Black and White

He was standing in a pitch black room enjoying the smell of chemicals. He turns on the red light as the ticking stops and watches his enlarged negatives appear. He then places all his tools in the exact same place they came from with not one slight tilt to the right nor left, to congratulate himself on a job well done. His funnel was 30mm away from the timer, his glass thermometer placed horizontally 50mm away from his bamboo tongs which were all placed 1.3mm away from each other. Joe then starts to hang up the photos he took of his loved one on the clothing line; smiling so big because he knows he will make his Rosa proud. In his favorite picture, he stares into her eyes and starts noticing this person in the background, wishing he wasn’t there as he is ruining his almost perfect picture.

Trying to find another perfect picture, he realizes this man is on all his shots he had taken on different days, at different times, in different places. He feels a wave of heat rush through his veins and feels his heart pounding so hard he can’t hear his own thoughts. He suddenly feels aggressive. He starts tearing down the still soaking wet pictures he had just developed and rips the man out every single one. The liquid gushed all over the room as he flipped all the containers to the ground, he could no longer control his anger. He goes to bed with the torn pieces under his pillow and tries to fall asleep before he runs out of breath. Three hours have passed and he is still wide awake tossing and turning, tangled in his sheets. His mind is made up; he is going to find this stalker. He goes in his shower before heading into the computer room to ensure he does not dirty his perfectly cleaned keyboard and screen. He sits, scans, and digitally enlarges the guy’s face. Joe plans to start, at the break of dawn, asking around the captured neighborhoods if anyone could recognize the anonymous man.

At 5:30 he starts to drive toward Albany to *South Pearl Coffee,* and inside, no one seemed to remember the face on the print; the staff said fifty people a day pass through this coffee shop. He then moves along to Syracuse, Onondaga park, and rings a few doorbells. His only result was a couple of frustrated people disturbed by his questioning. He decides to stop at McDonalds just off the road. He orders a Big Mac classic takeout: two all-beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles, onions, on a sesame-seed bun. He eats it in his own car, with the windows down, a bottle of Windex and Febreze at arm’s reach, because the seats at the fast food chain are too unsanitary for his liking. He hits the road with a refill of drive. Off to New Burgh, he goes to the Sportsplex where he took that beautiful picture of Rosa buying her brand new pair of a pink swoosh Nike shoes. He goes up to one of the employees who seemed to be in his late thirties, about the same age as the man in all of Rosa’s photos.

The staff member then says “Hey ya that’s Nick the baseball coach”.

Joe stunned says “Nick who?”.

“Nick Pearson”.

Before he was able to say another word, Joe was **out the door**

He rushes back home, heads decisively to the computer room, and “googles’ Nick P. till his fingers bleed. He lands on Nick’s social network sites and notices himself in all the backgrounds of his selfies and landscape posts. Joe starts to feel dizzy and his fingers clench with fear. He prints all of Nick’s photos and all of his photos of Rosa, puts them in a transparent file holder and runs to the Sheriff’s department two miles away. He pushes the glass doors open, perspiring through all of his clothes, pupils dilated; he asks for the Sheriff. He shows him his case file and tells him assertively to arrest Pearson right away. The Sheriff tries to calm Joe down and tells him to head back home and assures him that he will look into it immediately. The Albany County Sheriff’s office then calls in Nick P. to question in regard to all of this evidence. Twenty-five minutes later… *Nick walks in with his wife Rosa.*