

THE
BACKYARD
DIARIES
OF
MAVERICK
MONTGOMERY

Lila Ann: “Honey, say something. We’re almost at your Maw and Paw’s. You’ll have a great time there! You remember how much you love it at their house? When you were younger, you always spoke of your fun adventures there. Mav?”

Mav looks angrily out the car window. He can’t believe his parents are dropping him off at his grandparents. He thinks, ‘Ain’t I a little too old for made-up adventures? Especially right now. The whole world is falling apart from a virus and my mom is going straight to the frontlines to treat those sick with it...’

Lila Ann: “C’mon Mav, don’t be mad. This is what’s best for you. Your father and I...”

Mav: “I’m old enough to know what’s going on, mom. I don’t know why you have to go back there”

Lila Ann: “Mav, you know I’ll come back as soon as I can, but the hospital needs me. The world needs heroes right now.”



Mav: “Why do you have to be the hero? Can’t somebody else do it?”The car

filled with silence as they drove down the familiar gravel driveway lined with giant oak trees arching over the path. Snippets of sunshine breaking through the dense overhang. The car comes to a stop and they both hesitate to say goodbye.

Lila Ann: “We were waiting to give this to you on your birthday, but now’s a good time for you to have it. Here, Mav. This is for you.”

Lila Ann reaches into her purse and pulls out a dark leather bound journal with the initials MGM inscribed in the middle. Lila Ann turns around in her seat to hand it to Mav, but he’s already out of the car, slamming the door shut behind him like a typical teenager. Mav runs to pet Buck, a little white fox looking dog with a big brown spot on his right eye, where he is patiently sitting on the white-chipped front porch for him. Lila sighs and shoves the journal back into her purse. She takes a deep breath and gets out of the car. Mav and Buck run off into the backyard.

Lila Ann opens the front door and gently enters into a familiar hallway she’s seen so many times growing up. Sky blue wallpaper covered in soft white flowers with blue jays perching on their

branches remind Lila Ann how much her mother adores nature and wanted to bring that beauty indoors. She skims by old family photos in simple brown frames. Lila Ann turns the corner and finds Maw spraying her small-potted flowers in the window, and a tea kettle boiling on the stove. Scents of peppermint and orange peel fill the air. Maw sees Lila Ann through the corner of her wrinkly, big brown eyes. Maw says, “My dear Lily, come in! Sit down! Have some tea!” Maw’s voice filled with joy and faint longing to soak in every fleeting moment of her daughter’s visit.



Lila Ann: “Hi mom, it’s good to see you. I know it’s been awhile. The hospital has me working around the clock these days.”

Maw: “No worries, dear. I’m just glad you’re here. My, how our grandson has grown. Feels like he’s shot up like a tree since the last time he was here. What’re you feeding him, sprouts?” Maw softly laughs at her own joke while she pours two cups of tea.

Lila Ann: “I know, he’s looking more and more like his dad each day. So mom, I have to head to the hospital soon, and his father’s tidying up some loose ends at work. We’re afraid he might lose the restaurant. This virus is really hitting us hard.” Lila Ann glances down. Maw places her smooth, sun-spotted hand on top of Lila Ann’s, and provides a comforting smile.

Maw: “Everything will be alright, dear. I know it’s hard now, but it won’t be like that forever. You’ll see. We’ll take care of Mav until your return.”

Lila Ann nods with watery hazel eyes. She is almost out the door when she realizes... “Oh mom, will you give this to Mav for me? It’s his birthday tomorrow, but we just didn’t want to wait to give it to him.”

Maw’s back tending to her little plants and says, “Of course dear. Set it on the table and I’ll get it to him.”

Lila Ann places it on the table and walks out the door. Mav is nowhere in sight, so she must leave without saying goodbye. Mav sees her taillights down the drive and casually heads inside. And there it was - the journal - laying on top of the soft, yellow cushioned, two-seated table next to his mom’s hot tea cup. He hesitates to grab it because he regrets the way he treated her just then. Maw notices his reaction, and places it in his hands anyways.

Maw: “There’s no time for regrets, dear. Make your peace and take this with you.”

Mav nods and walks upstairs to his bedroom. He lays back on his bed and tosses the journal next to him. He stares at the ceiling for a few moments until he decides to move past it and finally open the journal. He opens it up and reads:

This Journal belongs to: Maverick Montgomery

Date: April 19th, 2020

Inscription: Happy early 16th Birthday Mav! We are very proud of you.

Be brave, son. We love you. See you soon.

Mav opens up to the first page and writes his first entry:

April 19th

It doesn’t feel like a time to celebrate a birthday. Especially mine. I ignored my mom, ran off with Buck, and didn’t even tell her goodbye. I’m sorry, mom. I know you and dad are

trying your best. I just hope this whole thing blows over soon. I'll try to make the best of my time here, don't worry. I'm not too old for adventures, mom.

God, since I can write anything in here, I figured I'd write a prayer to You too. I don't know what this virus is, but it's killing a lot of good people, and I'm tired of it. I'm sorry I haven't prayed to You sooner. I hope it's not too late. Amen.



As soon as Mav writes his first journal entry, he places it under his pillow and falls asleep. The next morning, Mav slumps downstairs for breakfast. He gulps a fresh cup of orange juice, takes a bite out of Maw's homemade biscuit, and heads for the back door. Before he goes, he spots Paw sitting in his study with the door open. Mav's never been allowed in there before. Paw feels Mav's gaze and so peers above his book with his glasses on his nose to meet Mav's curious eyes.

