# Forgive And Forget

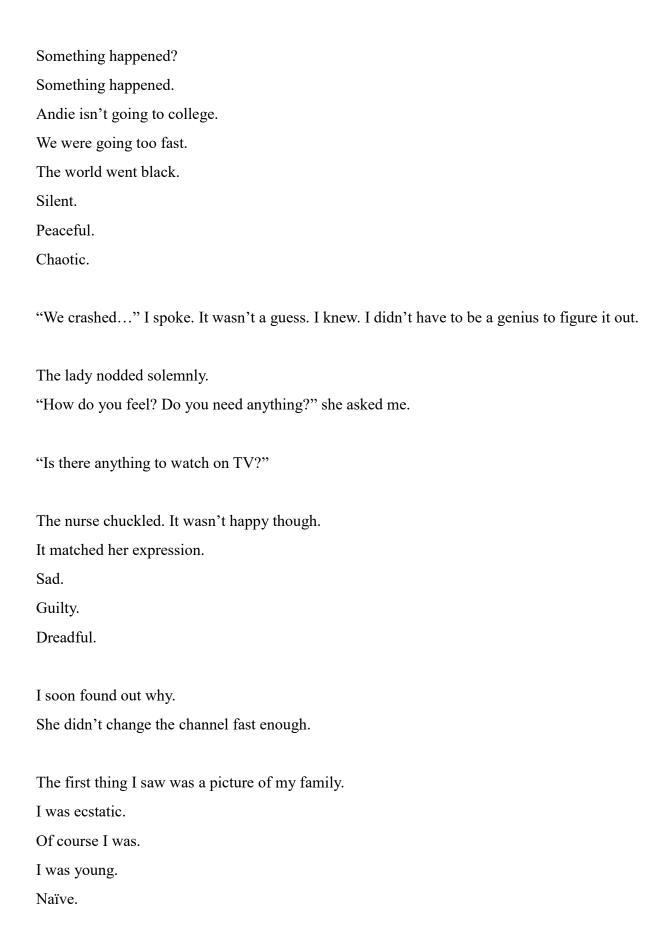
By Courtney Snider

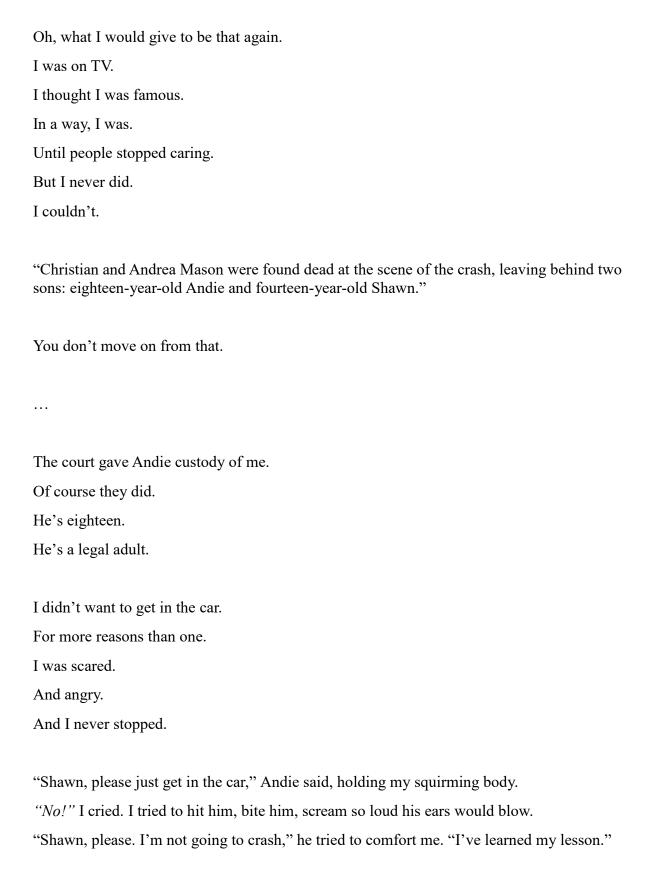
## Prologue

# Shawn Alan Mason

Andie isn't going to college.
That's the only thing my parents cared about at that moment.
Five little words.
"I'm not going to college."
Instead of five much bigger numbers.
Forty.
Forty-Five.
Fifty.
Fifty-Five.
Sixty.
MPH.
"Andie?" I tried to call out to my older brother.
But the screaming is too loud.
"What do you mean you're not going to college?" my mom demanded.
"We spent a lot of money so you could go to the University of Chicago!" my dad complained.
"But now you don't have to!" Andie screamed. "Isn't that a good thing?"
"Andie!" I tried again. Still, to no avail.

