

The Room

MALA

“*Suicide?* In MY ROOM?”

Another sweaty August at the Wenworth School for Girls. But the newbies didn’t know that. Or didn't care. Or didn’t care about sweat. There were so many things to do.

Carrie, of course, had ignored the other first-years during last week’s orientation as they flounced along between club tables, sports tryouts, and parties. And Carrie did care about sweat. Hers and that of others. After all!

Meanwhile, she had been laser-focused on something much more important: HER personal living space. And her effort had paid off most handsomely when she triumphantly moved over the weekend into the newly renovated single room in the VERY BEST dorm.

By Sunday evening, her life had been absolute perfection.

By Wednesday, everything was shattered.

Just who would have the *nerve* to die in her wonderful room?

Or was this just some twisted joke, some rumor spread around by jealous girls who got caught party-napping while ignoring their own personal living arrangements. Tough luck to them.

It started off as whispers and stares in the halls and courtyard, the types of things Carrie had grown accustomed to ignoring. Normally those **stares** pertained to her personal life style. Or her personal style of life. But when girls in her very own dorm had started talking about death, in like, her face, she simply had to go for help. To the only person she could think of.

Violet was the dorm’s “Mum.” Part-time friend cum guardian to the two-dozen or so girls living at Donnelly Hall.

The old lady’s not much. But what’s the choice here?

Now, staring into Violet’s serious watery blue eyes, Carrie could see that the unthinkable had to be thinkable. Violet was just too, too, like, ancient to go along with twisted, mealy-mouth jokes.

The loss of hope manifested itself with a burning flush to Carrie’s cheeks. Tears rimmed her eyes, then took a series of slides down her splotched face.

Things like this just SHOULDN’T happen to me. I’m so very careful when it comes to me.

Violet wheezed out a sigh. Never a moment of peace at Wenworth. Certainly not with the girls. She thanked the Good Lord for having only given her boys. And wondered, for the umpteenth time, if this was the way she wanted to use her spare time.

Violet reached a blue veiny hand out and gave Carrie's bony young shoulder a soft squeeze. Carrie causally shrugged off this intrusion into her personal space as she ran her sleeve about her face.

Violet pursed her lips and tried again.

"Now, now, Carrie, dear. I know this is a shock. Nobody wants to talk about it, but now you need to be told. This will surely be back in the newspapers anyway, now that Annie's family is pursuing their lawsuit."

Carrie shook her head.

"In my room? This girl actually did it in MY room?"

"Yes. It was quite the shock. Who would have guessed? Annie was always so cheerful, so happy, bless her soul."

Carrie's tears started back running down her cheeks.

Why me? Why does it always have to be me?

She'd been blind-sided. For sure. Tricked. Everybody knew. And they stuck her with the room.

Why can't anything in my life be perfect? Just once? Just this once.

Violet disliked situations she couldn't mend. The counseling session, such as it was, was over. What was the point? It was clear the girl was too distraught to talk any sense.

"I know this must be terribly difficult for you, Carrie my dear. Maybe have a little think about things. I'm here for you. My door is always open. You understand that, now don't you."

Carrie gave up a disinterested nod as she rose to leave.

So now what?

Everyone else was at the welcome BBQ. There was NO WAY she was going to show up to that with the truth hanging over her like a storm cloud.

And they knew. They ALL knew. How could they do this to her?

Carrie slowly made her way up the stairs to the Suicide Room.

She stood in her doorway, letting time tick by, imagining the flames. The heat. The smell.

All she could see was the fresh coat of bright eggshell yellow paint on the walls and the gleaming new floors.

She quietly walked in and lay down squarely in the middle of the hard floor. She stared at the pristine, off-white ceiling, and took in some deep breaths. More minutes went by. There was not the slightest hint.

Surreal.

Carrie stared again at the gleamingly bright room, trying to imagine what it had been like: the preparation, the moment with the match, the last clean breath.

It was too much.

She rose and opened a window, letting in the humid, end-of-summer air. The smoke she'd been trying to imagine was fortified by the pungent smell of smoking BBQ meat. She felt sick.

I don't need that smell on top of everything else.

Why had Annie decided to give it all away? And like that?

Carrie paced around her room, thinking, deciding.

Living in a dead girl's suicide spot.

Does it really matter?

Should she care?

Is that really any reason to give up such a perfect room?