

THE STORM: CHAPTER 1

A TALE OF TWO GIRLS

BY HAN TAMASHII

Characters:

Leanne

Gender: F

Age: 13

Hair Color: Brown

Hair Style: Long (middle of back), straight

Eye Color: Brown

Brynn

Gender: F

Age: 7

Hair Color: Brown

Hair Style: Medium (chin length).

Eye Color: Brown

Author's Notes:

This is based upon actual events that occurred in my youth. The story has been fictionalized and compressed to make it a more potent experience.

The events you will read about here are like the grain of sand in the center of a pearl. They have been surrounded by fiction and embellishments, so that they are now much smoother, prettier, and more valuable.

The characters are, likewise, fictional. The names, ages, physical descriptions, and personalities have all been created especially for this work. I did not intend to describe any actual persons.

I sincerely hope that you will enjoy reading this piece.

HT

THE STORM BY HAN TAMASHII

My sexual adventures began when I was eight years old. That day, in the middle of summer, was beautiful and sunny. In my memory, the sky seems more vibrant and blue than it is today. The sunlight seemed warmer. And life, in general seemed happier. Easier.

I was in my room, on the second floor, getting ready to run through the sprinklers outside. I lived in an townhouse complex. A hundred units divided into quarters, separated by grassy fields. The fields had underground sprinklers. Dozens of them. When the sprinklers were running, it was better than any water park.

Looking outside my window, I was planning my wet adventure. My eyes, my breath and my mind stopped, caught in web of beauty. Two radiant girls had appeared, now frolicking through the dancing water. They moved with the grace of innocence. And I believe it was in that moment, which seemed to stretch into hours, that my admiration for young girls formed.

I dashed to out of my room and out of my home. My feet sunk into the wet ground, the short grass tickling, water splashing as I ran. As I approached, I wondered briefly how to stop on this slippery grass. Choosing the flashiest method I could think of, I leaped into a baseball slide that took me just under a beam of water being spewed out by one of the sprinklers.

The girls laughed openly as they watched me, and it took no further effort than that to join in their fun. We ran, jumped, twirled, and tumbled our way to exhaustion. Flopping on the cool wet grass, enjoying the summer breeze tickling our skin and the sunlight massaging our bodies with it's warm hands, we chatted a bit.

Leanne, the elder of the two sisters, was thirteen. Long, straight brown hair reached to the middle of her back. Her body, covered by a two piece suit, showed signs of maturity that interested me. Just small hints, really. Her breasts were still small and her hips had just a touch of curve to them.

Her younger sister, Brynn, was much more childlike. Brynn's body, at 7 years of age, was a model of the simple beauty of young girls. Soft, smooth skin, big bright eyes, even the carefree laughter and the scent of fruity shampoo combining to evoke from me a tender, protective urge from me. She was like a princess, and my duty was to keep her safe.

I invited the girls up to my room. There were no sexual intentions on my part, it was simply a change of venue. My room was cluttered with toys of all sorts. Truthfully, I was more than a little bit spoiled. I even had a TV and VCR in my room. A child could entertain themselves for months in that room.

We arrived in my private domain drying ourselves with the fluffy towels we'd snatched from the linen closet. Even at eight years old, I was envious of the places those towels got to touch. Watching my two adorable friends slide their towels along their bodies, I began to feel an odd, but pleasurable sensation in my penis.

Leanne noticed my eyes following the movement of her towel. I imagine she felt playful as she began giving me a show. She brought her towel to her chest and began rubbing her forming breasts. My eyes widened and Leanne became bolder. Her towel drifted down over her stomach, keeping my rapt attention, down and down between her smooth legs. She pressed the towel into her pussy and began a slight circular

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motion.

A quick glance at her face revealed that her eyes were closed. She was biting her lower lip. My eyes snapped back down to the action. The towel seemed to have slipped from her hand, but she hadn't stopped rubbing herself. I watched in complete fascination.

Leanne and I were startled back to reality as Brynn dumped some of my Lego onto the floor. Lego was my favorite toy, but at that moment, I wanted to watch Leanne touch herself some more. I looked up at Leanne to see if the show was over. Perhaps she noticed my disappointment, or my tiny hard-on. In either case, she smiled at me kindly and took me by the hand. Together we climbed onto my bed and under the covers. Brynn glanced at us, but kept playing quietly by herself.

Leanne and I pulled the covers right over us, making a little tent. A private space where we could do private things. We lay on our sides facing each other. Several moments passed as we looked into each other's eyes. I was nervous. And shy. I didn't make a move or a sound, so it was good that Leanne took the initiative. She reached out and touched me.

The warmth of her hand on her shoulder was soothing, yet exciting. Warmth that spread down onto my chest. Her fingertips brushed my nipples. She seemed amused by them and her touch glided over them several times. I'd never really even noticed my nipples before. They were more important to girls. But her light touch felt nice on them.

She stopped suddenly. My eyes, which had been running up and down her body, rose back to her face to find out why. They never made it to her face, however. Her hands were pushing the straps of her top down off her shoulders. She did this slowly, watching my face. Her left shoulder first, then the right. She sat up a bit after and turned her top so that the back was now in front. I saw a peak of her nipples as she did this, but her hands were soon blocking my view.

She waited, not hesitating, just waiting. Letting the anticipation build. I felt it building. Just as I was about to reach out and push her hands away, they began moving. She unhooked the top, holding it there a moment, and then let it drop to the bed behind her. One hand covered her breasts as the other one moved the top out of her way. And then she lowered herself back onto her side, and let her hand fall out of my line of sight.

I could do nothing for several moment except admire them. They were only small little mounds of flesh, but they stirred desire in me. Desire to touch them. Leanne, intuitively took my hand and gently placed it on her left breast. I looked at her eyes seeking permission, and she smiled at me warmly.

I touched her like she had touched me. A light caress, gliding my hand over her skin. My fingertips brushing over her nipples. She sighed happily, so I did it again. Her breathing quickened and her nipple became harder. Curiosity overcame my shyness and I squeezed her nipple gently. I was unsure and didn't want to hurt her, but she let a small, appreciative moan slip past her lips.

I continued exploring her nipple, so focused on it that I almost didn't notice her hand reaching out to touch me. Her touch was so light on my tummy this time that it tickled, but I resisted by focusing even more on discovering the mysteries of her

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body. As I moved my hand to her other nipple, he hand drifted down to my swim suit.

She began pulling it down, so I instinctively raised my hips to help. When she managed to slide them down to my knees, I used my feet to kick them off. She took that opportunity to slide her bottoms down and off. She did this quickly, not slowly like her top. I didn't recognize the signs at the time, but she was in need.

She raised one knee, and the movement drew my attention from her breasts down to her lightly covered mound. The hair was so fine you could barely notice it. A moment later, as she guided my hand down between her legs, I discovered how soft it was. And then I discovered her soft lips, already moist. Her scent filled my lungs. It was like how it smelled after the rain. Fresh. Intoxicating. Addicting.

Her hand gripped my hard appendage, stroking slowly up and down. I felt things I'd never experienced before. My mind was suddenly cast open to the potential pleasure my body was capable of. It was a moment that changed everything.

I was only as long as the thickness of her hand, so she used her index finger and her thumb. As I still do, to this day. Slowly up from the base. Slowly back down from the tip. And pleasure flowed in waves through my body, and hers. Ebb and flow. Washing over us. Baptismal ecstasy.

My fingers slipped between her lips, exploring her folds. One spot felt hotter and wetter than the rest. My small finger pressed on this spot and popped inside. Leanne gasped quietly. I wondered if I'd hurt her, but her free hand came to cover mine, pressing down to encourage me further inside her. The angle wasn't quite right, so my finger couldn't go very deep inside her, but she flexed her hips up and down, humping my finger in and out of her.