"It's not about the money, Andie..." my mom muttered. "Then why did you bring it up!" Andie yelled. "We just want you to have a stable future, which comes from a stable career, which comes from college!" my dad explained. "ANDIE!" The next thing I remember is waking up in a place I've never seen before. I thought it was a lab at first. People in white coats. Wires. Strange liquids. Screens displaying things I didn't understand, like a foreign language. I still wish I had spoken a foreign language at that moment. "Oh good, you're awake," one of the people in the white coats told me. She didn't look scary. She didn't look like she was about to turn me into a rat via a science experiment. She didn't look like the mad scientists that all the boys wanted to be in kindergarten. She looked sad. Guilty. Dreadful. "Where... where am I? I asked. "You're in the hospital, dear. Do you remember what happened?"





"Murderers don't learn their lessons!" I screamed. "I hate you, Andie Adonis Mason!"

### Erin Alexandria Harper

Every person is insecure in their own way.
Your stomach is too big.
Your nose is too big.
Your shoulders are too small.
You're too small.
But no child.
Ever.
They should think that their parents don't want them.
I never thought that my parents didn't want me.
I know they would prefer him.
Caleb.
The baby they never had.
His due date was May 21 <sup>st</sup> .
He didn't make it past October 14 <sup>th</sup> .
My parents made that a holiday of sorts,
Which I never understood.
Why would you celebrate the death of someone?
Every October 14 <sup>th</sup> we would do something my parents think he would like.
Eat at McDonalds.

Watch some sports on television.

Go to the comic book store.

"We're just trying to honor him, Erin." My mom said.

Was making up delusions about your dead son honoring him?

"He was your brother." My dad said.

Was he my brother if I've never seen him?

But I never said any of that.

I was supposed to be grateful.

They didn't know if I was going to make it either.

So, I sit there

And smile

And pretend they wouldn't prefer.

That I was Caleb Micheal Harper.

And I'll spend the rest of my life trying to prove that I'm worth it.

# Chapter One

# 3 years later

## <u>Shawn</u>

I didn't know you needed good grades to play football.			
I don't need to know how to use a semicolon to throw a football.			
I don't need to know comma rules to tackle people.			
However, according to my coach,			
I need a tutor.			
"I'll see if Erin can tutor you," he tells me.			
Erin.			
Erin Harper.			
I know who she is.			
Most of the school does.			
She's known.			
She's on the debate team.			
She's in my math class. Sits in the front row.			
I don't talk to her a lot.			
But she seems cool.			
"Fine."			

#### <u>Erin</u>

"Are you doing anything after school?" my English teacher, Mr. Gregson asks me. I grip the small pepper spray can attached to my keys. "No..." I answer, taking a small step back. "Mr. Hillcox asked me if you'd be willing to tutor one of his players." I didn't know I was smart enough to be a tutor. I know I'm smart. I've never had a grade under an A. I'm on the debate team. I've never had a missing assignment in my life. And I think I'm too humble. My grip on my pepper spray loosens. I reverse my step. "Who?" I ask. "Shawn Mason." Shawn Mason

Shawn.

I know who he is.

Most of the school does.

He's known.

He's on the football team.

He's in my math class. Sits in the third row.

I don't talk to him a lot.

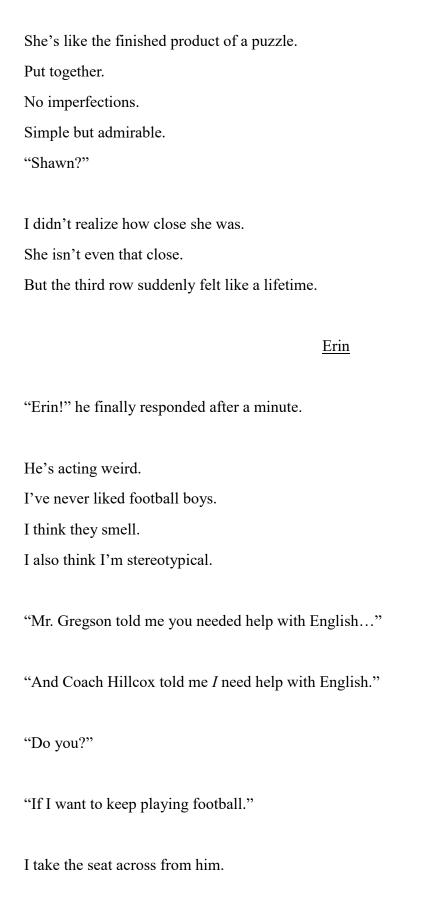
But he seems cool.