Paw: "Hello boy, come in and give your Paw a proper greeting."

Mav slowly but coolly walks in, and his eyes wander from shelf to shelf, from books of magnificent colors and sizes to an American flag displayed in a box covered with valiant gold medals, including a small purple one that stuck out like a sore thumb. Mav remembers his mom talking about Paw going to war, but he's never talked about it. Mav almost stumbles into the desk corner when he snaps out of it and goes to hug his grandfather.

Paw: "That's more like it. I imagine you have many questions? You see, I've been working on filling this room since the day I married your grandmother. Every year on our anniversary, she brings me a new book. This one..." Paw shakes the one he has in his hand, "...this one is from the first year I was away at war. Even then, she thought of me. You'll find a good woman like that one day. Hell, I was just two years old than you are now when I met her. Go ahead. Look around."

Mav gives it a second look and his eyes focus on one particular photo sitting on the top shelf. "Paw, who's this photo of? That boy looks a lot like you? Was that you, Paw?" Mav brings the photo to Paw sitting behind his desk.

Paw: "I'll tell you about this photo when it's time, boy." Paw puts the photo in his front pocket. Mav's eyes cast downward as he nods his head and says, "Yes, Paw." Paw takes his reading glasses off, and says, "So what trouble are you and Buck going to get into today?"

Mav: "Oh you know, figured we'd play outside like we used to."

Paw: "Sounds like a good idea. I'll see you soon, then."

Mav heads out to the backyard looking for Buck. Something from the corner of his eye catches his attention. He sees a white shimmering flash in Maw's greenhouse. "That must be him," he thinks. So Mav races for the entrance. The greenhouse windows look like they haven't been cleaned in years, but the plants are as tall and green as ever. Something rustles behind the big potted plants. Mav inches closer. The leaves stop rustling,

and then suddenly, Buck jumps out at him!

Mav: "Buck!! You crazy dog."

Mav notices a shimmering window in the back corner of the greenhouse.

Buck whimpers and tugs the back of Mav's t-shirt. Mav: "Cut it out, Buck."

Mav climbs over the pots, onto the table, and leans into the window to push

it open. Mav underestimates his weight, however, and completely falls

through. Day turns into night. He no longer sees Mav's greenhouse or

his grandparents house on the hill. Instead, he sees a small brick home down behind the pond.

Buck jumps out of the shimmering window hanging in mid air and joins Mav by his side. Mav thinks aloud, "Where are we?"

Mav sees lights on in the house, so they decide to get closer. They peek into the kitchen window on the side of the house. There's a woman cooking dinner, a man hanging up his coat and hat, walking towards her with a bottle of champagne. He kisses the woman and calls her darling. A young boy lays on the living room floor reading a book. A taller, older looking boy comes walking down the stairs. Mav thinks, "That young kid looks just like Paw, but who's the older kid? Did Paw have a brother?" Suddenly, Mav hears footsteps on the front porch. He ducks and holds Buck closer to him. Two men and one woman enter the home. They are dressed in black and gold. The woman is white, slim, and has curly red hair. One of the men is black, muscular, and has a tattoo covering his right arm. The other man is white and skinny with jet-black hair. There is one thing that Mav notices to be the most unusual - their eyes. They glow as crimson as blood. The family seems caught off guard by this dangerous-looking trio.

Then, the fire started.

Mav and Buck race for their escape through the greenhouse window on top of the hill. They jump through, panting frantically. Mav catches his breath and turns around to find Paw laying on the greenhouse floor. He's wounded. He took a bullet to the side and a puddle of blood quickly encircles him. Mav says, "But...How...Paw? Oh, Paw!" Mav rushes to his side to stop the bleeding, but it's no use. Mav rushes into the greenhouse, sees her husband dying and her grandson weeping. She joins them. She lifts Paw's head into her lap and wraps her hands around his bitter cold hands. Paw tries to speak, but he doesn't have the strength. Instead, he pats a pocket on his chest. Mav kisses his cheek, tears streaming down her face.

Mav: "I know, dear. I love you so very much. I'll tell him."

Paw's breathing fades. Mav strokes his salt and pepper hair one last time, and pulls the photo out of Paw's pocket. Mav recognizes it. It's the one of Paw as a kid in front of the pond, except this one shows a family of four - Paw, a brother, a mother, and a father.

Mav: "Mav, I swear I didn't...I don't know what happened. But that photo. I saw them tonight. Just like that. But, how...?"



Maw: “Mav, I’m sorry. Now’s the time you should now. You have powers just like your Paw. And just like your mother. Your mother, she heals. That’s why she’s a nurse. And you...”

Mav: “I can travel through time.”

Maw: “Yes, dear. Your Paw had a feeling they would come, that’s why he transformed into Buck. To keep you safe.”

Mav: “Maw, who’s they? Who were those bad people? Why did they do this to Paw? To his family?”

Maw: “So many questions, so little time.”

Paw’s body turned to a shimmering light and transformed into a final form – a book. Maw picked it up and held it tight. She whispers, “Of course, my love.”

Maw: “Maw hands the book to Mav. It’s a book with no title, no pages, but a single inscription. It reads:

To my love, I am yours forever.

To my daughter, you’ve given over a thousand lifetimes, but given meaning to mine.

To my grandson, this is your battle now. Protect your mother and Maw. Be brave.

- Paw

They walked back to the house in silence. Mav’s mind replays over and over the words written in that book and takes out his journal.

April 20th

This is why the world needs heroes. I’ll be a good one, Paw. You’ll see.