

## **The Red Box and Other Short Stories**

**By Angel Turner**

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## **The Table of Contents**

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright Page](#)

[Table of Contents](#)

[The Room](#)

[Mama Bear](#)

[The Red Box](#)

[About the Author](#)

## The Room

They sat out there and talked for hours, while I...Lay there- hidden from the world. The musk of the roomed compounded under the bed with me. The darkness allowed for my imagination to run circles around me. The longer I stayed under there, the more the carpet raked against my skin and the more that bat... The tinged, iron-smelling bat gripped my fingers.

I wanted to scream out. The agony from the itch and the dust nestled against my nose hairs only made me more furious.

“I don’t know what we’re going to do with him,” said dad.

The silence killed me. *Say something mom. You know me.*

“You’re right dear,” mom said. “I don’t know either. It’s like he’s possessed or something. What in heavens name made him do that?”

“Where did we go wrong with him?” mom said.

The little tare in the bottom sheet provided the perfect glimpse, coupled with the beaming sun light, to the porch. *His filthy hand rested on hers. The tears rolled down her face. That stupid woman, I should’ve got rid of her too, and him.*”

“I want him gone,” dad said. “We tried and it just isn’t working. If he did that, who knows what he will do next.”

*Breathe Andy. Breathe...* Before I could finish talking to myself, I felt myself bolting from underneath the bed. My left-hand squeezed so tight I felt the wood slicing my fingers.

“Shut up!” I said. “You know why I beat that old man.

The picturesque photos stared at me from behind. The stench of the room merged with the smell of the bat, and it kept growing stronger.

“I beat him for you mom.”

“Stop it!” mom said. “You don’t say another word.”

“Tell him mom. Tell dad why I did it. Why I beat that old man.”

Dad narrowed his eyes as he scratched his chin. He looked at mom then back at me. He jumped up and walked past me.

“Shh,” said dad.

He crept toward the door. The carpet not forgiving to his aged-knees. His ear pressed against the door as he stood frozen. The color raced from his face the longer he stood there.

Finally, he opened the door and looked around. The color returned to his face once he returned back inside and locked the door.

“Now you listen and you listen good,” said dad. “You are pure evil and you will not destroy everything I’ve worked for.”

“You worked for?” I said. “You don’t work. Mom works. All you do is sit around and do nothing but complain. Where were you when mom needed you?”

“I’ve always been there for your mom, what are you talking about.”

Her eyes pierced my soul as I talked to my dad but it was time. I had to tell the truth.

“You were not there, dad. Mom needed you and you were gone, so I had to be there for her.”

“You are going back where you came from,” said dad. “We tried to love you. But you are not from us. And for you to take that bat and beat that man, that poor old man almost to death, we have to give you back to the state.”

“I’ve been here six years dad. Six years and five of those years, you sat by and did nothing as mom suffered at the hands of that monster!”

Sweat rolled off the short strands on my head. “You did nothing!”

“What is he talking about dear?”

His gaze finally locked mine-he didn’t know.

“Please don’t,” said mom.

“The old man raped mom for five years. In our house, in your bed.”

The tears flooded his eyes, he now knew. His dad raped his wife for five years in his own house.

And because he did nothing, I stepped up. I did what he should have done. I handled it. But I made a mistake, I left him breathing.

## **Mama Bear**

Charley inhaled a long drag of his cigarette. He looked up and saw Diane walking with her friends. Her smile always made his heart skip a beat but today she didn't have her usually smile. Her golden locks bounced effortlessly off her shoulders.

"Bear, wait up," said Charley. He pushed past the groups of kids huddled up in front of the school.

Diane looked at him and kept walking.

"Bear! Bear! Diane, wait up!" He ran a little faster before reaching Diane's shoulder. Her soft hair tangled around Charley's fingers. He let a smile as he remembered the last time her hair tangled in his fingers.

"What do you want Charley?" said Diane.

"Why haven't you returned any of my phone calls? I've been calling you for over a week now. What's wrong?"

