

Abatement

by Benjamin Hanson

Chapters Twenty Six through Thirty

Statement and Disclaimer

I have to say that this submission is just a little past due, actually, almost a year past due. For that I am sincerely apologetic, but my life has changed dramatically over the past year. Thankfully college is going well, but I have since left a relationship, moved twice, lost a family, gained one, and experienced all manner of things that I won't bore you with. With all that being said, welcome to the triumphant return of Abatement! There are two more submissions to go, and I promise to have this story complete by the end of January, or February at the very latest. If you are a new reader, enjoy! If you are a returning fan, feel free to re-read. In either scenario, please send your comments! I do this for the readers, and it is your comments that keep me going. You can email me at benhanson1980@yahoo.com

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Chapter Twenty Six

As the morning light began to light my skin, my eyes shuddered open. The warmth was familiar, but a more recently familiar warmth began to permeate me as well; the soft lips of a familiar stranger, gently taking their course across my neck, dancing gently with each curve and indentation.

"I thought you'd never wake up," Peter murmured, taking a momentary break from his lip based massage. I smiled, unwilling to respond too quickly. The wonderful things that Peter caused me to feel felt so surreal, so very much like a dream. If there was any chance this was anything other than reality, I wanted to savor it as long as possible.

"Play dead, that's fine. Although I do have my ways of making you talk!" With the last word his once seductive voice became childish once more, and I leapt in surprise as I felt his fingers bury themselves into my exposed flesh. With fiendish speed, they managed to penetrate every part of my

body that could be tickled, and I writhed, laughing loudly and pleading for him to stop. The look in his eyes, when I was able to catch an occasional glance, was gleeful, yet committed to the task at hand. When at last I managed to scoot away enough to free one arm and return the assault, the sound of the door opening shot us both back into reality.

“Why don’t you want to play with me anymore?” The usually soft and boyish voice of David trembled with remorse, with jealousy, with sadness. Almost immediately after he spoke, he slammed the door roughly, causing me to jump a bit in surprise. I began to feel tears rise in my eyes as I fought them as best as I could. I immediately jumped up, and began to look for my discarded clothes from the previous evening. Before I had a chance to advance on them once I discovered them in the far corner by the window, I felt Peter’s grasp firmly upon my arm.

“Don’t,” he said firmly. His voice was clear, more adult than it ever had been. I at once felt afraid, but at the same time committed to my ideals. I felt horrible for the way I had treated him, and he had chosen to talk to me just the same. Here I was, the worst of people, and there wasn’t anyone that was going to keep me from salvaging what was left of this temporal relationship. I jerked away quickly, grabbed my clothes, and began to dress. I glared at Peter in forced disdain.

“I can’t do this anymore. I know that I won’t know him for very long, but that’s not his fault! I can still be his friend!” I yelled forcefully, despite my constantly evolving emotions. By the time I managed to pull my shirt over my head, Peter had jumped from the bed and blocked the door to the hallway.

“I forbid you to take one damn step out of this room. If you love me you will do what I ask you to.” I immediately paused as his words flooded into my barely comprehending mind. I knew that I loved Peter; I had never felt this way about anyone before. I almost considered what life would be like if I accepted the fate this interaction had created. Surely I would feel bad, but David would move on, would heal. It was an impossible thought. It just wasn’t in me to accept that.

“I’ll never love anyone like I love you, but I can’t accept this!” With force that I didn’t realize I had, I managed to push him onto the floor. Without a moments glance, I quickly wrapped my hand around the door knob and turned it, pushing the door outward. I flew as fast as my feet would carry me down the stairs, as I heard another pair of feet in hot pursuit a few leaps behind me. My eyes managed to catch a glimpse of fiery red hair beyond the entrance door, and I followed it immediately knowing its owner. By the time I had managed to escape, the slam behind me that I expected came much later, followed by the same familiar footsteps behind me. I didn’t care if he followed me, he wouldn’t stop me now.

“David!” I yelled out, seeing the young boy a good twenty feet ahead of me. He immediately turned, stopped and stared at me. He didn’t seem angry, merely upset, and while he wasn’t crying it was fairly obviously that he had been. I cleared the distance between us quite quickly, but before I could begin to speak, Peter shoved me aside, almost causing me to lose my balance.

“Now you listen to me you insignificant pile of shit. You are going to go off and live with this... this Michael and Melinda couple, and it’s not fair for you to expect anyone to feel the same about you. You obviously hurt Ben; there isn’t any way around that. You are worthless, you are evil, you are just a selfish little kid and there is absolutely nothing you can do to change that. You need to leave him alone, and if I ever see you again I will personally kick your ass!” As the words flew out of Peter’s mouth I knew at once that they were said to protect me, but I felt two emotions despite that. At once I was angry, I couldn’t believe that anyone, especially Peter, would talk to a little kid like that. I also felt shock that it was him, that it really was Peter saying such things. It was impossible for me to accept this treatment, but almost as impossible for me to believe it had occurred.

David burst into tears once more and began to run back towards the house. I momentarily turned, prepared to run after him, but I stopped. My feet planted themselves firmly in the ground as I felt my fists tighten at my sides.

“Listen, it’s over. Let’s just drop it and get on with our lives.” Peter’s voice was calm once more, familiar. As much as I wanted to trust it in that moment, my rage had overcome me. Peter’s hands gently formed their way across my shoulders, preparing to console me, but I felt my body begin to move without my consent. My arms reached out, hands extended, as I pushed Peter forward. His face was suddenly frozen in shock, as my arms took control of themselves once more. My left hand flew with nearly archer-like accuracy, and planted firmly against his cheek.

