

Abatement

by Benjamin Hanson

Chapters Sixteen through Nineteen

Statement and Disclaimer

Well folks it has definitely been awhile since my last submission. My original plan was to write these chapters before I went back from Thanksgiving Break but sadly that never happened. Preparing for finals got the best of me but now that that's done and I have a month off, I'm going to do my damndest to get this done as quickly as possible. This installment includes a dramatic turn for a popular relationship and the introduction of a new character. I have found myself altering the storyline just a tad because of your suggestions, and they have never been more important than they are now. If you have any ideas, suggestions, criticisms, etcetera... then please write me! Every email you send, good or bad, is the inspiration I need to continue. As always the email address is benhanson1980@yahoo.com

If this story is illegal in your particular jurisdiction then please don't continue reading. If you are under eighteen, are offended by cross generational themed stories or the age regression genre doesn't interest you then don't read this either.

Chapter Sixteen

There was a mob gathered at the clothes closet as almost every boy in the orphanage fought over the best clothes available. I noticed David's face contorted in distress, but I almost felt relieved. Maybe it would come down to one good outfit and one crummy one, and then I could force David to take the good one. He could then get out of the orphanage and have a chance at a normal life that I never would. Before I had a chance to suggest that we wait for the crowd to clear, David had fallen to his knees and began crawling through the mob to get to the clothes.

I sighed, looking around for any sign of James and Colby. It came as no great surprise that they weren't there. I wondered why they hadn't warned me of this day, or given me any kind of directive, but I supposed they left it up to common sense. I belonged to Mr. Terrance and no one else could have me. I just hoped that playing this game didn't put me back in their suspicion.

David suddenly popped out of the crowd, clutching two outfits and grinning from ear to ear.

“I got them!”

I smiled as convincingly as I could as David led me towards the basement. The bathroom above had a long line and apparently this wasn't the only bathroom available. By the time we reached the basement I suddenly knew why the space was reserved for the younger kids. The ceilings were short, not even a foot above my own head, and there seemed to be as many rooms crammed together as was possible. There was a light smell of mildew in the air and the wood paneling surrounding us reminded me of a trailer.

Apparently the younger kids were having trouble getting to the clothes because the entire space was eerily silent. David led me over to a door at the end of the hall that led into a room lined with showerheads. I supposed that the only way to accommodate for so many children smashed together was to only provide them with showers. I wondered if David was even allowed to take a bath upstairs or not.

David quickly stripped down, I followed suit, and we both stood next to each other and turned our respective showerheads on. As the water cascaded over my body I sighed, allowing the tenseness of the morning to escape me. David quickly tapped my shoulder and broke me from my moment of peace.

“C'mon! We have to get ready fast!”

I laughed a little. He truly was excited about the prospect of us living together in the same home. I almost wanted to mention Jack again but decided against it. By the time I started soaping up my rag David was rinsing and he quickly set forth re-soaping his own. I jumped in surprise as he began to wash my back.

“Slow poke!” He giggled, running his rag covered hand furiously around my back.

I giggled as well, washing my torso as quickly as I could. By the time I reached my legs he had already finished the back of them and was hopping up and down for me to rinse. I rang the rag out, placed it teasingly on David's head, and rinsed my entire body. We quickly dried off, dressed, brushed our hair and teeth and headed back upstairs.

As soon as we reached the landing above it became apparent that we had beaten the visitors and as soon as Bessie had caught sight of us, she let out a deep laugh.

“Lord honey you didn't have to get ready so fast!”

David blushed and I just patted his shoulder in consolation. It was nice to see him so excited but Bessie had knocked the wind out of his sails. The smell of bacon wafting through the dining room suddenly reminded him of breakfast.

“Let's eat!” He grabbed my hand and dragged me into the dining room.

The majority of the older boys had already taken their places. I looked over at James and Colby who seemed to be deep in conversation. Jose and Jake were talking in hushed tones but Jose never

dared to cast a glance in my direction. I smiled to myself in satisfaction, suddenly feeling that I had no reason to fear the older boy. David broke me from my thoughts as Bessie began to carry the food out. The younger boys were filtering in little by little and apparently Bessie wasn't going to wait for them all to arrive.

David dutifully filled my plate with equal portions of what he was eating; four slices of bacon, two scoops of scrambled eggs, toast and a large glass of orange juice. He smiled impishly at me and shoveled a bit of his egg into his mouth. I smiled back, following his lead and chewed slowly. I knew that David was in a hurry but there wasn't any reason to be. The visitors would come in their own time apparently and I was a little afraid of the concept. What if someone knew what I was? What if someone actually decided to take an interest in me?

