

JODI MAY'S



HSA vs IT

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FOREWORD & DISCLAIMER

First and foremost, I do not own the characters of 'IT' nor the original concept. All rights remain with the original author, Stephen King. It's important to note that this is a homage to the original story, which happens to be my favourite book. I was inspired by every single page and read it once a year, every summer, to be whisked away to Derry all over again. It occurred to me, after the two recent films (I prefer the 1990's television series) that a lot of people love the story and adore 'Pennywise the Dancing Clown' but they never get the chance to read the book. Put off by its length, they miss out on the magic of the tale as King wrote it. With this crossover homage fan fiction I wanted to bring a piece of that magic (and horror) to life and it's my hope, above all, that I'll be able to encourage just one person to pick up the original book.

Secondly, the '*Hillside Academy*' characters featured in this fan fiction are all my own. The only character I took from King's story was 'Pennywise'. The rest are mine and all belong to me by law. I will also add that much of the main characters' backstories have been changed to fit this specific 'alternative universe' and several of the minor characters of the story have also been altered. To conclude, there are no spoilers to the main '*Hillside Academy*' series. Rather, it is a way for me to highlight the main eight (Erika, Dominic, Sam, Anna, Emily, Will, Elivia and Tom) in this horror fan fiction that is dedicated to not only Stephen King for inspiring me to keep writing all these years, but also to the people of Lancaster, Lancashire.

Thus bringing me to the penultimate point of this disclaimer. Throughout the book, Lancaster is referred to not always kindly and sometimes in a negative light. This is fiction. I wanted to set this gruesome fan fiction homage in this city because for one, it's truly beautiful and has a rich, fantastic history, and secondly, because I love it. I moved here just over two years ago and fell quickly in love with the history and architecture. My babies were born here and in a way, so was I. By leaving the place I grew up and all its ghosts, I was liberated. This city has quickly become not the place I was raised but the place I was born. And the people? The people of Lancaster are wonderful. They're community-orientated, kind and generous, and during a rather arduous period, the community of Greaves specifically aided us greatly. My partner and I are eternally grateful for their generosity and kindness during this time and this is my strange way of saying thank you; of bringing Lancaster to the forefront again and displaying it in all its glory. So whatever you may read, remember it is fiction and that Lancaster, UK is my favourite place in the world. So to the people of Lancaster, thank you.

And last but not least, a disclaimer to say that the content of this chapter and all the following contain strong language, violence against children, sexual references, scenes of gore and peril and is quite frankly inappropriate for young readers or anyone easily offended. But if this is all to your taste, go ahead and read.

I hope you enjoy reading this 'alternative universe' fan fiction homage as much as I enjoyed writing it. All comments are welcome (though don't be mean), shares are encouraged and remember –

Once you begin this story...*you'll float too.*

CHAPTER TWENTY

The Fate of the Fallen

It was ten minutes before curfew when the losers arrived back in Lancaster, wheeling their bikes off the bus and stepping out into the humid dusk-filled streets of the city. With a hiss and a bang of the doors, the bus drove off without them, leaving the eight stood clustered around the bus shelter at the bottom of Chatsworth Road.

They hadn't spoken much since returning from whatever state they'd been locked in as they stood inside Malkin Tower, not even on the long ride home, which had passed far quicker than this morning's journey. None of them were too sure what to say but the eight made no moves to hurry home to make curfew. Staring around at one another, they knew that now talking was what they needed to do.

That oppressive weight had returned to them as soon as they'd passed Lancaster's city limits as if igniting them, awakening them from the daze they'd been in since Malkin Tower and the vision of the Witches. Now, it was as if their voices had returned and the fog had dissipated. They could think clearly once again and much to all their surprise, Elivia was the one to break the silence first.

"It's always been here."

"Yes," Emily replied.

"Since the beginning?" Elivia said feebly with disbelief and horror. With dreaded hopelessness.

"Yes," Emily said again.

"But the Witches. They kept it at bay," Will added.

"And It killed them," Sam said firmly, gripping the handlebars of his bike.

