

Abatement

by Benjamin Hanson

Chapters Twenty through Twenty Five

Statement and Disclaimer

My last two submissions were largely met with deaf ears, but with that being said I find myself unable to stop writing. After finishing chapter nineteen, I knew that the ideas I had in mind needed a guide with which they could finally flesh out. I set out on a mission to create a chapter by chapter outline to the end, and these six chapters are the beginning of that journey. This certainly takes the award for the largest submission I've made for Abatement so far, and its length is for a good reason. I tried very hard to make each submission contain at least one provocative scene, but due to back story and character development, that had to fall by the wayside. This submission was purposely waited on so that I could get to chapter twenty five which contains such a moment. For those of you who have followed patiently, waiting for another intense moment of please, here is your reward.

On a smaller note, and while this will make sense to few of you, I was listening to Muse the whole time I was writing these chapters and came across one song in particular that struck me as being the perfect representation of Ben and David's relationship. The song is entitled "In Your World" and for anyone that cares, you can google the lyrics to see what it's all about. At any rate I'll quit rambling now. Enjoy the submission as always and I hope sincerely that this one brings more comments. To the few of you who did email me, thanks. 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 Twenty

As we neared the clearing ahead I couldn't pretend that I didn't feel better. Meeting Peter was an unexpected and welcome surprise on many levels. At the moment that I felt the most dismal I ever had, he seemed to know exactly what to do. I couldn't be sure at that time what he would mean for me in the future, but I wanted him to mean something. I found it impossible to believe that he was distrusted for the reasons he provided, but that was alright. The gift of his company was enough for me.

When the house came into view I was happy to see that the cars were gone. Although I was still happy, my thoughts immediately returned to David. I wondered what he was doing and how he felt. There was no way for me to know what time it was, but I was looking forward to sitting with him at dinner no matter how much it would hurt.

“Are you going to be alright?” Peter suddenly asked, shaking me from my thoughts.

“Yeah I’ll be fine.” I smiled at him, squeezing his hand gently. I very much liked the feeling of his hand around mine. It was definitely larger than mine, and exuded a warmth that seemed to permeate my entire being.

“I guess we’re about to see huh?”

I looked at him curiously as we ascended the stairs; Peter’s hand wrapped around the door knob, turned it and pushed the portal open. Immediately the smell of dinner began to waft from the dining room and I instantly knew what he meant. It wouldn’t be long now before I would be forced to confront David. I knew what I would do, and that would be nothing. He was too young to know how I felt and there was no reason he should have to. He was, after all, just a child.

I heard my stomach groan for the first time all day. I hadn’t realized how much time we had spent in the woods, and I was more than ready to eat. At the sight of some young boys rushing past us Peter’s hand dropped from mine, and I felt a cold chill cover my entire body. He smiled warmly, trying to encourage me, as we walked into the dining room together.

“Ben!” I heard the familiar voice of David call. My eyes immediately shot to our usual seats, and seeing him alone all at once I felt both happy and sad. The temporary nature of our relationship became more real than it ever had before. I certainly knew that we couldn’t be friends forever, but never before had I felt that. Before I could open my mouth in reply, Peter’s hand wrapped tightly around mine once more and began to drag me towards the other side of the table.

“Wait a minute!” I began to protest but was quickly silenced.

“There’s no point in you trying to be nice to him. He’ll be gone soon; you saw how he got along with that couple.

I felt a stream of tears rise up in my eyes but I managed to fight them back. Peter was right of course, but I didn’t want to let go. The child within me wanted to cherish what little time I had. The experiment we enjoyed was trivial; it was the gift of his company and his youthful vigor that I wanted. I would be willing to suffer for that. Peter seemed impossibly dead set against it.

As soon as we sat I couldn’t help myself anymore. My eyes rose to meet David’s. Each beautifully proportioned blue eye cast daggers into my soul. The look of hurt and confusion was enough to make my stomach churn and all I wanted to do was run away; Peter’s hand clasped firmly around my own beneath the table. I looked at him incapable of hiding my own emotions. The anxiety and pain that I

felt was as plain as the nose on my face. He simply shook his head lightly, not so much dismissing my feelings as he was just telling me to forget them.

How was that possible? This boy who knew so much about what I felt should at the very least understand my pain. I couldn't release these feelings as though they were nothing more than a toy. I squeezed his hand tightly, trying my best to make him feel the same pain that I did. My eyes rose once more to survey David. A few tears slid silently down his cheeks but he made no effort to look at me. I had hurt David, and there was nothing I could do to change it. I wanted to hate Peter for what he did, I wanted to hurt him, but I knew that what he did was for the best. I looked casually at him from the corner of my eye. His eyes seemed to have no ability to leave my face, each one surveying me in both warmth and sympathy. I sighed, in both lament and acceptance. It was all for the best.

As Bessie brought out each dish, my hunger didn't seem to want to return. Just the same, Peter put a small portion of everything onto my plate for me. I smiled gently, incapable of speech.

"You need to eat. You are a growing boy." He winked, trying to break the serious mood.

I simply nodded, prodding at a piece of corn on the edge of my plate. I wanted to look at David but I refused myself the right. I settled on looking across the table at James and Colby. The two were eating, seemingly oblivious of my plight. It wasn't entirely unexpected; it was the norm for them after all. Just the same I needed an outlet for my frustrations, and there was little keeping me from seeking it. With a swift movement my foot reached beneath the expanse of the table and landed firmly on James' leg, sending him into the air with surprise.

"What was that for!?" He yelled, glowering at me in anger. At once I felt bad for having kicked him; I wasn't sure what had possessed me to do so. It was such a childish thing to do, to want to transplant my pain onto another. All I could do was assume it was a part of the regression.

"Sorry my foot slipped." Peter said suddenly. His face was emotionless and I looked at him in shock. What would possess him to take the blame for me? James' face became even more enraged as he sat down, his attention now focused on Peter.

"I told you he was up to no good."

"Simmer down you two!" I heard Bessie's voice come across the table. Several of the other boys were watching, an eerie silence covered the entire dining room.

"Yes mam," both James and Peter sounded at once. My hand squeezed Peter's thigh by way of thanks and he simply smiled.

"Now eat," he commanded.

I sighed, unable to deny his request. Although the contents of my plate were cold I shoveled them quickly into my mouth. Each bite felt like it weighed a ton and swallowing seemed impossible.

When I had finished off about three quarters Peter seemed satisfied. I laid my fork down and sighed, wishing dinner to hurry up and finish.

“For dishes we have James, Peter and Jake.” Bessie called out, finally bringing an end to my uncomfortable meal. I looked at Peter, trying to extend a deeper apology for getting him stuck with dishes. He seemed to understand, ruffling my hair and rising to collect some of the dirty dishes that surrounded us. Colby’s eyes surveyed Peter deeply, and I couldn’t help but fear for him. If he was willing to hurt an actual child as much as he had, then what would he do to Peter?

“I’ll see you later.” Peter said, following James into the kitchen with his load. I stood, sighing deeply, and began to walk towards the exit.

I stopped momentarily in the entrance, rolling the idea of waiting for Peter around in my mind, when suddenly a shove from my side sent me cascading to the floor. I turned quickly, expecting to see Jose or even Colby standing above me, but I only saw the frame of David as he passed. My hand rose to grip my chest. What had been done was unfixable.

As I began to feel tears rise in my eyes for the umpteenth time that day, my feet found new strength. I felt them pressing beneath me with force as I flew to my full height. With equal power each foot seemed to rise with its own will, pushing me up each stair and away from the pain that was below me. I flew across the hallway once I cleared the landing and into my room, slamming the door behind me. I launched my body onto the bed and buried my head deep within my pillow. Within moments I drifted away into a restless slumber.

Chapter Twenty One

My dreams were uneasy. Everything around me was completely dark, and all that I could see were two lights in front of me. The first light, to my left, solidified as the image of my adult self. Blonde hair sat calmly on a confident face. Although I recognized the image as myself, the look was entirely foreign. The clothing wasn’t anything I had ever seen before either; a power suit, steel gray with a starched white shirt. Everything that I thought myself capable of being in my youth was standing in front of me. I felt weak and powerless in its presence.

My attention shifted as the second light began to form. At first I didn’t recognize what I was seeing, but in time I began to understand. It was me as I am now, brown hair and all. Instead of wearing clothes, I was completely nude and an empty lump on the floor. My eyes were barely open, any glimmer of life completely absent. The shadow of my adult self seemed darker than the surroundings, and cast over my childhood self. I fell to my knees, unable to comprehend what I was seeing. I clawed at the ground, seeking an escape, unable to find one.