I was almost tempted to blow David off and just hide the rest of the day but I couldn't bring myself to disappoint him. I glanced over at James and Colby again in desperate hope of getting their attention but it was to no avail. Colby chewed his bagel slowly and James was nibbling on a slice of bacon. I grumbled to myself and instead turned to look at Bessie who was taking her seat a few seats down.

"What time are the visitors coming?" I asked innocently.

"Well they can start coming around ten but usually they don't come till later. You have a little while to wait yet." She laughed, shoving a forkful of egg in her mouth.

I nodded, looking at David who seemed too consumed by the contents of his plate to care. I looked over at Colby and noticed him surveying me with a blank look across his face. I stared back but he only averted his gaze. I felt my stomach churn in dread as to what was going through his mind.

"You full yet?" David tugged on my sleeve after swallowing the last bite of his bacon.

I looked down at my still half full plate and shrugged.

"Sure..."

David grinned and grabbed my hand, dragging me from the dining room as quickly as he could. I tried to catch sight of Colby one last time but David was moving too fast for me to do so.

Chapter Seventeen

"Do you think anyone's ever going to come?" David asked, his legs swinging beneath him.

"It's only been ten minutes!" I giggled, looking at my own dangling feet and the ground so far beneath us. We had climbed into a tree per David's suggestion. He felt that if we could see the visitors first we could also have first pick. If someone didn't look nice enough or like they'd be any fun then we'd

just stay up here. If they looked like they could be good parents then we'd just climb down and be the first ones to meet them.

"It feels like forever!" David groaned.

"I know, but they will be here sooner than you think." I ruffled David's hair to which he giggled in reply. I had to admit that time was passing rather slowly. I was aware that time seemed to go on forever when I was young, and that it seemed to fly when I was an adult. Perhaps age regression made time last longer once more? Whenever I was playing with David it flew by to be sure, but now that I wasn't busy that wasn't the case.

"Look over there!" David pointed at a tree to my right. I turned quickly to see what he was pointing at and he licked my cheek.

I laughed along with David and thought momentarily about tickling him. I decided not to as tickling this far in the air probably wouldn't lead to good things.

"Can I ask you something?" David asked after regaining his composure.

"Sure." I replied, looking into his large vibrant eyes.

"How did you know I wasn't going to pee the other night?"

I blushed and looked down at my feet. That definitely wasn't the question I was expecting.

"It's just... I don't know." I shrugged and spoke in a frustrated tone.

"Oh..." David's expression turned to one of disappointment. He remained quiet for a moment and I began to feel bad for not answering him.

"I did the same thing before you did." I finally said, by way of an apology.

"I made you do that?" He asked, his eyes darting to mine.

"Yeah you did." I smiled a little, unsure of what to say or feel at that moment.

"Why didn't you say you had to pee?"

"I guess I just wanted to know what it felt like." I replied.

"What if you peed on me?"

"I didn't though." I said as innocently as I could. I wished that I could tell him that I knew what the feeling was. I wished I could explain what it meant and how wonderful an experience it was. Sadly I couldn't.

"I guess so..." David looked down at his feet once more to which I merely sighed.

“What’s wrong?” He asked.

“I don’t know.” I shrugged. Of course I knew but I didn’t want him to know how frustrated I was.

“I didn’t mean to make you mad.” I watched as David’s lip began to tremble. His hands rose to meet his face and rub his eyes. I began to feel my heart fall inside of my chest.

“Please don’t cry! I’m not mad!”

David sniffled and looked into my eyes. His own eyes were puffy and red. I felt horrible for having been so short and I knew that I had to resolve it somehow.

“I’ve done it before.” As I spoke I knew it wasn’t a lie. If he asked anymore questions then I knew I’d had to lie at that point, but it was alright. Perhaps I could fool him; perhaps I could make him happy.

“You’ve rubbed against people before?” He asked with a great curiosity spread across his pale face.

“Not exactly...” I swallowed deeply.

“Then how did you do it?”

“Well you don’t have to rub against people to feel that way...” my voice waivered nervously.

“How else can you do it?”

“You can rub against other stuff... Like a bed or something...”

“Is that what you did?”

I groaned deeply to myself. It had escaped me how curious children were at heart.

“You can jack off.” I finally said. There was no way that I was going to delve into the intricacies of sex with him. I felt that even this was going too far but at least it would stop the discussion.

“Is that what you did?” He asked once more.

“Yes.” I said simply and smiled, patting his leg and finally feeling relieved.

“Oh okay.” He seemed satisfied and began to stare in the distance once more. I looked at him in mild disbelief. First of all, there was no way he knew what the term meant. Secondly, how could that knowledge make him happy? I wasn’t sure what he was getting at or what it all meant but at least I had finally ended the conversation. I knew that my mind still worked on a different level than his and that his curiosity was simply for the sake of knowledge, so maybe I was reading too far into things. He didn’t have to know how to make himself do it; he just wanted to know how I knew how to do it. He wanted to know how I had so much more knowledge than him on the subject. I felt myself begin to relax.