I stared at Peter whose eyes began to well up with tears. The look on his face was one of the saddest I had seen, possible as sad as the look on David’s face mere moments ago. I felt bad, I truly did, but I couldn’t control myself. It was Peter that had wrought this judgment, not I. I was in the right, or at least I felt I was. I knew that I wasn’t in a fit state to speak, or to think, so I immediately turned and began to run. Each foot pounded the ground swiftly as I found my arms flailing by my sides. The familiar slopes of the grounds disappeared and became replaced by fallen leaves, by bramble, by branches, by trees. Within a matter of a few minutes, I found myself deeply within the very woods that I once feared. As lost as I knew I was, and the more lost I would become, stopping was not an option.

My breath quickened, youthful vigor only sufficient for so much. The pain that coursed through my exhausted frame felt invigorating, felt vindicating. I wanted to focus on the two problems I had, but my mind refused. All it wanted was to feel this life giving moment, my legs aching, my lungs begging for more oxygen than they could handle. I ran, and ran for what felt like an eternity, until finally a misplaced step sent me flying through the air. I landed fairly softly on a pile of leaves, and as I stared at each one and the scent of the forest permeated my being, I stopped. My mind slowed, and the pain that racked me began to cease. With the ability to think, I began to feel something else, something other than anger. I suddenly burst into tears, not because I thought of what had happened with David, or what had happened with Peter, but because I just wasn’t capable of doing anything else. My hands grasped the leaves around me as I hugged myself to them, comforting my shaking frame with the earth below me.

It was, at the very least, permanent. It would not change, it would not forsake me. I didn’t have to think about the fact there were leaves and dirt beneath me, it was just there. It was in that simplicity

that it was comforting, and nothing more. As I felt tears that I didn't know I had escape me, and my lips trembled in time with each stream, my body became cold. I looked ahead of me at the seemingly endless path of trees, the unfamiliar sound of nothing. My hands firmly planted on the ground, preparing to push my frame from its position, but I suddenly stopped, allowing my exhaustion to overcome me. I fell back onto the ground, my face buried in the leaves. My tears had ceased, but soft sobs replaced them.

"I love you," I said softly. I wasn't entirely sure who I said it to, but it felt the appropriate thing to say. The cold earth beneath me caused me to shiver, and I accepted it in my moment of defeat. My eyes closed tightly, and I allowed myself to float away. Within moments, I was asleep.

Chapter Twenty Seven

The warmth of the covers around me and the light shining brightly onto my face made it readily apparent that I had not awoken in the same place I fell asleep. I stretched out beneath the covers, searching for a warm body that wasn't there. I rolled over, my eyes opening slightly as the sight of the blank wall across from me came into view. I was alone, but I was safe and at home. How I had made it here was doubtless, who else knew the woods so well? Where he was, however, was another question entirely.

I sat up, trying to figure out the hour. It seemed to be morning, but how I slept so long was beyond me. The floor felt cold against my feet, and I shivered a little at its touch. I stood, gaining my balance, and my hands went straight to my head. I tried my best to remember every headache I had ever had, and it seemed as though each one had decided to make a last stand at that moment. My temples throbbed, my eyes fought to keep their focus. As much as the light was unkind, and as welcome as the bed seemed despite the many hours I had just slept, I knew that I had to find Peter.

As I crept out into the hall, the complete silence that surrounded me confirmed my suspicions about the hour. There were no showers as the day wined down, or final games being played below me. I climbed the stairs to search the corridors of the older boy's rooms. As I passed each door I listened intently for some sort of sign of where he could be, but it was of no use. I wasn't entirely sure which room belonged to Peter, and I couldn't just open each door at a whim. Without any leads to go on, I crept down the stairs and to the main level. Except for the ticking of a clock on the wall, there was nothing; a lifeless vessel that in a few hours become filled with the sounds of yelling children, and the smell of Bessie's cooking. As much as I knew searching any further was a worthless endeavor, there was one more place he could be, no matter how remote a possibility it was. I walked over towards the entrance, slipped on a pair of flip flops, and walked out onto the porch.

The morning air felt good against my throbbing head, and as I walked into the dew covered grass, my eyes found nothing. I wanted to reach out and create Peter from nothing, or to yell to the top of my lungs, but it was impossible. I knew he was mad, he had every right to be, but my anger had long since dissipated. I wanted to hate him for what he did to David but it just wasn't possible. He loved me

so much that he would be willing to put his life and reputation at the orphanage on the line for me. Even if I felt it was a wrong move, he did it all because of me. How could I stay mad at that? There had to be some way to make it up to him, and as much as I wished I had the answer to what that was, I simply didn't. There was always the possibility of talking to James or Colby, but both boys hated Peter. Talking to Bessie was almost as fruitless since there was no way I could blow my cover, or cause any concern at the orphanage that would have me singled out. As my mind raced to think of someone to talk to, I immediately paused on a remote, but seemingly valid possibility – Wesley.

I immediately walked back into the house, ascended the stairs, entered my room, and flew to where the jeans I had worn a couple of days ago was. I panicked, holding my breath as I discovered they weren't there. Of course it wasn't such a huge surprise, Bessie was a dutiful housekeeper, but this one time it was a great inconvenience. I immediately ran out of the room, down the stairs, and into the kitchen where the laundry area was. After reaching the closet and gazing on a rather large pile of dirty clothes, I swallowed deeply.

