

Stop 'Loving' Me

By : SecretVoice

A story about child abuse. Blue Anderson hates her life. Her mom is a drug addict and beats her senseless. When she was just a child - basically a baby! - her father snatched her from her terrible life and they lived happily for a few weeks...until her mom found them and sent someone to murder Blue's father. Now Blue, at 9 years old, is her mother's servant and chew toy. Blue has nowhere to run and nowone to turn to, her mom makes sure of it by placing moles all over town. Ramona Anderson's (Blue's mom) boyfriend is getting out of jail in a month. Blue is the reason he was sent there and once he returns...she's dead. She must escape! Is there any hope for her? Enter Tom McPhur. Tom is going through the same thing; his father is a psychotic beast and his mother, too afraid to do anything, just lets her son suffer. Tom wishes he could die...until he meets Blue. When his 'family' moves next door, Tom and Blue instantly bond. The two 9 year olds plan to run way together - anywhere. Just far from here! Of course, it seems as if the world is against them... Follow Blue and Tom as they struggle to escape from their abusive parents and finally find freedom. Can they do it? They better.



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Table of Contents

Stop 'Loving' Me Chapter 1

New House, Same Abuse

I wish you were my mommy

Heaven and my new friends

Why won't you help me?

Don't come home

Let's go to the park

Hand in Hand

New Neighbor

Awkward

Who's afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?

Hello, Class!

Recess!

Let's Run Away Together!

First Step towards Liberty

Stop 'Loving' Me : Chapter 1

A/N: Hey, guys! This is basically a preview of my upcoming novel Stop 'Loving' Me. But because I originally wrote it as the first chapter, I'll leave it as that (I wrote this all just 2 hours ago although i've planned it for a short while). So tell me what you guys think and if you think I should continue/finish it?:) Enjoy! P.S luckily, i've never experienced this. Xoxo SV

"BLUE!" screamed Mom, as she blew out the marijuana smoke. I ran down the stairs and skidded to a halt outside the kitchen door. Gingerly, I pushed open the door.

"Ye-Yes, M-mommy?" I squeaked. She grimaced as I slowly entered the room.

"Don't just stand there - get your lazy ass moving and make me supper!" she shouted in my face. I nodded and pattered to the fridge. I reached for the eggs and heard Mom grunt. Confused, I retreated my hand and closed the fridge. My green eyes lit up as an idea struck me. Mom smirked as I pulled open the freezer and extracted a pound of beef.

"It's enough for the *both* of us, but I know *I* won't be getting any..." I mumbled under my breath.

"Mmm, yes. Spaghetti! Don't you *love* it?" Mom sang.

I mentally stabbed her as she skipped out of the kitchen, throwing her lit joint on the floor - leaving the cooking and cleaning to me. A tear rolled down my bruised face. It stung as it settled on a deep cut near my lip.

Mom had given me that when I'd '*accidentally*' turned her favourite t-shirt brown. I was '*rewarded*' bruised cheeks when I'd forgotten to wash my hands before I cooked for her. Mom said she did it out of *love*, that it was for *my own good*. I *deserved* it, she said.

"If Daddy was still alive, I'd be happy, I'd be *free*," I whimpered as I scrubbed my dirty hands with berry-scented soap. When I was two, Daddy found out Mom had been abusing me, so he snatched me and we fled the country. We lived happily; he loved me, and I him. A couple of weeks later, he was murdered by a friend of Mom's. She dragged me back and from there, my life *really* became hell. That was seven years ago. My childhood was stolen from me by my own Mother!

The only time I was ever at peace was after my mom had beaten me *unconscious*, because even in my dreams she was there. Only after I'd been beaten cold could I be happy. *Only then* could I feel true happiness; pure, pitiful *happiness*.

Then, I awoke.

Blue Anderson

Ramona Anderson (Mom)/(maiden name is Lauden but kept husband's name)

Frank Donald Anderson (Daddy)

Joel Nicholas (Mom's Boyfriend in Jail)

Stop 'Loving' Me

Chapter 2: New House, Same Abuse

"Isn't it beautiful, Tommy?" beamed Allie, my mother. She didn't *deserve* the title "Mom" - those only went out to *real* moms; *caring* moms, *loving* moms.

"Yeah, it's great," I murmured, holding the painful tears back as I stared up at the large house. I crushed Mr. Schnooglypoopykins to me, letting his soft, mangled fur caress my wounded skin under the thin, cotton shirt I wore. Jacob, my father, made sure I always looked "presentable" in public, to hide the fact he was beating me to a pulp behind the curtains. The rich, lustring shirts and expensive jeans were all to cover up my severely bruised skin and infected lesions on my body. A car door slammed behind me and I felt the wind slap my back as the taxi sped off. Jacob shoved me aside and draped his arm on Allie's shoulder. He roared a laugh and drew her closer, planting kisses all over her face as she giggled like a teenage girl.

"Tom, make yourself useful and bring those suitcases inside your Mom and I's new home," he commanded. *Their* new home.

"Why don't we let Tommy-uh, Tom, take a walk. You know, get a feel of the neighborhood," whispered Allie, failing to hide her fear. Jacob grabbed her arm and pulled her inches from his face.

"He can go for a *walk* after Dinner. Right now, he can, *you know*, get a *feel* of the *house*," he sneered. Allie quickly nodded and begged me to do as he said, with her eyes. **The coward.** He smirked and pressed a wet kiss to her lips. I grimaced and turned on my heels. I placed Mr. Schnooglypoopykins on the red suitcase and grabbed another one, dragging them both to the door. Jacob and Allie entered the house, leaving me to do this on my own.

"Two down, six more to go," I grumbled to myself, and Mr. Schnooglypoopykins. I rolled back to the rest of the luggages on my white hee-lies and skidded to a halt. I heard footsteps behind me and flung up straight, slapping my hand firmly on my forehead to complete the salute. I felt a petite hand pat my back and relaxed; it was only Allie.

"Need any help, baby?" she asked in a honeyed tone. She really believed she was a good mother. I almost gagged at the thought; she was as good a mother as those on the show, "Toddlers and Tiaras". I brushed her hand off my back.

"Did you get bored of making out with that *beast*?" I snarled. Hey, at least I didn't call him a certain word beginning with "D" and ending with "ick". I'd learnt that very word from him. She shamefully looked down and rubbed her arm. I grabbed two suitcases and she did the same. Together, but in silence, we walked to the doorstep and dropped them. Allie ran back to the remaining two, which also happened to be the biggest, and hauled them inside. Jacob yanked them from her and took them upstairs. I picked up Mr. Schnooglypoopykins and dusted him off.

"How dare he," I growled, only loud enough for Allie, myself and of course, Mr. Schnooglypoopykins to hear. She smiled, ruffled his puff of hair and pecked his cheek. She repeated it on me, messing up my dirty blonde hair, then trailed after Jacob.

"Well, Mr. Schnoog, looks like we're burning your hair off...and mine," I half-jokingly whispered to him. I hugged my best friend warmly. My *only* friend. We wandered around the grand house; it was significantly larger than our neighbors'. I gawked at the huge dining room which was linked to the even more macro Livingroom. Even Mr. Schnooglypoopykins was amazed!

Stop 'Loving' Me

"I wonder where we'll be sleeping," I sighed in his ear.

"Probably in a cardboard box....outside," I laughed, knowing all too well it was bound to be true - Mr. Schnoog knew it too. Jacob cackled as he strolled in. He whistled me over, like a dog. I trudged over to him and squeezed my bestfriend, stopping right before my father.

"Wanna see your new room?" he questioned, oddly excited. I nodded cautiously and followed him as he led me upstairs. He flung open a door and my mouth dropped at the sight.

"Mr.Schnooglypoopykins, are you seeing this?!"

THOMAS 'TOMMY/TOM' MCPHUR

ALLIE MIA MCPHUR

JACOB THOMAS MCPHUR

MR SCHNOOGLYPOOPYKINS

Chapter 3: I wish you were my mommy

A/N: Hey guys! I really enjoyed writing this chapter as I think I really portrayed the atmosphere of the house well!:) I've witnessed people being abused and I typed it as I imagine it would be. OH, and if you haven't figured it out after you read the chapter, Mr Schnooglypoopykins OBVIOUSLY doesn't talk or move, but after being alone and isolated for so long, you'd start to believe your toys were real people. After all, Mr Schnoogly is his only friend!:) ENJOY!

I gawked at the fairly large room. I ran and jumped onto the red-sportscar-bed and flung Mr. Schnooglypoopykins onto the small, round leather couch behind me. Next to the bed was a fake road which led to my garage-door-closet, drawers and sports-themed computer and chair. On the other side were two steps and more drawers. The steps led to a small, velvet bathroom which included a milky white sink, toilet and a big, bulky bathtub.