"I think I see something!" David yelled as he pointed out into the woods. Sure enough, I could see the outline of something moving in the distance. It was getting larger and larger with each passing moment and seemed to be rectangular in shape. After a few moments it became apparent that it was a car and David was hopping up and down excitedly.

I smiled at him and turned my gaze back to the approaching automobile. When it finally pulled up I saw that it was an older station wagon with wood paneling and nearly bald tires. I wondered to myself how they had the money to adopt anyone.

"That's a neat looking car." David said in complete seriousness. I nearly laughed but managed to control myself. When the doors flung open, a rotund woman with curly red hair and horn rimmed glasses stepped out. The passenger revealed himself to be a tall lanky man with curly brown hair and an adams apple so large it could be seen from the tree. David and I both looked at each other before we burst out laughing. I was laughing so hard that I nearly started to cry.

Thankfully neither of the members of the strange couple heard us and walked inside without a moment's thought. I almost felt sorry for the children they'd be going to see. Within a few minutes two more cars began traveling up the driveway and we waited patiently to see what the new couples would look like. I began to lose faith in the possibility of finding a suitable set of parents for David.

The first car was a large white sedan that seemed well maintained but fairly ordinary. An African American couple stepped out that looked like they were in their early thirties. The woman had a kind smile on her face and had curly hair running down her back. The man was fairly tall with short hair and wore a tan suit with a green tie. I looked at David who shrugged.

"Let's see who's in the next car."

I nodded in agreement as we turned our attention to them. If the car was any indication of their wealth, then it was vast. It was a black luxury car with bright chrome rims and tinted windows. The driver's side door opened first and a tall man in his mid-forties stepped out. He wore a pair of dark sunglasses, his black hair perfectly appointed on his head with a slight sprinkling of gray on the sides. He wore a pair of boots that were as shiny as the car and a loose white linen top that cascaded over his dark denim jeans. He walked over to open the passenger door and a tall statuesque figure stepped out. She had long platinum blonde hair that flowed straight down her back, deep penetrating blue eyes, and wore a red top and black skirt. I looked at David who seemed enamored.

"She's hot!"

I almost began to get sick to my stomach. There was no doubt in my mind how fake this couple was. Whatever they wanted they could afford and while they portrayed this perfect image on the outside, there was doubtlessly something darker within.

"HEY!" David yelled at the couple, waving his arms wildly. Before I could cover his mouth or stop him the couple turned and looked up at us.

“Hi there!” The man spoke with authority. His perfectly aligned teeth shined as the sun caught them. I groaned to myself as David hopped up and down excitedly.

“What’s your name?” David called. I felt like I wanted to disappear, and I really wanted to take David with me, but it was no use.

“I’m Patrick and this is my wife Suzanne. What’s your name?”

“I’m David! This is my best friend Ben!”

I blushed a little at his forwardness.

“Hi there Ben.” Patrick waved kindly to me. I waved back a little, attempting to act shy.

“Why don’t you two come down here?” Suzanne asked. She had a thick Texas accent that made me even sicker.

“Okay!” David shouted and tugged on my arm.

“Come on let’s go!”

I groaned but complied. David climbed down first and I followed shortly. I watched from the shadows for a moment as David ran over and shook their hands. Patrick seemed to be as cordial as possible, shaking his hand briefly and raising his eyes to meet mine.

“Come on over son, don’t be shy.” He said with the same booming voice he had before.

I looked down at my feet for a moment before walking over. Suzanne looked at me with a little smile before kneeling down to talk with David. As soon as I approached Patrick he knelt down and held out his hand.

“Good to meet you.”

I nodded and shook his hand in return. His hand lingered for a little longer than I was comfortable with so I finally pulled away.

“How old are you Ben?”

I wanted so badly to tell him my real age. I wanted to kick him in the shin and run as fast as I could. I knew what kind of person he was, my parents were made of the same stock. Money was the only thing that mattered and image was everything. They were doubtlessly looking for the perfect trophy child to bring home.

“I’m nine.” I said after a moment’s thought.

“Well that’s a grand age, isn’t it Suzanne?”

Suzanne looked away from David and smiled at her husband.

"It sure is!"

"Do you like video games Ben?"

I groaned. He was going to try and buy my affection.

"They're okay." I said simply. I wasn't going to make this easy for him.

"I see. Well what do you like Ben?" He rested his hand on my shoulder.

I almost shook it off but decided not to.

"I like to read, I like to be quiet, I like to keep to myself." I said with an evil grin on the inside.

"Well that's just swell." He smiled, patting my cheek gently.

"Sure... You know David is really intelligent. He likes to go outside and play, he likes video games." I spoke as innocently as I could.

