

H I H

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Chapter Two

*When I was born, they looked at me and said,
"What a good boy, what a smart boy, what a strong boy."
And when you were born, they looked at you and said,
"What a good girl, what a what a smart girl, what a pretty girl."*

*We've got these chains that hang around our necks
people want to strangle us with them before we take our first breath.
Afraid of change, afraid of staying the same,
when temptation calls, we just look away.*

*This name is the hairshirt I wear
and this hairshirt is woven from your brown hair.
This song is the cross that I bear,
bear it with me, bear with me, bear with me, be with me tonight,
I know that it isn't right, but be with me tonight.*

*I go to school, I write exams,
if I pass, if I fail, if I drop out,
does anyone give a damn?
And if they do, they'll soon forget 'cause it won't take much for me
to show my life ain't over yet.
I wake up scared, I wake up strange.
I wake up wondering if anything in my life is ever going to change.
I wake up scared, I wake up strange
and everything around me stays the same.*

- What a Good Boy, by the Barenaked Ladies

On his first day of 4 year old Kindergarten, Alexander had been really scared.

“Why do I have to go Daddy?” Alexander looked up to his father, holding onto his leg tightly.

His daddy crouched down, taking his son into a big hug. “It’s only for a few hours, Alexander. You’ll meet all sorts of nice people, and make some new friends.”

Just beyond the sidewalk was the play area where all the other 4 and 5 year olds were playing. Daddy soothed Alexander as he continued to be frightened. “Do you want me to take you to meet Mrs. Little? She’s really nice, I’m sure you’ll like her.”

Taking Alexander’s hand, Daddy brought him up to the teacher. “He’s really scared for his first day. I’m sure he’ll be fine.”

A little boy came over to Mrs. Little’s side. “Mrs. Little, who’s this?” Of course, Mrs. Little was forgotten before she could even answer, and the boy stepped up to Alexander. “I’m Peter, do you wanna play?”

Alexander let go of his dad’s hand, and looked up for approval. He nodded, and Alexander was running with Peter towards the playground. “Seems he got over his fear pretty fast” his dad commented to Mrs. Little.

I listened to Mr. Fielding’s normal morning announcements, while in my little daydream. But soon the announcements were over, and I still wasn’t paying attention. I was lost in thought about my first day in kindergarten. I’m closest with my Dad. I love him to pieces, but I only get to see him once a month. I really wish that was different. Peter and I have had many discussions on the subject, but with no resolutions.

My Dad had visited last week, my Father comes to see me next week. They’re in the family business, but so far it seems to be interplanetary commerce or something. They said I’ll find out when I’m 21 or done University, or both. Who knows, maybe they’ll find an excuse to prolong my torture.

“Alexander! I asked you what you thought the role that Lady Macbeth played in the play you were supposed to be reading for homework this week.” Mrs. Theophilus my English teacher said.

“Uh... well... you see...” I started to say. I had read the play, my mind is just preoccupied. I do have this bad habit of daydreaming in class, and have been caught.

“Don’t bother, Alexander. See me after class, and don’t forget to report to detention later.” The teacher moved on with the class, asking the same question of another student.

“So what are you in for?” this girl sitting next to me asked. She had strawberry blond hair that went down to her shoulders, but other than that she was pretty plain. Nothing especially exciting about her, nothing that made her stand out.

I looked over at her and made eye contact. “I was daydreaming in English. To my defense, I didn't realize the announcements were over after *O Canada*.”

The girl just nodded a little, her hair flapping with the little bit of air movement in the detention room. “Seems to be a rising problem. There's a few other people in here for that same reason.”

“So what are you in for?” I evaluate this girl, I'm not really sure why she's talking to me. Perhaps she's bored? She didn't take out any homework, she's just doodling on a piece of paper or something like that.

“I was caught kissing my boyfriend on school grounds.” The girl replied, having returned her attention to her doodling shortly after I made eye contact.

I just looked at her for a moment. “I didn't realize you could get in trouble for kissing someone on school grounds.” I turned my eyes back to my math homework.

“School board policy. No public displays of affection. It's their homophobic response. They don't want gays and lesbians kissing, but they'll get sued if they let heterosexuals do it and not gays and lesbians.”

I just gave a small nod, writing down an answer to the problem I was working on. “Makes sense. I'd rather have all forms of displays of affection, but if they want to be heavy-handed, they can be my guest.”

She looked over at me for a moment, “Don't get me wrong, I'm not homophobic. My boyfriend is bisexual. I just think they should allow all PDA's instead of banning them.”

“Who is your boyfriend?” I idly asked, working on the next math problem. This girl is really boring to be honest, and my math is more exciting than she is. I really didn't want to get into an in-depth discussion of the school board's policy on public displays of affection because she couldn't adhere to it.

She kept silent for a few moments, still doodling. “I can't tell you that. He's not 'out' as you might say.”

“I'm surprised he told you. Most bisexual guys would never think of telling their girlfriends that they're bisexual.” This was a general stereotype, but it was pretty apt. Being bisexual usually meant you could hide it if you were with a girl. So either she caught him, or he wanted something involving another guy.

That's my guess, anyway.

She kept doodling. I wondered if she had ever taken an art class, I wondered if she could do abstract art. She might be good at it. "He said he wanted to have an honest relationship from the start. He's not a typical male."

"Apparently" was all I could think to say.

Me and Peter were deep in a passionate kiss. The door to my bedroom was closed, and while clothed, the two of us were very passionate in each other's embrace. Finally I decided to break the kiss, coming up for air.