She had started to sweat now. Her eyes were tightly closed and lips clamped shut as she held in her moans. The hand stroking me stuttered as she lost herself in the pleasure, and then remembered herself. Over and over. It was like that for a few minutes. Her hips moved faster and faster, seeming to jerk back and forth.

Finally, she opened her eyes, staring into mine. I could see she was almost crying with desire and need. She moved my hand up to the top of her slit, and guided me, showing me how to rub her clit. Back and forth. Faster and faster our hands moved. She pressed my fingers harder and harder into her. Her body was beginning to shake. She pulled her hand away from my dick and covered her mouth with it.

And then she exploded. It's the only way I could describe it. Her body shook harder and harder and then went totally rigid. She stopped me from rubbing her and instead pulled me close to her. She could barely contain her passion, wanting to scream. I could see it. She was still looking directly into my eyes. I could see everything.

Through her eyes I could see directly into her soul, or so it seemed. At that moment what I saw was passion, affection, gratitude, and an even greater desire. I could see that she wanted something more, but was holding herself back. The intensity of these emotions stunned me. I suddenly wanted to feel what she was feeling. I wanted to share that with her.

After a few long minutes, she blinked. The spell binding and connecting us was broken. I looked away. Not seeing anything. I could hear her breathing slowing. I could feel her muscles become limp. I could smell her scent as if there were

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nothing else in the world. I suddenly wanted to taste her. My fingers gently slid through her sex, becoming slick with her juices. And then I tasted them.

Her flavor was subtle. I can't find anything to compare it to, but I savored it. I fell in love with it that day. The taste of a girl became imprinted on my mind. She looked shocked when I looked at her, fingers still in my mouth, and smiled. She smiled back at me, happy that I enjoyed her.

We spent some time just being close, after that. Not doing anything, or saying anything. Just enjoying the moment. Then we put our swim suits back on and peaked out from under our makeshift tent. Brynn had stopped playing and was watching us, eyes wide.

I felt a pang of fear and guilt suddenly at being caught, but Leanne was not concerned. She climbed off the bed and started playing with her sister. Just as if nothing had happened. Awkwardly, I joined them, but soon we were playing comfortably together. We laughed and had fun. It was really a good feeling.

When Brynn took two of my action figures and said, "Take off your clothes," Leanne and I looked at each other. I wondered if I was going to get in trouble or something, but Leanne just smiled at me reassuringly. She made an excuse to leave and they stood up. I was worried they would leave and never come back. Instead, Leanne bent down a bit and kissed my cheek.

"Let's play again soon," she said with a mischievous ring in her voice. I could not reply because the next moment, Brynn was hugging me tightly. She nuzzled her face into my neck. Just when I thought she would let go, she turned her head and kissed my neck. I was surprised by the quiet girl, but when she kissed me, I felt an emotion so incredible and indescribable that it would take years for me to give it a name.

I was blushing so furiously as we made plans to meet again, that Leanne was giggling at me almost constantly. And I didn't care. All I could do was remember Brynn's body against mine and her lips on my neck.

It was confusing for me. Leanne and I experienced something wonderful and exciting, but it paled in comparison to what I felt for Brynn at that moment. Which of these girls did I like more, I wondered to myself. The feelings were different, but similar. I felt like I couldn't think. Like my brain had melted from the fire in my heart.

When the two girls left my house that day, I felt for the first time, a burning in my chest. I ached to see them again, longed to be near them, longed to touch them. I felt like dancing and moping at the same time. In my mind I ran after them, never to be alone again. In reality, I slinked back to my room, into my bed, and wrapped myself in the blanket that still smelled like girl.

I had no idea how to handle these feelings. And it was only the beginning.

Leanne says,

*"As soon as she hugged you, I could see it in your eyes.
She was just copying me. Even the kiss! So why?
Why did your eyes light up when it was her in your arms?
Why did HIS eyes light up when it was her?"*

*"Do you know why I hugged you that day? My sister...
she hadn't been happy. Not for a long time.
She wouldn't tell me why, but that day, I saw her smile.
You made her smile. And that made me love you,"*

says Brynn

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END*

THE STORM: CHAPTER 2

RESCUE ME

BY HAN TAMASHII

Characters:

Leanne

Gender: F

Age: 13

Hair Color: Brown

Hair Style: Long (middle of back), straight

Eye Color: Brown

Brynn

Gender: F

Age: 7

Hair Color: Brown

Hair Style: Medium (chin length)

Eye Color: Brown

Author's Notes:

Children are still learning how to cope with new situations and strong emotions, and as they struggle their way through them, regrettable things are said and done. Words that are meant to be kind come out sounding cruel. Innocent words are replaced by hidden agendas. And often, things are just confusing.

The day depicted in this chapter is an illustration of these things. While writing this, I was brought back to those youthful days when I was filled with doubt and confusion and was overwhelmed by the intensity of my emotions. I did my best to put those feelings into my words.

I hope you continue to enjoy this series as it delves deeper into the confusing and conflicting emotions of relationships.

HT

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It was only a few days before the sisters and I were playing together again. There was only a month of summer break left, and we wanted to enjoy it while it was here. We weren't doing anything in particular, just running from one corner of the complex to the other. There were three small parks inside the complex, and we'd played at each one already.

Playing with girls is different than boys. With boys, it seemed like you were always in competition. Ground hockey, soccer, basketball, baseball. It was always about seeing who was better at something. The girls seemed content just spending time together. It didn't matter if we were chasing each other in an impromptu game of tag or chasing butterflies. I felt like I could relax around them.

We were skipping when Leanne, being the only one who could double dutch, suddenly stopped. A sly smile slowly crept onto her face. Brynn and I watched her silently, wondering what she was thinking about. Our curiosity grew as she grabbed the skipping ropes and commanded us to follow her.

She was the oldest and the most assertive, so Brynn and I typically followed her lead. This time she was leading us out of the complex. I knew where we were going, but I'd never been there without an adult before. There was a park close by. You had to walk a few blocks through some alleys. The park was much larger than the ones we usually played at. The whole thing was surrounded by trees. One end was an open field with playground equipment and the other had a short, wooded trail.

Leanne herded us towards the wooded trail. It was really only a few hundred feet or so, but the twists and turns made it so you couldn't see very far ahead. When we'd gone in far enough to be out of view, Leanne stopped and grinned wickedly at us.

"Now we're going to play a new game. It's called 'Prisoner'," and then she leaped towards me, catching me by the wrists, "And you are going to be the prisoner first."

I was stood in front of a tree and had my hands tied around the trunk. The bark of the tree dug into my bare arms. I was momentarily concerned about spiders, but I pushed the fear away so I wouldn't look cowardly in front of the girls. The knots were not all that tight. I could have escaped, and in fact, I was prepared to do just that if the game turned out to be less enjoyable than I wanted. For now, I was biding my time. Curiosity had always been one of weaknesses.

A brief interrogation ensued. It was really just a pretext, however. The game was really about punishing the prisoner for not talking. The punishment began with Leanne unzipping my jeans and pushing them down to my knees. She fondled me through my underwear for a few delicious moments. When I looked at Brynn to see what she thought of this, I saw her staring curiously at my crotch. She met my eyes, briefly, before blushing and looking away.

My attention turned back to Leanne. Now she was pulling my underwear down. My eyes darted around making sure no one else was around. I'd never been naked outside before. It was different than inside. I felt exposed and vulnerable in a way I'd never felt before. And suddenly I realized that Brynn had never seen me naked before. I quickly looked at her.

Her eyes were wide and focused on my small dick. Her lips were parted, looking like she was about to say something, but the words never came. Again, her eyes met mine.

