

HAPPY BIRTHDAY ALICE

Written by

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INT. ALICE'S HOME, Tallahassee - EARLY EVENING

AUNT PAT, a demonstrative woman of fifty, demonstrates loading a magazine into a 9 mm handgun. ALICE, a shy and nervous girl of eighteen, jumps at the SOUND of it. MOM, an older version of Alice, stands nervously at a distance.

AUNT PAT
(to Alice)
Got that?

Alice takes a big gulp of Diet Coke. Mom clears the table of birthday cake and gift wrap.

ALICE
There's so much to remember . . .

MOM
Pat, she's going to be late for her first class.

AUNT PAT
Starting college and turning eighteen on the same day! Da-yum, Girl.

Aunt Pat hugs Alice.

AUNT PAT (CONT'D)
I am so proud of you. But, why'd you take a night class, honey?

ALICE
It's the only one I could get in my major.

MOM
Alice, I wish you'd take the car.

ALICE
It'll be easier to park my bike.

Alice hurriedly digs through a drawer and finds a pencil.

MOM
But it'll be dark when you come back.

Alice checks the time on her phone.

ALICE
So sorry I have to rush off.

AUNT PAT
 (to Mom)
 She'll be fine. She'll be armed.

Alice, reminded about the gun, draws a deep breath as she slings the backpack over her shoulder.

AUNT PAT (CONT'D)
 We'll go over everything again tomorrow. Magazine's full -- you have ten shots.

MOM
 Why would she need --

Aunt Pat demonstrates sliding the safety.

AUNT PAT
 -- Safety's on, safety's off, safety's on again. Got it?

ALICE
 Yes, Aunt Pat.

MOM
 Maybe she should wait about --

AUNT PAT
 -- Nonsense!

Aunt Pat places the handgun in Alice's backpack.

AUNT PAT (CONT'D)
 Don't take it out unless you plan to use it. Now scoot! And Happy birthday, Alice!

ALICE
 Thank you, Aunt Pat.

One more swig of Diet Coke, and Alice rushes out of the house.

AUNT PAT
 Damn, but I wish guns on campus had been legal when I was a student. Don't look so worried, honey -- she'll be fine.

INT. FSU BUILDIN HALLWAY - A LITTLE LATER

We see Alice and other students entering through double glass doors into the building. We also see students exiting the hallway into a classroom.

INT. UNIVERSITY CLASSROOM - LATER

The classroom is in an old building. Thick layers of cream colored paint peel from the walls. An obviously new clock reads seven-thirty. The classroom is almost full.

A few students who are running late rush in through the open doorway to find a desk/chair. Alice sits on the back row.

Once all twenty students are seated, DR. BARKER, a bearded stick of a man in a 1970's polyester pants suit, attempts to hold their attention by moving about and gesturing too much.

DR. BARKER

You read the advance assignments
along with the syllabus on-line?

A few heads nod yes; many faces are blank.

DR. BARKER (CONT'D)

If you haven't, this is the link.

He indicates a link written on the chalk board.

DR. BARKER (CONT'D)

OK. Who can explain Aristotle's
unity of action?

He waits for a response. Alice starts to raise her hand, but clutches her neck instead.

DR. BARKER (CONT'D)

Who hasn't read The Poetics, as
assigned? Raise your guilty hands.

All hands go up, except Alice's. Her hand cannot decide what to do.

DR. BARKER (CONT'D)

(without drawing a breath)

I grant you it's a simpler matter
to be prepared for this class than
to purchase a weapon which I'd bet
my pitiful salary a few of you did
the moment those bozos in the state
capital gave you the green light to
carry on campus!

DR. BARKER (CONT'D)

It may be legal now, but I don't want to see the glint of metal in this classroom. Understood? And that goes for your infernal cell phones as well. Turn them off and put 'um away.

The majority of the class do so. KELLY, a slovenly kid seated next to Alice, speaks very loudly.

KELLY

Dr. Barker, the bookstore didn't have The Poetics!

OTHERS

Yeah. I tried. The order hasn't arrived. Back ordered.

DR. BARKER

Ever heard of a library?
(pointing through the
window)
It's that big building right over there across the grove -- the one with the books!

CURTIS

They had one copy and it was checked out.

