

## Honey

Before today, I never knew that you could actually smell fear, or that it even crossed over into senses other than 'feel'. Between the four walls of my cell, it vibrates in the air, in the silence, in the cold, bouncing off the one-way glass ahead. We sit in orange, the three of us, lined up along the back wall, as two officers in blue come to take us away. They take my best friend Tommy first, and then Jake. Each one leaves a scrambled message as they are thrown out the door, arms and legs flailing: 'Remember what we said.' 'Don't tell them anything.' 'It'll be okay.' 'Don't betray us.'

Another officer in that painfully mock-peaceful cornflower blue approaches the table I am chained to. He is young like me. It's sensible that they send in somebody I can relate to. I will feel more comfortable – maybe even confess. I give a thumbs up to the police watching behind the one-way glass. I'm not oblivious to their tactics. The officer pulls a letter out of the file he holds in his weathered hands and looks me in the eye for the first time all day.

'You will have to tell us what happened, Grace,' he says. I refuse to acknowledge him, my eyes looking down at the letter, but not reading it. 'This is what the attorney just sent over. He says that if you just confess to everything then we will transfer you to a youth correctional facility and let you go after three years. You'll still get a chance at an education and a career. However, if you refuse and either Jake or Tommy confess first, then you get tried as an adult. That would mean that you could possibly spend the rest of your life in gaol. You're 17 years old, Grace. You won't ever have this chance again. Do you understand?'

It feels like someone just took a vacuum cleaner to the inside of my head and switched on 'blow'. We had planned for situations like this. We decided that if anyone asked us too many questions, we would stick to the story. 'We had no idea.' 'Oh my goodness, that's terrible.' 'What a shame.' 'He was such a nice boy.'

But none of these things were true. You see, last year this new kid came to our school. Charles Baker Avery the fifth. He hated sounding like a cotton plantation owner straight of a Mark Twain novel, so he insisted that everyone call him 'Fire', which was a pretty stupid nickname if you ask me. Anyway the guy was a pig. He used to make fun of us because we, hard-working over-achievers, actually knew how to read. It got serious one day when Tommy got sent home after lunch with a broken collar bone and a dislocated shoulder. It didn't help that Fire's dad happened to be the new principal. He didn't get so much as a note in his diary. That was when we knew we had to get him back.

So we came up with the perfect plan. We would convince him that we wanted to be his friends and invite him on a camping trip over the weekend. This was fairly simple. We