"Hope springs eternal..." I muttered to myself as I started to make my way through dirty shirts, pants, underwear, socks, and all manner of garments. I tried my best to hold my enthusiasm back as much as possible, but my youthful mind battled me for control. I didn't have any long standing desire to clean up a huge mess, but I knew if I was caught I might be in trouble. When it seemed as though finding that particular pair of jeans would be impossible, I stopped. The sound of crinkling paper inside fabric immediately reached my ear, and hope began to rise inside of me. I grabbed the pair directly below where my hands had been, reached in the offending pocket, and pulled out a small sheet of paper.

"Yes!" I yelled, a little too loudly and paused for a second to listen. Thankfully it appeared as though no one had heard me. I quickly set about piling the clothes into a single pile once more, and quietly crept out of the kitchen and back into the foyer. On the far wall by the stairs a single table sat with a telephone on top. As I approached it, hands shaking, I grabbed the receiver and pressed it to my ear. After dialing the numbers I waited, for what seemed like an eternity, until the phone began to ring. By the time the third ring had arrived, I began to lose hope and almost began to lower the phone from my ear, when muffled groans could be heard on the other end.

"Mmmm... Hello?" The tired voice of Wesley spoke through a stifled yawn.

"Oh, I'm sorry, did I wake you up?" I asked, immediately hitting myself in the forehead. I hadn't even stopped to think of how early it was.

"It's fine... Is this Ben?"

I paused for a moment before answering, my index finger quietly playing with the cord that led the phone to its base. I felt bad to ask him to come over so early, but he had openly offered to come anytime I needed. I supposed that sometimes it was necessary to ask for help, especially when one was only nine.

“Yes. Did you mean what you said the other day? That I could call you whenever I need you?” I breathed heavily as I spoke, unsure of myself, and sounding much more childish than I wanted to.

“Sure I did.” Wesley replied, straining to sound awake as I heard shifting on his end of the receiver.

“I need you.” I laughed a little, still tangling the cord around my finger.

“Oh you do huh? Well do you want me to come over?” He sounded happy to oblige, as bad as I felt asking him to.

“Please.” I replied simply.

“How about you give me two hours? I need to take a shower and get some stuff settled around here.”

“Sounds great! I mean... that’ll work.” I laughed nervously. I wasn’t sure why I was so excited, maybe it was the possibility to get relevant advice about Peter and make things right.

“Alright kiddo, see you then.” As he finished speaking I could hear him hang up on his end, and I did the same. I sighed for a moment, staring at the stairs next to me. My mind returned to my headache, and my stomach begged for sustenance. I momentarily thought about raiding the kitchen for drugs and cereal when the familiar shifting of Bessie’s feet came.

“What’re you doing up so early honey? Couldn’t sleep well?” Bessie asked with concern, laying her hand gently on my shoulder. I smiled up at her, turning to look at her aging face. She truly was a kind person.

“My head hurts, and I’m hungry.” I said simply. I could have discussed that my mind was full of chaotic matters, but somehow my base needs won out.

“Well we’ll just have to take care of that won’t we?” Bessie gently squeezed my shoulders as she spoke, and led me into the kitchen. I smiled contentedly, maybe things were going to look up?

A couple aspirin and a full breakfast later, I was disappointed to once more not see Peter. I hoped silently that he was just sleeping in from the previous evening’s work, but realized that he was probably still mad. I went outside and sat on the porch, my headache nearly gone, and waited for any sign of Wesley. While I wasn’t sure how long it had been, it felt like a small eternity, the sound of distant gravel being shifted finally reached my ears. I stood excitedly, standing on my tip toes for any sign of Wesley’s car. Within a few minutes what I had been waiting for finally came to fruition, Wesley was here.

As I ran up to the side of his car, eagerly waiting for him to get out, I saw him laugh happily. Whatever possessed Wesley to take an interest in me was greatly appreciated at that moment. As he swung the door open, I stepped aside long enough for him to get out, and immediately wrapped my arms around his waist hugging him tightly.

“Well it’s good to see you too!” Wesley chortled as he bent down and returned the hug. I smiled brightly as I stared into his eyes, feeling a strong affinity for him in that moment. Wesley was real, unattached to the orphanage, had a legitimate interest in my wellbeing, and knew nothing of my dark secrets. He was, for lack of a better term, my messiah.

“Care to go for a walk?” Wesley asked. I nodded, finally releasing him and stepping back. Wesley began to walk across the yard and towards the woods; I followed closely by his side. Wesley reached down, offered his hand, and I gladly took it. It was nice to feel someone else’s touch. We quickly found our way onto the familiar path that led to my introduction to David and Jack. I attempted to push the idea of David from my mind, but it was difficult since it was at the basis of my argument with Peter. My eyes surveyed each leaf we passed, trying to remember its color, its texture, anything that wasn’t associated with the problems I was facing.

“What’s bothering you?” Wesley asked, gently swinging his arm a bit, jostling my own. I looked up and over at his face, smiling a little. His eyes were glued on me, waiting for any sort of a response.

“It’s a long story...” My voice trailed off as I spoke. I wanted to go ahead and blurt it out, but there was a side of me that knew I had to be kind, to be considerate. If Wesley was kind enough to come to see me on a whim, I had to be kind enough to not load him down so readily.

“Looks like a long walk to me. Go for it, if you want.” Wesley squeezed my hand gently as he spoke. I sighed, took a deep breath, and prepared to dump my feelings into the early summer air. I begged my mind to stay as adult as possible, at least so I could get my point across clearly.