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This time when she blushed, she didn't look away. I smiled at her. I'm not sure why I did. Was I reassuring her that it was alright to look at me? Or was it just because she was so beautiful when her cheeks flushed red? In either case, she did not smile back.

Brynn and I were still looking into each other's eyes when I felt the most amazing feeling. It was unlike anything I'd felt before, and at that moment my only wish was to feel that way forever. It was one of those moments where time seems to slow down. I remember everything vividly. The rustle of the leaves. The smell of the trees. The stiffness in my arms from being tied to the tree. The warmth surrounding my dick. A flick of softness along the sensitive underside. Suction. The moment stretched on and on. My dick became my whole being. I was alive for the first time. Yesterday I was living, but now I'm alive.

Brynn must have seen something change in my eyes because she wrenched her gaze from mine and looked down to where Leanne was now sucking on me. She stood frozen like that, watching her sister give me a blow job. Unmoving and expressionless. I couldn't tell if she was fascinated or horrified. Would she hate me, after this? I was suddenly filled with panic. Brynn, my princess, don't hate me. I didn't ask her to do it. In my heart, I also knew, that I had not and would not ask her to stop.

Fear defeated the pleasure and I lost my erection. Leanne pulled back and looked at me with a puzzled expression. My apologetic look and quick glance towards Brynn clued her into my thoughts. Of course, this kind of communication is not all that accurate or reliable. She completely mistook my meaning.

"Eh? You want Brynn to do it? I don't know, she's kinda young. Brynn, wanna give it a try?"

I'm not sure who was more upset at that moment. Brynn looked like she didn't know which direction to run. And I felt a whirl of panic blow through me. I had to stop this. My princess, delicate flower, would surely hate me for making her do such a thing.

"I do not!!" my panicked voice exploded much more forcefully than I'd intended. It was then that Brynn bolted. As she turned, I saw a tear slide down her smooth cheek. My heart broke. I slumped against the tree sullenly. My insides felt like they were filled with broken glass. Brynn's footsteps pounded in my ears. Then they faded.

"What'd you say that for?" Leanne asked disgustedly. She stood up, turned away and started walking in the direction Brynn had gone.

"Hey!" I yelled after her. She stopped, but didn't look back. I sensed her anger, and my shame softened my voice, "Untie me. Please."

Hearing this, she turned back to look at me. Her eyes were without mercy or sympathy. They were cold. Cold like a winter storm. Chilling me through. Ripping any remaining warmth from my body. Leaving me empty.

She never did respond. She didn't untie me, either. My eyes, filling with tears, did not see her walk away. But I remember the sound of those foot falls. Hers and Brynn's. They echoed in my mind like the cruel laughter of an evil god. Like the pitter patter of icy rain. Cold tears shed, by an angel, because of me.

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I pulled my hands free and redressed, but I didn't move from that spot for a long time. I sat, leaning against that tree, feeling nothing. My heart was numb. Like it had turned against me and refused to feel. My mind followed my heart and refused to think. My body, of it's own accord, stood up and began walking home.

I was half way home when I realized I was holding the skipping rope we had brought with us. I should return it. So I turned toward their townhouse and plodded along lethargically. Each step was an effort. It seemed as though I was walking towards the gallows. Still, I felt nothing. That is, until I heard my hand rapping on their door.

The fear surged. The shame swooped in. And the door opened.

"What?" an obviously annoyed Leanne asked tersely. Head bowed, I held the skipping rope out to her. I think she took pity on me, because she hesitated a moment before she ruffled my hair, "Let's go for a walk."

While we walked, we talked. We didn't talk about what happened, or about Brynn. We just talked about nothing. Words floated back and forth, having no impact on anything. Even though we said nothing of any meaning, Leanne was telling me that she was still my friend. Knowing that, I remembered warmth once again.

Without realizing it, we had wandered back to the wooded trail in the park. Maybe Leanne had intended to come here, because she suddenly grinned at me and asked, "Did you like what I did before?"

I, of course, hadn't liked it. Like is not a strong enough word. Love might not even be enough. It was life-altering. Earth-shattering. Reality-bending. So naturally I shyly examined my shoes and nodded. My guilty grin and flushed cheeks were all the confirmation Leanne needed. She stepped close to me and slowly slid her shorts over her slight hips.

"Want to do it for me?" her voice seemed to call to me over a great distance. With a tremendous effort I tore my eyes away from her pussy and looked at her uncertainly. She smiled reassuringly and pressed down on my shoulders gently, guiding me down to my knees, "Just lick me."

I remembered her taste before my tongue even reached her. Her smell reached me first, and I breathed deep to take it in. I wanted to fill myself with it. Then, tentatively, I touched her slit with my tongue. Moaning encouragingly, Leanne stroked her hands through my hair. It was a soothing gesture and I relaxed enough to take a big lick from the bottom of her slit to the top.

Another moan enticed me to continue. Her pussy lips were swelling now, opening herself to me. I licked again along the length of her. The tip inadvertently flicked her clit, making her gasp. Her hips rolled, trying to keep contact. My tongue dug in for another long lick. This time, she was prepared and angled herself so my tongue glided over her clit.

We repeated this motion a few more times. Her juices were flowing now and I could taste her fully. I wanted to drink up every drop. I pressed my tongue into that warm wet hole near the bottom. I curled my tongue to pull more of her nectar out. Her hips bucked, so I did this again. With her hands on the back of my head she

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pressed my face into her. I extended my tongue as far into her as I could.

"More," she gasped. She pulled away only enough to slide her right hand in between us and rub her clit. Back and forth. Her fingers flew over her clit as my tongue wriggled and curled inside her. Her mouth fell open and suddenly emitted a deep groan. Her fingers stopped, but her hips were bucking every which way. I was having trouble keeping my tongue inside her. But I was rewarded with more of her tasty juices.

Each time I licked her, searching for more of her deliciousness, her hips bucked and her legs trembled. All too soon she stepped back, "It gets sensitive after."

I must have looked a bit disappointed because she giggled at me and promised we could do this again. She ruffled my hair affectionately. Then she got a curious expression. I was going to ask her what was wrong, but she was already leaning in to kiss me. It was my first kiss, but her lips and tongue guided me. I parted my lips when her tongue pressed against them and she slipped her tongue past them. Our tongues touched, then danced together. After a minute, she pulled back.

"I taste pretty good," I blushed as I realized that her flavor still filled my mouth. Then I nodded vigorously and smiled.

We headed back after that. She wanted to hold my hand, and I let her. I kind of felt like I was walking with my mom, which was weird, considering what we'd just done. If it made her happy, though, I didn't mind. I was in a light hearted mood again. Our arms swung widely, energetically. Life was good again.

We rounded a corner as we walked back to her house, and I stopped dead. It was like I'd been struck. An icy feeling washed over me. Sitting upon the step in front of her door was my princess, Brynn. She looked sullen and listless. Her hands cradled her chin. Her eyes stared blankly in front of her until Leanne's continued movement caught her eye.

She looked at us, looked at me, and I saw the most painful thing in the world. She was angry at me. I couldn't look at her. My eyes dropped to my feet and my shoulders slumped forward. I wanted to disappear. If her eyes kept looking at me with that anger in them, I would melt. The fire would consume me and my body would melt like snow.

Leanne took this all in and quietly spoke, "We'll talk later. Seeya," and she walked towards her sister. Immediately I turned and walked home.

My mood was obvious and my parents lovingly pried, hoping to find the cause of this sadness and correct it. I looked at them, hopelessly, and told them. They looked at each other. After a long sigh, my dad patted my shoulder and, just as hopelessly, repeated the word.

"Girls."