"It destroyed them," Anna murmured. "The entire Coven. Everything. And since then, this city, it's reeked of It. This place – it's a hunting ground."

"For It," Tom nodded slowly.

"Not for much longer," Dominic said, his tone defiant causing them all to raise their chins ever so slightly as if empowered by his strength.

"We've gotta kill It," Erika concluded.

"Well that's obvious," Sam scoffed, receiving a sneer from Erika in return.

"But how?" Elivia asked.

"I don't know," Erika said, bowing her head with thought.

“Even the Witches only knew how to keep It at bay,” Tom said.

“But they *were* onto something,” Emily said, capturing all of their attentions. “Otherwise, why did It get rid of them?”

“Because It had grown tired of being stifled?” Sam suggested.

“No,” Emily mumbled. She shook her head, eyes down on her shoes, her expression pensive. “No I think it was more. I think they found a way to kill It.”

“But whatever they’d come up with, died with them? Surely?” Anna questioned.

“Maybe,” Emily mused. “All I know is that the ritual they performed is important. And that dagger?” She raised her focus from the ground to meet each of their urgent eyes. “I think it’s quite possibly the key to all of this.”

“You’re saying you think the dagger could kill It?” Dominic asked.

“I don’t know,” Emily said with a twist of her mouth, suddenly weighed down by all their questions and the pressure of their need for knowledge from her. She didn’t have all the answers. And that fact haunted her.

“So what is the grand summary of what we learnt today?” Sam scoffed. “Fuck all.”

“Not fuck all!” Will snapped, frightening the group. “Weren’t you listening to anything Emily just said?!”

“Don’t get shitty with me, *William*,” Sam sneered, squaring up to Will and striking up a whole new tension amongst the group of teenagers.

“Don’t call me that!” Will hissed, shoving Sam away from him.

“Oi!” Erika called out, halting the scuffle before it could break out. “The lot of you, shut it!”

“He started it,” Will mumbled, head low with shame and embarrassment as he caught Emily’s unimpressed eye.

“I don’t care who started it. None of *that* matters!” Erika hollered. “Emily.” She turned to their quiet friend whose knuckles had turned white from gripping the handlebars of her bike. “What do we need to do?”

“We need the dagger,” Emily said almost with defeat.

“Alright, where is it?” Sam asked.

“Tit,” Tom tutted.

“What?”

“It’s not like nipping down t’Spar to pick up some chicken nuggets, Sam,” Will scoffed, still irritated from their previous altercation.

They were all on edge tonight; exhausted from the day and, with the creeping dusk falling upon their young heads, they were all eager to be somewhere safe. But for some of them, somewhere safe had never been an option.

“Ems?” Elivia asked, cutting across the boys squabbling.

“Well –.”

“It’s at the castle,” Anna murmured. She said it almost so quietly none of them heard causing her to have to repeat herself. “The castle. When the Pendle Witches were arrested, the blade, the dagger or whatever, it was confiscated. The castle has it on display now.”

“That’s handy,” Tom smirked feebly.

“That’s sorted then,” Erika said with finality.

“What?” Emily and Elivia spluttered in unison.

“We can’t just stroll into the castle and steal it, E,” Will said almost patronisingly.

Erika’s face became hard as she viewed them all; dishevelled from their long day and weary from the mounting pressure on their young shoulders.

“Yes we can and we will. If we want this thing dead, we need that dagger. The Crone –,” her voice hitched as she relived that moment in the forest at the end of Dorrington Road all over again. Sam edged ever so slightly closer on one side, Dominic on the other. She seemed to push them both away with a deep, brave exhale. “It had it. Almost like It was teasing us with it. Mocking us. It thinks we won’t do it. It thinks we won’t go to whatever lengths we have to to kill It. It’s wrong. We will do what the Pendle Witches didn’t. We will kill It. Here. This is where It began and this is where It’ll end. We will end It. Once and for all.”

There wasn’t a mutter of disagreement among the eight teenagers. Not even a slither of a thought against Erika’s proposition. For they all knew she was right. They all knew what they needed to do. This mission, this task – this duty – it had been thrust upon them. They hadn’t chosen this path, one that would surely kill them all, but there was no turning back.