I gaped at Jacob, waiting to be laughed at, mocked, for thinking this was my room. I waited, yet he didn't say anything; he simply walked out of my room, reminding me dinner was at 5.30pm. He closed the door as he broke away and I was left alone, unharmed. My eyes nearly fell out of my head; I was stupified! I ran up the ramp and took hold of Mr Schnoogly. He stared up at me with his big, loving, beady black eyes. He was just as shocked as I was!

"Something fishy's going on," he hinted. I nodded at his statement and dragged my suitcases from the door to my bed. Unzipping them, I started to put all mine and Mr Schnoogly's clothes away, neatly; just how Jacob liked them. Mr Schnoogly strolled over and helped me unpack. Finally, everything was in its place. I heard Allie shout my name and I grabbed my friend's fluffy paw. We skipped down the stairs together but quietly entered the beautiful dining room. I marveled at the bouquet of chandeliers, the black 1/4 inch glass table and painted, rhodium chairs. The sun shone through the thin, white curtains and the bright rays exposed an angelic painting of Marilyn Monroe.

"Looks like Jacob sold more 'narcotics'," whispered Mr. Schnooglypoopykins, admiring our surroundings. I giggled and pressed a finger to my lips, instructing him to be quiet. Allie sauntered into the dining room and stood next to me, stroking my hair. She motioned me to sit down, shoving me playfully. I huffed and tramped over to a cushioned chair. I pulled it out and lowered myself onto it, then pulling it closer to the table again. Allie did the same but sat opposite me, wanting to keep the empty seat next to her for Jacob.

"What do you think of the house?" she asked.

"It's nice," I replied, for once, politely. She smiled graciously, obviously pleased I was talking to her. I rolled my eyes and placed Mr Schnoogly on the seat beside me. I'd dressed him in a baby blue, flannel polo-shirt. I noticed a crease and smoothed it, then combing his fur with my fingers. Allie purposely emptied her throat and I looked over my shoulder; Jacob walked in. I straightened my back and insidiously, but promptly, sorted my hair. Jacob drew out a seat next to Allie and settled down. He clicked his fingers loudly and workers emerged from the kitchen. They held salvers in level with their shoulders; plates of food just waiting to be spilled. One of the four people, a woman who looked in her late twenties, set a big bowl of Southwestern Chili Pasta - my favourite - in front of me. My mouth watered and it was all I could do *not* to gobble it all up. Jacob grasped Allie's hand and she, mine. I took Mr Schnooglypoopykins'. This part of our *mea Isickenedme*; I almost lost my appetite,*almost*.

"Lord Jesus Christ, as you blessed many with the five loaves and the two dishes, may we too, know your blessing as we share this food. Your peace in our hearts, and your love in our lives. Amen," he recapitulated.*What a hypocrite*. I snorted at his deceitfulness and he abruptly glared at me.

"What was that?" he hissed.

"Amen," I answered through gritted teeth. He frowned and stabbed a crispy fry, shoving it in his mouth. I didn't avert my *glare* from him and he didn't avert his from mine. We ate like that; glowering at each other, Allie squirming in her seat. If I wasn't in competition, I'd laugh in her face. But it didn't matter, Mr Schnooglypoopykins was taking care of that. Still, I stared icily at my father. He ate, I ate, we ate. I finished my food and wiped my mouth with a soft, red cloth. The woman whom had served me before entered the room. Once again, she placed a dish before me; this time, a glass of rich, chocolate pudding with flavourful

Stop 'Loving' Me

whipped cream and brittle flakes. I licked my lips and devoured the dessert.

The woman chuckled and poured me more water. I looked up at her and she smiled so sweetly, it made my heart swell. This was the kind of woman I wished I had as a mother. She lowered herself down to her knees, picked up the cloth and mopped my sticky face. My *parents* paid no attention to us.

"Look at your dirty face," she laughed, still cleaning it. I beamed at her and she tickled me.

"There, all clean," she whispered warmly and brushed my purple cheek with her soft hand. "What happened to your face?"

"I...hurt myself," I mumbled. She grimaced, but not at me. Still stroking my cheek with her warm hand, she picked up Mr Schnoogly with the other.

"Who's this little guy?" she squealed, playfully waving him in my face.

"That's Mr Schnooglypoopykins, or Mr Schnoogly for short," I giggled.

"What a lovely name, what's yours?"

"Tom," I mumbled, suddenly shy. She tilted my chin up and looked at me, *really* looked at me.

"Well, *Tommy*, I think you have an adorable name," she grinned. I smiled back; no one had called me that-not the way she did- in years. Not since Jacob started beating me when I was a year and a half old.

"I'm Adeline," she informed buoyantly. Allie clicked her fingers and Adeline stood up, handing me Mr Schnoogly back amiably. Jacob oggled her as she piled my dishes onto her tray and walked out, waving me goodbye...*for now*.

"What were you two talking about?" demanded Jacob and Allie in unison. I embosomed my bestfriend and strung together a reply.

"Nothing, she just asked if I liked my pudding," I lied. Jacob scoffed.

"Of course you did, it's the best chocolate, imported from Switzerland!" Allie placed her hand on his, in attempt to calm him. He slapped it away and snapped his fingers again. Adeline walked in, ready to take orders.

"I'm done, clean this shit up," he ordered. She nodded and silently cleared the table. I stayed until she was finished and gone. I physically couldn't get up and leave while she was here, I...*needed* to be in her presence.

"Can I go for a walk, please?" I murmured. Jacob snorted and shooed me away. I picked up Mr Schnooglypoopykins and made my way to the door. I heard someone running after me, I turned to find Allie smiling.

"Mind if I come?" she asked, already putting on her jacket.

"*Yes*," I hissed and stormed off without her. I wandered around the neighborhood, counting each house I passed... and hoping, somehow, I'd get lost. I stumbled upon a park and opened the gate. The grass was a healthy color of green and well trimmed. I strolled over to the swings and planted Mr Schnoogly on the baby ones. I pulled his seat back as far as I could and let go, letting him swing for a couple of minutes while I enjoyed the park by myself. I slid down the slide and swirled on the roundabout. After 10 minutes to myself, I decided to walk back to my besfriend. I noticed someone was crouched down beside him.

"*Thief!*" I screamed, bolting towards the criminal. I dove into them and they let out a high pitched cry.

"Get off me, I'm not a thief!" hissed the girl. *Oops!*

"Oh, sorry....I'm Tom," I said awkwardly. She glared at me but then relaxed her face and stuck out her little hand.

"Blue,"

Adeline Roy

Chapter 4: Heaven and my new friends

Blue's POV:

"Well, hi, Tom," I giggled and let go of his hand. "I saw your teddy on the swing and I thought he was lost,"

"Oh, no, I was just enjoying the park while Mr Schnoogly had a little swing," he politely replied. I smiled and shook Mr Schnoogly's hand.

"He's so cute," I complimented. Tom whispered something into his friend's ear and giggled. I tilted my head in confusion.

"He said you're cute too," Tom clarified. I blushed and looked down. An idea struck me and I held out my hand, for Tom to take.

"Come with me, I want to show you something," I announced and Tom took hold of my hand, eager to follow. We skipped down to the end of the park and made countless amounts of turns until we got to the bushes, in the forest, which perfectly hid my secret spot inside a tree - I called it Heaven. I pushed past the shrubs and called Tom. He gingerly walked through and I crawled inside, him behind me. Once we were in, I pulled the bushes back in place, hiding the entrance from anyone on the outside -although it was highly unlikely people would be out here, animals perhaps but not people.

Tom stood up from the ground and dusted his jeans, then gawked at my little paradise. It was bigger than it looked from the outside. He walked over to my small mattress and ran his fingers along the soft blanket and pillow. He studied the little cabinet beside it and admired my hand-made basket which contained all my food. Everything I needed was in here, Mom didn't let me sleep in the house; she said I blemished everything I touched. Tom giggled as he through Mr Schnoogly up in the air and I caught him gracefully. I beamed at him and handed his fluffy friend back.

"How did you find this place?" he questioned, amazed. I shrugged and lowered my head, too ashamed to tell him why I was really here. Unlike normal kids who used places like this as a treehouse for fun and games, I used Heaven as a home - it was the only one I knew. It was the only place I could truly call *'home'*. I don't know why I'd shown Tom; I guess I saw something in him -empathy, but that was doubtful.