My older self looked at me, an evil smirk forming on his face. His foot rose as he began to walk towards me. I scooted backwards, away from the child me and the pursuing me, a lump rising up in my throat. I wanted to yell, I wanted to ask for help, but it was impossible. As the adult me began to reach

out, engulfing the full range of my vision with my hand, my eyes shot open and I awoke to the familiar surroundings of my room. I was safe.

As I sat up, drenched in sweat, the familiar sight of Frederick in the corner forced me out of my shocked state. I swallowed, trying to pull whatever saliva there was from my dry mouth, and inclined my head in his direction. He merely smiled and stood, walking towards me and sitting on the edge of the bed.

“That must have been some dream,” he stated in a mellow tone. I merely nodded, staring at my toes as they curled beneath me.

“Anything you want to talk about?” He asked, looking over me with a curiosity that I felt extended beyond my dream. I merely shook my head, finally allowing my eyes to rise and meet his.

“I’m good... Thanks.” I mumbled at the end. I knew Frederick was coming but it was no more pleasant than it ever was.

“Very well, I do at least have some good news for you this evening.”

My interest suddenly peaked and my mood began to improve exponentially.

“What?” I asked excitedly. Perhaps the payment hadn’t gone through; perhaps Mr. Terrance had changed his mind. I knew in my mind that the possibility of those things occurring was slim, but my heart hoped just the same. I watched disappointedly as a delighted sneer passed over Frederick’s face.

“My, how excited you are! Well I guess I shouldn’t keep you in suspense. This will be the last time you will see me.”

My stomach flew to my feet. Was Mr. Terrance taking possession of me earlier than expected? Had my training been completed that quickly? I immediately began to feel distress. I had no idea what evil was awaiting me now. Seeing the distress on my face, Frederick began to laugh.

“I didn’t know you cared for me so deeply! I’m touched, truly I am.”

I still felt confused and worried about what was going to come next. Frederick was nothing if not unpredictable.

“Why won’t I see you again?” I managed to squeak out in a weak voice. Frederick’s face returned to normal as the laughing died down.

“Your training begins tomorrow night.” He rose to his feet and walked towards the window, staring at something that I couldn’t see. I sighed with relief but was a little confused.

“I thought that’s what I had already been doing with you?” I asked, seeking clarity.

“These talks? Oh my, no. Perhaps you know a bit more about your predicament but you have no idea what else is... involved.” The final word sent shivers through my spine.

“By involved what do you mean?”

“I refuse to answer stupid questions,” he snapped back quickly, apparently losing his patience. I stared down at my feet once more. I was certain I knew what he meant but it wasn’t something I wanted to think of.

“I was thinking James would be the ideal candidate for your training. How do you feel?” He eyes still surveyed the yard intently.

“What about Peter?” As soon as the words slipped from my lips I realized I wasn’t thinking. I could feel my cheeks turn red as Frederick turned on his heel. His eyes bore into me with an intense curiosity. I felt at once that I was right about what his questions were when I first awoke. I also felt dirty, partially because my mind went to such a dark place so quickly, and also because of the way Frederick was staring at me. It wasn’t the look of curiosity one had towards a peculiar situation, it was the look of curiosity one has for an animal or a science experiment.

“That was mostly a rhetorical question, but I must ask...” Frederick’s voice trailed off as he looked out the window once more and then back to me. Already anticipating his question I was prepared.

“Peter is really nice. He helped me today after, well...” I looked down once more feeling tears rush to my eyes again.

“This predicament with David?” Frederick asked. I wasn’t sure if he was looking at me or not but it felt like it. I simply nodded in return.

“I fear that you have the wrong impression of Peter,” he said simply. I looked up finally, his eyes surveying the outside once more. The look of curiosity was gone and a blank expression took its place.

“Why does he have to be a bad person because he isn’t an asshole? So what if he has a little fun every now and then?” I knew my response was foolish as soon as I said it. Frederick laughed darkly.

“He calls it fun does he?”

I sat back, feeling incredibly foolish, but I was unwilling to change my opinion of Peter.

“Did he tell you this?”

My fingers absentmindedly played with the hem of my shirt. “Yes...”

Frederick smirked. “And you believed him?”

“Not really...”

Frederick rolled his eyes. “It’s of no consequence to me. If you want him to train you then fine.”

I nodded, smiling a little.

“Thanks.” I whispered.

“Certainly...” Frederick turned his attention away from the window and brought his hands together in front of his face, bowing ever so slightly.

“With that I bid you adieu. I hope that you enjoy yourself.”

I nodded watching him as he approached the door. Although I didn’t care, my curiosity got the better of me.

“What did he do that was so bad?” As I asked, Frederick stopped for the briefest of moments, letting out an audible sigh.

“That’s a question best reserved for Peter.”

With those words Frederick turned the knob and walked out into the hall. Without a single additional glance, he left my life for what I assumed would be a very long time. I stared at the door in silence trying to figure out what he could have done to make them dislike him so. It wasn’t like they were the kind of people that you wanted to impress, but there was something about the tone James and Frederick used when they discussed him. I wasn’t sure if I’d ever have the gall to ask him myself, but I knew in my heart that it couldn’t be all that bad.

As I lied back down to try and sleep awhile longer, my eyes grew wide.

“I asked him to let Peter train me...”

My cheeks turned violently red again as the idea of being with Peter in that manner caused several emotions to run through me. I felt foolish for having suggested it, especially without so much as a second thought, and I also felt strangely aroused. My fingers fell, tracing the outline of my cock through my shorts. I felt a shiver pass over my spine.

I couldn’t be sure what the training would involve but maybe doing it with Peter wouldn’t be so bad after all? My hand fell away as I sighed, closing my eyes and fighting with myself to go to sleep. Between the thoughts running through my mind, my confusion, my curiosity and my erection, it was no easy feat. Half an hour later the exhaustion of the day managed to overwhelm me, and I settled into more restful dreams.

Chapter Twenty Two

As my eyes batted open the next morning, it occurred to me how wholly wonderful beds really are. No matter how bad your day has been or what awaits you the next day, the simple comfort of a mattress beneath you and a warm blanket wrapping you in a cocoon is enough to make it all melt away. As I lie there, trapped in an impossible knot with the sheets, closing my eyes once more was all too easy. I let out a sigh and prepared myself to fall back to sleep for a couple more blissful hours.

“Wake up.”

The words were simple enough but my mind refused to comprehend their meaning. It was as though I had forgotten how to speak, how to hear. After the week I had who could blame me?

“Wake up.”

The same words filtered into my blanket laden cocoon once more, this time in a harsher tone. At once comprehension of their meaning dawned on me, but I didn’t like it. Perhaps I was already asleep and this was just a dream? Who would be so cruel as to try and wake me from such a peaceful slumber?

“Seriously, wake up!”

This time the words were even harsher and I realized that I wasn’t dreaming. There would be no way for me to ignore them much longer. Just the same, I felt that it was worth trying. Maybe if I feigned sleep they wouldn’t return. I smashed my eye lids down as tightly as I could, wishing them away.

“Damn it Ben!”

I felt two hands grab the blanket and rip it off of my head. I immediately grabbed for my pillow, pressing it over my face and willing myself to disappear.

“I know you were up late last night but you need to get up. It’s big brother day.”

The voice of James finally managed to break my will. I slowly removed the pillow, looking at the slightly older boy with a pouty expression on my face.

“Don’t try that with me. This is mandatory. If I have to go so do you. Now get up!”

James’ hands grabbed the blanket and tried to force it off of me, only causing my body to fall over and hit the floor with a bang. I groaned, holding my head and cursed silently under my breath.

“You’re a rough sleeper.” James smirked, staring down at me as though I were a rag doll at his feet. I smiled as genuinely as I could, trying to hide my displeasure the best way I could. I wasn’t going to be mean; I had won a great battle the previous evening already. James was to be a temporary fixture in my life after all. So what if he had no compassion? It wasn’t his fault he was an asshole.

“So I’ve been told...” I sat up, still rubbing my head and wishing the pain from its collision with the floor to go away.

“So what’s big brother day and what does it have to do with me?”

James groaned, plopping down on his mattress. I looked at him expectantly as I rose to my feet and sat across from him on my own bed. He looked incredibly exhausted and I found myself almost feeling sorry for him. He did have a much rougher schedule than I.

“It’s almost always the day after we have open house. Some adult male volunteers come up here to bond with the boys. It’s a requirement, unfortunately, so we have to get going. Else wise Bessie will be up here shortly and I assure you that you don’t want her waking you up.”