“When I first came here I met a boy named David who is younger than me. We became friends, and when the adoption day came, he met a great family that is probably going to adopt him and his twin brother. Well, my other friend Peter who is older than me, he is really nice and didn’t want me to get hurt so he told David that we can’t be friends anymore because he’s leaving and I’m not. I told Peter that I just wanted to stay friends with David even though he’s leaving, but Peter said he didn’t think that would work out because it would hurt too bad. I mean, I know he’s right, but I still don’t want to hurt David even though him leaving really hurts me.”

Each word that I spoke felt like sweet redemption from some egregious crime that I had committed. I knew that the explanation was childish, but it was more coherent than I thought it would be.

“I see... So David still wants to be friends and Peter doesn’t think you should be.” Wesley summarized the statement fairly easily. I nodded, sighing audibly.

“Well there definitely isn’t a problem being friends, but I understand why it hurts to see him leave. He was one of the first friends you met here, he’s going to have a family that I’m sure you want to have as well, and you are just stuck in the middle holding all the pieces.”

As complex as my feelings on the subject were, Wesley made a pretty easy task of deciphering them. He had been adopted as well, so naturally he had experienced these sorts of things before.

“Yeah... I guess I understand that I can’t be friends with David forever, but I don’t want Peter to be mad at me anymore. I just want to fix it. If David leaves and Peter is still mad at me, then I don’t have anyone anymore!” As I yelled the last part of my reply, I began to feel tears well up in my eyes. I fought hard to hold them back as I stopped where I stood, released Wesley’s hand and squeezed my fists tightly. Wesley stopped as well, kneeling down until we were eye level, and placed his hands on my shoulders.

“If Peter cares enough about you to look out for you with this, well this situation with David, then he isn’t going to just stop being your friend. You need to tell him how you feel, that you appreciate what he’s trying to do, and that you don’t want to lose him as a friend. I don’t think he’d do all this for you if he wanted to lose you as a friend either.”

I nodded, using my hands to wipe the collection of tears that were just appearing on my lower eyelids. I managed to stop anymore from coming, bit my lower lip, and contemplated his words. What he said was absolutely true. Peter loved me, I knew as much, so why would he stop being there for me just because of a singular incident? He did come into the woods and save me after all, well, most likely anyway.

“You’re right, thanks.” I smiled, looking into his large brown eyes.

“Anytime kid.” Wesley hugged me tightly and I returned the favor, wrapping my arms firmly around his neck. I nuzzled my face into his hair for a brief moment, breathing in his scent and momentarily forgetting myself. It was somehow comforting to be in the arms of a man, somehow familiar to how it was to be with Peter, even if he physically was a child.

“Since we’ve solved all the problems of the world, how about a bite of lunch in town? My treat!” Wesley laughed as he leaned back, releasing me from his grasp. I smiled, letting my arms fall back to my side and recomposing myself.

“Sure!”

Wesley took my hand once more as we began to walk back towards the house.

Chapter Twenty Eight

After receiving permission from Bessie to go into town, and driving for awhile, Wesley parked the car in front of the same diner we had our first lunch at. I climbed out, feeling more comfortable with my surroundings than I had the first time, and followed him inside. We took our same seat as before and waited for the waitress quietly as I thumbed through the menu.

“So when we’re through here, I know this great arcade down the straight that you’d love.” Wesley broke the silence with a feigned expression of excitement etched across his face. I groaned internally, but kept a fairly solid face on the outside. It had been many years since I had played or

enjoyed video games, and I doubted that even regression was going to fix that. Just the same, if it made Wesley happy to see me happy, then I would oblige him.

“Cool!” I said simply, my voice rose a bit as the word finished forming. I smiled, forcing as goofy an expression as I could. Wesley seemed to take the response as sincere, and closed his menu. I knew that he had only been looking through it to pass the time; he had been here countless times before. When the waitress finally arrived, we ordered our food, received our drinks, and fell into a staring contest.

“Boo,” Wesley grinned, as I sat back a little, startled. I guess I had been staring at him for quite some time, but it never occurred to me. I had so many things running through my mind that everything else seemed secondary. Wesley laughed.

“Sorry! Didn’t mean to startle you. Still worried about Peter?”

I sighed, blowing bubbles into my soda.

“More or less.”

“Understandable, but it’ll work out, I promise.” Wesley reached across the table, laying his hand over mine. I blushed a little, looking down into my soda once more. I knew that it was just a kind gesture, but the adult side of me saw such contact as more so, as being intimate.

“Oh great timing!” Wesley proclaimed as the waitress arrived with our food. We both had burgers, again, and Wesley made quick work of tearing into his. I followed, at a relatively lower pace, but truly enjoyed the taste of the meat and grease as it made its way into my stomach. There were some pleasures in life that nothing could take away from me, apparently junk food was one of them. My relatively small breakfast left me wanting more, and in no time I had managed to finish everything on my plate. It came as a shock to me, but I supposed it was good to eat after everything I had been through recently.

Wesley extracted his wallet, laid the payment on the table next to the ticket, and began to rise, beckoning me to follow. As soon as we exited the restaurant I turned to walk towards the car, but Wesley was already walking in the opposite direction. I stopped, suddenly remembering the arcade, and turned to follow him instead.

