presented an enormous number of situations that include a sort of conclusion – revenge.

Where do you go from here without repeating the same message? That's where your creativity and writing chops come in.

Good luck with this worthy story.

Dave

*Most of the
important parts
are flash back
turn this into
a novel. Develop the
motivation*

Summary: Told from the viewpoint of high school senior Lexi, not your typical girl. Smart, boyish, a good mechanic, and discovering she has possesses a dangerous power.

I know it's coming when I spot the gang (*might want to define 'gang' here*) of turkeys in the field across the road. Birds always show up first. Doors slam inside the house, rattling windows and bisecting angry voices. The Dick is packing and Mom is crying, so I keep my brothers outside. They don't need to hear that crap.

"Lexi, will you draw me a truck?" Ben says, holding out a green stub of chalk.

I take the chalk and kneel on warm tar, stroking out lines as the light changes. No clouds block the sun, but my world darkens by the minute. Negative energy does that to me, and the

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Dick is a garbage truck (*full of*) of negative energy. Sure he's a good-looking lawyer, but his personality sucks.

In the field, the turkeys yelp and flap into a tighter circle.

Ben rubs my hair as I draw, (*Where are we. You have to establish a setting. The reader needs this.*) something he likes to do since I dyed it indigo and shaved it into a Mohawk. Mom isn't crazy about it, but the best part is (*the*) Dick totally hates it. "What the hell have you done, Alexis?" he *'d* said when I *'d come* came down to dinner that night. "You look like a freak. How do you expect to amount to anything but a grease-monkey?"

Mom gasped, and Ben and Brody just about wet themselves laughing.

Mom's husband's real name is Douglas which, in a sick twist of fate, happens to be the name of my absolute favorite actor—the gorgeous and talented Douglas Spain. I can't call (*him*) the step Douglas, so I gave him a nickname. *The Dick* fits him much better. (*New paragraph*)

And I know I'm different from, like, ninety percent of the girls in my high school. I'm tall and bony with no boobs. (*How old? You mention AP class later. High school?!*) My two best friends are guys. I wear black tees and holey jeans and Converse. I work on engines, and I'm the smartest one in my AP Anatomy class. My grandmother used to tell me to be myself and good people would see how great I am. God, I really loved her. But I don't think the Dick can see the good in anyone who isn't like him: slayer of the lowly malpractice accuser; slicer of a nine iron in an Armani suit.

"Is Dad leaving again?" Brody says, sitting next to me. (*Again, where are we?!*) His shorts reveal legs covered with scabs and bug bites from playing in the tree fort I made, a place the twins escape to whenever I'm not around to be Dick's verbal punching bag.

diversion
fishback

YOUNG ADULT SHORT STORY BY CATHRYN BONICA

STB
"He's not our dad." I glance up at the house. The windows reflect black and gray images like a photo negative. "A dad doesn't put down his wife because she wants to paint for a living instead of selling insurance. A dad doesn't swear at five-year-olds or run over toys on purpose because he's late for golf. A dad doesn't call his stepdaughter a dy—," I catch myself, "a bad name because she plays the guitar and looks different. A real dad loves his wife and kids, no matter what."

Ben nods, but Brody's eyebrows go up. "Where did our dad go?"

"Afghanistan," I say, wiping green dust on my Metallica shirt.

"When's he coming home?"

The word sticks in my throat, a painful nugget. "Never."

"I don't remember him," Ben says.

"He left when you guys were babies," I say. "He's a hero. He loved us. Remember that."

Brody frowns. The murky light colors his sun-drenched face ash. In the field, turkeys creep toward the road. A few break from the stand of pines lining the field, keekee-ing in panicked staccato, charging the gang. Mother hens cluck at their errant young.

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YOUNG ADULT SHORT STORY BY CATHRYN BONICA

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I look at my drawing, a logging truck filled with huge tree trunks defying gravity, like the trucks that zoom by our house every day. (*Is this the drawing Ben asks that she draw? A little connection would help here*)

Voices pierce the air. (*When? Is this the result of the visions? Or is this a flashback?*) "I'm sick of it, Holly," the Dick says. "I would've made partner if wasn't for you and those kids suffocating me!" Mom follows him into the garage, pleading, and he barks his stupid, self-absorbed motto: "I'm looking out for number one." I hate him. (*I had to read the paragraph a couple of times to understand it.*)

The pungent stink of rotting apples descends. When the garage door rolls up, I hurry the boys through the mudroom door. Mom stands there crying. "Take them to the den and stay there," I say (to Mom? Mom says it to Lexi? What just happened here? You're depending too much for the reader to connect the dots. Needs clarification. You have a lot going on here. The reader needs help to follow.). "Don't let them out of your sight."

Her eyes go like saucers. She kicks the door to the garage closed and obeys.

YOUNG ADULT SHORT STORY BY CATHRYN BONICA

I return to the driveway and watch the Dick back his Mercedes out and turn it around. *(Not a flashback? Present time?)* The unrelenting stench reminds me of Candie Sparks. She bullied me for over a year, crapping on me all over Facebook. One day, I left my guitar in anatomy class. When I went back for it, it was smeared with frog guts from the dissection we'd just done. I was heading to work *(You keep mentioning work. Job after school?)*—mad as hell after cleaning entrails off my Jim Dandy Flat Top, the formaldehyde leaving pitted scars in the black finish—and I pulled into Flo's to grab a soda. The roof of the place was crowded with crows, which should've been a hint, but I was eager for the smell of pizza instead of pickling chemicals. Candie sat at a table with her friends, cawing at me. As I paid for my drink, I heard her say the anchovies on her pizza smelled a lot better than frog guts.

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She came back to school last week. I doubt she'll bully anyone now. The EMT accidentally damaged her voice box. She talks like a bullfrog with laryngitis.

I looked it up, what a flock of crows is called. *(you already used the term earlier. This explanation needs to come out earlier.)*

A murder.

YOUNG ADULT SHORT STORY BY CATHRYN BONICA

The Dick's (*car*) window is down. (*When?*) He's talking at me, but I haven't heard a word. Turkeys take flight, struggling to lift off, giant wings beating the air. Their cackles echo across the field.

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(Your story jumps and sputters in different places with no guidance from you. We need to know when and where we are. We need to understand the sequence of things happening. Easy to fix if you want to.

Remember, it's your story. If you like the quick flashes from here to there, fine. It's a style I have trouble with.)

Jenni's Comments

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"You look like a freak. How do you expect to amount to anything but a grease-monkey?"

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Great first line.

YOUNG ADULT SHORT STORY BY CATHRYN BONICA

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Comment [PHS IS1]: good

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*love how you keep
repeating in the
turkeys*

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Comment [PHS 152]: foreshadowing?

Cool!

YOUNG ADULT SHORT STORY BY CATHRYN BONICA

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~~4~~
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Comment [PHS IS3]: Is it still apples?

Comment [PHS IS4]: At first I thought Candie Sparks was an apple-flavored candy. Not a person.

Comment [PHS IS5]: She must have sat there for a long time for the girl to choke, and for someone to call 911 and then for the ambulance to show up.

Comment [PHS IS6]: Maybe she should see Candie choking.

YOUNG ADULT SHORT STORY BY CATHRYN BONICA

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NOTE: Love this! Great start.

Great Voice.

Comment [PHS 157]: Poetic Justice. Nice!

Comment [PHS 158]: Oh no. Don't stop there! What happens???

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