I nodded, accepting the inevitability of my situation. Surely this wouldn’t be as bad as yesterday. It would at least afford me the opportunity to not have to see David for awhile longer. I stood to my full height, patted James on the head and walked towards the door.

“Where are you going?” James asked, mildly amused.

“To take a shower, where else?”

I closed the door behind me and looked down the hall, half expecting a similar flood of boys as I had seen the day before. Fortunately it seemed I wasn’t the only one that was annoyed by the concept. With each step I listened for the sounds of running boys or even the softest voice, but was met with nothing. By the time I reached the bottom, assured of my solitude, I merely sighed and walked over towards the closet to extract a change of clothes. A few moments later I was in the bathroom, running a tub of warm water and standing naked and exposed near the door.

“You’re up early.”

I nearly jumped out of my skin at the unfamiliar voice sounding behind me. I turned on my heel, trying to catch my breath, and stared at the still dressed vision of Peter in the door frame. I smiled, trying to compose myself, and merely nodded.

“Just woke up?” He asked with a slight smirk on his face. I nodded, taking a moment to realize what he was looking at. My hands immediately rose to cover myself as my cheeks flushed violently. Peter erupted in laughter, leaned against the door frame and passed his index finger along his jaw line in a curious manner.

“No reason to be embarrassed I’m just teasing. Did you sleep well?”

I nodded, still not wanting to let him see me. It seemed an entirely senseless act. He was, after all, going to train me.

“Yeah I did, thanks for everything yesterday.”

Peter smiled, walking past me and sitting on the commode.

“Sure thing.”

I stood there, my cheeks refusing to lose their crimson shade, staring at him with a great amount of confusion. Did he actually want to watch me bathe or did he just want to talk? Either way I didn’t want to expose myself to him, not yet anyway. Showing my body to Bessie or David was one thing, but showing Peter was something different entirely.

“Do you want me to leave?” He asked, apparently sensing my confusion.

"N..no! I mean, not if you don't want to." I grinned awkwardly trying to be friendly, but probably looked incredibly deranged.

"I just thought we could talk some more. I heard about what happened with David last night." As he finished his sentence he reached over to stop the water. I smiled, grateful that he had more of an ability to keep his senses in this situation than I did. My mind immediately fell on the events of the prior day.

"Yeah it was..." My voice trailed off as I tried to think of a way to put my thoughts into words. I really wanted Peter to know, to console me, but he was a part of why David was so mad at me. I knew that everything he did was for my best interest but was my happiness worth the happiness of David? I sighed, looking at the floor. It was impossible to say everything that was on my mind. I didn't think anyone was capable of talking that quickly.

"Maybe you should get in the bath while you're thinking about it." Peter laughed, only causing me to blush a shade deeper once more. I managed to climb in with only the briefest of exposures. As I settled into the water, allowing the warmth to relax me, I looked into Peter's face trying to find some clarity.

"I know that he's only temporary but why did you make me ignore him like that? At least I could have made him happy for a little while." I finally said, unable to think of anything better.

"Well the closer you get the more it's going to hurt when everything is said and done. Plus, he takes time away that I could be spending with you." The smile that rose on his face was perhaps the most seductive smile I had ever seen in my life. I was struck speechless, unable to think of a reply to that. My head slipped into the water slightly, concealing my reddened cheeks as my eyes floated just enough above to still survey him. Peter laughed once more.

"You're adorable, you know that?"

I smiled, realizing that I was under the water and sat back up so he could see it. The back of my hair was now wet and clung to my shoulders.

"Seriously though, I didn't like seeing you sad. If you allow yourself to still spend time with him then it's only going to be worse when he leaves. I don't want to have to see you like that again and I know you don't want to feel like that again."

I nodded, sighing to myself and staring at my feet through the water. He was right, I knew as much, but I still wanted to feel as though I had been wronged somehow. The thought of making David sad was enough for me to want to end my own life. Realizing the time I grabbed a rag and began to soap it up, casting glances at Peter occasionally. He seemed to be content just watching me, his warm smile ever present.

“Can I ask you something?” I asked, running the soaped up rag along my arm as I did so. Peter nodded, sitting back and crossing his arms across his chest. I felt incredibly comfortable with him, and as much as that frightened me, I was going to take advantage of it.

“Why does everyone tell me I need to watch out for you?”

As Peter began to open his mouth I stopped him.

“The truth.” I said with a sternness that was fairly uncharacteristic. Peter sighed, sitting forward, and tapped his fingers anxiously on my knee.

“I think you’re too young to know that.” He smiled teasingly to which I replied with a frown.

“Come on...” I pleaded, probably a little more childishly than I should have.

“Promise you’ll still love me?”

I blushed a little at his presumptive statement but nodded. I scooted forward, prepared for whatever he was going to say. I was certain that whatever it was couldn’t be that bad.

“When I was first regressed, there were a lot more of us here than there are now. Before this whole witch hunt against child predators began people were just generally more daring, more willing to walk the dark alleys and see what was waiting for them.”

I watched intently with each word, continuing to absentmindedly wash the same spot on my chest over and over.

“Like I told you yesterday I’ve always liked kids. It wasn’t something that I had to discover, it was something that I already knew. One day when I was working this weird guy came into the café I waited tables at. I had seen him before, but I didn’t know a whole lot about him. Apparently he knew a lot more about me than I did about him because as soon as I walked over he started hitting on me. I was a little creeped out by the whole thing, but since I was a virgin and curious I returned the attention. When all was said and done he asked me what time I got off and he said he’d be waiting for me when I left.”

I nodded, stood and washed the rest of my body. I figured since he was exposing himself to me in a figurative sense, I could do so in a literal sense. His eyes seemed transfixed with the floor anyway.

“Sure enough when I got off he was waiting and we went back to his place to have some drinks. The guys name was Alexander and he said he worked for some company as a file clerk. Anyway after a few drinks I had to go to the bathroom so I excused myself and headed down his hallway to find it.”

My eyes grew large as realization began to dawn on my face.

“This Alexander, was he kind of tall with black hair and blue eyes?” I asked, my lips trembling the whole time.

Peter's eyes finally released their hold on the floor and flew to mine. The look in his eyes was one of understanding and sympathy. I sat back, refusing to believe what I had heard. Was this Alexander the same man that told me about the alley? It was almost impossible to believe.

"I think, before I answer that, it's best that I finish my story... at least this part." Peter spoke in a more solemn voice than he had before. His mouth seemed parched and I wanted so badly to demand an immediate answer. Just the same, I knew he wanted to finish for a reason.

"When I found the bathroom and went inside, I decided to be nosy. I looked through some of his drawers and found some photographs of boys. Having the same attraction, I became immediately infatuated and lost track of time. I kept staring as though I had discovered some great treasure and before I knew it Alexander had walked in to see what was going on. He played it off really cool, not even getting mad about me invading his personal space, and invited me back into the living room to talk about it.

Naturally I had no reason to be afraid anymore, he asked me questions and I answered them. I told him I liked boys, I told him that I liked his pictures. He just listened to every last bit of my stupid ramblings and nodded, drawing me into his fucking web. After I spilled my heart out to him he decided to impart the knowledge of the alley to me. He told me all about how these young men were down there and that for a nominal fee I could fulfill my every desire. I was happy to learn about it of course, but having no money and being shaken by the whole thing I just chose to leave."

I felt my blood boiling inside of me. There was no doubt in my mind that this Alexander was the same one that I knew. These rules that were explained to me about who was chosen and why were nothing more than lies. How could I have been so foolish? There was no crime that I committed, as I very well knew. We had been trapped, we were sought; we were forced into this.

"So a couple weeks passed and I couldn't get the idea out of my mind. I worked too much to have a social life and I was lonely. I knew I didn't have the money but I wanted to see what was going on just the same. Maybe I'd get lucky and get to watch one of them going at it, or maybe I'd just be able to corner one and have my way with him. I had no idea what was going through my mind but I had this intense desire to go just the same. So when I got off of work that night I went to the warehouses, happened upon a boy and when it was discovered I didn't have the money to pay for him, well the rest is history."

My hands rose to cup my mouth. I wanted to yell, to fight back against these people, but there was nothing I could do. Peter had been hoodwinked... I had been hoodwinked. I didn't even know that I had. I had spent so much time believing that I was a bad person that I never thought to look any deeper. A single tear fell from my eye as a feeling of hopelessness washed over me. Peter smiled gently, leaned forward and rested his hand on my shoulder.

"You too?" he asked.

I nodded, unable to speak.

"Do you want to hear the rest? Why they despise me so?"

I nodded once more. Although I was seething with anger I couldn't miss this. Perhaps it was relevant to my own situation.