“Got a little lost, huh?” Wesley teased as he jostled my hair. I giggled, temporarily forgetting myself, and followed in silence. Wesley was definitely right about the proximity, hardly two blocks in and I could already see the garish sign that marked the exterior. As we approached I saw several posters for games both old and new, and found myself fairly impressed at how large the arcade was. When I grew up arcades were on the decline, almost every kid had their own video game system in their home. I knew that was still the case, but despite that, in the middle of nowhere, was this museum of video gaming days gone by. I’d say it was nostalgic, but since it was something I had never really experienced before, it was all new to me.

As we walked inside and Wesley approached the attendant to see about getting some change, I paced slowly, looking at each glowing screen with wonder. The graphics had certainly improved since the last time I had played a video game, and everything in here seemed positively amazing. There were racing games, fighting games, first person shooters, even some sort of a game where you were to tend your own farm. There didn't appear to be anyone else there, but even if there had been, I probably wouldn't have noticed. I was in heaven.

"What's it going to be first?" Wesley asked as he walked up beside me, causing me to jump and yell in surprise.

"Don't scare me like that!" I said, voice wavering as I turned to look at him. Wesley laughed heartily, holding his gut.

"You are so adorable when you're scared!" Wesley's face was turning red from laughing so hard, a shade I wasn't entirely sure an Asian's face could turn until that moment. I giggled, both because of Wesley's reaction and my own jumpiness. Being around Wesley made me the happiest I had been around an adult in years, and I didn't have a problem laughing at myself around him in return.

"Well now that that's over." Wesley sighed, rubbing his face and regaining his composure. "What's first on the agenda?"

My face formed into a devious smirk as I turned, looking at all the glowing screens that surrounded me. Finding the first one would be difficult, but I tried to keep in mind that it wouldn't be the only game I played that day. Within moments I had whittled the decision down to three, and turned wildly with my eyes closed before stopping and pointing. The shooter would be my first objective, and I would move on from there.

"So it begins." Wesley winked as he moved forward, deposited coins into the machine, and watched as I began an odyssey of fun that I hadn't experienced, well, ever.

I moved through each machine fluidly, finding more enjoyment with each game as I played it. I wasn't particularly good at any of the games, but just taking part in the experience was enough. My eyes were illuminated, and I stayed glued to the experience for as long as I could. After awhile, however, the coins dwindled and so did our time. When Wesley finally shocked me from my video game induced intoxication, it had already been three hours.

"Time to go kid, we'll come back another time." Wesley said kindly. I wanted to protest, to beg for more time, but I knew he had already been generous enough. Wesley hardly knew me but had spent more money on me than anyone else had in recent memory. I sighed, remorseful at first, but managed to force a smile on my lips. I leaned in and hugged him tightly, drawing his waist close to me.

"Thanks, for everything." I said simply. I didn't care who saw me, I was nine after all. I truly was grateful, not just for the games, but also for the food, and the advice. Wesley patted my head and returned the hug.

“Anytime.”

As Wesley and I walked towards the car and began to drive back towards the orphanage, I found myself a flurry of conversation. I talked about each video game, how exciting it had been to play, what I liked and disliked about the particular game I was talking about, and even how the graphics looked compared to what I had played before. Thankfully Wesley never questioned the last bit of observation, but instead listened intently to each word as though it were somehow the most important he had ever heard. I looked down at my feet in the floorboard and sighed, contented, remorseful to return, but hopeful for the future.

“You really are an amazing kid, you know?” Wesley asked as his hand patted my knee. I smiled at him, closed my eyes, and laid my head back. I began to wonder if I would see David when I returned, and what I would say to him. I even pondered as to whether he’d find the video games as appealing as I did, and whether I could convince Wesley to bring him along next time. I merely choked on how childish the idea was, when I became aware of a very unchildish thing occurring outside my mind.

Wesley’s hand had remained firmly planted on my leg as I thought, and had begun to rise gently upwards. By the time I regained my composure and became aware of my surroundings, he was already dangerously close to my crotch. I stopped, held my breath, and silently waited to see what would happen. I glanced at Wesley whose eyes were intent on the road, his breathing steady but shallow. I noticed a sizable tent in his pants that confirmed everything I needed to know.

His hand rose, pushing under my shirt and into the waistband of my jeans. I wasn’t sure what to say, what to do, I was shocked into complete silence as my eyes fell on his hand once more. His fingers pushed their way inside my pants, and then inside my underwear. Within a few moments, I felt his warm touch as the tip of his index finger brushed against my tiny member. I shuddered, my penis became erect against its own will, and I gasped audibly as his fingers wrapped around it. He began to move his hand up and down in a fluid motion, my own cheeks becoming flushed, matching his own. My toes curled as I fought the desire to continue against my own common sense. The feeling of Wesley’s hand was warm, was kind, was good, but it wasn’t his hand. It wasn’t Peter.

“What’re you doing?” I managed to stammer, still staring at my pants as they rose and fell with his hand’s motions.

“Sorry...” Wesley spoke as he quickly withdrew, placing the offending hand back on the steering wheel. I turned my head and stared out the window, wishing my own member to diminish in size. My mind fought between wanton passion, disdain, remorse, and Peter. I didn’t know what else to say, and apparently neither did Wesley. The remainder of the car ride was uncomfortably silent.

When at last we made it to the orphanage and parked outside, Wesley’s eyes seemed intent on the windshield, not once glancing at me. Perhaps I had been a little angry at first, but I knew that Wesley was a good person deep inside. I was eternally grateful for everything he had done for me, and I didn’t want our friendship ruined because of this incident. I knew that I couldn’t express myself properly; I had

to feign innocence as a child is ought to do, but I had to say or do something. I leaned over, wrapped my arms partially across Wesley's side, and hugged him.

