

Read chapter III of my Alice story carefully. Then follow the outline for analytical writing that is on the English page of our website. Dig deep to get to the real meaning - what is really happening in the story. What symbolism is there? (Re-read chapter one and two of my Alice stories - you should have them to help guide you.)

Alice (Jerry) by James Watts, November 2022

Kindergarten is a time for fun, play, learning, developing friendships, and discovery. For Alice, a sulky, shy, and quiet girl, it was none of these. She rarely spoke, never smiled, and refused to make friends. When the entire class actively engaged in learning, Alice sat on her hands, motionless, head bent until her dark hair covered her face. At lunch, she picked at her cheese sandwich with her tiny fingers – nails chewed to the point of bleeding.

Miss Judy noticed but was not overly concerned. After five years of snotty noses, "wet" pants, crying kids, bruised knees, and the occasional hug from confused kids who mistook her for "mom," Miss Judy had seen it all. "She'll engage when she's ready," the kind teacher assured Alice's parents.

All the students ignored Alice except for Éva, the new girl from Germany, and Jerry, the class clown. Éva sat next to Alice and silently passed her things like playdoh, colored pencils, and Lego blocks. Éva didn't speak much English, and Alice didn't speak, so their communication was non-verbal. Alice had long, black hair and dull, dark eyes, while Éva was blonde with shiny, dancing blue eyes – a study of opposites. When the teacher played music, Alice's body went rigid, but Éva danced; and could she ever dance. She bopped around the classroom like she was possessed.

Jerry was big for his age and, as one of the teachers said, "dumb as a sack of hammers!" Miss Judy suspected that he would eventually become the school bully. Jerry made fun of Alice. He stood behind her and made faces, causing the other children to laugh. When the teacher wasn't looking, Jerry poked Alice, kicked her under the table, and sometimes stole her sandwich. Alice never flinched, never retaliated, never reported him to the teacher. Not even when he pulled her hair or spit on her chair before she sat down.

It was Friday, and the Kindergartener's first field trip of the year. Miss Judy prepped the students for weeks. "We will take the metro downtown to the art gallery," she explained, trying to generate excitement. Some students had been on the metro before but were all excited. With Miss Judy leading and Miss Rogan trailing, they made their way from the school to the metro station, stopping at red lights, crossing the road together as they had been taught, hanging on tightly in pairs to Miss Judy's long red rope. They looked like a giant snake with 22 heads bobbing up and down.

Through the turnstile and down the stairs slithered the class with Miss Judy hushing them from the front and Miss Rogan shushing them from the back. Finally, they stood side by side, "one step back from the long yellow line." This is something they practiced in class, repeatedly. "If you get too close, the metro can pop off your head," Jerry warned his classmates. When Miss Judy sensed the rush of air as the train entered the station, she reeled in the rope.

Suddenly there was a scream. Miss Judy and Miss Rogan looked at the same time and froze in horror. In the middle of the tracks was Jerry, facedown, arms and legs flailing. And then it was over. The train came to a complete stop in the station. The teachers sprang into action, urging the children to step back against the station wall. Miss Judy dialed 9-1-1. Miss Judy says that everything went still and quiet – but the opposite was true. There was a chaotic confusion of flashing lights, clanging bells, loud sirens, and yelling voices. The next thing either teacher can truthfully remember is being back in their classroom with parents and police. Almost everyone was crying.

Later that week, the police came by to show the principal the video of the "incident." There were two camera angles. Both showed Jerry fooling around, slipping, and falling onto the tracks. "It was a horrible accident," the principal assured the parents and the governing board. "We will review our field trip procedures to ensure this never happens again."

When she arrived home, first-year university student Maxime Ranvier scrolled through her pictures until she came to the video she had taken on her way to school. She expanded the view and watched carefully as the metro roared into the station. She paused the clip. Yes, there it was. She had seen correctly. Seconds before the chubby boy slipped onto the tracks, a little, pale hand reached out, touched the boy's back, and gave him a wicked shove. In the same frame, Maxime noticed a small, dark-haired girl, and she was smiling. Maxime put her phone away and smiled too.