"Back then Purity wasn't as careful about who they brought around. One day when they had visitation the bastard had the nerve to show up. Basically it was so Purity could keep an eye on their flock and make sure none of the adults messed with them, and I guess they assumed we wouldn't recognize him. I still have no idea if everyone else had just forgotten or if they had different ways of recruiting us than just him, but I knew exactly who he was. As soon as I saw him, I knew. I ran up to him of course, demanding an explanation, but he just told me that I was being stupid. Bessie made me go to my room and I was locked away for the rest of the day.

That night that fucking Frederick came to talk to me. He tried to act nonchalant, like nothing had ever happened. I was on to him and I forced him to admit it. As soon as he did I called him on his shit and all he could say was that it was still my choice to go down that alley. I demanded my freedom, and of course he refused me. I tried to take him down but it was no use of course. At the time he kept the form of someone in their mid-thirties so he was significantly larger and stronger than me. He left, warning me to watch myself, and I at once made a decision."

Peter swallowed deeply, looking up at the ceiling above him. He almost looked like an angel to me. I couldn't look away, I just had to see and hear everything that he had to say.

"I knew I couldn't hurt him but I could hurt his pockets. I went down to the kitchen, got a knife, and..." Peter's eyes began to tear up. I sat back in shock, already expecting what was coming next. I could see the pain and regret all over Peter's face as he uttered each word.

"I murdered them, all three of the men that were on my floor. I walked into their rooms one by one and slit their throats. I don't know how I did it, but I did. I felt like each time I slit their throats I was somehow hurting Frederick personally. I knew that he'd kill me that it would be the end of my life, but it felt so worth it. There was no way I was going to let him trick me and get away with it."

He began to sob uncontrollably into his hands. I wasn't sure why, but I felt incredibly sorry for him. I didn't feel repulsed by what he did; I almost understood it, even if I knew I could never do it myself. I stepped out of the tub, soaking wet, and wrapped my arms around him pulling his head close to my chest. I consoled him for what felt like hours, his tears falling to meet the beads of water as they cascaded down my body.

"Please don't hate me!" He managed to squeak between sobs, pulling back from me and looking into my face with puffy red eyes. I laid my hands on both of his shoulders and pressed my forehead to his, looking deep into his eyes.

"I could never hate you. I don't think I could ever do anything like that... but I understand." I spoke nothing but the truth concerning how I felt. I understood well why the other boys distrusted him.

Sadly I doubted they knew the truth behind his motivation. I was angry, to be sure, but all I wanted to do was console Peter. My own situation aside, he was all that mattered to me now.

“Really?” He asked, wiping his eyes and looking somewhat relieved.

“Really.” I smiled, hugging him tightly once more as he returned my embrace. My body shivered in the breeze from the hallway but the warmth of his body helped. I broke away as I remembered what today was.

“I hate to do this but we need to go...” I whispered in the most assuring voice I could. Peter nodded, rubbed his eyes and forced a smile back onto his face.

“Guess you’re right.” He stood and began to walk out of the bathroom.

“Wait!” I yelled, catching myself by surprise at my bravado. Peter turned, looking at me with a renewed sense of curiosity.

“I love you.” I smiled deeply. I knew that the words were sudden, but they were true. In that moment, Peter completely exposed to me, I felt the emotion so strongly that I could no longer deny it. This kind, scarred, mistreated man before me; this was the one that I wanted. I would have done anything to make him happy.

“I love you too.” Peter smiled genuinely, the light that I knew so well immediately returned to his face. I grinned in return, feeling at once complete and prepared for anything. Peter’s hand reached towards the vanity and grasped my towel, flinging it at me.

“Better get ready.”

I blushed, remembering that I had been standing there completely exposed. I wrapped the towel around myself as quickly as I could. Peter’s laughter warmed me.

“See you later?”

I nodded. “Sure.”

Chapter Twenty Three

There were many questions still unanswered in my mind. Mainly why Peter wasn’t killed for what he did but also questions about what else he knew. Even so, I felt that I had a much deeper understanding of this once elusive boy. My heart ached to be with him even now. Being with him was confusing, but I felt good the majority of the time. He was a welcome place of rest on my journey.

As I descended the stairs towards the dining room I saw that I had missed breakfast. The boys neatly filed out of the room and towards their chosen destinations. My stomach growled for the first time all morning as I suddenly realized how hungry I really was. As I settled myself on being hungry for

awhile longer, I caught sight of David as soon as he exited the dining room. My stomach lurched and tightened around itself as I froze a few steps from the bottom.

David's eyes rose to meet mine, a look of anger still very present in his eyes. I smiled a little, in spite of myself, and watched his attention turn towards the playroom as he entered it. I immediately sat down, feeling dizzy, and rested my face in my hands. The sound of footsteps approaching me stirred me from my moment of sorrow.

"What's wrong?" An unfamiliar man's voice caused me to drop my hands and look up. The man was significantly taller than me, with spiked black hair and expressive brown eyes. I could tell by the almond shape of his eyes and his tanned skin that he was Asian. I smiled in return, feeling a flutter in my stomach. Despite my state I could recognize that he was attractive. I blushed as I looked down at the stairs once more.

"If you don't want to talk about it that's cool." I felt the brush of the man's shirt against me as he sat on the stair next to me. I looked up and over, observing his face as he watched me. I could only assume that he was one of the big brothers. His face seemed kind enough, and since this whole ordeal was mandatory, I figured I might as well make him feel as though I was interested.

"I had a fight with a friend. It's not that important." I wiped my nose on my arm, becoming immediately repulsed by my action.

"Well that sounds pretty important to me." He smiled, trying to be reassuring.

"Thanks I guess." I muttered, unsure of what to do or how to act.

"Well if you're not in the mood to talk then what can we do?"

I looked over at him once more. His face was genuine, and he truly seemed to have a desire to see my happy. I would welcome an escape from my thoughts, if even for one day. Maybe the whole big brother thing wouldn't be so bad after all.

"Whatever you want to do." I replied in a chipper tone, causing the man to laugh.

"Are you hungry?"

I looked down at my stomach remembering exactly how hungry I was.

"Yeah I missed breakfast..." I replied, running my hands over my growling stomach. The man stood to his full height and turned to grin at me.

"Then that settles it! What do you say we go into town and get a bite to eat?"

I looked at him with confusion for a brief moment. With the tight level of control they held over the orphanage, would they actually allow something like this to happen? Since the request was made I was certain it would be alright, but my mind found the idea almost too good to be true. I wasn't about to turn it down however.

“Sure.” I said simply, smiled and stood to my full height. I watched as the man began to turn, suddenly stopped midway and turned back towards me. He extended his hand with a kind glance and began to speak.

“I’m Wesley.”

“I’m Ben.” I extended my hand and shook his. His hand was quite a bit larger than me, engulfing mine with ease.

“Pleased to meet you.” Wesley broke our grip and turned for good this time. He walked towards the door and swung it open.

“Coming?” He asked, turning his head ever so slightly.

“Yeah... sorry.” I blushed and followed him outside. There were several cars parked in the yard surrounding the orphanage so I followed him closely to make sure I was going to the right one. The reality of what this outing meant suddenly dawned on me. For one, I’d be able to eat, but I also would get a better grasp of my surroundings. If I actually chose to run away then I’d need to have at least some handle on where I was going. While I was fairly certain we wouldn’t travel far, I could at least get a sense for where in Maine I actually was.

We approached a small blue sedan and Wesley opened the passenger door for me. I smiled, nodding in thanks, and slid into the dark interior of the car. By the time I had managed to slide my seatbelt into place, Wesley swung the driver’s side door open and slid in next to me. Within moments he had turned the ignition and we set off down the hill and away from the orphanage.

As we rode in silence my eyes surveyed my surroundings carefully, looking for any sort of landmark that may be of future importance. Unfortunately the road seemed as dull as the forest that surrounded the orphanage. There was little except for pine trees and I didn’t see as much as a speed limit sign as we drove. I glanced over towards Wesley for a moment, trying to think of a way to get information out of him without being too obvious. Wesley noticed me looking and smiled, patting my leg gently.

“Do you want to hear some music?”

I shrugged, it wasn’t the reaction I was hoping for. Then again he wasn’t a mind reader.

“Sure.” I said simply. As he turned the dial and an unfamiliar rock song reached my ears, I resigned myself to ignorance. I stared at the window once more, hoping to see something, anything that would give me an indication as to where I was. With each moment my stomach growled more and my resolve began to wane. With a childlike impatience, I finally decided to just ask.

“So where are we going?” Upon hearing me Wesley turned down the radio a little so we could hear each other better.