<sup>&</sup>quot;All right, I can do that."

# Chapter Two

### Shawn

I didn't think that tutoring sessions would start at once.
I only have a D in English.
I'm not failing.
My phone was the most interesting thing until she walked in.
Erin.
Air in.
Heaven.
Harper.
Harp.
Angel.
That's the only way to describe Erin Harper.
You don't see much from the third row.
Her hair matches her eyes.
Dark. Like dark chocolate, which I never found more appealing.
It goes with her dark green sweater.
Which goes with her jeans.
Which goes with her simple white tennis shoes.
Which goes with her glasses.
Which compliments her eyes and her freckly nose.



"They do that for college purposes."

He tenses.

"Then go on," he says.

His posture straightens.

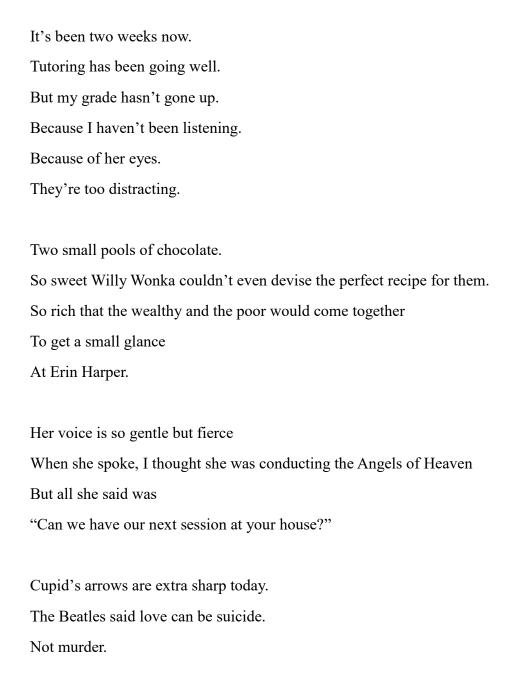
He grips his pencil.

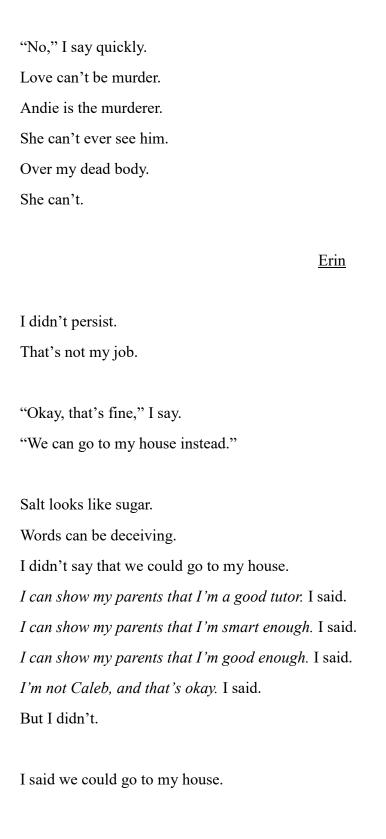
He looks at me.

But his eyes aren't focused.

### Chapter Three

#### Shawn





## Chapter Four

#### Shawn

If Erin is an Angel Her home is Heaven And they seem to serve a god that was never there. "Erin," Mrs. Harper says calmly. Though she's anything but calm. "Do you know what day it is?" What day is it? October 14<sup>th</sup>. What's so important about today? If Erin's home is Heaven, She just disappeared into the clouds. "Mom... it was unavoidable," she says. "So was Caleb's death," her father interjects. Death... I turn toward the door. "I should go." And suddenly the world becomes a tightrope, Because her parents say yes But she says no.

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"It won't take that long," she insists. "Just give us an hour."
The false god the parents serve granted the hour.
The false god is Caleb.
The god that never answered.
The god that was never a god.
"Sorry about that," Erin says, sitting on her bed.
I can't help but wonder if this was meant to be Caleb's room.
I can't help but wonder if Erin was never supposed to be alive.
I can't help but wonder if my parents were there for Caleb in Heaven.
"It's fine," I say.
I get loss.
The loss of parents and a sibling.
And, apparently, she does too.
"This would've been so much easier at your house," she mutters under her breath.
"No, it wouldn't," I insist.
"Why not?"
Why not?
Why?
"I don't have any less family drama than you do."
Why couldn't Andie just go to college?
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"What's wrong with yours?"	
Why did Andie have to be driving?	
"I'd prefer not to talk about it."	
Why didn't he realize his speed?	
"Are you sure?"	
The speed limit was thirty.	
"Yes."	
He was going sixty.	
"You can talk to me if you need to"	
"I SAID I DIDN'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT	Ţ"
	<u>Erin</u>
I shouldn't have persisted.	
That's not my job	
I shouldn't have persisted.	
That's not my job.	
I shouldn't have persisted.	
That's not my job.	