This was their fate. Their destiny.

It had met Its match. They were coming for It and they would end It.

Once and for all.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

The Deserving

It was decided. They would steal the Pendle Witches' dagger. It was a task that could only be performed by a handful, namely Anna. Upon Emily pointing out this fact, Anna demanded to be accompanied. She would not go back there alone. Sam and Erika offered to go with her the following Monday, the first day of Anna's father's latest court case at the castle. Until then, there was nothing more they could do.

Except stay alive.

Emily impressed upon them the importance of sticking together; of never going anywhere alone and if they were to come face to face with It again – run like hell. It was sound advice that all of them agreed was their natural instinct. What wasn't natural to any of them was waiting.

It would be a long week until then; one Anna had informed them all would be punctuated with a party at her house the following weekend. None of them had been particularly excited about the idea of a party, least of all Emily, who hadn't been to a party since her eighth birthday that had had games such as Pass the Parcel and even had a clown. She shuddered at the memory. Yet somehow, the fear of that memory and that hideously frightening clown was nowhere near as frightening as the prospect of a *teenage* party.

With Anna's parents away in London for the weekend at a private hospital where her mother would undertake an experimental treatment at the insistence of her father, Anna was dead set on a party. She had invited everyone, including this new band of merry losers. Losers she had come to see as her closest friends. A type of family. While none of them looked enthused, none of them had declined the invite or tried to persuade her out of it. Not even Elivia. It was as if they all understood Anna's need to feel normal again. As if they all longed for that. What could be more normal than a teenage party with cheap alcohol and loud pop music?

With Jenny, Anna's older sister, back at university in Manchester, and Fifi, her younger sister, staying with a friend, the house belonged to Anna and she planned to fill it with noise, drunken teenagers and as much 'normality' as she possibly could. In order to take her mind off of her father's denial. In order to forget her mother's imminent mortality. In order to forget that outside all of that, there was a murderous, ancient, all-powerful shape-shifting being that wanted to eat her and her friends whole.

It would need to be a very good party indeed.

A party which Emily could never attend.

"Oh go on," Will said lightly as they wheeled their bikes up Chatsworth Road, having waved goodbye to the rest of their friends who continued along the pavement of the busy A6 which ran

through the centre of the city, on their route home. Will, without being asked or asking, had decided to walk Emily home. It was only wise.

“I couldn’t possibly,” Emily muttered. “Me? At a party? *Anna Clearwater’s* party?” she laughed humourlessly at the absurdity of the idea.

“She’s not just *Anna Clearwater*, though, is she, Ems?” Will said, giving her stern look.

“No, she’s a friend, I guess.”

“She *is* your friend. Just like I am,” Will smiled, a rosiness to his cheeks Emily couldn’t decipher was from the exertion of the long steep walk up the hill or something else.

What? What else could it possibly be?

Fat freak.

Emily lowered her chin bashfully. “Be that as it may, *everyone’s* going to be there.”

“Exactly. I’ll be there,” Will chimed in. “And Erika and Dom and Tom and Sam –.”

“Pfft, I think I could do with a week off from Sam Robinson.”

Will guffawed loudly at this, making Emily blush almost proudly.

“Same. Guy’s doing my nut in.”

“What *is* his problem?” Emily asked, slowing her pace to catch her breath. Will didn’t seem the least bit tired from the steep walk and she didn’t need him to see her as being any fatter than she already was. Not that she felt that way around Will.

He makes me feel...normal.

Pretty.

Beautiful.

Like Erika. Like Anna and Elivia. Like all the girls that will attend Anna’s party. The girls that will swoon over Will and gobble him up for themselves. He will be so blinded by them that Emily will cease to exist. She knew this to be true, why did she need to see it?

Wild horses couldn’t make her attend Anna’s upcoming party.

Not even It chasing her could make her go.

“Fuck knows. He’s just like his dad,” Will grunted.