“Just a small diner in Jackman.”

I tried my best to remember if I had ever heard of such a place before but was fairly sure I hadn't. Wherever we were was obviously not in southern Maine. I pressed my thumbs together, a nervous habit that I suddenly remembered from my youth.

"Where is Jackman?" I asked suddenly, seeing how much information I could get. Wesley laughed a little.

"Don't you know where you are?"

I frowned, pressing my thumbs together with more force and staring at the floorboard. I heard Wesley as he cleared his throat.

"Sorry about that, I just assumed you were from around here. We're pretty close to Canada... about sixteen miles away I suppose."

I nodded, looking at Wesley out of the corner of my eye. He seemed distressed; probably concerned that he had offended me somehow. I just smiled.

"It's okay... thanks for telling me."

Wesley smiled back, apparently relaxing at my words. I was delighted when we finally turned onto another road and power lines began to appear. I knew that running away would be incredibly difficult considering we were so far away from civilization, but at least I had a little bit of knowledge now. Within moments I watched as an actual speed limit sign appeared, and a few modest homes sparsely situated at random intervals.

A few additional minutes passed before we pulled into the parking lot of a modest diner. I had to contain myself from laughing, it was almost too picturesque to be real; a brick façade with great windows that had the day's specials displayed through them, several kitschy decorations peering from highly set shelves and even checkered curtains pulled back on either side of the windows. A couple pickup trucks sat beside us and the clientele inside seemed to have an affinity for flannel. I felt like I was stuck in a cheesy movie. Wesley exited the car without another word and I followed, staying close to him. I wasn't sure why but I felt an intense shyness fall over me.

Wesley pushed the door open causing a bell to ring. We were quickly greeted by a short, voluptuous woman wearing a spring green waitress' uniform that looked like it belonged in the seventies. She had violent red hair that sat in a beehive on her head and a pad tucked between her arm and her breast.

"Welcome! Go ahead and take a seat. What can I get you to drink?"

"Oh I'll take a coffee, how about you?" Wesley looked at me. I was unsure of what to say.

"You can have anything you want." He assured, smiling gently. I smiled back, trying to regain some of my confidence.

“Do you have milkshakes?” I asked innocently.

“Sure do, what kind would you like?” She asked, smiling at me in a way that greatly resembled a horse.

“Strawberry!” I chirped, almost immediately becoming embarrassed. Thankfully the waitress seemed amused and laughed.

“I’ll get that right away little man!”

I watched as she waddled behind the counter and one of the flannel clad men smiled at me from his perch. I latched onto Wesley’s arm only causing him to laugh.

“Burt won’t hurt you, will you Burt?”

The man laughed, taking a sip of his coffee. “Not today.”

I groaned to myself internally. I couldn’t believe how shy I felt. Even the slightest glance from these adults made me feel uneasy and for whatever reason I felt comfortable around Wesley. Thankfully he didn’t seem to think my reaction was bizarre, and he led me over to a booth. We both slid in and faced each other. Wesley placed his hand in his shirt pocket and withdrew a cigarette and a lighter.

“Do you mind?”

I shook my head. I had actually smoked many years ago when I was in college. That memory seemed incredibly distant to me now. As Wesley ignited the tip and inhaled deeply, I sunk in my seat and looked around the diner. There were several paintings by local artists, images of trees and who I could only assume were regular visitors. My eyes fell on an image of a young Asian boy and I smiled.

“Is that you?” I asked.

Wesley turned and looked in the direction I was pointing. He turned back around and smiled, nodding in return.

“Yes that was taken awhile ago when I was little. I think that was around the time I was adopted.”

My ears perked at his words. I supposed it was a little unusual for an Asian man to be in this region of the country, but I hadn’t really given it any thought.

“You were adopted?” I asked.

“Yeah I was ten when they got me. I didn’t grow up in your orphanage of course; I was down in New York. My parents died in a car accident when I was very young.”

I looked down as I began to feel sorry for him.

“Sorry...” I whispered, barely audible.

"Oh please don't worry about it!" He laughed. "I'm very happy to have the family I do. I really love living in Maine."

I smiled a little and tried to regain my confidence. Before I had a chance to say much else the waitress came over and sat a cup of coffee in front of Wesley, and a tall strawberry milkshake in front of me. I grinned happily, examining the whipped cream and cherry on top.

"Thanks so much!" I spoke delightedly. The waitress laughed and ruffled my hair.

"Anytime darling."

I blushed as she took the pad out from beneath her arm and removed a pen from her ear.

"What'll it be boys?"

Wesley thought for a brief moment before responding.

"I'll just have a cheeseburger and some fries. What would you like?"

I looked from him to the waitress for a moment. My eyes settled on her name tag. I almost laughed after reading the name.

"I'll have the same... Ms. Dot."

She grinned happily, clicked her pen and placed it behind her ear once more.

"Coming right up!"

As she waddled off once more I slid the milkshake closer to me. I slipped the straw between my lips and sucked hard, letting the sweet cold ooze slip into my mouth. I couldn't help but grin; it had been quite some time since I'd had anything sweet. It had also been quite some time since I had the metabolism to allow it.

"Pretty good huh? I used to get milkshakes here all the time when I was little. I used to get chocolate though."

I smiled and nodded. "I think it's the best I've ever had!"

I wasn't dishonest at all, it absolutely was. Not that my food memory was all that long.

"Maybe next time we come you can try the chocolate?"

I almost frowned but caught myself. I knew the likelihood of my coming back was slim. I had little time with which to decide what I would do. As nice as Wesley was he was very much like David, simply a temporary fixture in my life. There was no point in becoming attached.

"Maybe." I said simply, pressing the straw into my mouth once more and continuing my attack on the cold substance. Wesley opened a packet of sugar, dumping the contents into his cup. After

stirring it he allowed it to rise and meet his lips. After taking a sip he smiled, letting it lower back to the table.

“That’s good.”

I smirked a little. I had never been a big fan of coffee.

“I think coffee is gross.” I said, giggling a little.

“Well this is the best coffee in the world, hands down! Do you want to try it?” He offered me the cup and I politely declined. I knew that if I didn’t like it as an adult, I certainly wouldn’t like it now.

“How do you like living at the orphanage?”

“It’s okay I guess... I haven’t been there for very long. I have a really good friend though.” I smiled as thoughts of Peter entered my mind once more.

“Well that’s good. I had a good friend when I lived in my orphanage as well. It really hurt when I had to leave him behind.”

I nodded, suddenly remembering my situation with David. It wasn’t that I wanted to think about it but the way he mourned his past friend reminded me of him.

“Yeah...”

“So is this good friend the one you are fighting with?”

I fought for a moment to regain my bearings and determine what he was asking. I suddenly remembered him asking what was wrong on the stair at the orphanage. My mind was forced to remain on David at least for the time being.

“No it’s another friend.” I said simply. My fingers grabbed the straw and moved it up and down, mixing the milkshake but also trying to distract me from my thoughts.

“Do you want to talk about it some more or do you want to leave that door closed?”

I looked up at Wesley for a minute. I thought it awfully forward for him to assume my trust this quickly. Maybe it was to be expected, nine year olds weren’t exactly the most jaded people in the world. There was no way I could explain to him the full breadth of my predicament even if I wanted to. Even so, I didn’t want him to think I was mentally deranged. What if he reported what was going on to Bessie? There was no sense in drawing any unneeded attention.

“I have a friend named David that I used to play with. We had open house yesterday where people could come and see if they wanted to adopt anyone. He met this one family that was like perfect for him. He even has a twin and they couldn’t stop talking. I just know he’s going to be gone soon and it sucks...” I stuck the straw in my mouth once more and took another sip. I was going to drown my sorrows in sugar.

“I see.” Wesley replied. His face seemed contemplative as he fought for some reassuring words to provide me with.

“It really is sad to have to see your friends leave, but one day that’s going to be you. I know that you must want to have a Mom and Dad.”

I sighed. I honestly couldn’t deny what he said. When I saw David and Jack with those two I pined for what he had. I wished deeply that I could be adopted and have a chance at a normal childhood. I knew that it was all a result of my regression that I couldn’t help my feelings, but I also knew the reality of my situation. There was no way that I could ever be adopted. Any chance at a normal childhood was gone. I wasn’t, after all, a normal child.

“Yeah I do.” I said. There was no sense in arguing or drawing more attention to my predicament than was necessary. Wesley was trying his best with the information that he had.

“Try to be happy for him. He may be gone but you have your other friend to play with.”