It's never enough.

It's always too much.

It's always too little.

It's always too early.

It's always too late.

I'm never enough.

"Okay, that's fine..."

I can show my parents that I'm a good tutor. I said.

I can show my parents that I'm smart enough. I said.

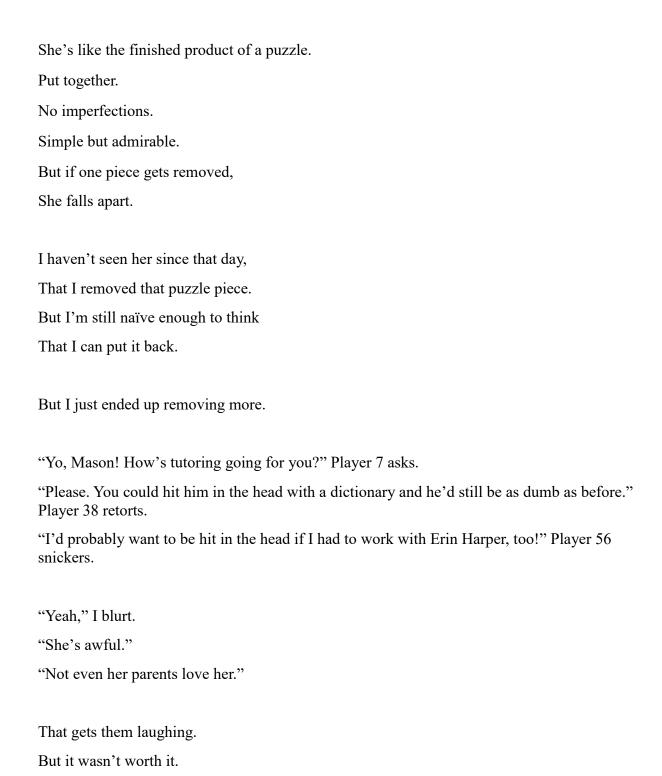
I can show my parents that I'm good enough. I said.

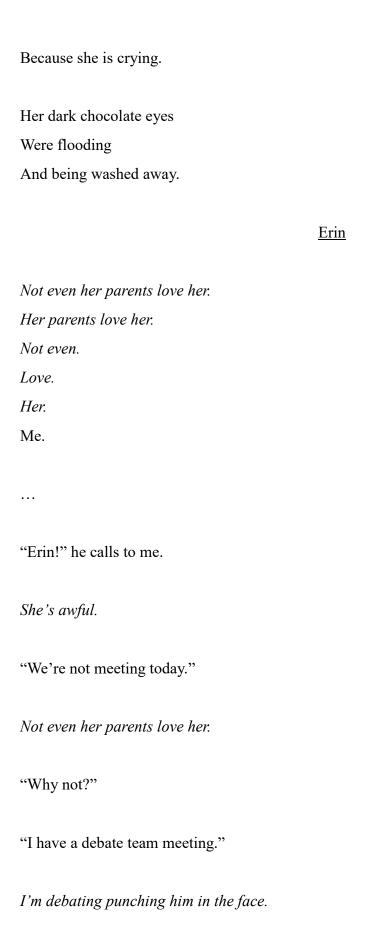
It's always said.

Never did.