There was a lot wrong, but Diane couldn't bring herself to tell him. She nervously rubbed her eyebrow. Anytime Diane had someone serious going on, she did this. Charley knew something was definitely up.

"Diane, you can talk to me. Did I do something?"

"I need to get to class before I'm late," she said.

Charley watched her enter the school. He knew he had to leave before the assistant principal made her rounds. Charley decided a few months ago that school wasn't his thing. Even though he only had two years left, he hated the confinement that came along with school. He had to wake up early, stay there all day and turn in the heap loads of non-essential tasks that his teachers came up with. Since dropping out, Charley unfortunately has gotten into more trouble than he did when school was a part of his life.

He met Diane in his English class. She moved from South Carolina because of her dad's job. She didn't say much and seemed to not like hanging out with the "in crowd." Every day, Charley caught himself staring at her. He would snap out of his daze to a red-faced Diane with her eyes glued on him. It took him almost two weeks to work up the courage to try his hand at

telling her a joke. Surprisingly, Diane laughed at it, and it wasn't an undeserved chuckle. She had a full blown, disrupt the classroom laugh. This gave Charley the motivation to eventually ask her to be his girlfriend. Again, surprised, she said yes.

Now, the young couple seemed to have another senseless issue to deal with. It seemed almost every week Diane had something to be upset with Charley about. Charley professed his deepest feelings to Diane. Their relationship barely had made it six months but for some reason, he wanted her forever.

“You love me?” Diane’s face instantly went from the paleness the world was used to, to blood red.

Charley called Diane “Bear” because her skin tone reflected light like a polar bear. Diane had a love hate relationship with the name. The name although sweet, at times embarrassed her.

Charley dashed off the school property and waited for the end of the school day to meet up with Diane again. He tossed with the idea of enrolling back in school. That’s the only time he knew he could see Diane and he helped keep him out of trouble. The only thing that stopped him were his so-called friends that would never let him hear the last of it.

*Why does she put me through this? There’s only so much back and forth that I can take from her.*

## The Red Box

Julie nervously smoothed the minor wrinkles of her red evening gown.

She laughed amongst Ben's family and waited the special announcement he had to desperately tell everyone.

"Everyone, can I have your attention please," said Ben.

"O my gosh," said Julie nervously.

Ben flashed a quirky smile at Julie and nodded.

"I wanted to have all of you here tonight because I have been given the opportunity to do something amazing," said Ben.

Ben squeezed Julie's hand under the table and she quickly wiped her eyes. She began to lean forward waiting for her big moment, but it never came. Ben looked around the 10-seater table and leaped out his seat.

"You guys are looking at the new district director for Benz Auto Group," he yelled.

His stifled scream was overshadowed by the visible disappointment on Julie's face.

Frustrated, she slapped the table with her left hand and thumped it loudly. Ben's excitement diminished Julie's mild physical outburst.

"I am going to make \$150,000 a year," said Ben. "That's like three times what I make now."

"Wait, so, this wasn't an engagement party?" said Julie, in a low tone.

Confused by her comment, Ben reached his hand out to touch Julie. Thoroughly embarrassed, she jumped up from the table and stormed out of the room.

In the hallway Julie paced back and forth while waiting for her Uber.

"How could he?" she whispered to herself. Her cheeks beamed red from the humiliation of thinking today, she would gain an extravagant piece of jewelry – an engagement ring.

"Julie, wait up," said Ben. "I didn't mean to embarrass you, but what made you think I wanted to propose to you? I mean, we've only dated for a year now."

Her pacing only grew faster as his words pierced her ears.

“Only dated?” yelled Julie. “I’ve given you my whole life. I gave you my heart and soul. And you bring me here, tonight, to meet your parents, and that email you sent me.”

Ben reached out to grab Julie’s shoulder, but she shook him off. “Just forget it,” she said. “I don’t have time for this.”

Julie ran outside to her awaiting Uber. Ben just stood there confused by what just happened. *I’ll just call her in the morning*, Ben thought. *That’ll give her time to get herself together.*

In the Uber, Julie skimmed through her emails, looking for the proof. “A ha!” she yelled from the back seat. “Sorry, I was just …”

“It’s no problem,” the Uber driver said, looking at Julie through the rearview mirror.