"I get it, it's personal," he assured and held Mr Schnoogly out to me. Instead, I pulled Tom to me and rested my head on his shoulder. He squeezed me and we stayed like that for what seemed like forever; in a warm hug and a comfortable silence. He finally broke away and whispered,

"I have to go, my dad'll kill me if I'm late,"

Little did I know he was being serious. I nodded laboriously and let go of him. He pushed the bushes aside and crawled out of Heaven. I noticed Mr Schnoogly had accidentally been left behind and I chased after Tom. Realising I was trying to catch up, he turned around.

"You...forgot...Mr Schnoogly," I panted. Tom smiled softly and gently pushed Mr Schnoogly back into my arms. I furrowed my brows in confusion and waited for him to explain.

"You can keep him for the night," he whispered sweetly, "that way we can see each other again."

Stop 'Loving' Me

My slightly swollen cheeks turned a bright colour of crimson and I embraced him one last time before he slipped away.

"See you later, Tom," I murmured hopefully. He hugged Mr Schnoogly and lightly kissed my cheek.

"See you later, Mr Schnoogly," he whispered cheerfully, "See you later, BabyBlue."

He walked away quietly and disappeared out of the forest. *He must've memorised the way.*

I, too, walked away, and wriggled into Heaven with Mr Schnoogly resting on my back. I ripped open a large bag of crisps, the only food my Mom gave me, and fed. After I was satisfied, as much as I could be without a proper meal, I gurgled down water and changed into my old, coburg pajamas and snuggled into my bed with my new friend right by my side. That night, I slept peacefully and dreamt of Tom, Mr Schnoogly and I in a magical forest, chasing each other and playing games just like true friends did. For the first time in seven years, my Mom didn't haunt my sleep.

Chapter 5: Why won't you help me?

Tom's POV:

I looked down at my little Tom and Jerry watch and picked up the pace. It was almost 9pm, I hadn't notice time fly whilst playing with Blue. I didn't worry about Mr Schnoogly, for I knew my new friend would take good care of my bestfriend. I fastidiously opened the door and tiptoed in. I was about to run up the stairs when Allie walked in. She silently sped over to me and quietly shouted,

"Where were you, you're father's been waiting! Quick, run to your room!"

I nodded and darted upstairs but slapped right into Jacob. He growled and grabbed me by the hair, pulling me to my room. *Oh no!*

"Do you know what time it is!?" he roared, throwing me onto the bed. I backed away and pulled my pillow over me, desperately trying to protect myself. He yanked the pillow from me and slapped me hard.

"It's nine-fucking-o'clock!" he shouted, punching me in between each word. I cried as I felt my arm go numb from the pain. Allie bolted in and jumped onto Jacob, begging him to stop.

"Jacob, please! He learned his lesson, stop!" she screamed. Jacob pushed her off his back and grabbed her neck, throwing her out of the room before locking it. He turned to me, eyes crazed. He stormed over and I buried myself under my covers, positioning myself in the armadillo. Jacob tore my sheets away and smacked me off the bed with one hand.

"You're gonna learn your lesson," he snarled and pulled his belt out. I whimpered and began praying. I felt a whip across my face and yelped. *This was just the beginning.*

He repeatedly belted me, whalloping the leather strap all over my body until I couldn't feel the pain anymore. I just lay there, on the floor, taking the beating I didn't deserve. Suddenly, I felt him fasten the belt around my neck. I began to struggle, but it was futile -my body was limp and wouldn't respond. Jacob was throttling me and I couldn't do anything about it. I tried to cry out but only a croak escaped. I spat in his face and he immediately let go to wipe his eyes.

"MOMMY! HELP! PLEASE HELP ME!" I screamed before Jacob kicked my face, causing my wiggly tooth to shoot out. Blood poured out of my mouth and he held me down, causing me to choke with all the thick liquid. I spluttered and gagged but still, I couldn't breathe. Exhausted, I gave up and everything, ever so slowly, began to go black. I could only *just* hear Allie crying and kicking the door. Noticing I was fading away, Jacob released me and benevolently sashayed out of my room. Allie rushed in and lifted me to my bed, gently laying me down. She ran to the bathroom and returned with a box of tissues. She wiped my blood and kissed my wet forehead, sending tingles of pain all over me. I struggled to form a sentence and closed my swollen eyes, deciding to wait until she was done. She stroked my bloodied blonde hair and pulled the covers over my almost-lifeless body.

"C-call the am-mm...bulance," I mumbled, overwhelmed with agony. Allie shamefully shook her head.

"I can't, Jacob will kill me," she informed, remorsefully. I scoffed, and it burned.

"Get out then," I hissed. She blubbered a series of apologies but I blocked out her voice and repeated myself.

"What do you want from me, Tommy?" she weeped dolefully, brushing my momentarily disfigured face. I flinched as her touch stung me.

"I want you to be a good mom," I spat, "I want you to protect me like real moms do and be willing to give up your life for me *like real moms are!*" I took several, painful, deep breaths and closed my eyes, waiting for sleep to catch me.

"Get out, *now*," I sibilated. Allie, still sobbing, left my room and closed the door behind her. I broke into tears and hugged my mangled body.

"Adeline," I mewled, gravely wishing she was here to comfort me, *love me.*

Chapter 6: Don't come home

BLUE'S POV:

The sun rays peaked through my bush-door and I opened my right eye, just a little. I sighed and let my head fall back on the plump pillow. Hugging Mr Schnoogly, I wiggled out of the covers and swung my legs off the bed. I yawned and shook my head, waking myself up completely.

"What do you want for breakfast, Mr Schnoogly?" I beamed, happy I had someone to talk to other than myself. He didn't reply, and I tapped my foot. Frustrated, I flung him back onto the bed and lagged to my basket, taking out the small, plastic packet of Coco Pops. Sitting back down, I poured water into the box and shook it, making soggy, tasteless cereal. I forced the coco pops down my throat until the packet was empty, and threw it into my bin bag. I wiped my mouth on my arm and almost gagged at the after-taste. I looked down at my fluffy friend but, still, he was quiet.

"Why won't you talk?" I pouted and held Mr Schnoogly in my tiny hands. Then, I remembered what Daddy had told me.

"*Believe*, Blue. All you have to do is *believe*," he'd said, cuddling me before setting me down in my Dora the Explorer bed and kissing me goodnight. We'd exchanged *I love you's* and that was the last time I'd seen him whole. That very night, mom's *friend* Joel, slit his throat and cut his head off, leaving it at my door until the next morning when Mom collected me. I was scarred for life, and still dreamt of his empty eyes and drooping mouth. Mom said it was to let me know what she was capable of. I shuddered at the memory and picked Mr Schnoogly back up.

"Believe," I breathed, closing my eyes tightly. I waited for what seemed like an endless amount of time.

"Why are you just standing there? Let's go on an adventure!" boomed an adorable voice. I looked down and Mr Schnoogly was smiling warmly at me. I giggled and hugged him.

"Come on, get dressed," he laughed, jumping down and walking to the small pile of clothes next to my bed. I peaked through the bushes and stuck my finger out.

"It's nice out today," I smiled, grabbing a Hello Kitty t-shirt and denim roll-up shorts. I picked up the packet of wipes and cleaned myself. Dressing in my clothes, I pulled on my pair of scruffed, pink converse. I brushed my long, light-brown hair -with the brush I stole from Mom- and put it into neat piggy tails. I picked up Mr Schnoogly and we crawled out of Heaven, dusting out knees once we were out. I pulled the bushes back together and we headed towards town.

"Let's go to the park instead," I tittered, as we got closer to Mom's house. Mr Schnoogly nodded, and I turned around.

"BLUE! Get in here!" screamed Mom. I gulped and twirled, to find her standing outside her door. She beckoned me with her finger and I trudged over. She grabbed my ear and pulled me inside.

"What is that *thing* you're holding?" she growled, when she noticed Mr Schnoogly. I hugged him tighter and shook my head.

"Nothing...I-I found him,"

Stop 'Loving' Me

"Did you buy that with *my* money?"

"N-no! I told you...I found him at the park," I mumbled, desperately hoping she wouldn't chuck him out...or worse, burn him. She only shoved my forward into the kitchen.

"I have news, sit your ass down," she barked and I quickly plopped down on the wooden chair.

"Joel's getting out of jail in a month," she grinned. I flinched, and shut my eyes.

"*No...*"

Chapter 7: Let's go to the park

TOM'S POV:

I struggled to open my eyes. I could hear voices around me, and I reached out. I felt a hand clasp mine and tried to figure out who it was.