Leanne says,

*"You thought she was too good to do it, didn't you?
Angels don't do things like that, do they?
I wanted her to do it so she wouldn't be an angel to you anymore.
Or to him."*

*"I would have done it. You looked so happy when she did it.
I wanted to make you feel happy, too.
Why did you yell like that?
That yell broke my heart,"*

says Brynn

*RESCUE ME
THE STORM: CHAPTER 2
END*

THE STORM: CHAPTER 3

FIRST RECONCILIATION

BY HAN TAMASHII

Characters:

Leanne

Gender: F

Age: 13

Hair Color: Brown

Hair Style: Long (middle of back), straight

Eye Color: Brown

Brynn

Gender: F

Age: 8

Hair Color: Brown

Hair Style: Medium (chin length)

Eye Color: Brown

Mary

Gender: F

Age: 9

Hair Color: Blonde

Hair Style: Medium (shoulder length), wavy, with bangs

Eye Color: Green

Author's Notes:

Birthdays are important to children, and for more than just the presents. It's like getting a promotion. You're older, treated with more respect, and given more freedom.

Birthday *parties* are also very important. This is the time when you gather your peers, friends, and enemies in order to display your new rank and status. This ensures that everyone knows where they fit into the hierarchy. And, of course, it's an excuse to eat cake and be hyper.

Have you ever been purposely not invited to a birthday party? It's an awful feeling of rejection and disrespect. When our protagonist feels that hurt, he vows to make sure it doesn't happen again. And he's got a year to make things right.

Let's pray for him and hope it doesn't take that long.

HT

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"Why weren't you at Brynn's party?"

I was too stunned to reply to Mary's question. Party? What party? Mary, being used to my quiet demeanor, kept talking rapidly. I couldn't imagine her not talking, actually. It was her favorite thing to do. I imagine her talking in her sleep and talking in the bathroom. I bet she talked underwater when we took swimming lessons in Phys. Ed class at school.

"You really missed out. The cake was amazing! It was ice cream cake. Chocolate!"

Cake? That means...

"They didn't use eight candles, though. Just one big candle shaped like the number eight. I think that's cheating. How's she supposed to have boyfriends if she only has one candle to blow out?"

Birthday. Brynn's eighth birthday party. She didn't invite me. Did she hate me that much? Maybe it was just that she didn't want boys there.

"Everyone was there. Even boys. I was shocked! Who invites boys to a girl's birthday party?"

She hated me. Everyone was there, except me. Even boys. I'd never seen her playing with any other boys. I'm ashamed to admit it, but in the three weeks since we stopped talking, I've been keeping an eye on her. Leanne tells me how she's doing too, when I ask. She's a shy girl, and doesn't play often with anyone other than her sister. And never boys.

"It was fun anyway, though. We went to the lake! The water was a bit cold, but we swam around for awhile. I HATE seaweed. It's so gross! It got between my toes. Yech! My mom says some people EAT seaweed. But I think she's just making it up. She's such a dork sometimes."

The lake? I love the lake! I love swimming! I like the squishy feeling of seaweed between my toes! Why does someone like Mary get to go to such a wonderful party and I don't? Just because...because...wait, I'm not even sure why Brynn is mad at me.

"We had a fire and roasted hot dogs and marshmallows! Brynn's dad was showing me all the different ways to roast marshmallows. He's nice. Doesn't talk to me like I'm a little kid."

I wasn't even listening to her anymore. How could I let this go on so long without even finding out why Brynn was upset? I'm such a fool. I can't ask Brynn directly, though. Right? She would just yell at me to go away or something. I couldn't take that.

Leanne would know! Wouldn't she? And she would tell me. Since that day, however, we haven't seen each other very often. Since she normally plays with Brynn, and it's well established that Brynn doesn't want to be around me, it's difficult for us to spend time together.

When we do meet up, we always play the same game. I call it strip tag. She runs off, leading us somewhere private, and I follow trying to catch her. When the coast is clear, she lets me catch her. That's when the real games begin. I'd gotten

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better with my hands and tongue. She didn't need to guide me as much anymore.

Thinking about it, I felt myself start to get hard. Mary, as cute as she was, wasn't someone I wanted seeing me with a hard on. I made some excuse and wandered off to find Leanne.

I didn't find her that day. Or the next. Her family went away for the weekend. The last weekend before school started up again. They went on camping trips and fishing trips all the time. It made me envious. My family rarely traveled.

When Monday came again, I was suddenly in third grade. School was something I still enjoyed at that age. There were plenty of opportunities to show off my superior intellect without seeming to be as arrogant as I actually am. In my mind I was imagining how much fun it would be, and how far ahead of the other kids I would be.

All of my dreams were shattered, like a stained glass window hit by a meteor, when I walked into my homeroom and saw her there. Brynn and I were classmates. Universe, we have to talk.

She spotted me and spent the rest of the day pointedly ignoring me. When we chose seats, she sat as far as she could get. She actually asked a boy to move! I couldn't hear what she said, but as she was talking, she pointed directly at me. The boy looked around her, checking me out. He nodded, picked up his stuff and moved.

"Stay away from her, Creep!" he spit at me as he passed me. Universe, come on! Give a guy some pity.

Recesses were the hardest. It took all of five minutes before everyone in the class hated me. No one would play with me. The playground had some big tractor tires sunk half way into the ground. I ducked into the inside of one and hid until the bell rang to return to class.

I felt empty. Completely empty. When people talked, their words echoed inside me, but I could not make out their meaning. The teacher scolded me repeatedly, but I did not feel shame. Just a deep void where feeling should be.

Was Brynn enjoying this? Did she like seeing me suffer? I turned my head slowly towards her, but she was turned away from me looking out the window. It was a sunny day, and the sun shone brightly upon her. But somehow, the way she held herself, seemed gloomy.

Her back was slouched forward, shoulders drooped. Her head was almost on her desk, but turned to the side to look out the window. Her legs were crossed, as was proper since she was wearing the cute pink dress. Only the tips of her toes touched the ground. She looked...small. Pained. And I wasn't allowed to comfort her.

I raised my hand and told the teacher I was feeling sick. She gave me permission to go to the office and phone my parents. I shuffled out of the room and only looked back as I was closing the door. Brynn's head was down. All I wanted to do was stroke her hair and tell her it was all going to be alright. Instead, I closed the door and walked away.

Later that night someone knocked on our door. I heard it from my room, where I was

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laying in bed looking as miserable as possible. My mom answered and a moment later I heard someone stomping up the stairs towards my room.

Leanne burst in without knocking. She leaped onto the bed and began some playful wrestling. When I didn't play along, she stopped and looked at me worriedly.

"You really are sick, huh?"

I was embarrassed. I didn't want anyone, especially her, to see me looking so wretched. This was, however, my opportunity. Leanne was here, without Brynn, and I could finally ask her the question that's been on my mind for half a week.

"Why...does Brynn hate me?"

The words had come up in sobs, and by the time I'd said Brynn's name, I was a crying, sniffing wreck. I was watching Leanne through tearful eyes, silently pleading for help. She glanced quickly towards the door of my room. A small, gentle smile graced her lips when she looked back at me.

Her arms wrapped around me and I melted into her embrace. The blissful comfort soothed my aching chest. My sobs quieted, tears slowed. She gently stroked my back and head, cooing softly like a mother to her baby. When I was finally calm again, she spoke.

"She thinks you don't like her."

What? That didn't make any sense at all. How could she not know that I liked her? She was my sparkling princess, radiant and divine. Her smiling face was all I needed to feel happy. When she had hugged me, I had felt an affection so overwhelmingly intense well up inside me, that I could not name it.

