



“Wild Card”, by Matthew Jamil

After the mysterious disappearance of their good friend Levi, a group of friends gathered together to play their favorite game, Uno. This was the first time that the group had been able to have fun together since Levi went missing, but things just felt different without him. Levi kept the group together, and without him, the group was slowly falling apart. Milo and Nicole noticed this and set up the hang-out to attempt to bring the group back together. They invited Jasmine and Julie to Milo’s house but little did they know, there would be an uninvited guest who joined.

When the group arrived at Milo’s house, they awkwardly sat down at a round table and started to play Uno. After the cards were dealt, Milo began by throwing a red “2”. Nicole, not having a red card or a 2, throws her only wild card, and chooses yellow to be the new color. The lights in the room suddenly flicker, and a strange gust of wind knocks only the wild card off of the table. Being the prankster he is, the group initially suspects that Milo planned this. Upon seeing how shaken up Milo was, the group quickly realizes that this was no prank. As smoke began to fill the room and form fog near the ceiling, Julie sees the formation of a figure through

the smoke. Jasmine also sees this, points it out to the rest of the group, and recognizes the figure as their friend, Levi. Nicole leads the group as they approach the figure.

As they got closer to the figure, they began to realize that although it resembled Levi, it lacked the confidence that he normally possessed. Levi looked frightened. As Nicole reached out her hand, *the man reached out to her in the fog, longing for something that was already gone.* He grabbed her hand, pointed to a cabinet, and disappeared into the air. Silence overcame the room as the group hesitantly approached the cabinet. As Jasmine opened the cabinet, the group looked over her shoulders to see what would be in it. Inside, there were two Uno cards, both of them being wild cards. These cards confused the group until Milo turned them over to discover a map on the back of them. However, the map was incomplete and was missing two pieces. The group began to look through the rest of the deck and discovered two more wild cards that completed the map.

The group instantly recognized where the map was pointing. The group ran out of Milo's house, crammed into Julie's 2008 Kia Soul, and started driving towards the elementary school playground, which is where the map pointed. When they pulled into the parking lot, they wandered the playground, only to find nothing. They then remembered that Levi loved to climb a maple tree right next to the playground. They ran to the tree and found Levi shuffling a deck of Uno cards. When he saw the group, Levi chuckled and said, "You guys up for a couple of rounds". Filled with joy, everyone starts to hug Levi. However, when Milo goes up to hug him, everything goes dark.

Not too long after, Milo wakes up and realizes that Levi is still missing, and has been missing for over 3 years. Milo struggles to come to terms with this and still wishes that he had his friend Levi to talk to. When Milo went to school that day, he went to his locker to grab his

books. In his locker, he found an Uno Wild Card. This is when he realized that Levi was not gone forever.