

Dante's 9

By Tara Jade Brown

A short story

Copyright © 2015 Tara Jade Brown

Smashwords, Inc. Edition

1300 words

All characters and events in this publication, other than those clearly in the public domain, are fictitious and any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental

Smashwords, Inc. Edition, Licence Note

Thank you for downloading this short story.

The story is copyrighted property of the author, and may not be reproduced, copied and distributed for commercial or non-commercial purposes. If you enjoyed this short story, please encourage your friends to download their own copy, and also discover other works by this author. Thank you for your support.

Cover illustration © 2015 Tara Jade Brown

Cover illustration design: Tara Jade Brown

Cover illustration material

Concrete wall background: [Simon Murray](#)

Fonts: [Christoph Müller](#)

ISBN 9781311603975

Dante's 9

"Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch'intrate"

Long corridor. Grey tiles on the floor. Rows of narrow white lockers covering each wall.

I walk. My pace is quick. I hear the sound of metal clanging as the clips in my backpack bounce against each other with every step.

The halls are empty. Class is in session. One locker door is open, forgotten after the last break. As I pass, I look inside. Books, training clothes, a photo stuck behind the mirror on the inside of the door.

I walk on. Right, then left, then left again.

I approach a heavy, wooden door with a narrow window above the door handle. I can see her inside. She's talking. Always talking. Always knowing what's right.

I clench my fists.

Not anymore.

I push the door open.

She looks at me and smiles for an instant. Then she sees the machinegun.

So do the children. A dozen throats gasp in fear.

"Johnny," she whispers. "Let's talk about this - outside."

Outside? I think they need to hear this. It's you! They need to know about you.

It was all you!

I turn to look at the children. Their eyes are wide open. Some look at the gun, some at me. All are silent, cowering in their chairs.

I've got your attention now, haven't I?

I look back at her.

And yours as well, Mother.

I will not be your quiet little boy anymore.

Because I have something to say.

I lift up the gun. Her eyes open wide. And I smile.

It's my turn.

Then the chaos starts. The rounds of bullets echo in the classroom, muffling the children's screams. The gun bucks and shakes with every shot, pushing me backward. I press on and turn around the classroom. Splinters of wood and blood spray around the classroom.

I'm yelling.

I don't know for how long. Seconds, minutes, hours?

And then I stop.

I still hear the echo of the last bullet in the quiet room.

Quiet, Mother, just the way you like it.

Her body is at my feet. Her hair covers her face, but her white blouse is red and pierced with bullet holes.

I look around the classroom. Small, lifeless bodies are folded over tables, lying on the floor, slumped over chairs.

The curly, brown hair of a girl spills over the side of her desk. Her blue eyes are wide open, her cheek resting on an open notebook, blood oozing

across the graphite letters pressed onto white paper.

I hear yelling in the hallway. It's getting louder. Someone swings the door open.

I lift the gun and press the barrel beneath my chin. It's burning hot.

There is no surprise. I planned for this. I knew how it would end. And it was worth it.

I press the trigger, looking at the bewildered faces of the people in the doorway.

The classroom echoes one last time.

I drop to the floor behind the teacher's desk.

I missed?

I missed!

I peek around the table. More people are entering the room.

Shouts.

Screams.

Cries.

Some of them are trying to keep others from coming in. They are saying something, but I can't seem to understand.

I need to get out.

I look at the window. It's partly open. I leap up and crash through the glass.

Outside, the grass cushions my fall. I jump to my feet.

I want to remove the glass shards from my arms, then realize there aren't any.

I look back. On the window I see the reflection of red and blue lights.

I turn toward the front entrance. Two police cars. Officers advance across the lawn, guns raised.

I scan the area and spot a small, wooden garden shed only ten feet away. I run and hide behind it, an open meadow before me.

I glance around the corner at the police and the crowd gathering in front of the school. So many people, so many faces.

Some hold their hands over their mouths. Some cover their entire face, their bodies shaking. Some kneel, eyes closed as they cover their ears.

One of the policemen holds out his hands and shouts at the people, pushing them back.

I don't hear him. I don't hear any of them.

The police cordon off the school entrance with black and white striped tape.

I turn away and sit, my back to the wooden shed wall.

I don't understand, but I need to get away. I look around and see a small row of trees next to a stream. Glancing back at the crowd to make sure I

won't be noticed, I make a run for the trees. I'm very fast. I don't understand it, but I like it.

I hide in the wet, dark hollow of a tree next to the water's edge. The stream flows over small rocks, making white, bubbly foam.

I tilt my head. I don't hear the stream either. I'm getting worried. I scratch my forehead...

Aghrrr! That hurts!

I look at my hand and see blood and pieces of skin under my nails.

What?

I touch my forehead again and feel something soft and wet. Three deep scratches with blood streaming out.

I stand up. This is not happening!

I bring both of my hands to my head, combing through my hair. I need to figure this out!

The scratches on top of my head start to sting. I look at my hands. Patches of hair are stuck to my fingers, glued by the red, sticky liquid.

What is going on?!

This cannot be!

This cannot be!

I look around. I need help!

I start to run.

Immediately, I'm in the middle of the city. People walk past me, talking.

I don't hear them.

"Help me! Help me!" I turn to them with arms wide open.

They don't hear me.

They don't see me either.

Then I fall, my ankle giving in.

I lie on the hard, dark asphalt and look down at my leg. My left foot is twisted round 90 degrees to the rest of my leg. It burns. Deep, sharp agony radiates from my ankle, creeping up my leg.

I look up at the people, at their faces, trying to make eye contact.

"Help me! Help me!"

People pass me. Pass right through me. Each step causes agonizing pain as their feet rip through my body, rapturing organs, tearing tendons, bursting blood vessels, breaking bones.

Sharp bursts of pain intertwine with a dull, deep agony throughout my body as they dismember me with their footsteps.

I lie on the street, completely immobile.

I peer out at the world through my only remaining eye, the other kicked out by a wobbly toddler holding her mother's hand.

My body is gone, but the pain remains.

Persistent.

Relentless.

Unforgiving.

Let this end.

Let this end!

And then the darkness falls.

I wake up and look around. I'm sitting in the wet, dark hollow of a tree.

Ah! It was a dream... It was just a dream.

I support myself with my left hand, pressing on dry leaves and the damp soil underneath.

I close my eyes and smile to myself, wiping the sweat from my forehead.

Ahhgrr!

Excruciating pain and a soft ripping sound.

I open my eyes and look at my hand. Hanging from it is a piece of flesh, shiny skin still attached.

My forehead burns with pain.

I lift my hand from the forest floor, dry leaves still stuck on my palm. My hand is shaking. Slowly, I touch my forehead again.

Hard, bony structure. My fingers slip on sticky blood.

I don't believe this!

This is not happening.

My body shakes with horror.

I scream. But I don't hear it.

No one does.

No one ever will.

For all eternity.



If you liked this story, and would like to find out when my next book/short story is coming out, please sign up [here](#).

If you have any comments, questions or would just like to say hello, I'd love to hear from you!
Connect with me online:

tara@tarajadebrown.com

Goodreads.com: https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/8103878.Tara_Jade_Brown

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/TaraJadeBrown>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/tarajade.brown.9>

Blog: <http://www.tarajadebrown.com/>

Smashwords: <http://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/tarajadebrown>