"I like her!" I shouted simply and determinedly. Leanne smiled warmly, holding me tight. Her eyes flicked towards my bedroom door again, but when I looked, there wasn't anything interesting over there to look at.

"I know. I know." she said over and over. Like a mantra, calming my soul.

It took me a huge amount of effort to get my next words past my lips. Over time, it hasn't gotten any easier to say them. They're heavy words, they seem to sit in your stomach like lead weights. You push and push trying to force them out, knowing that it's necessary. Nothing will change until you say them. But it still takes every ounce of strength in you to lift them into your throat.

"Help me. Help me make it better."

There! I'd done it. I felt exhausted. Worn out. Leanne kissed my forehead. It was the simplest gesture. Natural. Effortless. It made all the difference to me, at that moment. It was just what I needed.

"Oh, don't worry. She'll come around. Just you wait and see."

I believed her. There really wasn't any reason to, but her small reassurance sank deep into my mind and took root. It sprouted quickly into a beautiful flower. I looked upon the pink petals and felt hope.

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Hope was a bit faded, but still alive, the next day as I walked into home room. Brynn was already there. She looked over as I entered. Our eyes met, but I looked down quickly. I thought I saw something different in that moment, but I couldn't be sure.

Classes passed slowly. The dreaded recess was looming ahead, so I didn't mind. If time were to stop, I would have rejoiced. There's nothing more lonely than being surrounded by people and feeling alone.

The bell rang, as it must, and in contrast to my peers, I sluggishly shuffled outside. I surveyed the playground. Should I try to play with someone? Nothing has changed, though, has it? No, I'll just go to my hiding spot and wait for the bell.

I ducked down into the tire. The smell of the rubber burning in my nose. The dark interior was comforting. It felt private. Like my own little space. Even when one of the other kids would run over the top, it didn't bother me. In here, I was safe.

I was smiling to myself as I begun to imagine this tire as a fortress. The walls and gates protecting those inside. No one could enter without the king's permission, and I was the king. The thought was startled right out of my head as Brynn ducked under the edge of my fortress, stepping inside wordlessly. We've been invaded.

I couldn't look her in the eyes, so I studied her dress. Today she was wearing a white and purple dress. It had lace and frills on it. I thought it looked too nice to wear to school. It wasn't even picture day. Her shoes were shiny black and strappy. Also much too nice to wear in the sand like this. Her white knee socks were going to get filthy!

My eyes raised to hers, my intent was to warn her that her clothes would get dirty playing under here. Looking into her deep brown eyes, however, I was paralyzed. She was beautiful. Stunning. I'd forgotten just how radiant she was. She hadn't been this near to me for weeks.

My legs weakened and wobbled. I let myself fall. My knees thudded into the dirt, but I didn't feel a thing. My eyes were still locked on hers. She looked startled when I fell. She may have said something if I had not beat her to it.

"I'm sorry," as soon as the words left my mouth, I thought they were completely inadequate. I wanted to tell her how much I liked her. The way she brightened my world. I wanted her to know the way I adored her. A simple apology just wasn't enough, but my throat constricted, cutting off any words that may have followed.

What happened next was better than anything that had happened. It was better than Christmas morning. It was better than birthdays. Nothing could compare when she smiled at me. A smile that said a thousand things, but most importantly, it said, "I forgive you."

I couldn't help but smile too. It was infectious. At first it was smile of relief and gratitude. It kept growing, though, until it was full of joy and affection. I'm sure, with that smile, she knew everything. I didn't need to speak a word. It was plain to see.

And so, in an instant, we were friends once more. I thought that would be it. What

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more could there be to end this sad chapter of my life? Brynn was more imaginative than I was, apparently. She knelt down, oblivious to the fact that she was getting a beautiful dress dirty. She took my right hand in both of hers. She leaned in. She kissed me.

It was a soft, tender kiss. Our lips barely touched, but I remember their softness vividly. Her hands were squeezing my right hand tightly. I didn't want her to ever let go.

My left hand, moving on its own, touched her cheek. Our kiss ended and she nuzzled her face into my hand. I pulled her to me and held her. With our cheeks touching, and my lips near her ear, I said the most obvious and unnecessary thing.

"I like you."

Leanne says,

*"It didn't matter at all, did it? The more you were with me,
the more you wanted to be with her. You're just like HIM.
Why can't you look at ME that way? Look at me!"*

*"I was in the hall outside your door the whole time.
I couldn't go in. I'd been so mean. You were crying,
and then you yelled again. That yell made me whole again,"*

says Brynn

*FIRST RECONCILIATION
THE STORM: CHAPTER 3
END*

THE STORM: CHAPTER 4

AUTUMN WIND

BY HAN TAMASHII

Characters:

Leanne

Gender: F

Age: 13

Hair Color: Brown

Hair Style: Long (middle of back), straight

Eye Color: Brown

Brynn

Gender: F

Age: 8

Hair Color: Brown

Hair Style: Medium (chin length)

Eye Color: Brown

Author's Notes:

Autumn is a season of change. When things change, they will never be quite the same again. I'm not sure if that makes it easier or more difficult for young people to accept change. As an adult, I have many memories of happy moments. I remember them and I wish the world could be like that again. So happy. Or so simple.

Even when the wind changes direction, it's not going backwards. Wind does not return to where it's been. It's just moving forward in a new direction. The land it passes over is always something it hasn't seen before. Wind has no memory.

Being together with the two girls is one of those memories I linger on. We had a lot of good times. Life was not simple with them around, but it was full. I feel like I really *lived* those days.

As this chapter opens, the wind was already blowing. Autumn was upon us.

HT

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Things had returned to how they were. For all of three days. On Saturday, the three of us were free to play the day away without school or homework. I expected it to be as it had been a month or so ago when we'd first met. The girls and I, together, happy and carefree. That's just not how things work.

"I have a BOYFRIEND!" Leanne was twirling and dancing as she shrieked this announcement. Brynn and I looked at each other and shrugged. What, exactly, was the significance of this? After all, I was a boy and Leanne's friend. I received an answer almost immediately, "Sorry, bud, we can't play our naked games anymore. I've got to be faithful to my boyfriend."

So that's it. I've been replaced. Traded in for a newer model.

"He's older than us," she continued. Older? Why would you want to play naked games with someone older than you? Old people aren't any fun. They just talk down to you and make you do boring things, "He knows things, you know? Been places. Seen things. And he's soooooooo dreamy. He said he loves me."

I instantly deduced that aging goes hand in hand with insanity. I only had a few short years of rational thought left. I had to enjoy it while there was still time. Something was getting in the way of my enjoyment, however. A pang of jealousy. I was suddenly angry. Who was this guy to swoop in and steal my friend?

Leanne noticed as my mood changed. I wasn't skilled at hiding my feelings. My face took on a fierce expression. My movements became quick, choppy. My body was stiff and breathing heavy. It felt like the jealousy was growing in my chest making it harder and harder to breathe.

"Eh? Why aren't you happy for me? My first boyfriend!"

So I didn't even count. I was beneath her. She looked down on me. Like all those other old people. In an instant, Leanne became one of the enemy. As soon as I realized the thought I'd just had, I cut it off. I didn't want to lose a friend.

I enjoyed our naked games, and I was going to miss playing them. We could still have fun, though. We could still be friends. We would just play all the other games we enjoyed.

Still looking disappointed, I walked up and gave Leanne a hug. I wanted to show her that I was still her friend. Friends support each other. No hurt feelings. She was just growing up and getting crazy. It wasn't her fault. Someday the same would happen to me and I hope there would be someone who could be my friend anyway.

Her body tensed up as soon as I hugged her. I noticed because usually she's so relaxed and liked being touched. A small shudder ran through her. It seemed to start in her tummy and move out from there. And then, all at once, she softened again. She patted my back and kissed the top of my head.