Peter sighed a little, watching my brilliant green eyes. "You know, I'm going to miss you an awful lot while you go away to University."

I looked at Peter plainly for a few moments. "Dude, I'm going to the University of Toronto. While I won't be living at home, I can come home whenever I want. You won't be that far away. Besides, didn't you say you got into York University?"

Peter nodded a little. "Yeah, they took me into the environmental studies program. I'm just afraid we'll never see each other."

"Fat chance of that happening, Peter." I said impassionately. "I was going to wait to tell you, but my Dad insisted that I had to live off campus. Mumbled something about corporate security. So he's buying a house. While he thinks you're only my best friend, he said if you wanted to, you could live there too. But we have to let Sophia visit on occasion. He wants her to have some freedom under her feet sometimes."

Peter looked excited. "Really? We can even share a bed!"

I wanted to be a little more down to earth. "Yes, but when Sophia visits, she's only 16. She may be dating your brother, but we can't let on that we're gay. You know we could get in trouble."

"I don't see how. You have two gay Dads. I don't know why we cannot tell them, Alexander." Peter said, frankly.

"That's the problem. They'll probably tease the hell out of me. You know what my Dad is like. I love him to death, but he'd never let me hear the end of it, and your Dad would give you the boot."

I was walking around a little. It was just after midnight, and I couldn't sleep. I was restless in bed. My parents and grandparents gave me liberty to take walks when I needed to. I was going to soon be 18.

I stopped outside the temple. My parents had taken me to a service at the Imperial temple every week when they were around. My grandparents took me on occasion. It was one of a few branches of the Order of the Yellow Rose. I never really understood who the Yellow Rose monks were, or why they were so important.

The temple was always open. Imperial Security had a visible presence, keeping it and the monks safe. I made my way in, sitting on a bench by the big fire. The big fire, almost like a bonfire, was in the middle of the rotunda. It was meant for reflection and discovery. I didn't notice one of the monks coming over and sitting next to me. The monk was quiet, also gazing at the fire.

I sighed. My thoughts were on Peter, Peter's parents, my own parents, going to University, and the whole nine yards. The stress was starting to show. My Dad was going to be in town in a few days to go to... parent-teacher interviews. At 17, my Dad still went to them with me.

"My father once told me that for there to be total trust, you had to be honest with yourself." The monk quietly said. He was about 10 years older than me, but I knew him. He was sort of cute too. I talked to him weekly for the last 5 years, since just after he'd become a monk.

"Josh, why... why can't I tell my parents I'm gay? I told Peter that it was because of the facade I had always put on for them." I sighed.

Brother Josh put his hand on my shoulder. "Your Dad and your Father always told you they wanted the best for you. How much they loved you. I see it when you're with them, Alexander. They love you so very much. You're probably just as scared as a boy who has straight parents. You're afraid they'll reject you."

"Sister Clara told me last month that I needed to accept myself before they could accept me."

"Are you uncomfortable with being gay, Alexander?" Brother Josh asked pointedly.

"Yes" I replied, a little unsure of my conviction.

"Are you comfortable with being gay around other people?"

"No."

"Now tonight for homework, I want you to read all of chapter 8. There will be a quiz on it on Monday." Ms. Laframboise said. I got a B+ on my mid-semester report card for this class, and my Dad *insisted* he had to meet with Ms. Laframboise.

I got up from my chair, and caught up to Susan. "So what are we having for lunch?" Tradition for the two of us had Susan picking out lunch when we got to the cafeteria line, and I just agreed to eat whatever she picked. Susan, like my Dad, is a vegetarian, and refuses to eat meat, or sit with anyone eating meat.

“The quiche surprise.” Susan replied. The quiche surprise was never really a surprise, that was the joke. It was always spinach quiche, when quiche was served. It was usually the only vegetarian dish offered.

“Hey, do you wanna come over for dinner?” I asked as the two of us ate lunch.

Susan just looked at me funny for a few moments. “Do I have stupid written all over my face?”

“Relax, my Dad’s coming home just before dinner. He’s a vegetarian too. So you won’t have to eat meat. Grandma won’t even make it with him around.” I said matter-of-factly.

“How is it” Susan started to muse, “that you share your Dad’s last name, but you don’t even know your father’s last name?”

I shrugged. “He’s not human? I always assumed that he didn’t have one.”

Susan just shook her head. “Have you even met your relatives on his side of the family?”

I shook his head. “No, but supposedly I have an Aunt in Boston.”

“It’s all quite mysterious. If you allow your imagination to wander, we could even pretend that you’re royalty. A handsome, dashing prince with his love in his arm, dancing across the marble ballroom floor.” Susan sighed a little, eating some of her food.

“DON’T SAY THAT!” I started to object. “It would be horrible to be a prince. Look at the British monarchy.”

“Yes, well it’s not like you know what your family business is.” Susan giggled.

“Grandma said that father told dad he was in the family business when they first met. Something to do with interplanetary commerce.”

“I’m sure he did.”

The principal, Mr. Fielding came over to the table that Susan and I were at. “Mr. Bezner, we have a cab waiting outside for you” he said tactfully.

I looked up to Mr. Fielding, “Why would I need a cab?”

“Your sister Sophia was taken to the hospital. I was told your dad would be there soon as well. He asked us to send you over in a cab.” Mr. Fielding explained.

I looked a little shocked, and Susan put a reassuring hand on my shoulder. “Of course.” I grabbed my book-bag. “I’ll see you later, Susan. I’ll call you if dinner is still on.” I rushed up the stairs to the main level, and then to the waiting cab.