"Thanks again." I said silently before opening my door and stepping out. Before I could close the door Wesley suddenly turned, his eyes glistening with tears.

"I'm sorry, I really am. I really hope you can forgive me."

I smiled at him, genuinely. There wasn't any side of me that felt angry for what he did, at least not anymore.

"I think you're a good friend." As I said the words I knew they were true, and thankfully Wesley seemed to realize as much. He smiled back at me, the tears fading back into him.

"Call me sometime, if you need me for anything okay?"

I nodded, closed the door, and turned to walk back towards the house. As I heard Wesley drive out of sight, a familiar person caught my eyes.

"Peter!"

Chapter Twenty Nine

At the sight of Peter, my legs shot from underneath me and ran to meet him halfway, Peter ran at the same pace, and as soon as we met we embraced tightly. For the moment, my mind became completely clear except for the thought of how much I loved him. None of the events of the previous days mattered, David didn't matter, Wesley's inappropriate action didn't matter. All that I wanted was to love Peter and for him to love me back. After awhile it became apparent that one of us was going to have to speak, before I had a chance to, Peter broke the embrace.

"I thought you decided to go out on your own! I was so worried! I didn't know what I was going to do without you." His eyes watered as he spoke, and our hands held each other's tightly.

"I thought you were mad at me and I'd never see you again. I'm sorry; I had to do anything I could think of to get you back." I sniffled, stifling my own tears from re-arising for the umpteenth time that day.

"I'm just so happy, can you forgive me?" Peter smiled, looking into my eyes with genuine remorse.

"No, I'm the one that should be sorry. I know that being friends with David just, well it hurts me. I know you did it because you love me."

"I do love you." Peter smiled as he cupped my face, looking longingly into my eyes. I returned the gaze for a moment, before turning red and looking down.

“Sorry, I um, we probably shouldn’t be caught like this.”

Peter laughed, letting go of me and stepping back a bit.

“So what were you up to today?”

I rolled my eyes and sighed, glad to have a semi-normal conversation. I explained to him each detail of the day; how I woke up and tried to find him, how I called Wesley to get some advice, how we talked about him, what he said, how we went to the diner, played video games, and even his indiscretion on the way back.

“Fucking pervert...” Peter grumbled as he kicked the ground angrily. I giggled a little, enjoying this protective side to him.

“What’s the difference between that and what you did to me?”

Peter blushed as his hand rose and tussled his hair.

“We’re both kids, well, adults, I mean... What I mean is...”

I giggled, enjoying watching him stammer for the first time. I hugged him once more as he finally fell into silence again.

“I missed you.” He said as he kissed my head gently.

“I miss you too.” I replied, sighing and breathing in his odor.

“So about that whole perverted thing...” Peter smirked, grabbing my shoulders and holding me back a bit. I blushed in response, but grinned impishly.

“Sure.” I said simply as Peter reached his hand into mine and held it firmly. We both walked back towards the porch, and into the entrance. The inside was fairly normal, a few kids were playing in the game room and we apparently hadn’t caused any unwanted attention. As we ascended the stairs, quickly finding our way to my landing, I felt myself beginning to become excited at the possibility of what we were going to do next. Each interaction before that point had been fraught with nervousness, but this was at the end of an argument. I mused to myself that I was finally going to participate in make-up sex; it just took an age regression for it to happen. As soon as we walked inside, Peter shut the door and walked over to me. He wrapped his arms tightly around me and pressed his lips to mine, his tongue immediately invading my mouth.

I felt weak and excited at his touch, becoming butter in his hands. My tongue fought with his, my face became flushed with passion. Within mere moment I felt Peter’s hands began to grab my shirt and pull it upwards. I sighed, feeling the release of his lips from mine and the cold air against my warm skin. Peter quickly grabbed his own shirt and tossed it aside as well, before allowing his hands to grapple with my pants. His fingers made quick work of releasing the button, and he slid them down my legs with

expert grace. As soon as I stepped out of them, Peter stood back for the briefest of moments, examining my body in just underwear.

“You are so beautiful.” He said. It was an honest statement, as best as I could tell, and every crevice of his face shined with adoration. I smiled, blushing a little beyond the red that already covered my face, and mouthed a silent thank you in response. I inserted my thumbs into my waistband and pulled them down, stepping out. My hard two inch member stood rigid against my milky frame. Peter smiled happily, removing his own pants and underwear. His larger member stood proud, still hairless, and still perfect against his pristine body.

Peter grabbed me once more, our nude bodies pressing together as his tongue slipped into my mouth once more. As we moved over to the bed, I felt Peter’s hands grab my sides and guide me down until I was lying on my back. He shifted himself next to me before climbing on top, his lips never leaving mine. My hands began to move slowly down his back. Feeling his soft, supple skin against my flesh sent electricity flying through me. I stopped at the small indentation of his lower back and hovered for a moment before continuing, lowered my hands more and grasped his ass tightly.

Peter’s lips released from mine as he let out a low moan, lowered himself, and kissed my neck passionately. I let out a moan of pleasure in response, my hands kneading his globes as though my life depended on it. The reach was difficult, considering our differences in height, but the feeling of his body, his lips on my neck, it was absolute ecstasy.

“I want you to be mine.” Peter breathed in between kisses, his hands gently passing over my sides.

“I want to be yours.” I squeaked out, trying to be as quiet as humanly possible. My penis jerked wildly each time it brushed against Peter’s stomach.