"Tommy? Stay still, baby," whispered a voice; Allie. She kissed my hand and I finally managed to lift my eyelids. Everything was blurred, and my heart hurt. I coughed, and blood splattered out. Allie grabbed a tissue and cleaned my face. I looked behind her, where Jacob and a man in a white coat stood, talking.

"You say he was attacked?" questioned the man, holding a notebook. Jacob nodded, a worried look plastered on his face.

"Yes, the group stole his watch, shoes...anything which can be sold on ebay," he lied. I looked down at my wrist, and my watch wasn't there.

"Well, Mr McPhur, your son was severely beaten. He has two broken ribs and suffered from internal bleeding. Luckily, we managed to fix him up..." rambled the man, which I assumed was a doctor. He looked over and walked to me, noticing I was awake.

"How are ya, son?" he smiled, and a croak escaped my lips. He sighed sympathetically and returned to his conversation with my father.

"There were bruises all over his body. They looked like belt marks...?" gritted the doctor, and Jacob pretend to be shocked.

"What? They did this to him?" he shouted. The doctor nodded and the two men walked out of my room, still talking. The door closed and I looked back up to Allie.

"They said you'll be stuck in bed for a few days," she smiled. I couldn't even glare at her, so instead looked away.

"Do you want some ice cream?" she mumbled, and I nodded. Even though I hated her, my throat was dry and my chest, too hot. She left, and returned with a bowl of vanilla icecream, topped with chocolate chips and coconut sprinkles. I tried to reach for the spoon but my hand wouldn't move, so Allie took it instead. She fed me some and, ever so slowly, I swallowed it. Once finished, she dressed me in a soft, white cotton long-sleeved t-shirt and a pair of khakis. She slipped me on my clean white Nike Deuces and combed my now-clean hair.

"I - want to go - to the park," I croaked and she giggled.

"You can't leave the house, silly! Look at you," she sighed. I scoffed, even though it hurt, and rolled my eyes.

"I don't need a mirror to know what I look like," I snapped. She looked down contemptibly and twiddled her finger. I wanted to slap her, so hard.

"Let's go to the park," she muttered and lift me onto a wheel chair which was parked in front of my bed. As she sat me down, I stared at my heavily bandaged upper-body. I touched my head and felt more bandages wrapped around it. I exhaled sorrowfully and Allie wheeled me out of the room. We went cautiously down the stairs

Stop 'Loving' Me

and left the house.

"Please be there, Blue..." I begged under my breath.

Chapter 8: Hand in Hand

I ran. I bolted out the door and ran. Where? I did not know, but still I kept going. Mom didn't bother coming after me, for she was sitting in the kitchen, and smirking. Joel and Mom had gotten together after he'd killed Daddy. But I didn't let him get away with that, no, I'd gotten his fingerprints on a piece of sellotape, and plastered it onto Daddy's bathroom wall. The police had traced it back to Joel and arrested him. He was meant to be doing life, but I guess he knew someone on the inside. Now, he was getting out...and he would come for me.

I thought of going to Heaven, but remembered I still had Mr Schnoogly, and headed to the park. I slumped down on the bench and let the tears fall down like raindrops from the tips of an umbrella. I heard wheels roll along the soft grass but didn't look up, afraid someone would see me cry and try to 'help'. Last time that happened, which was six years ago, Mom beat me senseless for almost getting her in trouble.

"Blue?" asked a sweet, familiar voice. I looked up and smiled when I saw Tom. Then I wiped the tears away and saw his body and head were bandaged, and he was in a wheelchair. I gasped and jerked up, cupping his purple, swollen face.

"Tom, what happened!?" I cried, hugging him so tight, he yelped in pain. I pulled away and kept my eyes fixed on his.

"Sorry..." I mumbled. "What happened?"

He looked down dolefully and I noticed there was a blonde woman standing behind him, smiling.

"Nothing...I was attacked," he muttered, and I couldn't help but doubt his answer. I planted a gentle kiss on his cheek and he instantly got back to his old self; fun and cheerful. The woman giggled and cleared her throat, tapping her nails on the handles.

"Oh, this is Allie," Tom gritted through his teeth. I held back the smile which begged to surface; that was another thing we both had in common, we hated our Moms. At least, I guessed it was his Mom.

"I'm Tom's mom, nice to meet you!" she beamed and stuck out her hand. I hesitantly shook it and pasted a polite smile on my face.

"I'm Blue," I said, unnecessarily. Tom cleared his throat and took my hand, indicating he needed help getting up. I pulled him up and swung his arm over my shoulders. He pulled me closer, so walking would be easier, and I immediately felt warm, safe. I let my head fall on his shoulder and felt him smile.

"Let's go sit on the grass!" he exclaimed, and we fast-walked to the same patch where we met, yesterday. Allie stayed behind, realising Tom obviously wouldn't want her with us. We sat on the cushion-like grass and fell back, staring up at the perfect baby-blue sky, dotted with puffy clouds.

"What do you see?" he murmured, his breath warm on my ear. I studied the clouds then looked back at Tom, staring into his sapphire eyes.

"A zombie bunny, tearing out a woman's heart," I grinned, thinking of my Mom. He laughed and nodded, still looking at me.

"Good," he smiled.

Stop 'Loving' Me

"How is that good?" I giggled. He looked up at the sky again, then back at me.

"Because I see blood-thirsty demon, munching on a man's flesh!"

We both guffawed and looked down at Mr Schnoogly, who was inbetween us. He too, laughed.

"Well, I see two kids, and an epic teddy...running in a magical forest, hand in hand."

I nodded, and Tom froze, gawking at me.

"What?" I questioned.

"You heard him?" he whispered dramatically. I giggled and nodded. A huge smile creeped onto his face and he took my hand. I smiled and shifted closer to him.

"I wish we could stay like this forever..." I sighed. "Hand in hand, with Mr Schnoogly...no parents. Just peace,"

"You and I both," he breathed, and we closed our eyes, fantasizing about a dream which would never come true; not for me.

Chapter 9: New Neighbor

Tom's POV:

"Tom, we have to go. Your dad says he has good news," Allie shouted over to me. My tummy knotted up and I suddenly felt sick; I didn't want to go home.

"It's not like I care, you can go without me!" I yelled back, clasping Blue's hand tighter. Allie walked over and we sat up, staring at her.

"Tom, we have to go now. You can see Blue tomorrow," she smiled, and I almost smacked it off her. I sighed dismally and Blue helped me up, hugging me tightly before my witch of a mother took my hand, pulling me away from my friend.

"Wait, Tom! Mr Schnoogly," Blue whispered, handing the fluffy bear back to me. I embraced my little friend and kissed Blue on the cheek.

"Thanks for taking care of him," I beamed. I got an idea, and tore my hand away from Allie. "Since I can't stay, can Blue stay for lunch...and dinner?"

"Not today. How about tomorrow?" she grinned, and Blue and I nodded vigorously.

"Yay! I'll see you tomorrow Tommy!" she giggled, hugging me once more.

"Sure thing, Bluebell!" I replied.

"Bluebell?" she asked, tilting her head.

"Yeah, that's your new nickname; Bluebell," I announced. She blushed and waved her hand, walking away. Mr Schnoogly and I waved back.

"Meet you here in the morning!" I hollered, before turning away and slumping down on my wheelchair. Allie and I entered the house, and went to the livingroom, waiting for Jacob. He strode in, with Adeline shuffling behind him. He sat down on his couch, and she pulled off his shoes, replacing them with slippers. She stood up, dusted her dress and smiled warmly at me. I smiled back and waved enthusiastically. I felt Allie stiffen and fold her arms.

"When did you two get all friendly?" she asked harshly. I rolled my eyes and fixed Mr Schnooglypoopykins' shirt.

"What does it matter? It's not like you pay attention to me anyway," I scoffed. Jacob cleared his throat and we fixed our attention on him.

"As you know, I gathered you here because I have news," Jacob informed. "Tom, you will be attending Elmswood Elementary for a month."

"Isn't that great, Tom?" Allie gleamed. I glared at her and looked back at Jacob.

"Oh, just dandy!" I sneered. "A month? Why only a month?"

Stop 'Loving' Me

"What was it again...?" he chaffed. "Oh, yes! We're sending you to military school."

Blue's POV:

I lagged inside the house and sunk into the cream sofa. I didn't care if Mom found me, and beat me for it-I had finally been invited to someone's house. Mom opened the door, and slammed it shut, walking to the livingroom.

"What are you doing?" she growled. I shrugged and switched the TV on, putting on H2o: Just add water. She marched in front of the TV, blocking my view.

"You rude little bitch! Get the hell off my sofa and get your ass to the kitchen!" she roared, but I remained seated. She grabbed my ear and dragged me to the kitchen.

