Preview of new book - When The Bell Rings

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This is a preview of my newest novel: When the Bell Rings. The first chapter will be uploaded by March the 1st, 2013.

Published on
Booksie

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Ugh. Double maths on a Monday morning is bad enough, but when your best friend isn't there... well, let's just say it's my idea of eternal punishment. Tara Jennings is the name, and I'm not one to mess about. It's not every day I moan about something, normally I find it easier to just get on with it; but Mr Storeman is a nasty piece of work, especially to me, and my best friend Phil isn't here for some reason or another, to help me survive the two hours with old Storeman.

Now Phil isn't one to skip school, and he's never, ever taken ill in the twelve years I've known him, so yes, I admit it, I'm worried about him. Kids have been disappearing from school lately, they always come back of course, but when they do, there's always something different about them. An abscence, or an addition, I don't know, but they always seem like something's wrone, like their personalities have been subdued or maybe even controlled. Maybe I'm imagining things, maybe I'm going crazy, but hey. Nobody seems to notice either, which strikes me as odd.

It's snowing outside for once, and as the bell goes for first lesson, my mood sinks from bad to goddamn terrible. I take the long winded indoor route to the maths department, not just because I'm stalling, but because Ryan Oscars and his mates love chucking snowballs, and as the snow is already setting, I don't want to be theor first target. Where the *hell* is Phil?!

When I do get to the classroom and take my seat at the front, Mr Storeman's eyes light up at the prospect of an easy target. I keep my head down and try avoid his mean little eyes while writing down the equations on the board. They're really crazy questions, like:

Find the value of x if: x+2-x2+10-13â -2945

He may as well have written:

What is the meaning of life and all of existence?

He gives us thirty seconds to do all fifteen questions, then tells us to give us the answers. He picks on me of course, and I simply tell him I didn't have enough time to finish all the questions. His face goes as red-purple as a pickled beetroot and I can practically see steam flying out of his ears. He opens his mouth to scream blue bloody murder when somebody knocks on the door timidly. I see Phil's black messenger bag through the glass and fix my gaze on my maths book. "WHAT?" Mr Storeman roars, and I see Phil walk in two steps out of the corner of my eye.

"Sorry I'm late sir, Mr Taton called me to his office." Phil says quietly, and I wait for the teacher to yell. And wait. And wait. Shocked, I glance at Mr Storeman's pudgy face and see the most scary thing I could ever have seen in my life. He was smiling. He tells Phil to sit down and catch up on the work, and resumes prowling the classroom as the next set of questions is put on the board. Phil takes his usual seat by me, and I almost forget myself, almost look up and grin, but catch myself abruptly.

Now don't get me wrong, I'm not being petty. Honestly I'm not. But I don't want to see that difference in Phil's face, I'm afraid. I wouldn't be so scared if I hadn't started to notice a pattern, it seems it's all the freethinkers going first. Now I'm no princess when it comes to obedience, but I'm nothing compared to Phil. He's the biggest problem this school has faced in twenty years, he's done everything from pulling fire alarms to breaking windows, but has never been caught once. His goody two shoes act keeps him from being suspected, naturally.

"T," He whispers, risking drawing Storeman's attention. "Tara!" He is a little louder this time, and I can't ignore him without getting him in trouble.

"What?" I reply, glancing up through my blonde curtain of hair. I have to look twice before it registers, and I'm suddenly torn between relief and horror. That subtle difference isn't there, but there *is* a huge cut on his face, from his cheekbone to his jaw, and another on his neck. Blood is running from each one, and nobody's doing anything! "Holy fudge Phil, what happened to you?" I gasp quietly, and shock takes over him.

"You can... see them?" He asks hesitantly.

"What do you mean 'I can see them'? Of course I can see them, you're hurt! What the hell happened?!" Mr Storeman's head pops up like a creepy jack-in-the-box and we automatically duck and get writing. "Tell me at break." I growl, and after a moment's hesitation, he nods.

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