Patrick laughed a little and pinched my nose.

"That's just wonderful isn't it?"

I turned red with anger. There wasn't any way in hell I was letting them ignore David like this.

"Hey David, do you want to go play?"

David turned from Suzanne with a slightly disappointed look on his face.

"I think we need to go do something."

David blinked in confusion but shrugged.

"I guess."

I smiled, glad that he had agreed.

"Good to meet you Patricia." I smiled sheepishly and turned to walk away.

"Certainly, hope to see you later." His voice seemed a bit gruffer than it had before. It made me uncomfortable but I decided to ignore it. I grabbed David's hand and ran into the woods as fast as I could. By the time we managed to clear a few trees and I saw the couple walk into the house, I looked down at David who still looked confused.

"Why did you do that?" He asked.

"They didn't have any interest in you, that woman was just being nice to you so Patrick could talk to me."

“How do you know that? She was really nice!”

I sighed, rubbing my temples.

“It’s hard to explain... My parents are really rich like that and I know what people like that are.”

David blinked, still looking confused, but decided to drop the subject.

“Do you want to go back up the tree?”

David shook his head.

“I think we can see them from here.”

I smiled and nodded, sitting next to him on a patch of barren soil. As the morning progressed only a few more cars arrived. None of the couples seemed to capture David’s attention despite my best efforts. I even suggested going inside to see the nice African American couple that had arrived moments before Patrick and Suzanne but he refused. I felt like I was ready to give up hope when a large red SUV drove up and parked in front of the house.

David and I watched intently as the driver’s side door swung open. A tall nice looking man stepped out. He had black hair, green eyes and wore a pair of khakis and a red polo. The passenger’s door followed and a young woman with red hair and blue eyes stepped out. She was wearing a green top and a pair of jeans. I couldn’t help but get a tad excited. The couple looked like they could have been David and Jack’s natural parents. I looked over at David who seemed slightly interested.

“I think you should go talk to them.”

David looked at me a tad horrified.

“Aren’t you coming too?”

I smiled and patted his shoulder.

“I’ll be there in a little bit; I just need to go inside for a minute. They look really nice.”

David looked unsure for a moment but finally sighed.

“Okay, but you better come!”

I smiled, “Of course I will.”

He ran out of the woods and the couple turned around, bright smiles on both of their faces. I felt as though I had finally set things right. Hopefully they would see Jack soon and would have the perfect family. I walked out of the woods, skirting the brush, and approached the back of the house. I was going to go hide in my room for a little while and give David a chance to bond with the couple. As soon as I began walking up the steps Patrick suddenly appeared with that same fake smile spread across his face. I groaned and despite my best efforts, wasn’t able to ignore him.

“Come take a seat with me.” He said taking a seat on the bottom step and patting the spot next to him. I wanted to protest, I wanted to run away, but I also didn’t want anyone to think there was something wrong with me. I descended the stairs and took my place, looking over at Patrick nervously.

He pulled a flask out of his pants, unscrewed the cap and let it rise to meet his lips. He took a deep swig and let out a sigh.

“Want some?” He inclined the flask in my direction. I almost wanted to scold him, to tell him how wrong he was offering alcohol to a minor, but I truly needed it. It had been a stressful day after all. I nodded and took the flask in my hands, taking a huge swig. I began to cough, and bent over. The burning sensation going down my throat felt foreign.

Patrick laughed and patted my back. “Good job little man.”

I handed the flask back and just nodded.

“Thanks.” I rubbed the tears from my eyes and finally sat upright.

“Do you have your own room here?”

I looked at him for a moment, slightly disturbed by his question.

“Yeah but I share it with someone.”

“I see...” he said with a satisfied smile crossing his face. He emptied the remaining contents of the flask into his gullet and shoved the empty container in his pocket.

“Why don’t you show it to me?”

I bit my lip, rolling over the possibilities in my mind. I wasn’t entirely sure what he wanted or why my room was so important but I wasn’t going to argue. He had no more ability to adopt me than he had the desire to adopt David.

“Sure.” I said and stood, walking up the stairs and towards the rear entrance. Patrick followed closely as we wended our way through the crowd of boys and adults. I caught sight of David speaking animatedly to the couple from before. He seemed absolutely happy and hadn’t even noticed me. I smiled to myself, pleased for him, and rounded the banister and started to climb the stairs. By the time we made it to the third floor I noticed that it was completely deserted.

I walked towards the room that James and I shared and swung open the door, walking inside. I turned to look at Patrick as he looked around in moderate disgust before entering and locking the door behind him. I began to feel my heart beat fast.

“So this is where they have you sleep?”

I nodded, frozen in place and unable to speak.

“What a pity...”

He rounded the corner and took a seat on James’ bed. He patted the bedspread next to me so that I would take a seat next to him. It took me a moment to break through my frozen state but I managed to slowly walk over and sit. I was more afraid than I ever had been.