#### Chapter 5

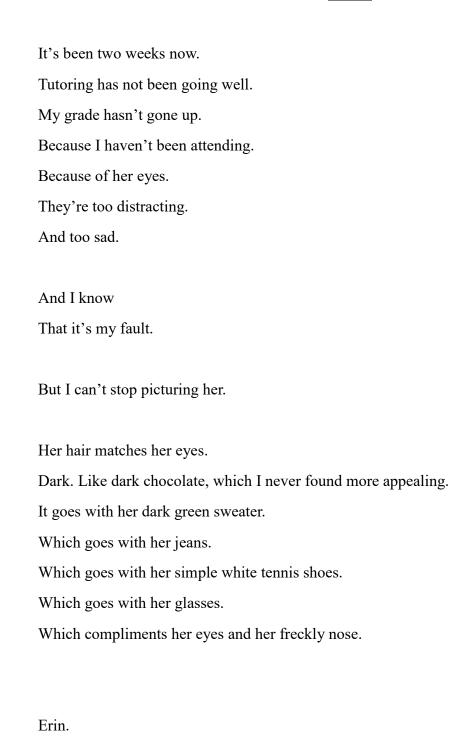
#### Shawn



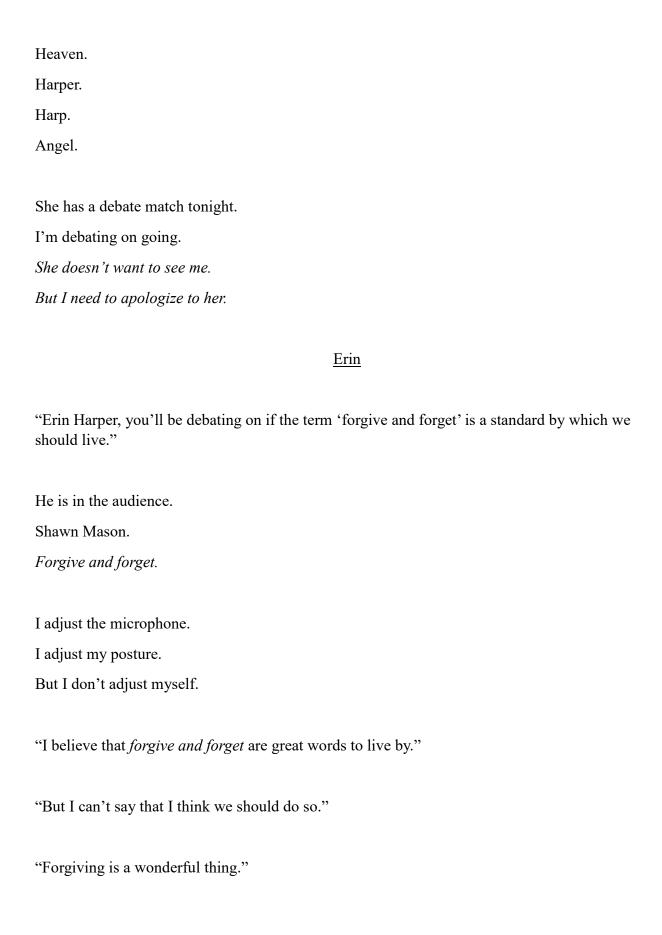


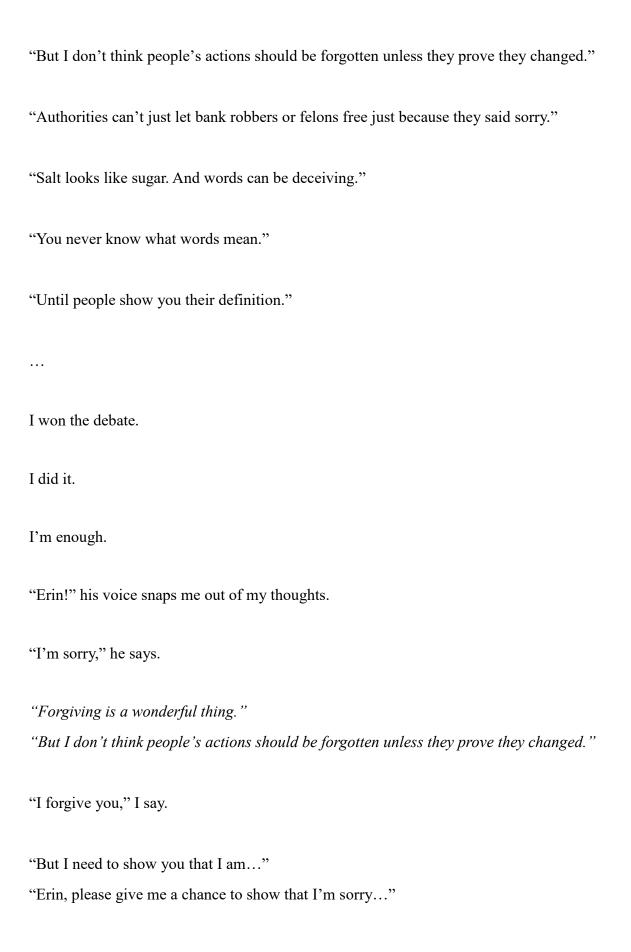
## Chapter Six

#### Shawn



Air in.





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"We can go to the movies, I'll buy you popcorn, candy, all of it!"
"I just don't want to lose you."
"You never know what words mean."
"Until people show you their definition."
"Are you asking me out?" I ask warily.
"Erin, please just give me a chance..."
I swallow.
"Forgiving is a wonderful thing."
"But I don't think people's actions should be forgotten unless they prove they changed."
"You never know what words mean."
"Until people show you their definition."
"I'm sorry, Shawn," I say. "But my answer is no."
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