"Bake a cake, and make it frickin' good, you hear?" she snarled, slapping me. I shrugged and pulled out eggs from the fridge and a bowl from the cupboard.

"I've been invited for dinner tomorrow," I announced, cracking the eggs and adding flour and butter. Her mouth dropped for a moment, then she slapped it shut.

"Do they know about us?" she asked, smirking, and I shook my head, angrily. "Then you can go."

"Thanks," I gritted. I stirred the completed mixture one last time and opened the oven, pushing it in. "Who's the cake for?"

"Our new neighbors. They just moved in next door," she clarified. "They have a kid. I expect you to make me sound good, you hear?"

"Sure," I forced myself to say, leaving the kitchen to get changed into my maid outfit.

"Wear something nice, I want to make a good impression. The husband is loaded," she grinned, and I almost threw up. "And don't forget to cover those bruises up, they're disgusting."

"Yes, Mom," I hissed, storming up the stairs and into the dressing room, which would be my bedroom if I were a normal child. I wore my blue and white polkadot dress, white bow shoes and gold sparrow earrings. Mom came in to curl my hair, occasionally burning me with the steam, and applied pink lip-balm on my lips. She did one plait across the back of my head, and tied it with a large, blue bow. My cheeks had healed and were now a light crimson. The cut near my lips was now only a light red line, but Mom covered it with a brush of foundation. I looked in the mirror and a beautiful, spoiled-looking girl stared back at me.

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"There, you actually look presentable," she smiled, happy with herself. I fought back the urge to roll my eyes; I'd look presentable all the time, if she didn't hurt me.

"Look at your arms and legs!" she scolded, and this time I did roll my eyes.

"*You* made them that way," I snapped, and felt a sting on my right cheek immediately after I'd said it. She grabbed more foundation and covered up my bruises. There was a loud 'ding' downstairs and I ran to the

Stop 'Loving' Me

kitchen, taking out the delicious-smelling *and* looking vanilla cake. I coated it with cream icing and decorated it, writing 'Welcome' in the middle with chocolate sugar icing. Mom came downstairs dressed in her pretty, frilly white dress and small black heels, her hair in a braided bun and lips blood-red. She beckoned me with her finger and I took the cake, walking next door with her. We knocked on the big, white door and waited for someone to answer.

"Hello, there," answered a tall, muscled man. I stared up at him and he flashed me a toothy grin. He went down on his knee, and looked at the cake.

"Is this for me?" he cooed, and I nodded shyly. "It's beautiful!"

"Hi, I'm Ramona Anderson and this is Blue, my daughter-we wanted to welcome our new neighbors with a home-made cake," Mom smiled, politely. *What a fake.*

"Lovely to meet you, Ramona. I'm Jacob McPhur," the man replied, shaking her hand. "Did your daughter make this?"

"Yes, I did," I answered, before Mom could take the credit. I knew I was getting a slap for that but I didn't care...it felt great ticking her off.

"You're so much more talented and helpful than my son," he laughed, patting my head. I knew I was adorable, but *sheesh*, I wasn't a dog.

"Please, come in," Jacob encouraged, and we entered his beautiful home. I almost lost my eyes, as they popped out at the decorations. They were *fantastic!*

"Allie?" I squeaked, as the blonde woman joined Jacob, wrapping her arm around his. A dirty-blond boy limped behind her. "Tom!?"

Chapter 10: Awkward

"You two know each other?" Jacob questioned. I nodded and ran to Tom, hugging him.

"How...*nice*," Mom whispered. I knew, then, that she was going to take advantage of Tom and I's friendship. She stepped inside the grand house, and Jacob led us to a beautifully lit room with pearly white sofas, perfectly positioned cushions and a 72 inch plasma TV which hung on the wall. We all sat down, me with Tom, Mom beside Allie and her next to Jacob.

"Drinks!" he yelled, and a young maid with bleach blonde hair ran in. I gawked, then looked at Tom. He leaned forward and whispered,

"That's Aqua, one of Jacob's workers,"

"You didn't tell me you were rich," I gasped. He shrugged and regained his posture.

"Would you like something to drink, Blue?" Jacob asked.

"Can I have apple juice, please?" I smiled. He chuckled and nodded, Aqua noting it down.

"She's so polite," Allie complimented Mom. She shrugged and ordered a glass of red wine.

"What kind, Miss?" Aqua asked.

"The best," Mom winked. Jacob and Allie laughed, before ordering their drinks. The maid left the room and another one returned with a tray of glasses. This one was slightly older, with glossy dark-brown hair which was plaited into a bun and haunting blue eyes, which tinted green under the sunlight.

"Adeline!" beamed Tom, dashing to her. She embraced him and giggled, ruffling his hair.

"Well, hello Tommy," she laughed, getting down on one knee. She straightened his shirt and tied his loose shoe-lace. "Why are you all bandaged up?"

"Doesn't matter," he muttered. She exhaled sharply, obviously angry...but at what? Or *who*?

"Tom, please sit," Allie interrupted, jealousy present in the tone of her voice. "You, maid, put the drinks down."

"One apple juice for a *beautiful* little girl," Adeline cooed, handing me the cup. I giggled and twirled a lock of hair around my finger.

"Thank you. I'm Blue by the way," I grinned, sipping the delicious liquid. She mouthed '*you're welcome*', and brushed my cheek with her delicate fingers. I sighed blissfully and pushed my face further into her hand. She sniggered and pulled away, placing everyone's drinks on the table. As she left, she flashed Tom and I a warmhearted smile and we returned it with amiable ones.

"So, what school will your son be attending?" Mom asked, breaking the silence.

"Elmswood Elementary," Jacob answered, downing his shot of whisky.

Stop 'Loving' Me

"That's where I go!" I squealed, clutching Tom's knee. He winced, and I quickly relaxed my grip. "Sorry."

"How lovely. You could show Tom around," Allie smiled, looking at Jacob rather than I. "Right, honey?"

"Oh yes. The spring break will be over in, what? Five days?" he chuckled. "Tom should be all patched up by then."

"What happened, if you don't mind my asking," Mom questioned, imbibing her rich red wine.

"Oh, nothing. He was attacked by a couple of muggers. Everything's been taken care of," he replied, oddly relaxed. "Right, Tom?"

"Yeah...*right*," Tom hissed. "I'm going upstairs. Coming Bluebell?"

"Sure," I gleamed, clasping his hand as he led me out. Mom grinned devilishly, savouring her sweet drink.

"Is that okay, Mr McPhur?" I asked shyly.

"Of course. Go on ahead," he insisted. I nodded and Tom took me away. We whisked up the polished stairs and into his deluxe room, Mr Schnoogly perched over a blue toy-car.

"Oh, *wow*," I breathed, gazing at the sublimely decorated room. "Just, *wow*."

"I want to show you something," he murmured, pulling me inside. "I think you'll like it."

Chapter 11: Who's afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?

I watched as the black wolf staggered forward and waved it's round paws in the air. It drooled fake blood and I picked up the little toy, staring into it's beady, black eyes.

"How...*weird*," I mumbled, entranced by it. Tom squatted down next to me and smiled. I handed him back the little wolf and moved to his race-car bed.

"You like it?" he asked, plopping down beside me. I nodded and exhaled dramatically, admiring -yet again- his gorgeous room. Although fancy, it had that horrid hospital smell; medicine, gauze and a hint of agonising pain. Realising we hadn't had a proper conversation since he'd shown me the toy, I turned to face Tom.

"Your dad seems really nice," I giggled but stopped as his face darkened. My vision blurred as he pushed me -incredibly fast- back on the bed, pinning my wrists on either side of my head. He leaned forward on me, the warmth of his breath heating my paper-white skin and making me flinch slightly.

"Don't you ever say that. *Ever!*" he hissed and I nodded, fear taking over.

"Tom, you're hurting me," I whimpered, my berry-red lip quivering. He loosened his grip and slowly slid off me. I shot up and hugged myself, rubbing my cold arms as a tear rolled down my cheek. Tom wrapped his arms around me and held me warmly. I relaxed and dropped my head on his chest.

"I'm sorry," he murmured, stroking my hair with his baby-hands. I sniffed and snuggled closer to him. "It's just..."

"Yes?"

"The wolf is Jacob. I'm the little pig," he sighed, picking up another little toy; a rosy-pink piglet.

"Why?" I asked, touching it's blonde tuft of hair.