With her cheek resting on the top of my head, she spoke softly, "I'll help you get Brynn to play with you."

I knew what she meant, because Brynn and I played all the time now. At school we'd become almost inseparable. At recess we'd run outside together and play alone. Just the two of us. Sometimes we went back to the private fortress inside the old

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tractor tire. It didn't matter what we were doing. We were together. That was all.

So when Leanne said 'play' she meant the naked games. The games that Brynn and I had never played together. I felt excited beyond reason at the thought. The memory of what happened on the wooded trail lingered with me, though. I didn't want anything like that to happen again. If she didn't want to do it, I wouldn't make her.

"Oh! I've got to go. I'm supposed to meet up with him," she said in a rush. There was an oddness to her voice that I took to be excitement, "You two stay here and play. We want to be alone together."

Leanne dashed off before she was even finished speaking. Brynn and I exchanged confused looks and shrugs. And then we got down to the business of playing. Just our normal romping around.

It didn't take long for us to become bored, of course, and suddenly I wanted to see what Leanne's new boyfriend looked like. This person who knew so much and had been everywhere. So I took Brynn's hand and started walking in the direction Leanne had went.

Brynn hesitated when she realized where I was taking her. She planted her feet and pulled her hand from mine. I looked at her, pleading with my eyes. Her own inner battle was waging, of course. Finally her curiosity won and she started walking again.

Leaves were falling already. It was a cold autumn, so much colder than they seem now. The wind was stiff and unforgiving that day. We were bundled up warmly in jackets and sweaters. Our clothes rustled as we moved along.

Each step brought us closer to our prey, and we felt an increasing need for stealth. We hopped along, avoiding the noisy crinkle of leaves beneath our feet. It was fun game. At times we forgot ourselves and our joy bubbled out in happy giggles.

We'd almost forgotten that we were looking for Leanne, and then I looked up and saw her. I dashed behind cover, pulling Brynn with me. Brynn looked at me like I'd suddenly aged and lost my mind, but understood quickly when I pointed out her sister.

Finally finding Leanne hadn't answered any questions, in fact, we were more confused than before. About fifty feet away, she sat leaning against a tree. Each quarter of the complex had an island of grass and trees. This is where she was. Even from a distance, we could see she was crying. Every few moments, she'd look at the townhouse directly across from her.

Is that where her boyfriend lived? Had they met each other and had a fight? Or had he not shown up as he promised? These were the questions Brynn and I were now asking ourselves.

After ten minutes of crying, Leanne stood up. She squared her shoulders towards that townhouse. She pulled herself up straight. Taking a determined posture. She looked like she was about to kick the door in and storm the house.

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She didn't move. She didn't take even one step. Soon, we saw her shoulders shaking. The rest of her body followed. A moment later, we saw her crumple forward. It seemed like slow motion. Her knees buckled, her head fell forward, her hands flung themselves out to absorb the force of the fall, and then she hit the ground. Her knees and hands took the brunt of the fall, but she was leaned so far forward I thought she might drop down face first into the dirt.

I wanted to run over there and comfort her. I wanted to find out what was wrong. More than anything, I wanted to beat the crap out of her boyfriend. If I had done any of that, she would know we'd followed her and spying on her.

Indecision gripped me, held me tight. Before I could make a move, she was getting up again. She brushed away the tears and the dirt and turned her back to the townhouse. Panic gave me wings and I grabbed Brynn and we flew back to where Leanne had left us.

She found us there, a few minutes later, playing half-heartedly. She was hiding her feelings, but not too successfully. We could see her red eyes and the tear stains on her cheeks.

"Let's go play in my room. It's cold out today," she said before we could ask any questions.

I'd been in her room before. You could see that it had once been a typical little girl's room with stuffed animals, dolls, and lots of pink. Now it was transitioning into a teen girl's room. Posters with bands and movie stars. Anything with a Disney character on it was tucked away somewhere, not gone, but out of plain view.

She had a single sized bed with a pale blue comforter and lots of pillows. And a record player on her dresser. It was made of red and white plastic. Like a toy. But it played records just fine. She put on some classic seventies rock as background music.

It's interesting to note that both my parents and the girls' parents basically left us to ourselves. We were basically unsupervised in the privacy of our rooms, provided we didn't make too much racket. So it was easy to get up to no good. Which is what Leanne was in the mood for, apparently.

"Okay, we're going to play a game. It's like telephone," she began. Telephone? I think I'd played that before. It's when you whisper something in someone's ear and then they pass it on to the next person and so on. At the end you say it out loud and see how close it is to the original whisper. It was moderately fun with big groups, but with three people? Leanne continued explaining, "We'll turn off the light so we can't see each other, then I'll do something to one of you. Then you'll do it to the other one and then that person will do it to me. And we'll see if it's the same at the end."

I had to admit, my interest was piqued. Leanne had said she'd help me get Brynn to play with me. Was this her way? How far was she going to take this? I was suddenly very worried. In the dark, I wouldn't be able to tell if Brynn wanted to do it or not. What if I did something and she hated me for it?

"Let's all promise that no matter what it is, we won't back out. Okay?" Leanne looked at each of us seriously as she said this. She waited for both of us to nod

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our heads in agreement before continuing, "Okay, Brynn, work the lights the first round. Wait till we're on the bed and then turn them off. Don't turn them on again until I say. Then we'll switch."

She hauled me onto the bed almost violently. Seriously, she hurt me a little. Obviously I didn't tell her that. I'm a man, got to be strong. Being out muscled by a girl was hard on the ego.

When we were standing awkwardly on the bed, Leanne nodded at Brynn. We were plunged into darkness. There's something about darkness that makes everything more exciting. The mystery of it, not knowing what's going to happen. Not being able to see or expect anything. It still gives me delightful shivers.

A touch on my arm sent electricity through my body. Just a simple touch. She was just reaching out to measure the distance. So simple. Then the bed squeaked as her weight shifted. Her clothes rustled quietly, barely heard over the music playing softly in the background.

I felt her hair brush my cheek before her lips did. Her soft, moist lips pressed lightly into my cheek. It was sweet, more like something Brynn would do. Not that I minded, as I had to do this to Brynn next. I think a kiss on the cheek was okay.

"Just for today, we can play," Leanne breathed into my ear. It was only a whisper, little more than a sigh. I heard emotion in the words, though. A big jumble of them. They were tangled together in a knot and I could not unravel them.

And then it was over. Leanne backed away, and called for Brynn to turn the lights back on. We blinked at each other in the dazzlingly lights. I could see Brynn studying us for a clue to what would happen when she stood in the dark. I flashed her a reassuring smile, and she climbed onto the bed almost eagerly.

Leanne watched us and when she thought we were ready, cast us into shadow again. It was just as exciting as I prepared to kiss Brynn as it was to be kissed. She didn't know, or even suspect, what I was going to do. It gave me a naughty thrill.

Ever so slowly I reached out, copying Leanne, to find Brynn's arm. I misjudged, however, and instead my hand landed squarely over her left breast. Not that there was much to feel, but she had taken off her sweater and I could feel her nipple through her thin top.

She gasped slightly and her hand sprang up and grasped my wrist. I thought she would tear my hand away from her body, but she let it remain there. I was flustered and wanted to end my turn so I quickly leaned in for a kiss. My lips found her neck instead of her cheek, though. Just below the ear. Another little gasp escaped her lips.

I stood up straight and gently pulled my hand away. Brynn seemed almost reluctant to release my wrist. She squeezed it once and then let go. I held my hand in front of me, remembering the feeling of her warm body. I stood for such a long time, that Brynn finally signaled the end of our turn.