“Who is his dad?” Emily questioned. They all mentioned in hushed breaths Sam’s father – Benjamin Robinson – but she was yet to meet or learn any more about him. From the looks on Will’s pinched face, she wondered if she wanted to.

“He’s Lancaster’s very own Cray Brother. Just the one. They broke the mould when they made Benjamin. He’s a nasty piece of work,” Will said, again in a hushed whisper as though his voice would travel in the warm summer evening breeze and find Benjamin’s ears.

“So he’s a gangster?” Emily frowned, wholly naïve to this seedy underworld of crime.

“I guess. He’s a drug dealer. *The* drug dealer. Lives in a big ole house up by Willybob Park,” Will explained, also slowing his pace as they drew closer to Ardengate lane and the moment they would have to say goodbye.

Both of them were dreading that moment.

“And Sam? He doesn’t like him?” Emily said tentatively.

“No, he hates him. But then, who does like their dad?” Will snorted but there was no laughter in his throat; only a forlorn sadness that made Emily’s chest gape with emotion.

The two came to a halt at the top of the gravel lane, only their bikes between them as they stared bashfully back at one another.

“I quite liked mine. Or, what I remember of him,” Emily said, blinking quickly to rid the painful sting that always appeared in the backs of her eyes whenever her parents were mentioned.

My dead parents.

My dead family.

“Yeah? What was he like?” Will asked.

“Kind,” Emily said, without having to think. “Calm. They both were. The picture of perfect parents. Religious, good-natured, polite and perfect. Not like me,” she said this last part quietly, as if it were a thought in her head she’d accidentally let slip.

“You’re perfect,” Will said, almost exactly in the same hushed tone as Emily. He could hardly believe he’d said it aloud. Allowed his mouth to say that thought he’d been thinking ever since she tumbled down that hill and into his life – into his heart.

“What?” Emily asked, searching his face with suspicious eyes.

“I said –,” Will swallowed tightly, their bikes knocking together. They hardly noticed as Will leant closer; his shoulders curling as he chewed on his swollen, chapped bottom lip, fixated upon Emily’s bow-shaped ones.

I bet they’re soft.

I bet they taste perfect too.

“You’re perfect,” Will whispered.

Blinking quickly, stuttering for a reply, Emily could hardly fathom what was happening as Will’s mouth grazed hers. It was a whisper of a kiss but it was her first and it was glorious.

And it was with Will Bennet.

Her lips were every bit as soft as he'd always dreamt. They were almost too soft for his own, too good for his bruised, battered mouth. So much so, he pulled back, disgusted with himself. Kissing Emily, sweet, perfect Emily Fox with her soft lips and dark chestnut eyes, it was like traipsing mud over a freshly cleaned floor. He was the dirt and she was the pristine ground that he dared not walk upon. That he didn't deserve to even gaze upon.

Worthless son of a bitch.

Piece of shit.

Stifling back the hurt tears, Will said a hurried goodbye and wheeled his bike away. Quickening his pace, he didn't look back as he cocked his leg over the saddle and pedalled down the gravel lane, leaving Emily stood alone, deep in her shame and confusion.

Of course he'd run away. Who would want to admit they'd kissed her?

Emily Fox.

Fat Emily Fox.

Fat.

That's all I'll ever be.

She didn't deserve Will Bennet and all that she feared was made apparent in those moments as she watched him disappear around the corner of the lane, her first kiss turning sour on her lips.

As much as Erika hated to admit it, Sam Robinson was useful for a few things. Cigarettes was one of them. Without him palming her twenty-packs every time they met, she would have long since gone insane from the incessant cravings that no amount of chewing gum could stem.

Dominic said she needed to give up. Tom too. Anna and Elivia seemed disgusted by her habit, and while Emily and Will didn't say anything, Erika knew they agreed. But not Sam. Sam Robinson, with his adolescent gut and spotty cheeks and mouth of braces, liked her just the way she was. Not taller, not breastier or blonde. Just the way she was and that included her smoking, even if it was a dirty habit. It was one she needed. A type of stability she craved more than the nicotine flooding her veins with every puff on these white cancerous sticks. Cigarettes, as pathetic as it sounded, were the one constant Erika Waterstone had had since she was nine years old.