"Allie's the straw house. And he blows her down before chowing down on me," he affirmed, his face hard. It didn't suit him, the cold expressions. His face resembled that of a baby's, and no one likes to see babies cry. I kissed his cheek, desperate to lighten his mood. Although I felt sorry for him, Tom had things easy. I was being abused by my own mother! Nothing could beat that. Pun intended.

"You have a good life, Tom. I don't even get a room," I sighed, shaking my head.

"What?"

"Why do you think I go to Heaven? That's where I stay," I revealed.

"Why?" he questioned, now focusing on my problems.

"My mom doesn't like me," I blubbered and buried my face in his expensive shirt. He hugged me briefly, then pushed me away to get a better look.

"Well, my dad doesn't like *me*," he smiled and I did too. I snatched the little wolf and the piglet, studying them both. Tom shifted closer until the toys were the only things in between us.

Stop 'Loving' Me

"Blue, can you keep a secret?" he asked, deadly serious. I stared at his plump lips then back into his sea-blue eyes, and nodded.

"Only if you can," I whispered. This was it - I finally had someone to tell my biggest secret to! I was going to tell him anything and everything, without leaving a single detail out. This was what it felt like, having someone you could trust. Someone you could *love*. Just as we both opened our mouths to speak, the door swung open.

"Come on, Blue. We're leaving," mom ordered. I gasped and shook my head. She narrowed her eyes and stepped closer, and I jerked up. Tom took my hand, lifting himself up, too.

"Don't go," he begged, and I fought back the tears.

"I have to," I mumbled, hugging him quickly. "But, we'll see each other again."

"Okay, Bluebell," he sniffed and I squeezed his hand before freeing myself from his hold.

"See ya, Tom-Tom," I grinned, and he giggled wildly. Slowly, I walked away. Slowly, but easily, for I knew this was not goodbye.

"See ya at school," I heard him say as I left his room and went down the stairs, with Mom in front of me.

"Yeah, see you at school."

Chapter 12: Hello, Class!

1 week later

Tom's POV:

I walked down the corridor toward classroom A23. I tried to focus on reaching the room but instead, I could only feel the eyes of the other kids upon me. The hallway seemed to go on forever, the glossy green tile floor looming in front of me and the whispers of others closed in around me. The kids peeped through the almost-closed wooden doors and some past their lockers. The sound of the slammed little, metal doors was startling and nausea bubbled up inside of me as wafts of perfume, sweat and stale food assailed me. I finally made it to the classroom safely and sat down in the middle row. Pulling my bag under my table and my jacket over my chair, I placed my pencil case in front of me and took out my stationery, lining them up neatly. As the first bell of the day rang, a herd of kids barged into the room. The boys wore brown, boot cut pants, white polo shirts, green jumpers and black french-toast shoes. The girls were dressed in brown pleated scooters, white panel shirts, black flats and the same jumper.

As they all gathered in their groups, an adorable brunette entered the room. Her chocolate brown hair highlighted the two lime-green streaks she had at the front, and I surveyed her outfit. Unlike the others, she wore green striped, knee-high socks and black-Hi, slouchy converse. My eyes lit up as she made her way to me, the other kids trying to get her attention as she did.

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"Hey, Blue!" shouted a girl.

"Blue, how was your spring break?" another asked.

"You look really pretty today, Blue," a boy complimented. She replied with a simple 'Hello' and sat down on my table, pulling me into an embrace.

"Hi, Bluebell," I giggled.

"Hey, Tom-Tom," she beamed, ruffling my hair. I finger-combed it and she stuck her tongue out at me. Her bright mood made me happy, which was I feeling I rarely got.

"You're different...*happy*," I accused jokingly. She laughed and slid into the seat next to me.

"School's the only place, other than Heaven, where I'm...*free*," she shrugged. I nodded.

"Â´Sup Blue," a voice interrupted our comfortable silence. The emo-hair kid.

"Hey, Jasper," she smiled and tilted her head, gesturing him to the seat behind her. "Where's Mrs. Bored-out-of-my-hair?"

"Five, four, three, two..." he breathed and was cut off by the clicking of heels and the slamming of a door. A short, angry-looking woman with dark clown-hair and blood-red lipstick entered the room. She pounded the black-board with the eraser and the class fell silent, everyone rushing to their seats. Across from me, sat a cute blonde. She flashed me a sweet smile and I returned it.

Stop 'Loving' Me

"Hello, idio-, uh, class. We have a new pupil. Uh..." she announced, reading my name from a piece of paper. "Thomas McPhur."

"It's Tom," I corrected, and she raised a thin eyebrow.

"Yes, fine. Tom, then, will you please stand and introduce yourself," she sighed, sounding fed-up already.

"But, you just...did?" I mumbled and she glared at me. Standing up, I exhaled and looked at each of my classmates as I spoke.

"Hey, I'm Tom. I just moved here from Germany, my dad's in the military," I affirmed.

Yeah, he's also a drug-dealer. But you don't need to know that.

"Everyone give Tom a round of applause," she commanded proudly. I slapped my hand on my forehead and dragged it down my face. The classroom filled with applaud and cheers. I jokingly bowed and blew kisses, making everyone burst into laughter.

"Alright, Alright. Sit down and shut up," the teacher hissed and scribbled her name on the board. "Mrs...Bore...da..loo...air."

"Today, we'll be exploring Geometry! Peggy, hand out everyone's jotters and the Geometry Success books!" she yelled as we all started to chat over her. I hardly dodged a notebook as it flew past me, hitting the boy in front of me.

"Ow, Jake! I'm gonna kill you!" he roared, fleeing his seat and lunging at the other boy.

"Mrs Boredaluaire! Danny put glue on my seat!" screamed a redhead.

"No, I didn't!"

"DID TOO!"

"And the torture begins," muttered the teacher.

Chapter 13: Recess!

Tom's POV:

"Danny, leave Rose-Mary alone!" scolded the teacher.

"Mrs Bore-da-LOOOO-AIRE!!!" shrieked Peggy as Jake tipped her chair.

"Jake, finish your work!" the teacher snapped.

"Tom, get back to your seat! Jasper, this is your *final* warning! Get your angles work done!" she continued to shout, anger and frustration finally taking over.

"Why won't anyone *DO AS THEY'RE TOLD!*?"

The interval bell rang and everyone evacuated the classroom, leaving behind a complete disaster for the janitors to tidy.

"Saved by the bell," Mrs Boredaluaire sighed, sinking into her seat and dropping her head down on her desk.

Jasper, Blue and I darted through the crowd and onto the playground. We lunged at the swings before anyone else could and pushed each other, laughing hard.

"Yo, Jas!" hollered a boy. He ran up to us and Jasper stepped forward. The two slapped hands, curled them into fists and bumped knuckles.

"Sup, Kennie! This, here's Tom," Jasper introduced. Kennie and I bumped fists and Blue and him did the same.

"So, how do you like it here?" he asked, making conversation. I fell back on the grass and crossed my legs in, my arms behind me so I could lean back.

"Meh, it's ok. I like the trees," I shrugged and they all sat down.

"Where's Ivy?" Blue questioned, looking over Jasper. He shrugged and turned his head slightly, footsteps nearing us. It was the blonde girl. Her golden hair swished as she walked towards us and she folded her skirt as she plopped down between Blue and I.

"Hola, amigos," she grinned and stared at me, obviously waiting for an introduction.

"Tom," I beamed, extending my arm.

"Ivy," she confirmed, shaking my hand. Jasper blew a raspberry and got up. The soothing draft made his raven-dark hair swoosh slightly, revealing his royal-blue eyes.

"Let's leave the girls and go play," he suggested, crossing his arms. Kennie nodded and stood up, both of them awaiting my answer.

"Uh..." I exhaled, looking at Blue. She smiled and tilted her head, gesturing me to go. "You *sure?*"

Stop 'Loving' Me

"Go, Tom-Tom," she giggled, planting a kiss on my cheek, causing Ivy to squirm under us. Reassured, I leaped up and dashed after the boys. It felt amazing; speeding through the playground, having a best friend like Blue...and now, friends of my own sex. I'd never had any one else, other than Mr Schnoogly.

"Tag, you're it!" yelled Kennie, poking my arm. I laughed and chased after him and Jasper. I pushed one of them lightly, and it was now the other way around. I was racing away from Jasper, Kennie by my side when we both smacked into a something big.

"Watch it, dweeb!"

Or someone.

"Oops, sorry!" I exclaimed, stepping back to see the boy looking down at me. There were two others standing on either side of him.

"*Eighth graders!*" someone bawled, and everyone either fled the scene or just stepped back.

"I thought this was an *elementary* school!" I hissed at Jasper.

"There's a middle school right next to us. The high school's on the other side of the park," he clarified, oddly calm - compared to the rest of the school.

