

Photobomb

by Grace Chae, age 16, Coquitlam

He keeps appearing in my videos.

I noticed it a month ago, realizing how he managed to show up in every one of my vlogs that I posted. It wasn't too odd at first. The college I attended was small, so it wasn't strange that he would be appearing in the background.

This changed when he started appearing *everywhere* I was.

He wasn't an intimidating person, with wide eyes and a small build. It might've all been one big coincidence, constantly showing up in my film wearing all black.

So I didn't say anything. I kept posting my vlogs, and each time he would be there.

Then, he started changing.

It was subtle at first. Dark eye circles, where there had been none previously. Then, it became more startling. His hands were gnarled, as if the fat had been sucked away and left skin clinging to bone. His skin seemed ashen, graying, his body frail, hanging limply in frame as if barely hung up by its own structure.

I only ever saw him in photos.

I asked around, seeing if anyone knew the guy, but no one had seen him. Eyes hollow, dark circles getting darker, my friends joked I was turning into the guy. I had been staying up late, trying to see if he had appeared in any of my friends' photos, but with no luck. Studying his face in my free time, trying to figure out why he was there, I was tormented.

Why was he getting closer?

The photo I took a week ago, he had been a few feet away from me, eyes blazing and hair brittle and more gray than blond now, stringy and shining with oil. This was odd, since in previous videos and pictures he had been much farther away, a smudge of a shadow in the background.

By now, I wasn't dedicating time to myself, every waking moment spent searching through my phone, trying to spot a pattern, an explanation.

The photo I took on Friday was in a library. I pressed the button and posted it, fingers flickering across the screen, tapping away.

Like clockwork, he appeared in the photo, just one pace away, slightly hidden behind a bookshelf. The black of his hoodie radiated inky darkness, seeming to bleed pigment around his unearthly form, making him blend into the dim lights of the library.

Or maybe that was just my phone.

I swung around in my chair; I should've been able to see him. But there wasn't any trace of him behind me.

I took another photo, directed at the place he should've been, then scanned it again. He was there, on the screen, closer this time, a few inches away from me. His grim eyes, half-covered by straggly hair, were staring straight at me through the picture. Morbid curiosity consumed me.

I hesitated, pulled out my phone, and took one last photo.