“Do you like my boots Ben?” He asked running his fingers through my messy brown hair.

“Sure...” I replied quietly. I was barely able to make my voice audible.

“I could buy you a pair just like this. In fact, I could buy you anything you ever wanted.”

His arm reached around me as he began to gently rub my arm.

“That’s cool...” I replied, quietly once more. I knew that whatever he was up to wasn’t good. My previous assumptions about him were the least of my worries.

He laughed a little, taking his hands and wrapping them around my waist. Before I had a chance to protest he had lifted me up and placed me on his lap. I looked down at my legs as they dangled a good foot above the floor. Patrick had wrapped his arms around me and drawn me close to his chest, resting his face in my hair. I felt his nostrils inhale the fragrance.

“Anything,” he reiterated.

I tried to pull away but he didn’t lessen his grip. I turned my head to try and look at him but it was to no avail.

“Don’t be afraid. Have you never had a man love you like this before?”

I shook my head violently. I wanted to cry, I wanted to protest, but I knew that it was useless. I had promised to never cry again and it was a promise I had no intention of breaking.

“I think you’d love living with us. With have a great big pool, lots of land for you to play on. I can even buy you all the books you could ever read.” With each word his large hand inched closer to my waist. I felt his large fingers as they began to push into my waistband and towards my cock. I suddenly felt the smallest tinge of bravery rise up inside of me. I wasn’t going to be bullied; I wasn’t going to let this man take advantage of me. I shut my eyes tightly.

“STOP IT!” I yelled out. My eyes opened wide as the door burst open. Colby stood there with his arms crossed and Patrick’s arms fell from the shock. I ran over and wrapped my arms around Colby tightly, so frightened that I never wanted to let go.

“Why don’t you pick on somebody your own size?” Colby asked, smirking as he did his best to console me.

"I don't need this shit." Patrick scoffed and stood from the bed. He walked around Colby and back towards the stairs. Colby grabbed my arms and pushed me backwards, looking me deep in the eyes.

"Are you okay?"

I nodded, biting my lip and forcing the tears back.

"He tried to rape me."

Colby groaned and turned on his heel.

"Figures..."

I sniffed and just stood there, staring at the back of Colby's head.

"What do you mean?"

Colby smirked, "I know his type. The moment he walked in here I knew what he had on his mind. You are a damned fool for letting him bring you up here."

I sighed and looked down at my feet.

"I never thought..."

"Well start thinking!" Colby said, half exasperated, half angry.

I nodded and watched as Colby left the room. I plopped down on my bed for a moment to regain my composure.

Chapter Eighteen

If I hadn't of cared for David as much as I did, I probably would have locked myself in my room for the rest of the day. Since I did, I managed to will myself back to life and leave the room. I had no idea how much time had passed since I last left David, but I was hopeful that he wouldn't be too mad. As I descended the stairs, trying to push the prior altercation from my mind, I began to hope selfishly that the couple would have completely lost interest in him. I wanted things to go back to the way they were. I wanted to be able to run outside and play, with no adults around to ruin everything.

When I reached the bottom of the stairs I saw David and Jack sitting together with the same couple from before. They seemed so happy and involved that it seemed a shame to disturb them. I felt this strong feeling of jealousy rise up inside of me. I wasn't able to explain it, or what it meant, but for the briefest of moments I imagined myself in David's place. For the briefest of moments I fantasized about what it would mean to have a normal Mother and Father, and the life that could lead to. I immediately shook the thought from my mind and sighed.

I circled around the banister and walked towards the electronics room. I figured if Jose and Jake were in there, they wouldn't mess with me after their experience with Colby. Even if they did mess with me it would be better than feeling those things again. As I spun towards the doorway and peaked in, I saw Colby and James sitting there, watching the television.

I smiled a little and waved, hoping desperately that they would invite me in. James noticed me first and smiled gently.

"Hey come on in."

I nodded, surveying Colby's face but his eyes never broke with the television. I took a seat next to James and looked at what was on. It was a cartoon, which one I wasn't sure, and I could tell that neither of the boys were interested. It was apparently just to keep up appearances.

"I noticed David getting pretty chummy with those two out there." Colby said gruffly. I blushed and looked down at my feet.

"Yeah..."

James smiled and turned to look at me better.

"It's for the best you know?"

I nodded, not really sure what to say. They apparently noticed that I was upset. I felt horrible for wanting him to stay but it wasn't something I could help.

"You'll be out of here in two weeks anyway." Colby commented without emotion. James groaned and elbowed him in the side causing Colby to recoil.

"Well it's true!"

"Quit being an ass." James said playfully, winking at Colby. I almost giggled in spite of myself. James actually made Colby seem human.

