

A Familiar Sight, An Unfamiliar Presence

Hazel had been suspecting that something was off. But now, she was certain. Urging her to take action, her guts strengthened. *But who was she taking action against?* This day started off no different than the others. Hazel, a twelve year old girl, was preparing for her last day of school. After bidding her mom goodbye, she slung her backpack on her arms and dashed over to her bus stop. Speeding through the seats of the bus, Hazel was greeted and welcomed by all her friends. A sense of warmth and belonging washed over her. Despite that, Hazel was not aware, nor prepared, mentally or physically, for what awaited her.

As the students filed into their classes, Hazel stood in the hall, lingering behind for a little more than she was supposed to, lost in a gaze. At that moment, a sinister cackle and a soft cry drew her attention back. Hazel froze. A chill went down her spine. Despite wanting to stay a little bit longer, she slowly inched to the classroom as the last day celebration would begin. With shaky fingers she twisted the doorknob and nudged the door open, but the sight that greeted her left her shocked.

It was her most beloved and cherished teacher, Ms. Veronica holding a yardstick and threatening Willow, one the most kindhearted kids. Hazel was utterly confused when she discovered that all Willow did was answer a question incorrectly. The fact that they were learning on the final day, contrary to the teacher's promise of a day filled with games and enjoyment, was what puzzled her most. More than anything, Hazel longed for Ms. Veronica to return to her usual self. Sadly, the reality was different. The cycle persisted until Hazel understood she had no choice but to act.

Meanwhile, the unfortunate teacher was striving to control her actions, but it would result in her getting shocked. Seized by people from another land, she was now under their control. They had a mind-controlling watch, with a green amulet, put onto her wrist, the glow

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intensifying as they applied control. Ms. Veronica desperately wanted to stop, but circumstances forced her to continue, leaving her with no other option. Recognizing the necessity of ending this behavior, she relied on her students to retrieve the amulet-watch..

Hazel had been monitoring Ms. Veronica's actions over the course of the day. Finally, she figured out what was triggering her actions and was looking for the right time to take action. At lunch time, she engaged Ms. Veronica, steadily coming closer until the watch-amulet was within reach. Then, she snatched it before Ms. Veronica had a chance to respond. Hazel held her breath, her heart pounding. She was taken aback by what unfolded next. With joyful tears in her eyes, Ms. Veronica thanked Hazel profusely. That was when Hazel connected the dots. Understanding that Ms. Veronica was the one who had cried for help earlier, Hazel found herself speechless, her mind processing what had just happened.