Cigarettes and Dominic.

Now Dominic was gone, all Erika had left were these tobacco stuffed rolled up sticks which she burnt to the filter with trembling fingers tonight as she sat on the edge of the decking in Tom's back garden, rocking on the heels of her bare feet, staring into the night's sky above.

At her mother's house, where cigarette smoked stained the walls, she had still smoked outside. Marianne may not have cared about Victoria's growing body and her tiny lungs that were inflicted with all manner of substances and chemicals every day, but Erika cared. She thought of her sister then. Only a few streets away but completely out of reach. Was Vicky okay? Had Marianne remembered to bathe her, feed her, read her a bedtime story? Erika doubted it and her frustration at not being able to even hold her sister and protect her against this cruel world ignited something inside of Erika; her hands becoming fists and almost crumpling the burning cigarette in two.

Upon realising, she relaxed her fist and straightened out the cigarette to finish the last of it. It didn't stop the anger from pulsating through her; pushing all other worries and fears aside.

All but one.

With the smoke of her dying cigarette billowing about her face, Erika cast her eyes down to where her other hand sat instinctively over her lower stomach. All at once, images of a moment in time she desperately wanted to forget – one of many – rushed across her mind. In front of her very eyes as she tried to cling to reality.

Who was he, E?

Who did you run to instead of me?

It doesn't matter.

It does to me!

Why!?! You're never there anymore! You don't want to know me!

That's not true!

Ever since Tom –.

Don't! Don't you dare!

What?!

You're jealous.

Jealous? Of you and Tom?

Yes.

Fuck you, Dom.

Was it jealousy? Or was it the fundamental fear that, like losing cigarettes, she would lose Dominic completely. Her oldest friend. Her one constant. The only person she could ever rely on.

He was right. It wasn't he she had run to last October. And it wasn't Dominic she had run to again just six weeks ago. No, the night after she was attacked by the Crone in the woods at the end of

Dorrington Road was the first time Erika had sought solace in Dominic in over a year. Before that night, Erika had run to someone else entirely when the world had tried to crush her.

It had been a mistake. A manipulation of sorts. A grooming in which she had had no control over. Something that had been done to her; out of her control. There was no changing the past but Erika had tried to take steps to change her future. She hoped.

Looking down at her hand once again resting over her stomach, her hand which quickly became a fist in her ratty t-shirt that had been worn and washed too many times, Erika wondered if she'd changed anything at all. If, after everything, after every battle, she was destined for the same future as her mother.

Or worse – her older sister.

Erika's feeble body curled forwards, rocking on the edge of the wooden decking of the back garden as small sobs escaped her parted lips. Like a baby on a pacifier, she sucked on her cigarette, willing it to bring her comfort, anything at all that would quell the storm inside of her.

The Clown. It. None of that seemed relevant then as Erika wept for a life she would never know. A life she would never deserve. Eyes on her stomach where she pulled up the front of her t-shirt to see the beginnings of the swelling that would grow and grow if she didn't stop it, Erika's lips stretched into a resentful sneer. Removing the cigarette from her wet, salty lips, she closed her eyes tight as she stubbed the burning embers of the end against the soft pale skin of her stomach. With a wince and a hiss, Erika bared her teeth through the pain, shuddering as the agony turned to ecstasy and she was once again fulfilled.

The tinge of burning flesh filled her nostrils, bringing about another wave of nausea that she had desperately tried to stifle all day. Tossing aside the cigarette into the plant pot Angie had put outside just for her fag ends, Erika dropped the bottom of her t-shirt. She'd been about to head back inside when her ears pricked up at the sound of voices.