"Your hair is getting really long." James commented as he tugged on it a little. I blinked and pulled on a strand, watching as it nearly came down to my shoulders. I hadn't taken the time to give it any attention.

"I guess so... Frederick said it would do that for awhile."

"What color was it before?" James asked.

"Oh... It was blonde." I replied.

"I think you'd look better as a blonde." Colby commented, staring off into the distance.

"Thanks I guess."

The silence that followed was deafening. I was grateful for their invite but this wasn't exactly the fun time I had in mind. I had become accustomed to playing, and this was the opposite of that. I knew that they were more mature than me but we were all kids after all.

"Are you sad?" I asked James suddenly, trying to ascertain what was going on.

James laughed a little, looking down at the floor and then back at the television.

"Kind of..."

"So you feel it too!?" I asked excitedly. I finally felt vindicated.

"How the hell can you not? It doesn't matter how much you know or what you were, you are damned to have these... feelings." Colby said with a slight tone of anger. He crossed his arms around his chest.

"Sorry..." I said, my excitement quickly leaving me.

"Don't worry about it." James said gently, patting my leg.

I leaned back against the sofa in defeat when Bessie poked her head in to see what was going on.

"Now what are you boys doing in here?"

I looked at James and Colby who seemed more used to the questions than I was.

"Just letting the younger kids have a chance. We'll be okay Bessie." James said, smiling as genuinely as he could.

Bessie seemed a tad distressed but simply sighed in defeat.

"Now I expect this from these two but what's your excuse?" Bessie asked me suddenly. I felt my cheeks flush as both James and Colby stared at me. I'd have loved to tell her how one of these wonderful potential parents tried to rape me upstairs but I knew that I couldn't. I was to draw as little attention to myself as was possible.

"I don't like any of them." I said simply.

Bessie sighed, "Fine, fine... Don't make a mess now."

She walked out of the room with a look of defeat etched on her face. I frowned a little, feeling as though I had disappointed the only adult ally I had.

"Good job." Colby said, picking up the remote and turning it to a news channel. I groaned and leaned back. It was going to be a long day.

It felt like several hours had passed when lunch was finally served. As we walked into the dining room I noticed that there was a stark difference from the typical arrangement. The boys that had been talking to adults were sitting closer to the kitchen with their respective potential parents next to them. The boys that had been ignored were sitting closer to the entrance by themselves. They seemed fairly happy despite their situation and I felt confused. James seemed to know what was on my mind as he leaned in to whisper in my ear.

“The majority of these kids have been here since they were very young. They know who the cream of the crop is and who is doomed to stay here forever. It’s like a pecking order of sorts.”

I nodded, still slightly confused but I accepted it. I supposed that vanity was present in all things. We each sat next to each other beside a couple of boys I had never noticed before and waited for the food to be served. I rested my chin in my hands as I watched David and Jack with the same family from before. I stared intently at David, willing him to turn his head, but he never did. I wondered if he had ever even mentioned me. Before I had a chance to become any more depressed the door swung open and the same feast I had become accustomed to came out.

As everyone dug in I caught sight of a boy that appeared to be about twelve. He had dark brown hair that lay lazily in his eyes which were a piercing blue. His skin was fairly tan and he had this bemused expression spread across his face. I couldn’t help but stare at him. He was handsome, certainly, but there was something about him that just caught my attention. His eyes rose to meet mine and I blinked in surprise, looking away quickly.

“What’s up?” He asked; his voice still very childish.

I swallowed deeply as my eyes moved to meet his again.

“Nothing...” I said quietly.

The bemused expression on his face turned into a smirk and I began to squirm a little. James threw a roll at him causing his eyes to grow large.

“Really? Him?” The boy asked utterly bewildered. James nodded.

“What?” I asked, turning to look at James.

“He’s... one of us.”

I swallowed again and looked back at him. Suddenly it dawned on me why he seemed so interesting. The look in his eyes, his expressions, they were much older than he was. Even if it was slight it was still noticeable. Maybe I had some strange innate ability to tell who was like me. The boy’s face seemed to return to normal as he placed a large scoop of mashed potatoes on his plate. He purposely reached over the table to hand them to me.

“Here you go.”

I smiled, blushing a little, and took the bowl from him. I scooped myself a serving and passed the bowl over to James who simply laughed.

“Look out for him.” He gestured towards the boy.

I began to protest, to explain I had no interest, but I decided not to. I couldn’t deny that I was intrigued, and for the first time all day my mind was on something other than the loss of David. I grabbed a piece of meatloaf and some asparagus and began to dig in.

I would occasionally glance up and catch his gaze to which I would simply blush and return to my food. I wasn’t sure what it was about him, but there was this attraction that he exuded that felt almost adult. As I pressed the last piece of asparagus in my mouth and rose to wait for him by the entrance, I noticed David, Jack and the family walking towards me. David grinned happily and waved, running up to hug me.

