

Murphy's Law

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Murphy's Law

by [InscrutableJoy](#)

Summary

Caroline Murphy (not that anyone's ever heard her speak that name aloud) is a deeply closeted trans girl with a lot more secrets than just her name: she has a precarious plan, a backup plan, and a last-ditch fallback plan to escape the hellish situation she's been stuck in for as long as she can remember.

But what happens when everything that can go wrong, does?

A semi-autobiographical tale of coming of age in the late '90s, fighting tooth and nail to survive and, for maybe the first time, really live.

Updates will be sporadic, and heavily depend on reader feedback.

Part One of this story is going to be heavy on childhood trauma, ripped almost directly from my own childhood (the names and places have been changed to protect the innocent, but also to protect me from being tracked down and harmed further by the guilty). I double pinkie promise things get a lot fluffier starting with Part Two, which coincidentally is where creativity begins to outweigh memory in the word count, and I won't put anyone the least bit redeemable through anything they can't come back from.

Chapter 1

CWs:

This chapter contains homophobia, transphobia, light slurs, implied heavy slurs, oppressive religious extremism, implied physical abuse of a mother and child, and implied CSA; please let me know if I missed any relevant warnings.

Easter Sunday, 1984

I'm almost five years old, so I'm allowed to play on my own in the churchyard as long as I can see Mama or John. I hate neckties. I hate suit jackets, especially baby blue ones. So as soon as the "Children's Church" service dismisses I unbutton the too-hot jacket and top shirt button, unclip the awkward tie, roll up the hated collar-snake and stuff it in my jacket pocket before running out to the rectangle of scruffy grass between the side of the building and the cracked and faded asphalt of the parking lot.

The church isn't as big as the last one, Grammy's church, from before Mama married John; even on Easter there are barely over fifty people wandering out of the foyer to socialize a bit before getting in their cars and heading to various Easter lunches.

It's different here, at John's church. Feels kinda really bad.

At Grammy's church there was a Sunday school teacher who taught about love and accepting people who are different and being kind; at John's church there's a Sunday school teacher too, but he teaches about being in God's army to fight against sin, and the way he looks at me sometimes makes me want to run away and hide. He touches me way too much, but he hasn't touched my private area so Mama and John said I was being a baby when I asked them to make him stop. (They say that about a lot of things, so maybe I am being a baby?)

At Grammy's church, after I was big enough to leave the nursery and go to the sermon with the grown-ups, the pastor was a friendly old man who talked about love and forgiveness and turning the other cheek and never raised his voice; at John's church the pastor is also an old man, but he never smiles, just yells at us about sin and hell and final judgement, which I guess I'm still too little to understand because it's so different from anything I heard at Grammy's church and it makes me kinda really scared to think too hard about, so I mostly use the little pencil (that's supposed to be for writing on the tithe envelopes) to draw in the margins of last week's leftover program flyers I get from Mister Easton the usher.

So anyway, I'm in the little rectangle of scruffy grass between the old brick building and the parking lot, looking for four-leaf clovers, because I feel like I haven't been very lucky since Mama married John right before Thanksgiving, when I hear grown-ups laughing in that way that makes me feel weird and bad because it usually means they're laughing at someone who is having a bad time. I'm instantly nervous; maybe I've done something stupid, like I guess I've been doing a lot since we moved into John's house, because that's what he tells me almost every day and I can't tell him I didn't mean to or something bad will happen. So I

move closer to the cruel-laughing grown-ups, still looking for clovers but also listening, just in case it's about me.

But this time it isn't about me, and I know it isn't John laughing (because he's over by the old white-painted wrought iron church sign at the other end of the building talking to another farmer about why cows are better than pigs or something, instead it's the scary pastor and two other men who I know are something called Deacons because the grown-ups all voted for who would be the deacons this year just a few weeks ago. I can't hear everything they're saying, but I hear enough to know they're making fun of someone, and some of the mean words they're using are familiar but some are words I haven't heard before. I can pick out "freak" and "Jerry the fairy" and a long word that starts with the letter D, and one of the deacons says something about "his poor mother" and the other one says that Mister O'Connor should have "beaten that nonsense out of the boy" and someone says "tranny" which is the first time I've heard that word, and someone says "cross dresser" (which doesn't make sense because why would they be mad about a piece of furniture with a cross on it) and I'm kinda really scared.

I've gotten in trouble a lot lately for being too curious; back when we lived with Grammy I could be curious about anything and Mama or Grammy would answer all my questions and give me a hug about it, but John doesn't like it when I talk to Mama when he's at home and especially doesn't like it when I try to talk to him unless he starts talking first (which is when I can't not talk to him about whatever he wants to talk about because something bad will happen if I don't answer right). But I can't help it, those scary-mean new words are burning a hole in my brain and I have to know.

So finally, after almost everybody else has already left and John's almost done arguing about farm animals and Mama comes to walk me to John's old blue pickup truck, I ask the worst curious question of my whole almost-five years of life: I tell her about everything I heard, and the words I don't understand, and ask her what it's all about. It wouldn't have been so bad except John walked up behind us while I was asking, and heard probably almost the whole thing. He snatched me up off the ground by the back of my baby blue suit jacket with his rough strong hands and turned me around to look me in the face, and John got super really scary.

He said there was an older boy whose mother goes to church with us who ran away because he thought he should be a girl instead of a boy, and they couldn't stop him because he already turned eighteen, and that's wrong and sin against God and disgusting and used some other words I didn't understand but I definitely couldn't ask about because something really bad always happens if I try to talk to John when he's already angry, and I can't get down because now he's holding me by the front of my baby blue suit jacket hard enough that I think he ripped the armpit seams a little. Then he got that kind of quiet that's even scarier than yelling, where it feels like he's having to try really hard not to make something bad happen, and he told me that Jerry's parents should have held a pillow over his face until he stopped breathing instead of just sending him to that camp they sent him to, and that if any of his kids tried to be a ~~that long D word I still don't know what means~~ some new word that starts with F that he wouldn't waste money trying to fix it, but nobody would ever find the body.

And now I'm not kinda really scared anymore, I'm super really scared, because as soon as I understood that a boy could run away and be a girl I knew that I'm like Jerry, that I can't not be a girl one day now that I know it's possible, and every scary horrible thing John is saying is about me too.

If they ever find out, I'll be the body nobody will ever find. Well, that, and also I'm going to hell when he kills me.

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