It was late. Almost midnight. She was overtired, unable to sleep, haunted by the storm of thoughts in her mind. Erika had crept through the silent house for a smoke and hadn't expected anyone to be awake. At the sound of Tom's grandparents' hushed talking in the kitchen, Erika stayed motionless on the edge of the decking. She may be a guest in this house but she felt more like a ghost; one Tom and his grandparents were aware of but pretended as though didn't exist. She preferred it this way; blending into the furniture and making as few ripples in this happy home life, so foreign to her own, as possible. So instead of making her presence known and heading back inside, she listened like the ghost she was.

“– she's Tom's friend. I trust his judgement,” Mal said, attempting to keep his voice low. Unlike his wife.

“He's fourteen, what does he know about people?” Angie tutted.

“We've raised that boy right and if he trusts and cares about Erika, then we should respect that.”

“I don't trust her, Mal.”

“She's a child, love.”

“She’s – she’s –.”

“She’s what? What, Ange? Desperate? Homeless? Troubled?”

“You’re too soft.”

“And you’re too hard. There are children being abducted left right and centre in this city and you want to turn a vulnerable young girl out onto the street? Never mind a murderer – think about all the other types of undesirables that would seize that type of opportunity.”

“*Mal!*” Angie said, seemingly abhorred by this truth.

“I’m saying it how it is, dear. Erika is our responsibility whether you like it or not. We have a duty, as parents, as citizens, as good church-going folk, to take care of her.”

“And for how long?”

“Does it matter?”

“For as long as she’s eating my food and using our electricity and sleeping in my guest room, yes it matters. We should call social services.”

“And what? Let her be carted off from her home?”

“This isn’t her home.”

“Lancaster is. This community.”

“We don’t owe her anything.”

“She is a child.”

“*Mal,*” Angie said as though her husband were an idiot. “She’s no child.”

“Excuse me?”

“She’s – she’s –.”

Whore.

Slut.

Slag.

Skank.

“She’s what?” Mal pressed.

“She’s not a child,” Angie said again, more firmly this time.

“She’s fourteen. Same age as Thomas. Would you kick him out onto the streets too?”

“No! We took in that boy!”

“Exactly!”

“Erika isn’t our granddaughter.”

“She’s as good as in my eyes, Angie!” Mal said, his voice suddenly loud and frightening, silencing his wife once and for all. His words were followed by a long, pensive sigh. “That girl needs us. That *child* needs a roof over her head and a locked front door.”

“Fine. But only until this lunatic has been caught.”

“Only then?”

“Only then.”

Neither spoke again. Angela Right had spoken and her husband, as always, had bowed to her wishes.

Happy wife, quiet life.

Erika’s father had once believed the same. It was what had led him down a nefarious path that had eventually ended with his arrest for attempted murder. Felix Waterstone had wanted to please his wife; keep her happy by buying her the latest things, treating her to holidays and keeping her in the life she’d always expected. She had been a Kept Woman. A kept woman she was no more; puffing on cigarettes and injecting heroin into her veins. Sniffing laced cocaine and huffing on crack pipes until all her teeth would disintegrate and her tongue would become a shrivelled worm in her mouth.

Look at Marianne now. Look how happy she is.

Everything was falling apart. The turbulent ground Erika had lived the past five years of her life upon was finally at its last crescendo and soon, there would be nothing left. She was a burden. She was a plague brought into this household by Tom. She didn’t belong here. She didn’t belong anywhere.

And once again, she was filled with that trained urge to run to *him*. It was all she, a broken, tormented, forgotten girl was capable of. Like a dog, she would run to her master. It was only a matter of time. When all was said and done, she was nothing more than a strain on a happy family. A black spot that Angie urged to clean with her Windex. Erika needed to go.

But where she did go when there was nowhere left?

Straight into the jaws of the beast? The monster that was devouring the children of Lancaster. The monster she had vowed to, that evening, end once and for all. As she sat on that decking, the light in the kitchen switching off and leaving her in the gloom of the stars above, Erika doubted that she could even defeat her own demons, let alone It.

Infinite. All-powerful.

Not even the Witches could defeat It.

For she was nothing. A stain on this life and forgotten in the next. Erika Waterstone was nothing and no amount of belief or friendship could change that. No matter what she did.

No matter what she killed.

There were some monsters one could never escape.