We see an old beat up library copy of Aristotle's Poetics on Alice's desk. She eases it into her backpack next to her handgun. When her hand touches the gun, she recoils, then notices Kelly staring at her.

DR. BARKER

Did any of you think to look on-line for it? Sweet Jesus! A tenured professor and I'm stuck with a night class after twenty years at this institution, and I have twenty duds to go with it. Well . . . You may want to take notes.

Kelly taps Alice's desk top.

KELLY

Can I borrow a pencil?

Alice jumps a bit.

ALICE

I just have this one.

Dr. Barker stands over a student who is going to sleep.

DR. BARKER

This is not a bedtime story.

Dr. Barker moves to the middle of the teaching area, in the manner of an actor "taking the stage."

DR. BARKER (CONT'D)

According to Aristotle, a tragedy is composed of a beginning, a middle and an end. The beginning, requiring no previous action . . .

(pause)

A middle which grows out of necessity from the beginning . . .

(pause)

And an ending which is the inevitable consequence of the middle. This is very important in tragedy. The ending is inevitable. There can be no other ending. Is this clear?

CURTIS

What?

DR. BARKER

I shall repeat!

Dr. Baker begins to repeat the explanation, as time drifts. We hear Dr. Baker's SHRILL VOICE slurring, however the sounds are not intelligible. A clock on the wall speeds to eighty-three.

DR. BARKER (CONT'D)

Questions?

Dr. Barker searches one empty face after another.

When he looks at Alice, she squirms in her chair.

DR. BARKER (CONT'D)

(to Alice)

You have a question?

ALICE

(almost inaudible)

May I be excused?

DR. BARKER
You're an adult -- if need the
bathroom, just go!

Alice, humiliated, closes her notebook on which she has written "no coke before class" seven times, hurriedly gathers her things and quietly leaves room through the open doorway.

INT. WOMEN'S TOILET - CONTINUOUS

Alice rushes into a stall, hangs her backpack on a hook, drops her pants and sits with a huge sigh and a sudden STREAM.

She hears distant GUNSHOTS. Her stream stops. Another shot. Her stream becomes SHORT SQUIRTS, and her breathing becomes short.

A loud SIREN sounds, RATTLING bathroom windows.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Speakers nestled in the peeling corners of the hallway SCREAM:

SPEAKERS
Warning! Gunman on campus!
Emergency protocols now activated!
Lock down immediately! Warning!

INT. CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

As the WARNING continues to blast, students are on their feet, some looking out the windows. Dr. Barker SLAMS the door closed.

DR. BARKER
Get away from those windows!
Everyone down!

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Alice stumbles out of the bathroom with her backpack on her shoulder while pulling up her pants. She covers her ears as the speakers repeat their WARNING.

INT. CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dr. Barker pushes a chair against the door, lodging it under the doorknob. The sound of CLICKS startles him. He turns to see nineteen guns pointed at the door.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Alice, breathless with panic and trembling, slides along the wall toward her classroom. GUNSHOTS are heard again; they are closer.

INT. CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dr. Barker turns off the lights and backs to the far side of the room.

EXT. CAMPUS - CONTINUOUS

A hooded GUNMAN runs. Campus police chase him, FIRING as they run. The gunman runs to the double glass doors leading to the hallway. He sees Alice.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Alice sees the gunman. Terrified, she attempts to get her gun out of her backpack, but she shakes so that she cannot manage it. She sees the gunman turn away and FIRE his gun, ostensibly at the cops.

Alice gets her gun out. She is trembling so that when she releases the safety, she accidentally FIRES, shattering a glass door and narrowly missing the gunman as he attempts to enter. He withdraws.

INT. CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

The class reacts to GUNSHOTS, physically and audibly. Dr. Barker shoves a magazine into his gun with a SNAP.

EXT. CAMPUS - CONTINUOUS

The gunman turns to see a mob of cops approaching, firing their weapons. He runs away.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

As the mob of cops run past the double glass doors, Alice rushes to the classroom door. Finding it closed, she BANGS and pushes.

INT. CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

The POUNDING and shoving continue, some students cry, others SCREAM. The door opens wide, flinging the chair away, and as Alice steps inside, her gun preceding her, the students' guns FIRE repeatedly.

We see the shots land in slow motion, tearing Alice apart. As she falls, her copy of *The Poetics* falls from her backpack to the floor and is soon covered in blood.

END