

## Speed Chat

"Now, are we doing this or not?" she asked. Angela sat on the floor in her room and pulled the laptop closer.

Sammy stared at her feet for a few seconds and then locked eyes with Angela. "I'm nervous."

"Nothing will happen. It's just a video chat. It's not like you're going to die." She placed the laptop on her nightstand and grabbed Sammy's hand to pull her down. "Come on."

"Okay..." Sammy knelt on the floor and crossed her legs, smoothing her hair back. "Let's do this."

Angela clicked on the video chat icon and the screen turned black. Someone on the other side started typing right away.

*Hey, send me nudes.*

"Next," they said in unison. The girls looked at each other and burst out laughing. Sammy pressed the button and another user appeared. A teenage boy was strumming a guitar and singing.

"Hi," Angela said.

He set down his guitar and squinted at the screen.

"How old are you?" he asked.

"Twelve," Sammy said.

He guffawed. "Middle school? You're lame." He snaked his hand out, and the screen went dark.

"What an asshole. He wasn't even that cute," Sammy said.

Angela laughed. "Okay, okay. Let's do one more and then switch rooms." Angela hovered over the button and Sammy nodded in approval.

Heavy metal music blared from the laptop and they both jumped back. A young boy was covered in blood and sitting on his bed holding a knife.

"I'm going to kill myself," he said.

"Whoa," Angela said.

"Why?" Sammy asked at the same time.

The two girls looked at each other and tipped the screen down to block the camera. Angela twirled her finger by her temple and Sammy gawked. "What if he really does it? He's already covered in blood," she said.

"He won't. It's probably a prank," Angela said. She opened the screen again and screamed. His wrists were covered in blood and he smiled.

"I will, and it's not," he said.

"Oh, God." Sammy hid her face with her hands. "Stop!"

"You're crazy," Angela said.

"I know," he said. He dug the knife into his wrist and opened his wound further. Blood pooled on his blue comforter and soaked through his jeans.

"Stop it. Stop it. Stop it," Sammy said.

"Why?" he asked. The boy lifted the knife to his throat and held it there. His eyes were fixated on the camera as his smile widened.

Sammy tried reasoning with him. "This is so messed up. Get a towel and wrap your wrists."

"No." He silently mocked her as he wiped blood all over his face and body.

Sammy scooted back on the floor until her elbow hit the wall. She brought her knees to her chest, and rocked back and forth.

Angela looked at her friend cowered in the corner, then back to the screen. She did this a few times before she nodded her head, pulled the laptop close, and screamed into the microphone.

Sammy jumped and brought her hands to her ears. "What are you doing?" She glanced at the door, expecting Mr. Green to come in at any moment. She remembered his drunken body sprawled-out on the floor downstairs, and slumped back against the wall.

Angela took another breath and screamed with all her might.

Sammy looked at her friend, then the laptop, and back to the screen where the boy was still sitting with the knife to his throat. The blue comforter was drenched in blood, and it dripped onto his floor.

Angela's face was red from screaming and her ears hummed. "God. Where are your parents?"

The boy's grip on the knife loosened. "Oh, so that's what you were doing. They're both dead, so no one's here to stop me. I killed them first."

"Why?" Angela asked.

"I hate them. They were going to send me to military school, because I killed a few animals."

"That's fucked up," Angela said.

"Don't worry. The world will be safe soon. I can feel myself fading."

"Look, just tell me where you live. We can figure this out."

"There's no time."

"Get some towels and wrap your arms. I'll call 911." Angela grabbed her cell phone and pushed a button.

"Stop," he said. His tone made her look up.

He dragged the knife across his throat and blood splattered everywhere.

"Dad. Dad. Dad. Oh my God. Dad!" Angela said.

Sammy screamed and buried her face.

The boy's laugh was strangled and bubbles of blood escaped his mouth. Angela slammed the laptop shut, scrambled to get up, and ran out of the room.