“You will be.” Peter rose up once more, his lips locking with mine. As we kissed deeply, I felt his hands lower to my thighs and lift them, as he slid himself between my legs. The heat of our bodies in that position was intense, and having a good idea of what would happen next, I began to become nervous. My hands removed themselves from Peter’s ass and wrapped tightly around his torso. Apparently sensing my trepidation, Peter’s lips parted from mine once more as he gazed into my eyes.

“If you don’t want to, that’s okay,” he said, a kind look etched across his face as his hips thrust back and forth, rubbing his cock against mine.

“I do.” I breathed. I was fearful; this would be the first time I had done this, well, ever. I knew that if it was my option to choose who would be the first, it would definitely be Peter. I was finally met with the opportunity and I knew that the decision I had made was right.

“Take me.” I said, arching my back and closing my eyes tightly. Peter began to kiss my neck and shift himself downwards. His arms pushed my thighs up further until I could feel the tip of his penis against my bottom. I began to breathe heavily, my own cock twitching violently in response to the passion that raptured my tiny frame. I heard Peter as he spit into his hand, lowering it beneath me.

“Are you ready?” He asked as his frame heightened. My eyes shot open, staring into his as I nodded. I was, at least as ready as I could be. As Peter began to press himself forward and the head of his cock pressed against my vaginal hole, I immediately tensed. Peter waited, feeling out my body, and he managed to position himself to where his left hand could gently caress my cheek.

“Relax,” Peter whispered. I nodded, and swallowed deeply as I did what he asked. Within moments Peter began to lurch forward. I felt the head of his penis begin to penetrate me, and I immediately bit my lower lip. I fought the urge of my sphincter to fight the intrusion, and managed to remain fairly relaxed despite how my body appeared. Peter pushed forward once more, securing two inches, and roughly half, of his girth into me. I let out a sigh. I knew that if Peter had been an adult, this would have been an excruciatingly painful experience. Despite his small size, I was fairly small in comparison to him, so there was some mild discomfort. The feeling of Peter as he became a part of me, his flesh merging with mine, made the discomfort seem all too bearable, even enjoyable.

“You ready?” Peter asked gently as he paused. I nodded, more certain that I was ready than ever. Peter nodded back, and pushed himself the rest of the way in. When his crotch met with my cheeks, I grasped him tighter than I ever had.

“I love you so much,” I cried out. It didn’t hurt, it was uncomfortable certainly, but I cried out for a different reason entirely. Being this close to Peter, sharing this moment with him, was the most amazing thing I had ever done. I meant that I loved him, I knew that before this moment, and most certainly knew it now. No amount of sexual passion could mask the truth of my feelings beneath.

“I love you too,” Peter moaned as he began to pump in and out of me, slowly, taking measure of what I could handle. I knew that he stretched me to a certain extent, so the pleasure for Peter must have been immense. As we stared into each other’s eyes, communicating silently between us, Peter began to pick up pace and the friction between us strengthened. With each pump I became more and more relaxed, more impassioned by the actions that were taking place. While I was beginning to derive pleasure from the act, Peter was prepared to take it to the next level.

I watched as Peter’s hand lowered, taking my own tiny member into its grasp. He began to pump it up and down in rhythm with his own movements. I cried out, stifling the climax of my exclamation for fear of being caught. The feeling of his cock inside me, his skin against mine, and his hand jacking me to a rapid climax was almost too much to bear. My hands rubbed Peter’s back in quick escape, unable to know what to do with themselves.

“I think I’m going to cum,” Peter groaned as his pumps became more urgent, and his pace on my cock picked up as well. I nodded, moaning more quickly as his words escaped his mouth. As he began to pound me harder, his cock beginning to develop a noticeable twitch, I began to feel a familiar tingling sensation within my stomach. It began at the base, and quickly moved up my shaft. I had become accustomed to the process taking some time, but in this moment of passion it was quick, and ready to overcome me. Before I had a chance to exclaim, the tingling shattered through my shaft and my member began to dance wildly.

Peter bit his lip hard as his own member twitched violently inside of me, my own member twitched in rhythm inside his hand. Our bodies fought hard for fluids that they could not produce, and the sheer miracle of instantaneous climax brought more pleasure to me than I could ever express. By the time Peter began to calm I did as well, and as he slipped out he collapsed onto my chest, breathing hard.

I smiled, gently wrapping my arms around him as I held him close. Our hearts, for the moment, beat quickly in the same rhythm. It was as though this moment had been fated forever.

"I can't believe...." Peter began.

"I know!" I finished. I felt more alive than I ever had, and had experienced more pleasure than I knew could be experienced. We both laughed together, kissing briefly before collapsing back into our previous positions.

"I love you," I said, examining Peter's fingers as they sat between my own.

"I love you too," Peter responded. At once, everything was right with the world.

"You about ready to get dinner?" Peter asked, causing me to groan.

"Do we have to?" I asked, completely forlorn. My only desire was to stay in his arms the rest of the night.

"I think it would be suspicious if we didn't," Peter mused, propping himself up on his arm.

I sighed as I stood up, collected my clothes, and began to get dressed. For once I was grateful to be so young, not having to clean up after sex had its advantages. As I pulled on my shirt and pushed the wrinkles down with my hands, I gazed at Peter who was already ready to go.

"So I was thinking," Peter spoke as we exited the room together, shutting the door behind us.

"About what?" I asked as we descended the stairs together.

"After dinner, I think we need to have a talk in the woods."