I nodded. Certainly my thoughts of David would fade with time. I was happy to have Peter and I looked forward to seeing where the relationship went. Before I had a chance to think anymore, Dot arrived with our plates and deposited them. Apparently an expert, she deposited a bottle of ketchup before either of us could ask.

“Do you boys need anything else?”

Wesley and I shook our heads in unison. She smiled and walked away, leaving us alone once more. My hands pried the greasy burger from the plate and shoved it into my mouth hungrily. I was delighted to see that the food was as good as the milkshake. Wesley laughed, depositing some ketchup on his fries.

“Well at least this place has another fan now.”

I blushed, embarrassed at how rude I had been. I placed the burger down and chewed slower. I always heard that the best sign that food was good was silence, and that seemed to be the case. As we each ate our burgers and fries, neither of us said a word. Wesley occasionally smiled at me, and I kept myself in continuous check. I wasn’t going to embarrass myself again regardless of how hungry I was.

When we finally finished and Wesley paid the bill, we headed back outside and climbed back into his car. As we started heading back down the road Wesley turned the music off completely.

“Is there anything else you’d like to do?”

I thought for a brief moment on his offer. I wasn’t entirely sure what there was to do in the middle of nowhere, but I also didn’t want to take advantage of Wesley’s generosity too much. He had already bought me lunch after all and his kindness was something I had no way of returning. I shook my head and looked out the window as the small town became a distant memory. Wesley hummed happily, turning the music back up, and the sound carried me as the pine trees became denser once more.

As the car turned back onto the road that I knew would lead towards the orphanage, I began to feel a tinge of regret in the pit of my stomach. I wasn't ready to go back to my prison, but I also wanted to see Peter. I was certain that he was probably out with his big brother but I was hopeful just the same. The child in me wanted to be free, to see everything there was to see with Wesley by my side. The adult in me wanted to go back so I could spend more time with Peter. I settled on the adult side, since I had already made my decision clear moments before.

When we finally drew closer to the orphanage and I could see the outline in the distance, I drew my knees to my chest and hugged my legs to me. I was full, of both food and energy, and was regretting my choice to return so soon even more. Wesley rested his hand on my knee and smiled.

"Not ready to go back?"

I momentarily thought about saying no, about pleading with him to take me as far away as he could. I knew that it wasn't fair to him and I certainly didn't want to be a burden.

"I'm okay." I said simply.

"Very well." Wesley smiled again as we finally cleared the hill and pulled up behind the other cars surrounding the orphanage. A few had departed, but a great number still remained. As I turned to open the door and excuse myself, Wesley suddenly reached inside of his pocket and I could hear paper as he wrestled to get to something. I allowed my arm to fall as I turned to watch him. He pulled an old receipt out and ripped off a part of it, extracting a pen from his glove compartment and began to write something down that I couldn't see.

"I'm going to give you my number in case you ever need anything. Don't hesitate to call anytime, I mean it." When he finished he shoved the piece of paper in my hand and smiled.

"I hope you had fun today."

I nodded, feeling the piece of paper inside my hand.

"Thanks for everything."

He nodded as I reached over and opened the door. I slid out and stood, shutting it behind me. I stood there silently for a moment, watching as he turned around and headed back towards the road. He waved a little before he drove completely out of sight and I returned it, forcing a cheeky grin onto my face. As I felt the piece of paper press against my wet palm I almost felt bad for the guy. He genuinely wanted to help, but I knew that his offer was pointless. I shoved the paper into my pocket where I assumed it would remain forever.

Chapter Twenty Four

While it was by no means surprising, Peter was nowhere to be seen. My only hope was that he would be back in time for dinner and we'd be able to spend some time together before bed. David was nowhere to be seen as well, and for once his absence was a welcome relief to my tired mind. Several of the boys were situated at various points throughout the orphanage talking to their big brothers, but the majority seemed to be missing. I was certain they were probably exploring the grounds or hiking through the woods. I felt instantly proud of Wesley. I felt certain that none of the other big brothers were so cool as to take their boys to a diner.

With nothing else to occupy my mind I slipped into the electronics room which was thankfully empty. I plopped down on the sofa, grabbed the remote, and began searching for something to occupy my time. I was immediately driven to boredom by the onslaught of nothingness, and I knew that time was going to pass even more slowly than it usually did. I finally settled on a nature show and escaped to my thoughts, day dreaming about the things I would be doing with Peter.

My initial thoughts were merely about conversations that could be had and questions that could be answered. I even childishly thought about games that we could play together. After awhile my thoughts made a darker turn, as the thought of our training occurred to me. I began to blush, trying to imagine what all it would involve. I wasn't sure if Peter knew about his new found responsibility or not, if he did he gave no indication of it earlier.

I fiddled nervously with the hem of my shirt, suddenly regretting that I had requested him. It wasn't that I would have rather been trained by James; I merely feared that he would think less of me for it. I thought of our relationship as something more than carnal, although the idea did appeal to me a little. If the small incident with David was as amazing as it was, how much more amazing could an encounter with a boy with an adult's mind be?

I once more felt embarrassed about my thoughts. Who was to say that we would do anything physical at all? Maybe the whole training process was simply verbal. Maybe there was nothing to worry about. The only thing that would calm my mind would be time, and I just hoped sincerely that he wouldn't think less of me for my request. When the smell of food managed to waft into the electronics room I became aware of the hour for the first time. The nature show I had settled on had been off for quite some time and the confines of my mind and my solitude had made the time pass rather quickly.

I stood, brushing the wrinkles out of my pants, and walked into the entranceway. From what I could see the adults were gone, and the majority of the boys had begun making their way into the dining room. I walked over, half expecting to see Peter, but was sadly left disappointed. My eyes cast over towards my old seat momentarily and I was immediately shocked by what I saw. David was waving excitedly, his formerly angry face replaced by one of glee. For a moment I thought that it might be a trick, but decided that he was too young to think in such a way. I managed a weak smile and waved in return.

"Come sit with us!" I heard his voice chime. This was definitely no trick, the happy David that I once knew had returned to me. I looked around me for a moment hoping that Peter would appear but I

felt fairly certain that he wasn't going to show. I walked around the table, pulled my old chair out and sat next to David. If Peter ever caught wind of this he would be angry, but it was my life after all.

"Hey." I said simply, smiling as David hopped excitedly next to me.

"Did you have fun with your big brother?" He asked curiously. I nodded, managing a genuine smile for the first time. I wasn't sure what made his mind clear so quickly, but I was grateful. If nothing else we could have a friendly disposition towards each other until either he or I left, whichever came first.

"Me too! We went into the woods and played hide and seek for awhile. Then we came back and Jack's big brother already left so we played a game together that he could play even though he can't walk right." David giggled excitedly. His mind and mouth seemed to be working a million miles a minute. I thought momentarily about asking why he was talking to me once more, but decided to accept it as a miracle.

Bessie walked out of the dining room with food in hand. I was still largely full from my lunch, but I decided to go ahead and eat a little something so that I didn't worry anyone. As soon as everything was sat down and Bessie took her place, I shoveled a small helping of pasta onto my plate and half a breadstick. I watched in amusement as both David and Jack took way too much of everything as usual. As I raised the breadstick to my mouth and took a small bite, David began to speak once more.

"I forgot to tell you about Michael and Melinda!"

At the words I began to feel my stomach tighten. I managed to chew and swallow what was in my mouth, and simply sat the breadstick down. My face did little to hide the fact that I didn't want to hear it, but David seemed completely oblivious.

"I think I told you that they have a farm right? Well guess what they have on the farm? Horses! They also said they have a cow name Lulu and some chickens too, but I really want to ride horses! They even said Jack could ride them once his leg got better." He giggled, moving his hands expressively and shoving small bites of his food in his mouth between sentences. I felt an intense desire to run away, to simply escape, but there was no way that I could. It was my duty to draw no attention to myself.

"Oh and you know how Michael is a pilot? Well he has his own airplane too! He said that when I'm old enough I can learn how to fly it too! Jack doesn't really want to fly but I do. Oh and did you know that they have a swimming pool? I think that is so cool! And, and..." David stopped momentarily to catch his breath as he shoved another bite of his food into his mouth. The feeling of remorse and jealousy that once held me was turning into anger. It wasn't just a passive anger, but a seething dark anger that seemed to fill every ounce of my being. As much as I fought against it, I knew that it was useless.

"They don't have any kids because they are so busy but they said they wanted to adopted us! They said that we look like we are supposed to be their kids already!" He laughed, slapping his forehead in an over dramatic manner. I gritted my teeth, pushing my plate away.

"Stop it..." I whispered. It wasn't so quiet that David couldn't hear, but just audible enough so that he was the only one. Apparently either David had chosen to ignore it, or he didn't care.