Julie read the email without blinking. *I can’t wait until Friday. This will be a day you will forever remember. I love you so much, I always have and I always will, love B. P.S. Look out for the red box, (smiley face.)*

Julie slammed her phone on the seat next to her and sat in silence until the Uber pulled up to her house. “Thank you,” she said to the driver. She quickly grabbed her phone and hopped out the car.

Back in her front yard, her focus started to shift off from the nights’ chain of events to her house check routine. She slowly walked up the five steps leading to her door. She tried not to replay the last two hours in her head. Instead, she looked around her yard as she always did.

Even though it had been five years since the last time her ex-boyfriend assaulted her, she knew the amount of crazy he possessed would one day bring them back together. As she looked around her yard, one final time something below her caught her eye. A huge smile beamed across Julie’s face.

*Ben you’re going to get it. You are a freaking liar.*

Julie took a picture of the red box and sent it Ben. She also forwarded him the email he supposedly didn’t send her. In the subject line she wrote: YES.

She bent down to pick up the red box and went into the house.

Her phone started to ring.

“Hey baby. As you can see I got it,” Julie said, answering the phone. “I haven’t opened it yet though.”

“Julie, I didn’t send that that email. Ben said. You know my email and that isn’t it.”

She quickly looked at the email she just sent to Ben and noticed that it was off by one letter. Someone purposely tried to make her think it was Ben when in fact, it was not. It was in that instant, 4 minutes and 38 seconds past the moment she got into the house to be exact, that she KNEW she was in trouble.

Her eyes widened at the sound of the doorbell. As she turned around, a glimpse of him peeked through the glass sliver. She didn't want to but she knew she had to. She fearfully walked toward the door. Her hand trembled as she turned the knob. The day she always knew would come was finally here.

"Hello, Julie. I hope you liked what was in the red box," said Brad.

Her nightmare from hell had finally found her. She prayed that this time she would be as lucky as before.

Brad snatched the phone from out her hand and pressed the red button to end her call with Ben.

"You look so beautiful dear," said Brad. That red dress matches the box almost perfectly. You always like to coordinate things."

Julie started walking backwards but Brad grabbed her by the throat, halting her instantly.

"Brad," Julie managed to gasp.

He tightened his grip to hush her up.

"Shh. It's my time to talk. I have waited more than five years for this moment. You left me and thought the police could keep me from getting to you. You thought this Brad guy could replace me. Well I'm here, and this time, you're not leaving me."

Julie reached out her hand to touch Brad's face. He always loved it when she caressed his face. He loosened his grip enough for Julie to speak.

"I love you," said Julie. "I just didn't know what to do."

Brad stepped back from Julie made a run for it. She ran outside screaming for help. Brad was right behind her.

"Julie get back here," he yelled.

She kept running. She could feel his breath on her as she tried to run faster. *Don't look back. Just run a little bit further.* She ran to her mailbox and kicked over the concrete flower pot.

There was a gun waiting for her. She knew this moment would come but always thought she would never make it this far. She grabbed the gun and spun around to where Brad stopped in his tracks. She didn't speak. She didn't listen. She didn't leave any room for a mistake to happen.

She fired all six shots. Five of the six hit him. All of her practicing paid off. He fell to the ground. She stood there and waited for his final breaths.

The night turned out much different than she imagined. She didn't have a fiancé. She wasn't pinning wedding ideas to Pinterest. But one thing she did have was her freedom. Freedom from her ex and freedom to live life without wondering when her last day would be.

###

Thank you for taking the time to read my book.

Angel Turner Author

## **About the Author**



Angel L. Turner is an aspiring novelist who is working on her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Creative Writing. Turner attended the Defense Information School in 2009 and spent six years writing as a Public Affairs Specialist in the U.S. Army. Her focus of writing is children's, mystery and defeating the odds, type books. Turner wrote and published her first children's book in the second grade. Who's Who Among Young Writers recognized her works several years in the late 90's and early 2000's.

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