“Hey where have you been?”

I sighed, “I noticed you guys were having a lot of fun so I went and hung out with James and Colby.”

David frowned a little but quickly regained his composure.

“Michael and Melinda are so cool! They live in Connecticut and have a farm! Do you know what Michael does for a living?”

I felt my insides turning to dust. “What’s that?”

“He’s a pilot! Isn’t that so cool?”

I smiled and patted his head.

“It sure is. I hope you guys have fun.”

“Oh yeah!”

I watched in disappointment as he walked away, not even noticing how hurt I was. Jack hobbled after him, giving me the slightest of smiles while Michael and Melinda laughed and spoke excitedly behind them. All at once I felt the same feelings of loneliness and abandon wash over me. I bit my lip, looked down at the floor and tried my hardest not to cry. I had no idea what to do. These feelings were so much stronger than any I had ever had before. My lips began to tremble as an unfamiliar hand wrapped around mine. I looked up to see the frame of the older boy, a gentle smile replacing his playful expression from before.

“Want to go somewhere and talk?”

I sniffed and nodded, grateful for any escape from this moment. I followed him as we walked towards the entrance and into the yard, hand in hand.

Chapter Nineteen

It didn't take long for me to become lost in the woods that surrounded the house. Each trunk stood taller than the last and the leaves concealed any path that might have existed. I knew that we weren't supposed to walk out this far but in that moment I didn't care. The boy seemed to know exactly where he was going, and I felt safe by his side. He didn't seem at all like James or Colby to me. Even though Colby expressed his gratitude, he seemed so bitter about his existence. James seemed okay, but there was this quiet wall that seemed impenetrable to anyone but Colby. Neither of them wanted to get close to me, but this boy that barely knew me seemed to know how I felt instantly.

Even so, I couldn't bring myself to say anything. I occasionally glanced up at his face which seemed kind, but he had made no real effort to talk either. I wondered if he was respecting my thoughts or if he was just being nice. Either way I was grateful, and having company was always nice. All of a sudden he stopped and I looked around us. We were in a clearing of trees, and save an old mattress and a rotten tree trunk, there appeared to be nothing around us. There was no sound of children, of cars, of anything. We were absolutely and completely alone.

"You can sit on the trunk or next to me if you want." The boy plopped down on the old mattress.

I smiled and sat on the trunk, still not willing to completely trust him. He lay back with his hands around the back of his head and sighed, looking up at the canopy above us.

"That David kid means a lot to you huh?"

I stared at him for a moment in quiet contemplation before speaking.

"Yeah, he does..."

"You should never fall for the real ones; it always ends in heart break."

I suddenly felt affronted by his comments. Who was he to tell me who I should fall for and who I shouldn't? With that being said, how did he know anyway?

"Who said I loved him?"

The boy laughed a little, "Chill its fine. It's not like I'm going to tell anyone."

I sighed deeply. "Yeah so maybe I did... It's not my fault though."

The boy shook his head. "No it definitely isn't your fault. You didn't know any better."

I smiled a little. "What's your name anyway?"

The boy laughed. "Sorry I forgot... My name is Peter."

"I'm Ben."

“Good to finally meet you.” He finally sat up, sitting Indian style, and smiled at me gently. I blushed, still not used to his kindness.

“The fabulous duo didn’t want me to meet you.” He said suddenly, drawing in the dirt with his finger.

“Why?” I asked.

“Well let’s see... probably because I’m so adorable and nice.” He grinned brightly causing me to laugh.

“Come on tell me!”

Peter grinned sheepishly. “I’m a little different than they are. I don’t think being turned into a kid gives you a right to be a bitter asshole. I happen to love life, and I have fun with it. They’re pretty serious about what they do, they get the job done and that’s about it.”

I nodded. It didn’t make sense really but I could see it being plausible.

“I think that’s good.”

He looked up at me and smirked, “Be careful who you say that to.”

I smiled again, stood up and plopped down on the mattress next to him. Peter was definitely at least a foot taller than me and had bigger hands and feet. It amazed me how much older he seemed to me.

“How old are you?” I asked, lying on my back and staring up at him.

Peter smiled with a pleased expression on his face and lay down next to me.

“In my current form I’m twelve years, three months. In reality I’m twenty-nine.”

I blinked in surprise. “I’m twenty-nine too.”

Peter smiled, “Small world huh?”

I nodded. “How long have you been doing this?”

Peter thought for a moment. “Let’s see here... I guess about nine years now.”

That definitely took me by surprise. Both James and Colby were older and were transformed at more advanced ages. The idea of them regressing a twenty year old seemed shocking.

“Why did that happen to you so young?”