"I think it's kind of cool. I mean I think having red hair makes me look stupid, but it's REALLY pretty on Melinda! Don't you think so? Oh and Jack told her she was pretty and she said he was handsome! Jack got so red!"

As much as I knew that I needed to control myself, it was impossible. The feelings of anger and hatred that filled my being were too powerful. They were carnal, the very base of everything that was wrong with mankind. Being a child made it impossible to overcome, and within moments my body seemed to take over its own movements. I flew upwards, my chair collapsing behind me. My fists balled tightly and rose into the air, coming down quickly and slamming against the table.

"I said stop it! I don't want to hear about your stupid A-DOPTION!" I put an emphasis on the 'a', a pronunciation that I once found adorable but now found infuriating. I stormed from the table, stomping all the way towards the entrance and prepared to walk up the stairs. I could feel every eye in the room on me as I did so, but I refused to look back. I could hear the distant sounds of David sniffling in reaction to my outrage. It was shortly followed by the sound of another chair scooting back as much heavier footsteps followed behind me.

"You stop right there young man! You need to go back in there right now and apologize!" The voice of Bessie was stern and loud, causing my body to shake as fear intermingled with my anger. I turned on my heel, finding it impossible to stop myself.

"I don't have to do anything! All he wants to do is talk about his STUPID Michael and Melinda! I'm sick of it! I'm sick of you! I'm sick of this whole damned place!" As the word 'damned' escaped my lips I knew at once that it was a mistake; Bessie, the kind yet stern woman that I so admired, immediately raised her arm and planted her hand firmly on my cheek. I was immediately shaken from my rage, and tears began to flow freely down my cheeks as I wailed in response.

"You go up to your bedroom right now! You are not to make a peep and I don't want to see you again until you can apologize and be a good boy!"

My feet flew surely as I rounded the banister, up the flights of stairs and into my room. I slammed the door behind me and fell on my bed, unable to stop my wailing. I grabbed my pillow, hugged it close to my chest, and wanted so badly to die. I was disappointed; disappointed in how I treated David, disappointed in how I treated Bessie, disappointed in my inability to control myself and most of all disappointed that I had broken my promise to myself.

I knew that my life was out of my control, but I figured that I could at least stop crying. At that moment, with tears flowing at an impossible pace, I knew that even that part of my life was out of my control. I was a slave to my childish emotions, and the jealousy that I had felt had fueled an anger that was greater than I could control. David didn't deserve to be treated that way; my mind knew that he should be happy. Bessie certainly didn't deserve to be treated that way; she was such a kind and

compassionate woman. How could I ever expect to be able to survive on my own? I couldn't even handle something as simple as having a civil dinner.

Peter knew exactly what he was talking about when he warned me to not talk to David anymore. I silently wondered if he had experienced something similar himself. David, the very thought of him was almost comforting. As my tears began to steadily slow and my wails turned into soft sobs, the thought of seeing him once more became a comfort. I wiped my wet cheeks on my pillow and curled into a ball around it. Within a short while the stress of the day overwhelmed me and my eyes began to grow heavy. As soon as I allowed them to close, I fell away into a deep slumber.

Chapter Twenty Five

The sound of a loud thud caused my eyes to shoot open. I immediately sat up in the darkness that surrounded me, fear gripping tightly around me. My eyes tried to adjust, seeking an explanation for the sound.

“Who’s there?” My voice asked, wavering in and out of a false confidence. I heard a familiar laughter as a tall shadow rose in the distance.

“It’s just me, don’t be afraid.”

I suddenly grinned, my fear falling away at the sound of Peter’s voice. After the afternoon I had experienced, I didn’t mind being awoken by him. With the flick of a switch the room was bathed in light, and my eyes squinted against the brightness of it. As soon as my eyes adjusted, I grinned at the older boy. He looked down at me, smiling mischievously and placed his hands on his hips.

“You chose me huh? I must say I’m honored.”

I blushed and looked down at my feet. I now knew that he indeed didn’t know this morning. At least he didn’t seem upset or disappointed.

“Can I ask you one little favor first?”

I nodded, not knowing exactly what to expect.

“Next time you request something that requires Frederick come and visit me, give me ample warning first.”

I laughed loudly. I knew very well why he didn’t like Frederick and I shared those feelings. Naturally there was no way that I could have known to what depth he despised him the previous evening, but I knew it was a joke just the same. Peter walked across the room and sat on the bed next to me, turning so that we were facing each other. I immediately lunged forward, wrapping my arms around his mid-section and buried my face in his chest. His arms wrapped around me as his fingers playfully skipped across my scalp.

“I missed you.” I said in a muffled tone. I heard Peter sigh contentedly.

“I missed you too.”

My finger traced the contours of his chest absentmindedly. There was so much I had wanted to say, but at that point it didn’t seem to matter. I was close to my friend, my love, and there was nothing else that I wanted more. Even if that was all I had accomplished that night, it would have been enough.

“I heard about what happened with David earlier.”

I swallowed deeply, expecting him to yell or become angry, but it never happened. I backed away a little; my arms still firmly clasped around him, and looked into his eyes for any sign of emotion. The only thing I saw was sympathy.

“I’m not going to say that I told you so, but I want you to at least think about the fact you are a kid now. You know you can’t always control what you do.”

I sighed. I knew he was right, and I knew it before he even said it. I would have typically been infuriated by someone talking down to me, but from Peter it seemed appropriate.

“Do you want to talk about it?” He asked in a reassuring tone.

“I’m okay, thanks though.”

I felt his weight shift as he motioned for me to lie on my side. As I did so he spooned me once more, wrapping his arm around my midsection and pulling me close to him. I laid my head on his free arm and turned my neck so I could watch his face. My fingers traced the contours of the arm that held me.

“Can I ask you something else?”

I could feel Peter begin to tense up. The thought of asking the unanswered questions from earlier had occurred to me, but I wanted this moment with him to be as stress free as possible. He had already revealed so much that I felt he deserved as much. He returned my question with a simple nod, but I could see dread appearing on his face.

“Where were you this afternoon?”

I felt the tenseness immediately melt away at my words. A slight smile appeared on his face as he squeezed me softly.

“Well I knew that we had to start training tonight so I figured I’d get a nap in. Sorry I wasn’t there.”

I smiled nervously. I was satisfied with his response but now that I knew training was to begin tonight, I felt ill prepared. The only thing I could think about were the possibilities of what that training

would involve. I shrunk back into him, wishing that he would just hold me and I wouldn't have to worry about discovering what it all meant.

"You don't have to be nervous." I felt his lips kiss the back of my head as his hand rose from my side and intertwined with mine. I looked down at our hands together and felt somewhat better. I knew that Peter would never hurt me and whatever happened would be so much better simply because it was with him.

Peter's hand released mine as he rolled me onto my back, scooting back a little. His right arm propped him up so that he could look down at me. The smell of shampoo and cinnamon permeated my senses. His left hand rose, gently caressing my cheek. His beautiful eyes stared deep into mine, making it impossible for me to move.

"Did you mean what you said earlier?"

I thought for a moment about what he could possibly mean.

"That I love you?" I asked, fairly certain that it was what he was referring to. Peter nodded in return, a blank expression stretching across his beautiful face.

"Of course I did." I smiled happily. Peter's face quickly turned into one of joy, the beautiful light that seemed to surround him at all times became brighter than it ever had before. He leaned forward as he closed his eyes. I closed my eyes in turn, already expecting what was coming next. The feeling of his soft lips against mine was heavenly, and I wasn't prepared for the feelings it would inspire.

Peter gently moved his tongue past my lips as mine began to intermingle with his. His left hand remained still against my cheek, almost feeling cool against my fire hot cheek. I could feel the pressure in my pants building as my tiny member rose to its full height. The feeling of love, passion and adoration that I felt was almost enough to overwhelm me.

"What does the training involve?" I asked breathlessly as our lips finally parted.

"Practical experience." He moved downwards, straddling my body and nibbling my neck. As my penis pressed against him a wave of passion extended through my entire body. My hands, finding an unknown strength, immediately met with his shoulders and pushed him away from me. He stopped, staring at my face in confusion.

"Are you doing this because you have to?"

He had a contemplative expression for the briefest of moments. I knew that he was trying to find the best way to explain himself.

"Well I guess you could say yes and no. I didn't have to do this; Frederick can't force me to train you. Since I accepted I have to do it now, but it's because I want to." He made no more of an effort to continue as he awaited my reply.