"Whispering doesn't mean we can't *hear* you!" the eighth grader in the middle sneered.

"Ok. Good for you...?" I replied half-jokingly. He bared his teeth and cracked his knuckles, preparing to punch me. I rolled my eyes and stood my ground.

"Seriously? *Really?*" I moaned, pulling up my sleeves.

"Yeah, seriously. You don't mess with Rory!" he snarled. The other boys nodded, shouting 'yeah' in unison.

"This is Teagen and Owen, and we're going to knock your teeth in," he added, pointing to one as he said each name.

"Don't you mean *out?*" I scoffed. Owen threw a punch, but I dodged it and did it again when Teagen flung a fist. I sidestepped Rory as he pounced at me. He fell to the floor, and I simply placed my foot on his back.

"I win," I smirked, before turning around and walking away. Kennie and Jasper caught up, high-fiving me.

"Tom, that was *awesome!*" Jasper exclaimed.

"Yeah, dude, that was *well* cool!" Kennie agreed.

"Not *really*. All I did was put my foot on him," I giggled, but they shook their heads.

"Nu-uh! Tom, you dodged them! That takes skill," he protested. I smiled at myself.

"I saw that in class too! How you moved out of the way just before the book hit you. You are *fast*," Jasper praised, and I felt a wave of excitement, happiness and self-worth. Kennie snapped a large cookie into three pieces, and handed us one each.

Stop 'Loving' Me

"Thanks, Kennie," Jasper graced.

"Yeah, thanks, Kennie," I smiled, and he winked.

"What are friends for?" he grinned, and took a bite of his piece. We walked back to class, chatting about Spongebob, Fairy odd parents and Ed Edd 'n' Eddy.

"I hate TV people, they got rid of all the *good* shows!" I moaned.

"Yeah, have you seen that show 'Adventure Time'? What a *waste* of time!" Kennie scoffed and we guffawed.

"What happened to all the good shows, like Samurai Jack, Tom and Jerry, Cow and Chicken, Johnny Bravo, the list goes on!" Jasper added. Kennie and I agreed, nodding our heads rapidly.

"Yes, yes, yes! I loved those shows!" I admitted excitedly.

"Remember 'Courage the Cowardly Dog'?" he asked. Kennie and I gasped in unison.

"That was my favourite show!" we both squealed, laughing after we'd said it. Entering the classroom, we took our bags and jackets, and left for A15.

"Sit next to you guys?" I proposed, desperately hoping they'd accept.

"Well, duh," Jasper laughed as we breezed into the new room. Kennie led us to the back row, near the corner. The tables were in twos; two at the right, two in the middle and two at the left. It went like that until it reached the front of the room, stopping a few feet from the teacher's desk. I plopped down in the left aisle seat, Jasper next to me. Kennie took the seat across from us, which was still only an arm's length or so away.

"Don't let *Danny* sit there," Jasper warned.

"Why not?" I asked, curious.

"He eats *glue*," Kennie whispered, as the very person we were speaking of entered the room.

"Hey, guys!" Danny greeted, moving towards us. Kennie threw a leg over the seat, whilst Jasper and I stifled our laughs.

"Sorry, taken," Kennie lied. Danny crossed his arms and pouted, tapping his foot. Just as he was about to try again, Jake walked in.

"Jake, you're sitting here!" Kennie urged. Jake froze, then shrugged and sat down next to him.

"No fair!" whined Danny, sulking off. He slumped down at the front, away from the rest of us, and reached into his bag, taking out a tub of gooey-glue. The rest of the class rushed in as the bell rang, and everyone took their seats. Blue and Ivy sat on the seats across from Jasper.

"Hi, hi!" Blue beamed, waving at us, just a second longer at me.

"Hello, class. It has been brought to my attention that we have a new student?" sang a young teacher as she danced in gracefully. "Thomas McPhur?"

Stop 'Loving' Me

"Tom," I corrected, yet again.

"Hello, Tom! I'm Miss Loretta, your music teacher," she spoke softly.

"I like to get on with things, so if you don't mind, let's sing!" she announced, her arms dramatically high above her. Ivy and I handed out the the tambourines, Blue and Kennie dispensed the maracas whilst Jake and Peggy disseminated the xylophones and mini keyboards.

"I overheard some of you talking about old shows," she broadcasted, silencing the room. Jasper, Kennie and I exchanged some nervous glances and cringed. "And I got an idea!"

She started smacking her tambourine rhythmically and humming a tune. I caught on and started shaking my maracas. Jasper and Kennie tuned in with another small drum and a keyboard.

"You take the moon and you take the sun!" Miss Loretta sang beautifully.

"You take everything that seems like fun!" the boys and I chanted.

"You stir it up and then it's done!" Blue and Ivy continued.

"Rada rada rada! Rada rada rada!" Jake warbled, and we all laughed.

"So come on in, feel free to do some lookin' and stay a while 'cause something's always cookin'!" the whole class sang. We continued with the song but were interrupted shortly after by a woman in a ivory caccon skirt-suit. She wore a black bow-hat over her tight side-bun and black, kitten-heel pumps.

http://www.polyvore.com/mrs_kingsley/set?id=46130912

She looked far more formal than our teacher dressed in a halterneck, polka-dot dress and cream pumps. Miss Loretta's lips were a baby-pink colour and her short, brown hair curled up under her chin...she looked *so* much better.

http://www.polyvore.com/miss_loretta/set?id=46131603

"Hello, young ones," she spoke, her pot-rouge lips moving fluently.

"Hello, Mrs Kingsley," the class mumbled.

"What an underwhelming display of enthusiasm," she scolded. Blue rolled her eyes, and Jasper fake-yawned.

"I'm here to let this class know, ach and every one of you must prepare a talk about your hero," she said proudly. "It can be anyone. Mom, Dad, Nan."

My heart stopped for a good few seconds.

"Hey, you ok? You're paper-white, man," Kennie whispered. I gulped and nodded slightly. I looked over at Blue, and she too had gone pale. She caught me staring and smiled weakly. I mouthed '*we need to talk*' and she nodded.

"Is there something you'd like to *say*, young man?" Mrs Kingsley questioned. I shook my head and she frowned, eyeing me. "*Good.*"

Stop 'Loving' Me

"Miss Lauren-

"*Loretta*," our teacher snapped.

"Miss *Loretta* will hand out the template sheet," she gritted. "I leave you to do so. Goodbye, young ones."

"Goodbye, Mrs Kingsley," the class mumbled once more. Miss Loretta gave each of us a booklet and the template sheet, snatching the glue from Danny when she passed him.

"She's such a witch," she laughed, and we all joined in. "Alright, you may discuss with your friends."

Blue bolted to me and grabbed my arm, pulling me to a corner. We sat down, making sure no one saw or heard us, and leaned closer to each other.

"Tom...I have a secret," she murmured, her breath tickling my skin.

"Me t-

"No, you don't understand. Mine isn't just any-

"Blue, you have no idea what I go through," I snapped.

"Don't even go there! *You* have no idea what *I* go through," she growled. The door swung open and a tall, dark-haired man wearing an expensive-looking navy-blue suit entered.

"J-Jacob?" I gasped.

Chapter 14: Let's Run Away Together!

Jacob walked in, and the room fell deadly silent.

"Mr McPhur, what an honour!" Miss Loretta squeaked, fiddling with her fingers; unsure what to do. Jacob extended his arm and she shook it, obviously relieved.

"The pleasure is all mine," he purred. Sly bastard.

Oops!

"I'm here to talk to my son," he announced, and she pointed in my direction. My pulse raced and I shuffled back.

"Blue, don't let him take me," I whispered and she grasped my hand tight, nodding once. My father beckoned me with his finger and I marched to him, holding Blue close to me.

"Dad," I forced myself to say.

"Hey, kiddo," he laughed, acting like the world's greatest dad.

Over my dead body!

"You wanted to see me?" I asked, trying to stay calm. He nodded and tilted his head towards the door. I walked out of the classroom, Blue still by my side, and waited for him.

"I'm sorry, Blue, this is something Tom and I have to talk about *alone*," Jacob informed her.

"But-"

"Please go back to class," he broke her off. Blue dropped her head and let go of my hand, sulking back inside.

"I'll be *right* here," she assured, closing the door. I frowned at my father and crossed my arms.

"I got a phone call saying you'd been in a fight," he growled.

"I didn't do anything," I snarled, immediately feeling his hand across my face.

"Don't you talk to me like that, you stupid boy!" he barked, grabbing my ear and dragging me to the janitor's closet. He shoved me in and got inside.

