

Tracy Li

Age: 14, Grade: 9

School Name: Spain Park High School, Birmingham, AL

Educator: Jessica Quisenberry

Category: Short Story

Bloody Nails

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Gray skies blow on trees, tearing copper leaves from peeling branches. Sirens wail and weave through nearby skyscrapers. Shivering on a park bench, an elderly couple reads beneath layers of scarves. Grinding the concrete and smearing ants across the rough pavement, a woman's leather boot shuffles in tandem with puling. Buried beneath the lady's scratchy sweater, a baby's mouth, open and joined to its small nose, spits and froths as curly brown hair pricks its tongue. Red nails dig into soft cheeks.

The woman stops and eyes the man next to her, "We should give it up for adoption."

Brows knit. Dan pivots to her, "What did you say?"

"Well... we can always have more children, and we'll have to spend thousands on cleft surgery if we keep it, so I think it's best if we give it up for adoption." She bites her lip.

"That's our *daughter*, Paula. And when you were pregnant, we promised her that we would *always* be with her. No matter what!"

Paula groans, "Well that was then, and now, I don't want to spend the rest of my youth with debt and a defective child."

"I cannot *believe* you. You are a selfish, heartless person--"

A hand slaps Dan's cheek, sweater grazing and sharp red nails dragging across skin. Dark red oozes down his face. The old couple glances at them, then turn back to their book.

"Yeah? Ok. You're right. I am." Paula sneers, arms swinging to her sides, dropping the baby onto the concrete. The baby's little body bounces and her chubby arms grind the red ground. Dan barrels to his daughter, shoving Paula to the side into a tree. As his hands reach down, a leather boot buries itself into his stomach.

"I HATE YOU I HATE YOU, THAT'S WHAT YOU GET FOR PUSHING ME," Paula kicks and rakes at his hair.

The elderly lady glances up, wrinkled eyes bulging, red lips quivering.

"HEY, WHAT'S GOIN' ON??" an officer sprints towards them.

Paula whips around, gaping at the golden police badge.

"This psychopath *threw* our daughter on the ground--" Dan scoops up the baby.

"-uh *no!* He did it--"

"-and started kicking me--" Dan says.

The officer scowls at Dan, "let her speak."

"What--"

"He-," Paula's sharp nails pierce the air, pointing at Dan, "-shoved me into a tree and threw the baby down- look at the poor thing- and then had the audacity to pick her back up when he saw you coming!"

"You know very well what happened, you *disgusting liar*--"

"-is this true?" The officer peers at the elderly couple staring.

The elderly lady gulps, "w-well I saw the guy push her into that tree."

"-and, I believe what the young lady is saying. I'm sure no mother would *throw* her own baby on the concrete!" The old man shuts the book.

"NO! Paula threw her on the ground-" Dan chokes, clear tears sliding down his cut cheeks.

The officer glares at Dan, metal handcuffs clinking against the golden badge. Paula snatches the baby as she smirks, red nails drilling into her baby's blood-smear arm. Sirens blaring and baby wailing, a copper leaf crunches under leather boots beneath the cold gray sky.