"Oh..." Was all I could say. I had no idea how to feel about what he just said. In one way, I almost felt that he was doing it because he felt some sort of an obligation. In another way, I felt as though he had chosen to do this and I should feel honored.

"Are you doing it because you feel like you have to?" I asked. Peter almost began to laugh but his face turned serious as soon as he saw my disposition hadn't changed. I glanced at the door momentarily, considering the option of escape. If I could run away then he wouldn't have to do something he didn't want to. Maybe it would have been best for both of us. Before I had a chance to decide, his fingers moved my head back to where it was facing me. He peered in my eyes deeply.

"I don't feel like I have to do anything. I'm doing it because I love you, because I want to. If you don't want to do it we can stop. You can have James train you or whatever..." The look on his face became sadder with each word he spoke. I swallowed deeply, feeling immediately vindicated by his words.

"I want to." I said, smiling reassuringly at him. Peter stared at me for a moment before a smile crept across his lips once more.

"You sure?" He asked. I nodded in return. With a quick peck on the lips Peter moved downward once more, continuing his assault on my neck. I let out an audible gasp after I felt his hands slowly creep inside of my shirt. Each was incredibly soft, and as they gently caressed my stomach I immediately felt at ease. My penis throbbed tightly inside my pants, rubbing against Peter's stomach with each movement he made. I felt certain that I wouldn't be able to last long.

Peter's hands lowered with a practiced motion. They grasped at the hem of my shirt, pushing it upwards and towards my head. I arched my back slightly, giving him the room to remove it. As soon as it passed over my head and arms, he tossed it in the corner without a moments care. He sat back a moment, examining my bare chest and smiled hungrily up at me. I blushed intensely, not used to such attention even as an adult. I wanted to speak, I wanted to thank him for everything he was making me feel, but before I could his tongue found its way down my chest, his lips massaging my bare skin every so often.

His hands found their way into mine, pressing me down into the bed. As he moved to my left, his tongue began to lightly flick across my nipple. I let out a moan, squirming beneath his weight and enjoying the lack of control along with the sensations he made me feel. I watched intensely as his mouth enveloped my entire nipple. His tongue moved passionately across it, causing it to harden within the warm confines of his wet orifice. I felt the passion overwhelm me at once as I struggled to keep my moans to a minimum. Before I could protest, before I could beg him for mercy, he was already making his way across my chest once more, in hot pursuit of my remaining nipple.

As soon as he reached his goal, barely grazing it with the tip of his tongue, I let out another loud moan. My small body squirmed, finding it impossible to resist the feelings as they coursed through me. Everything was amplified, and the softness of his skin and tongue against me made it all the better. The days of rough hands and weathered skin were gone. Hairy arms and chests were replaced by supple,

butter like masses pressing against one another. There could have been no better pleasure than the one I experienced at that moment.

With his mouth around my right nipple, I felt my mind go hazy. I thought momentarily that I may go insane. I arched my back, wanting to feel him against my member. It rubbed ever so casually against him but his control was absolute. He seemed to have no desire to hasten my moment. I heard a light giggle as he moved back toward the middle of my chest and slowly began to nibble his way down. His mouth stopped momentarily above my navel, his nose inhaling my scent deeply. Just when I thought he was done, that I wouldn't have to experience anymore, he gently circled my navel with his tongue.

I arched my back once more, my penis firmly planted on his chest now. I let out a gasp, my breath quickening by the moment. He moved downward once more, finally reaching my waist. I held my breath for a moment, expecting him to remove my pants immediately, but he simply nibbled casually across my exposed waistline. I tried to remove my hands from his, to move them downwards and free myself, but he refused to relent. He held me tight against the bed and I had little ability to escape.

He stopped, momentarily, and looked up at me. I knew that I was bright red; I was already exhausted from the encounter and my lack of sleep. He smiled up at me mischievously, as though I were some toy in his complete control.

“Do you promise to be a good boy if I let your hands go for a minute?”

I nodded. There was no way that I would be able to stop now even if I wanted to. Ever so slowly, ever so methodically, he released my hands from his grip and slowly moved the tips of his fingers down my arms and across my chest. As he lowered them towards my waist I felt my arms willing themselves downward. I wanted to feel release, and apparently Peter had noticed.

“You promised to be a good boy.” He giggled teasingly. I nodded, forced my hands upwards and trapped them behind my head. Satisfied with what he saw, Peter’s fingers began to move once more. I waited with great anticipation as they finally passed over my belly button. He stopped once more spreading his fingers across the waistband of my jeans as he only barely pushed them inside.

I wanted to gyrate against him once more but there was nothing left to gyrate against. He was left between my legs, his face dangerously close to my crotch. His fingers played wistfully with my skin, trying to provoke me into another bad boy moment. I refused him the privilege, assured of my own self control despite by feelings to the contrary. When he saw that there was no hope, his fingers finally retracted and headed towards the clasp that held my jeans against my waist. My breath quickened once more, I knew that I would soon feel the greatest pleasure of my life.

As soon as the clasp released I felt a great sense of relief pass over me. His fingers seemed to have a tireless attention to detail as he pinched the zipper, pulling on it ever so gently just to tease me. I was watching each movement, and he was fully aware. With the quickest of motions he finally grabbed my zipper tightly, forcing it down and exposing my underwear for all to see. He reached his hands inside,

grabbed my jeans tightly, and began to pull downwards. I raised my hips into the air, simplifying the process.

As soon as he removed them and threw them in the corner to join my shirt, he casually spread my legs open with his hands. Each hand passed gently over my inner thighs, sending shivers up and down my spine. I fought with my hands once more to remain still, staring at the tiny tent on my underwear. I watched as Peter moved further downwards, his tongue gently flicking the soft skin of my inner thighs. He began at the knee of my right leg, moving upwards slowly towards the top. He stopped occasionally to nibble, inhaling my essence several times more. Once he reached the crease where my thigh met my groin, he ran his tongue gently across it.

My hands immediately shot downwards of their own accord and began to intermingle with his hair. It was impossible to keep them out of the action, but I wasn't going to ruin the pleasure only he could give to my member. He giggled lightly, moving to my other leg and repeating the same process as before. As his tongue once again ran across the crease joining my thigh and my groin, he rose up, breathing warm air onto my scrotum through the tight confines of my underwear. I nearly yelled out in pleasure.

Finally the moment I had been waiting for so long had arrived. His hands rose gently and found themselves inside the waistband of my underwear. My hips rose once more as he pulled them down, across my feet and onto the floor. With a ravenous delight that ran counter to every move he had made over the course of the evening, he immediately enveloped my penis with his mouth. The pressure of his sucking was nearly unbearable, and his tongue ran casually over the bottom length of my shaft.

This time I wasn't able to contain myself. I grasped at his hair violently, audibly yelling in response. A strong tingling sensation washed over my entire body. As he began to bob his head up and down in a quick motion, his hands found their way beneath me, taking each globe of my soft ass into their grips. He kneaded each gently, making sure that neither was left in want. He occasionally forced them upward, plunging my tiny member even deeper into his velveteen mouth.

As my hands fought violently with his hair the familiar sensation from the previous evening began to return to me. The tingling began in my stomach first, the overwhelming need to pee becoming ever present. The sensation moved downwards quickly, beginning at the base of my shaft and slowly moving its way upwards. My hands simply latched onto his hair as though they were glued, I was paralyzed by the feelings.

"I'm going to cum!" I shouted loudly, but Peter simply continued his assault. I pushed my hips upward as the mighty crescendo of pleasure overtook me. The tingling washed over my entire shaft, across the rim of my head and over the tip. My cock fought violently within the confines of his mouth, seeking to release fluids that didn't exist. My stomach was tense, each muscle in my body tightened to the breaking point.

Just when I thought I was going to pass out from ecstasy, I felt the amazing end of my symphony begin. The tingling began to diminish, the sweat poured ravenously off of my body. My penis began to

slow and so did the pace of Peter's sucking. My still erect penis finally fell away from its pleasure entirely, leaving my entire body sore and my skin incredibly sensitive to the touch. Peter backed away, sitting upright and let his hands fall to his sides. He examined my exhausted frame and smiled confidently. He had accomplished everything he wanted to.

"I love you." I whispered, still trying to catch my breath. Peter smiled more deeply than before, laying his index finger across my lips.

"I love you too."

Peter maneuvered my body so that he could pull the blanket down beneath me. After covering me up, he slipped beneath the confines with me and pulled me close to him. His arm wrapped tightly around me, his face buried deep inside my hair. In my moment of post coital bliss, so much more powerful than anything I had ever experienced before, I began to slip away into a wonderful sleep. Within the arms of my lover and my friend, nothing could go wrong.