I swallowed deeply at his words, already knowing what was going to be discussed.

"Okay." I said simply as we walked into the dining room together.

Chapter Thirty

My stomach churned as I tried to force bites of food down my esophagus. A mere few minutes before, I had been more relaxed and at peace with the world than I had been in weeks. Now, with just a few words, Peter had stolen that away from me. I knew that he was ready to talk about our escape, and I still wasn't sure. I knew that I wanted to be with Peter, I knew that awaiting my fate wasn't an option,

but I just wasn't ready to come to the end conclusion. Maybe this was the proper time; maybe it was time to reach that decision. Despite all the maybes, my stomach certainly didn't want to listen to logic. After managing a few bites and pushing my plate forward, Peter silently squeezed my thigh under the table. I looked at him knowingly as we nodded to one another and rose, walking silently towards the exit.

I could feel eyes boring into our heads from behind. It wasn't proper to leave the table until Bessie had given chores, and I was afraid that she would say something. As we reached the exit however, and with no response following us, I was certain that we were safe. I wasn't sure whether it was luck, or Bessie's forgiving nature, but in either scenario I was eternally grateful. We each slipped on a pair of flip flops and walked outside, shutting the door behind us. As we paced across the lawn in lock and step, his hand reached down and encircled mine once we were at a safe distance. I smiled a little, despite my tumultuous emotions, and I quickly found myself being led into the forest for the second time that day.

As we walked through the long line of trees I wanted badly to speak, but I knew it wasn't in either of our best interests. We had to get as far away from the orphanage as was humanly possible. Purity was listening, and I wasn't about to give them any leads, regardless of what I decided to do.

"Where are we going?" I finally asked when I felt that we were at a comfortable enough distance for at least unrelated conversation.

"You'll see," Peter responded. We both knew that we understood what the conversation was about, but as far as our destination was concerned, I was unsure.

Each step seemed like it took an eternity as my body anxiously awaited another emotional rollercoaster. Wherever we were going, it was a considerable distance away. I supposed that it was better to be safe than sorry, but my legs were already weak from the activities I had participated in a mere thirty minutes prior. Just when I was prepared to ask how much longer it would take, we came to a clearing, one that was all too familiar.

"Remember this place?" Peter asked as he plopped down on the mattress we had shared on the first day we met.

"How could I forget it?" I smiled, plopping down right next to him. I couldn't think of a more appropriate place to be. This was where we had gone the first day we met; the place that Peter first confessed that he had feelings for me. While it was a safe place, it was also a romantic place. I had never really taken Peter for being a romantic, but at that moment I was sure that he was.

For a moment there was silence, and not a word was spoken. We both were fairly sure Purity couldn't hear us here, but neither one of us wanted to discuss what we knew had to be discussed. As was usually the case, Peter was first to break the silence.

“Listen, I love you more than anything. I can’t even begin to imagine what life would be like without you. What they have planned for you, I’m just not going to let it happen. You belong to me, and I belong to you.”

I smiled as our fingers intertwined once more. I examined his cuticles before I managed a reply.

“I love you too Peter, but we have to think about this. I mean, what if we do get away successfully? Then what? We both are stuck as nine and twelve forever, and what if I start to regress more? What if I completely forget myself? What if you do?” No matter how hard I tried, I found it impossible to look at Peter’s face as I spoke. I knew if I did I would relent, and while there was a large part of me that wanted to, there was another side of me that knew it was a dangerous endeavor.

“I just don’t care Ben! I don’t care! There isn’t any threat, any possibility that would keep me apart from you. I know now that I have someone that’s meant for me, that’s made for me, and it’s you. I’m willing to put my life on the line so you can have yours, so we can share this life together. I’d rather be homeless, and be with you, than have a million years of security.”

I sighed, moving my gaze from his nails and towards the earth beneath us. He was right, how could he not be? It simply wasn’t an option to stay. There was a side of me that didn’t want to get him involved, but I didn’t want to live without him either. Our fates were intertwined, and I couldn’t deny that. I leaned over, wrapping my arms around Peter as we lay down on the dirty mattress. I rested my head on his chest, just listening to him breathe for a few moments. As much as I wanted to follow my passions, I knew there was no escaping logical reality. I just needed to find an alternative, and I needed time to find it.

As soon as I reached my decision I sat up. I looked down at Peter, finally locking eyes with him for the first time since we had arrived.

“I’ll think about it,” I said simply. It wasn’t in me to say no, I knew that I would probably say yes eventually, but at that moment I wasn’t ready.

Peter stood to his full height, sighed, and shook his head. Breathless, he looked away for a moment. I sighed, turned, and prepared to lead the way back to the orphanage. Before I could take a step, I felt Peter’s hand grasp my arm and turn me around. As he leaned forward, I closed my eyes, and our lips locked once more. His sweet taste began to melt away my nervousness, my logic, and my stomach began to calm. There was no doubt that Peter had an effect on me.

As our lips parted Peter’s hands slipped into mine once more; he pressed the combined sets against my chest, his eyes looking into mine with a pleading expression. I smiled, unable to make my eyes move from his.

“When do we leave?” I asked, the words escaping my mouth before I had a chance to recall them.

“Tonight,” he replied, his expression serious, yet confident.

I nodded in response. It was all I could do. Our left hands released and our right hands remained intertwined as we turned to stand side by side. Slowly, ever so surely, we began to walk back towards the orphanage. My eyes surveyed the skyline above the canopy of trees, covered by the waning twilight. It wouldn't be long now.