Light sprang into existence again. I blinked in the sudden brilliance. Brynn was standing very still, looking at her feet. Her face was flushed and her hands were clasped together turning and twisting around each other.

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Leanne surveyed the scene wondering what the big deal was. She quickly shooed me off the bed, in a hurry to end this round and begin the next. When they were ready, I flicked the light switch. And I waited.

It seemed like an eternity as I waited. I could see nothing in the dark room. The music drowned the sounds of movement on the bed. I thought, once, that I heard a squeak coming from one of the girls. I might have imagined it, however. Time dragged on and on. The blackened room felt open and empty. You could almost imagine yourself floating, as if you were in space. Drifting aimlessly.

"Lights," I heard Leanne's voice call out. I flicked the switch and we again struggled to adjust to the light. Leanne was looking at me looking very amused. My eyes widened as I realized that Brynn must have copied my example. She touched Leanne's...and kissed her neck? My mouth was opening and closing like a fish, but Leanne interrupted before I could say anything, "Yes, that was exactly right. Good job."

Brynn looked thoroughly embarrassed. She couldn't even face me. She was looking at the wall staring at nothing. I hoped she wasn't mad. The excitement of the game was mingled with the desire to just survive without offending anyone.

Round two began. This time, Leanne and Brynn would start. Again, I worked the lights and waiting. Painful agonizing waiting. I had a new appreciation for what Brynn must have felt when she was standing here, waiting for her turn. What would happen when I stepped onto the bed this time?

Again, Leanne called for the lights. She stepped off the bed, and grinned mischievously. It made me nervous. My legs felt wobbly, but I somehow managed to climb onto the bed. Looking into Brynn's wide, terrified eyes, I almost told Leanne to stop the game.

The darkness came again. More waiting. Nervous, anxious waiting. Then the first touch. With both hands, Brynn was searching for me. She found my arms, but slipped her hands under them and around my back. She pulled to her, rather than step into me. She squeezed me. We stood there for a minute, pressed against each other, cheek against cheek.

I thought maybe it was just a hug, but she started moving again. She turned her head fluidly and her lips found mine. We kissed. This was our second kiss on the lips. This kiss was deeper than the first. Her lips parted and her tongue slid out. I reacted, having been taught by Leanne how to french kiss.

This was nice. We kissed for a long time, tongues dancing. But there was one more thing that Brynn was working her courage up to do. The hands that had been pressing against my back, slid lower. Lower and lower. They hesitated when they reached the small of my back. All at once, as she gathered all her courage, they slid down inside the waistband of my pants. Inside my underwear even. Until she was cupping my bare bum.

My heart couldn't decide if it wanted to stop or race uncontrollably. The kiss ended, but we didn't move. We stood just like that, for a minute at least. I wish it were longer. Then we slowly, reluctantly pulled apart.

"Are you guys done yet?" Leanne asked, sounding impatient. Brynn managed to squeak

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out an affirmative. The girls switched places and then the scene replayed.

I followed the script Brynn had given me. I pulled Leanne to me, pressing our bodies together. She was taller than me, but she knew what was coming, so she leaned down for the kiss. This kiss was hungry, passionate. It was full of need and urgency. My hands smoothly slipped into her pants and cupped her bum. I squeezed and she moaned into my mouth. Her responses were making me excited. If we weren't playing this game, I would have started rubbing her front.

After a minute I pulled away. We ended the round and the lights came on. Leanne, looking flushed and sweaty, called quickly for the third round to begin. She wasted no time getting the action started.

She nearly pounced on me. One of her hands found its way into my pants and started stroking my growing manhood. Her other hand was thrusting mine down into her pants. It was obvious what she was looking for.

She was slick and wet already, obviously close to exploding. I'd gotten pretty good at this, so I tried my best to impress her with my skill. It didn't take long before she was letting out appreciative moans. She pulled her hand out of my pants to cover her mouth as she let out an ecstatic scream.

I knew enough to stop rubbing when this happened, and pulled my hand away. I cleaned my fingers the best way I knew how and waiting for her to recover. She was still leaning on me heavily when her strained voice called for the lights.

Brynn took in the sight and her eyes were wide. I don't blame her for being shocked. Her sister was sweaty and looked like she'd ran a marathon. I'm sure she had guessed what was going to happen, or had a pretty good idea. She still climbed up on the bed, though. With only a slight hesitation.

She was biting her lip nervously when the lights went out. What did that nervous look mean? Was she scared, but couldn't admit it? Did she feel like we were forcing her to do this? With these thoughts in my mind, I was unable to move. I didn't know what to do.

Maybe I should just do something else. I'd mess up the round, but it'd be easier for Brynn, right? What would I do? I thought about just kissing her again, but she'd never believe that Leanne would do the same thing twice. What else could I do?

I was suddenly saved as the girls' mother called them down for supper. Leanne instantly turned the lights on in case her mom checked in on us. When she saw we hadn't even moved, she looked annoyed. She flung a disappointed glare my way.

"Come on, Brynn. And you better go home now," her words were hot with hostility. I was a little hurt, but I was sure once I explained why I'd backed out, she'd understand. For now, I did as she said. I left and went home for supper.

As I walked, I thought about how she looked at me. Fire in her eyes. She'd never treated me that way before. She had been acting strangely all day. She was changing. The autumn wind had blown through her.

Things would never be the same again.

Leanne says,

*"Touch her! Defile her! Stain her with your lust!
Rip her wings off! Tear the halo from her head!
Cast her down to earth. With me.
So I don't need to hate her anymore."*

*"I heard the noises. I know what happened.
Why, instead of smiling, did she frown?
Sister, what is it that keeps hurting you?
I just wish you would smile,"*

says Brynn

THE STORM: CHAPTER 5

THE BETRAYER

BY HAN TAMASHII

Characters:

Leanne

Gender: F

Age: 14

Hair Color: Brown

Hair Style: Long (middle of back), straight

Eye Color: Brown

Brynn

Gender: F

Age: 8

Hair Color: Brown

Hair Style: Medium (chin length)

Eye Color: Brown

Author's Notes:

Doing the right thing is hard. It doesn't matter how old or how righteous you are, it takes a strong constitution to do the right thing in the face of adversity. It's even more difficult when the 'right thing' will hurt one of your friends.

There have been a few times when I have had to decide whether to risk damaging a friendship or do nothing, and watch a friend do something foolish. Something that would not only hurt them, in the long run, but hurt those around them. I have always opted to save my friends in spite of themselves.

In this case, I wonder if it was the best choice. I believe I did the right thing, of course. But did it change anything or just delay the inevitable? Years later, I see no real benefit to my actions. Nothing to balance the suffering that they caused.

I don't know if I would do the same thing again. And moral uncertainty...scares the hell out of me.

HT

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I only saw it for an instant. The blinds were promptly shut, blocking out my view. Sinking to the ground where I was hid, I thought about what I'd seen. My first clear thought was that I was glad Brynn had not been with me. My second clear thought was one of disbelief.

Leanne's boyfriend...was an old guy?!? He looked to be about thirty. Chubby and long haired. Not attractive by any standard, in my opinion. Leanne, however, had seemed to feel differently.

It had been a month or so since we played our game in Leanne's room. Since then, she had begun to shun both Brynn and I. She refused to play with us, walk home from school with us, or even let us attend her birthday party last week.

This October was much too cold for a party like they had for Brynn's birthday. No trips to the lake or swimming or roasting hot dogs over an open fire. Leanne instead opted for a sleepover party. She invited several of her friends from school. All girls, incidentally.

Brynn and I had been banished from her house for the duration of the party. We were not to be seen or heard of while Leanne's friends were over. She, being 14 now, was much too old to be hanging out with kids like us.