Peter shrugged. "Wrong place, wrong time? I don't know really. I heard what was happening around that alley and I went to get some action. When one of the kids asked me for money and I said I didn't have it, they drugged me and that was all she wrote."

I sighed, remembering my own first night. "I guess we have a lot in common."

"Is that what happened to you?"

"Well sort of... I thought there were men down there though. I'm not a pedophile. Not that there's anything wrong with that or anything!"

I protested suddenly, not wanting to hurt his feelings. He had been the kindest person to me so far. Thankfully he just laughed in return.

"It's cool don't be scared. I always liked kids but I never actually did anything. Going down that alley was my first try and you see what it did for me." He smirked.

"Do you like it?"

"What?"

"Being like this..."

Peter seemed thoughtful for a moment as he picked my hand up and wrapped his fingers around mine. I stared at our hands together and smiled a little.

"It could be worse you know? It's not that bad."

"I like the being a kid part. It's kind of fun to play games and enjoy myself for once. I just don't want to do the sex stuff."

Peter laughed a little. "Hey don't knock the sex stuff, it's not so bad."

I blushed furiously only causing him to laugh more.

"You liked sex as an adult didn't you?"

"Well, yes, I didn't have it all that much though."

Peter smirked. "Join the club. I was a virgin before I was regressed."

My eyebrows rose in wonder, "Really?"

"Sadly, yes."

I lay there for a moment, our hands still wrapped together, as I let the idea filter through my mind.

"Never?"

Peter laughed again. "Why is that so hard to believe?"

"I don't know you just seem so sweet."

Peter smiled, "Thanks, I appreciate that."

I nodded, looking in his penetrating blue eyes. If he looked even remotely like this as an adult I would have been all over him.

"Turn on your side." Peter asked suddenly.

My eyes grew large and as I began to protest Peter merely smirked.

"Not for that you dummy just turn over."

I nodded, a little nervously, but complied. As soon as I did he pressed his body closely against mine and wrapped his arm around my torso. He allowed me to rest my head on his arm. I smiled, blushing intensely, but enjoyed the sensation of being close to him like that.

"I like talking to you." I said simply. I wasn't sure what else to say.

"Thanks I like listening to you." Peter replied, running an errant finger up and down my arm and sending shivers through me.

The next hour with him was as ideal as any hour could be. We never did anything besides talk, but just having someone on the same level as me was amazing. He spoke maturely in general, but occasionally had childish slipups. His general demeanor was playful, but the way that he held me showed a much more mature and nurturing side. If anyone understood my plight as fully as I did, it was Peter, and I was grateful to have met him. There was a side of me that was certain that James and Colby didn't want us to meet for another reason than the one he provided, but at that moment I didn't care.

There wasn't a single subject that seemed taboo; everything from his first time, to how he felt when he first regressed, to how much he knew about the area. When I expressed my concerns about Mr. Terrance and my desire to run away, he seemed to understand more than anyone had. While he had never been leased to anyone, it wasn't something that appealed to him. For the briefest of moments we fell silent, and I thought that my moment of bliss was about to end. It was then that Peter surprised me.

"Why don't we just run away together?"

I almost laughed but managed to keep it in.

"You like it here though."

Peter shrugged. "I never said I liked it, I said it could be worse. I never actually thought about running away before..."

I broke our spooning and turned over so I could face him.

“You like what you do though don’t you? I thought you were cool with it.”

“I like adventure, I don’t know. I’m not saying I’m going to do it or anything, but it’s something to think about. I think we’d have a better chance if we went together.”

I stared at him for a moment in silence letting his words tumble around in my mind. Certainly two heads are better than one, but it wasn’t fair to him to take advantage of his generous nature. He was one fifth of the way done with his servitude as it was.

“You are almost done though.” I protested.

“I don’t know if I really want to be done. We have an advantage being adults you know? Once we get regressed further and we start to age we won’t remember any of this. Then we’ll just be... normal.”

I thought for another moment and sighed, my fingers absent mindedly played with his collar.

“I’ll think about it.”

“Well good I will too.” He smiled brightly at me.

I blushed again, letting my hand fall as I looked at the space between us.

“Not to break the mood but are you about ready to go back?”

I blinked and looked into his eyes. “I guess so. I feel better, thanks for everything.”

“Anytime...” Suddenly, without any warning, he leaned in and gently kissed me on the lips. My already red cheeks began to flush even more and I was left completely speechless. Peter merely giggled.

“Come on let’s go.” Peter stood and offered his hand. I nodded, shaking the kiss off, and took his hand. I looked up into his eyes again and smiled.

“Last one there’s a rotten egg!”

I began to run as fast as I could. I knew since he was older he’d have no trouble beating me but I’d enjoy the game just the same. Peter laughed, catching up with me quickly, and we both ran back through the woods with Peter leading the way by my side.