"You won't make a fool of me. If you do, I'll tear your little *bear* to fucking pieces, got it?" he threatened.

"That's impossible. I can't top the embarrassment you already cause," I sneered and this time, he grabbed my head and smacked it against the shelf. I yelped and fell to the floor, clutching my hair.

"Who were they?" he demanded. I shrugged and felt his fist pound my hands, trying to get to my face.

"I don't know!" I screamed. Someone knocked on the door and wiggled the handle hard.

Stop 'Loving' Me

"Mr McPhur? Is everything OK in there?" Miss Loretta questioned.

"Tom-Tom? What's going on in there!?" Blue shrieked.

"You were crying coz some boys hurt you," Jacob hissed. I nodded and sniffed back the tears, my head still tucked in my arms. He opened the door and smiled at my teacher.

"Some boys were bullying him. We had a chat, but he's still a bit sad," he murmured in her ear. Miss Loretta peaked in and I nodded.

"You're a great man," she sighed, closing the door but not before Blue got in, leaving us to talk freely.

"Rory, Teagan and Owen are meanies," Blue mumbled, stroking my hair, trying to comfort me.

"He lied," I sniffed. "He hurt me."

"Who, Owen?"

"No, Jacob! He beats me up, Blue!" I blubbered. Blue froze and the colour drained from her face. Suddenly, she buried herself in my arms and wept hard. I caressed her back, I too crying like a baby. After a while, she stopped and looked up. I burst out in laughter and she soon did too.

"Why are you laughing?" she giggled, wiping the tears from her eyes.

"I don't know. Why are you crying?" I snickered. The smile faded from her face.

"Tom, my mom beats me up too," she whimpered, and started to cry again. I hugged her tightly and kissed her head. This was too much for me - acting older than I was. The other nine year olds were in class, playing and having fun whilst we were here, crying and talking about serious problems which happens to millions of kids around the world! One in three daily. Yet, here were TWO of us - daily abused.

I told her. I let out everything I'd ever kept buried in my mind and more, she did the same. She told me how her dad was murdered, how her mom didn't let her sleep in the house and that her mom's boyfriend was coming home in a month - he was going to kill her. And, in return, I told her how Jacob beat me senseless, how Allie didn't do anything to stop him, how he'd almost killed me exactly ninety-eight times and that he was sending me to military school.

"I don't wanna die," she croaked, tears trickling down her crimson cheeks. Just then, my heart shattered. Could nine year olds fall in love?

I certainly had.

"I won't let you," I assured, as she stared into my sky-blue eyes.

"How?" she asked, hope visible on her face.

"We'll run away," I declared. "Together."

"You really mean it?"

Stop 'Loving' Me

"Yes, I do," I promised, not at all hesitant. A wide grin spread across her face and she pressed her soft lips on my tear-stained cheeks.

"Good," she sighed, sitting in between my legs and relaxing against me.

"Maybe Jasper and Kennie can help," I suggested. She stiffened and shook her head fiercely.

"We can't trust anyone! My mom has moles *all* over town," she warned.

"But...they're our *friends*," I mumbled.

"I know, but their parents could be friends with my *mom!*"

"Ok, then," I muttered. She looked up and smiled apologetically.

"Sorry, Tom-Tom. But think of it this way; once we're free, we'll be able to make friends that'll last *forever*," she breathed.

"That would be nice," I murmured, imagining a life without Jacob and Allie. Just Blue, Mr Schnoogly and I. A life free of pain and suffering - only love and friendship.

"Let's do it."

Chapter 15: First Step towards Liberty

Blue's POV:

The day seemed to have passed joyfully quickly after Tom and I's decision. My heart fluttered incessantly as I skipped down the Hallway. Tom walked out of the boy's room ahead of me and his face lit up when he noticed me. I waved and we ran to each other, chatting about his first day as we walked home together.

"Do you want to come over?" he asked, grinning. I looked down and shook my head.

"I've got chores," I mumbled.

"What does that *really* mean?"

"I've got to clean the house before mom gets back from drug shopping," I revealed.

"My dad's a dealer. Everyone thinks he's a *su-suckfestful* pharmacist though," Tom shrugged.

"Tom, silly, it's *successful*. Anyway, haven't they seen your house?"

"He tells them his dad was wealthy and passed the money down to him."

"That's pretty believable," I sighed. As we reached our homes, we parted and entered the hell which awaited us both. We exchange goodbyes and I shut the door behind me. Running to the changing room, I swapped my school clothes with a short, brown poofy dress and a stained apron. I swiftly brushed my hair and tied it into a high bun which left two, long strips of hair dangling on either side of my face. The sun had easily lightened my hair, leaving it a light brown -almost dirty blonde- colour. I pulled off my converse and replaced them with little black shoes which always left me with blisters, even through the socks. After tidying the room, I grabbed all the cleaning supplies from the closet beneath the stairs and began my "chores".

I scrubbed every corner of the house, as miserably as Cinderella before the wave of a wand. Ever hour or so, I scribble down city names Tom and I could escape to, and buried it in my socks. I heard the door open and shut, followed by the stomp of mom's feet. She marched in and before I could acknowledge her intentions, slapped me hard across the face. I pressed a hand to my stinging cheek and looked up at her in fear and confusion.

"Jacob called. He said you interrupted a father and son chat," she hissed.

"I just wanted to make sure Tom was okay," I replied, looking down.

"Don't blow this for me, you little bitch!" she barked and pulled off her flats, thrashing me with them until I was covered in red marks. Still, I remained silent - not a cry for help or a whimper of pain escaped my lips. Although nearly impossible, keeping quiet was all I had against her. She wanted me to fight, to howl in pain - I would not give her that satisfaction. After a half hour or so, the beating drew to an end and she slapped her shoes together in order to get rid of the "dirt", *me*.

"I'm gonna have real fun with you when Joel gets here," she smirked, skipping up the stairs. I picked myself up slowly and forced myself to finish what I'd started.

"Soon, Blue, soon," I reassured myself, failing to lift the sponge from the basin. I had to get out of here before

Stop 'Loving' Me

Joel returned. Even his name brought back dark, painful memories. I quickly brushed those thoughts - along with a few tears - off.

Once the house was spotless and gleaming from every angle, mom came down. She surveyed each room, making sure I hadn't missed anything. After evaluating, she found herself pleased with my work. Grabbing her purse, she pulled out *ten* dollars!

"The extra five is for finding someone with a rich dad," she grinned. I nodded and took the money, walking to the changing room. Peeking out the window, I could see the sun setting. It sunk from the sky and into the trees, leaving behind a dark, starless sky. It must've been around 8pm - nearly two hours until moonrise. After changing into my faded, aqua track suit, I washed my face and closed the chest containing the rest of my clothes. I left the house with my school stuff and walked to the nearest food store, buying enough food to last me a week or two. A real feast, to say the least. I trudged down the street, counting the lamp posts which flickered. 10, 11, 12...a black, slim figure stood at the end of the lane. It strutted closer and I held my breath. As it drew nearer, I forced myself to walk faster and ignore the threat before me. I exhaled once the dim lights exposed a beautiful young woman dressed in a short, red dress and a thin, black coat. Her dark hair was tied into a perfect bun, locks of curled hair dangling at the sides and her heels clicked softly against the sidewalk. She smiled graciously as she walked past and I stared at her, missing the deep crack on the ground. I tripped and fell on my knees, luckily not tearing the bags of grocery but dropping a few items. The woman looked back and awkwardly ran to me.

"Hey, there, you okay?" she asked, her voice smooth as honey and sweet as candy floss. I tittered and nodded, clasping the hand she held out. She helped me up and picked up the can of beef soup.

"Here," she smiled, handing it to me. I took it and thanked her, before walking away silently and disappearing into the dark.

"Be careful, now!" she called after me and I smiled to myself. Why? No idea. Once in Heaven, I put away all the food and pulled out the notes I'd stashed and straightened them. Looking through them, I picked out the top five, then three and finally circled Tom and I's best option. All we needed to do now was save up enough money to get one way bus tickets, food and water to keep us alive, a place to stay and complete make overs. We also needed new identities so that our parents wouldn't find us and birth certificates so that we could enrol in a new school. Needless to say, this wasn't going to be easy at all. But it needed to be done - and fast!

"Here goes everything," I sighed and dropped fifty cents, a quarter and a nickel in a huge jar. The first step towards liberty. Hopefully.

"No, definitely," I sighed, tucking myself into my cosy bed.

"Definetely," dad's voice in my head repeated as I fell into a dreamless sleep.

Definetely.

Stop 'Loving' Me

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