Brynn had stayed at my house overnight. We had fun, despite our unfair treatment. We played board games and talked until we couldn't keep our eyes open any longer, then we made our way to our indoor camp. Our sleeping bags were laid out on the living room floor. We'd made a fake campfire out of cardboard and colored it with those markers that smelled like fruit. We held hand until we fell asleep.

After that night, Leanne was openly cruel to us. She'd yell and tell us to get lost whenever we asked her to play with us. We were hurt and confused. Brynn was even more affected by it than I.

She had changed. It was in the blink of an eye, too. One day we were all friends and having fun together, the next we were bitter enemies. The biggest change was how she acted towards Brynn. There was this look of pure hate in her eyes whenever she saw Brynn.

At the time, I'd been unable to even imagine what could bring about such a change. What could conjure up such rage so quickly. Later on, I discovered that it had not been quick or sudden at all. It had been brewing, festering inside her for almost a year. And it had finally consumed her.

Being denied the advantage of hindsight, it was curiosity that made me follow her that day. She was headed off to see her boyfriend, who no one up until that day, had seen. It was a common joke between Brynn and I that he was imaginary. George the ghostly boyfriend, we called him. Tragically, this was not the case.

I trailed her from a distance. I knew where she went whenever she was going to see her boyfriend. Always to the same quarter and stood under the same tree facing the same townhouse.

She had been there two or three times since we had first followed her. There was nothing much to see, though. She would pace awhile, sometimes she would cry. Then she would just walk away looking miserable.

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This day was different. After her normal routine of brooding and pacing, she stood up straight and took a strong posture. It reminded me of that first day we'd watched her. Before she fell.

Today, she didn't fall. She didn't back down or walk away, either. She walked. Slowly, but steadily, she willed her feet forward. Towards that townhouse. Until she stood in front of it's door.

Trembling mightily, her finger pressed the doorbell. The awful waiting. Second ticked away as I waited, watching Leanne wait. The door opened after long minute. From where I was hidden, I couldn't see his face.

They talked. I couldn't hear a word, but Leanne's posture wilted. She looked like she was pleading, begging almost. Then a hand reached out and pulled her inside. Not that he was forcing her. She looked relieved and stepped into the house eagerly.

This scene only increased my curiosity. I knew how to get some answers, and that's what I did. Sneaking around to the back of the townhouse, keeping my head below the top of the wooden fence, I got into position to peer through the patio blinds.

By the time I was able to get a good look, a shocking scene was already in progress. Leanne was standing, bent over at the waist and leaning on something, with her skirt pulled up and her panties at her knees.

The man was stepping out of his jeans at that moment. I saw that he had an erection and was stepping up behind Leanne. His body was in the way and I couldn't see if he entered her or not. They were starting to move a bit, though, before he stopped and reached for the cord to close the blinds.

Confusion was the dominant emotion. I didn't have much knowledge or experience with sex, but I knew, instinctively, that this was wrong. Leanne and I had fooled around, sure, but that was different. It was just games.

Honestly, I didn't understand the difference. I only knew that there was one. This was something different, and it was something they shouldn't be doing. Another thing I knew was that this was something I should tell an adult about.

It wasn't something I did easily, however. Friends have a certain loyalty to each other. Even now that we weren't all that friendly towards each other, it was difficult for me to tattle on her.

In the end, I thought about how she had been acting recently. She had been edgy, irritable, and angry. If this was something good for her, she should be happy, right? The only thing I saw was a constant suffering. An unending agony that I imagined feeling a thousand times worse than falling off your bike.

And so it was that an hour later I was sitting on my couch telling my parents what I'd seen. They listened. They took me seriously. Which didn't make it easy to do, but it made it less difficult. I was crying by the end. A small bag of nerves and jitters.

That feeling didn't fade over the next few days. There were police everywhere. They talked to me, my parents, Leanne and her family. They took the man into custody. My

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involvement was never revealed to Leanne or her parents. My betrayal was secret.

It still didn't feel good. Even worse, because it was so intensely applauded by my parents and the police. They called me a hero. In my mind a hero was someone with a gun or super powers. They could fly and they saved everyone without fail. They made everyone smile again.

Leanne was not smiling. From what Brynn was telling me, she was doing a whole lot of crying. None of it turned out like it should have. There was no happily ever after for this story.

The man was never convicted. In fact, Leanne's parents dropped the charges. I know now why, but at the time, I couldn't begin to imagine. Apparently the police can't just walk away from a possible sexual abuse case, though. They came back to question me again.

This time, with Leanne and her parents denying the whole event, the police were much less friendly with me. They asked me questions until I was so scared and upset, I couldn't remember what happened anymore. They told me I was angry because she was mean to me. I wanted to get back at her. I did this all for revenge, didn't I? They kept on and on. I just wanted them to go away. So I told them I made it all up.

The police seemed satisfied, but my parents were furious. I heard one cop talking to my dad, "He had to learn not to make false accusations like that. We wasted a lot of time and manpower here. And we caused a lot of grief for that family."

In a blink, I went from hero to criminal. Oh nothing really happened. I was grounded for awhile, but no one was going to charge an eight year old with anything.

The man was apologized to. He went on living as if nothing had happened. Although his neighbors always treated him with suspicion after that. It was small satisfaction, though.

A week later I was still grounded. My parents made an exception, and let Brynn come in. She was crying, already, and flung herself into my arms. We hugged. It took ten minutes before she could speak.

"We're moving," she whimpered, "in two weeks."

As soon as she said it, she was reduced to violent sobbing again. She pulled away from me and ran out the door as I stood there, stunned.

You know how they say your life flashes before your eyes as you're about to die? My friendship with Leanne and Brynn flashed before my eyes just then. We'd only known each other for a few months. It didn't feel like a short time at all. It felt full. It felt like something that couldn't be defined by it's age.

We had played, fought, made up, played some more. We'd laughed and cried and held each other. It was a time that stands out in my mind. It's a time that over and over, thrusts itself back into my memory. Even when I often wish I could forget every detail. The more I wish, the more vivid the memory seems. That's my punishment, I think.

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The next two weeks were long, but uneventful. My release date had been decided to be the day after Leanne and Brynn's family moved. I'm not sure if it was cruel or merciful. I would have liked to say goodbye, but I don't think I could have I could have looked Leanne in the eye. And neither of the girls came to see me, after Brynn's tearful announcement.

They had arrived out of nothing, and now they disappeared into nothing. Who's to say that they ever really existed?

My time in solitude caused me to become quite skilled at being alone. I learned to entertain myself by diving into my imagination. Fantastic stories were flitting through my head at all times. They were full of heroes, princesses, and betrayal.

When I went outside alone for the first time in over two weeks, the world felt different. It seemed emptier. I wandered around aimlessly. Sometimes I would watched other kids playing. Sometimes I would find a quiet place to be alone. But from then on, I always felt alone. I carried the loneliness with me. It was inside me now. Part of me.

I never let anyone get close to me. There was always a distance between me and my friends. Always a few things I wasn't willing to share with them. This distance was a protection for everyone. It protected me from being hurt, but also, it protected my friends. From me. In my mind, well-meaning as I was, I had become cursed.

I was the betrayer. I hurt everyone I care about.

Leanne says,

*"I told my dad that if Tom was convicted,
that the cops would hear all about how my dear daddy touched me.
It wasn't Tom's fault anyway. I'm just a dirty whore.
Just like daddy made me."*

*"At first my parents were mad at Leanne.
They called her 'tramp', 'slut', and 'whore'.
That's how I learned those words.
But then, it all went away, and no one talked about it ever again,"*

says Brynn

*THE BETRAYER
THE STORM: CHAPTER 5
END*