
The background of the image is a landscape photograph. The foreground is a field of tall, golden-brown grasses. In the middle ground, there is a line of dark trees. The sky is filled with soft, grey clouds, with a bright spot where the sun is partially obscured, creating a lens flare effect.

# Theater of Dreams

A. M. Sherif

The background of the cover is a landscape photograph. The foreground is a lush green field with some texture. In the middle ground, there is a dark line of trees. The sky is filled with dramatic, layered clouds in shades of purple, pink, and grey, suggesting a sunset or sunrise.

# Theater of Dreams

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*A. M. Sherif*

This is to tell you that I'll never forget you. You were and will always be the best friend I ever had in my entire life. Rest in peace buddy.

*The sun would have been another useless unrecognized firing ball of gases floating randomly on the endless emptiness of the dead space. But the small planets revolving around it were what made it a Sun, and the tiny full-of-life blue-green planet called Earth was what added the word "The" to its name.*

## ***Preface: Meet Elvis***

Don't worry.

You can do it.

"Elvis! What are you waiting for?"

"Coming mom, just give me a moment."

Put yourself together.

It'll be fine. It'll be just perfect.

“ELVIS!”

“On my way.”

Trust yourself. If all of them can do it, then I can do it as well.

“I'm ready.”

Wow! The beautiful smile that always gave me power to keep going, and the gentle caress that always made me feel safe.

“Make me proud, son.”

“I'll do my best, I promise.”

Take a deep breath.

Now go.

Hmm... my name is Elvis. No, I wasn't named after Elvis Presley; it was my friend Robert who chose the name. Gladly, I'll be your narrator. I promise that I'll do my best to give you a complete picture of everything happening around. I'll use all of my abilities and skills to make you feel as if you were really there. I'll keep you entertained, help my friend Robert through his new life, and make my mom and dad proud of me.

“Elvis, my baby!”

“Mom, please don't cry. I'm online.”

“Oh! Sorry honey, go get them!”

Umm... I promise that I'll do my best to give you a complete picture of everything happening around...

“Honey, you already said that.”

“Did I?”

“Yes.”

“No! I'm ruining it! I knew I'll waste my chance! I...”

“Baby, calm down.”

“What should I do? What should I say? Please help me!”

“Tell them who you are, sweetheart.”

“Yes! Thanks mom. You are the best!”

“Go for it baby. And remember, I'll always be here for you.”

Ok, I'm back. I'm Elvis... the parrot. I'm Robert's pet bird and best friend. I'll be...

"Honey, tell the truth."

"Ok-ay."

I'm Elvis... the parrot. I WAS Robert's pet bird and best friend. I died five years ago, leaving him to suffer alone. But... I made a promise, and I intend to keep it. That's why I'm here; to keep my word. I promised him that I'll always be around every time he needs me. I promised him that we'll be friends forever, and nothing would ever separate us... even death. And I'll do my best to help him get into his new life and finally have his long-awaited happiness, even if it'll cost me my life.

"Honey, you're already dead."

"Mom, you are not helping."

"Sorry son, keep going."

I'm here now at his new house waiting with his family that gathered downstairs for his arrival. He'll be here at any moment, and I'm completely ready for it.

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## ***A New Morning: The Arrival***

*Some minutes passed.*

Wait... I can see a car approaching. It pulled over and... YES! He is here! Arriving with that mysterious lawyer, Mr. Johnson, the one who started all of this from the beginning.

They headed to the house, climbed some stairs towards the porch, and walked slowly towards the main door. Suddenly, Robert, who didn't seem very comfortable, stood still. Mr. Johnson stopped and spun around to face him. Robert stared for a while at Mr. Johnson's confused face, before finally talking.

"I... don't know... if I can do this," he mumbled.

Mr. Johnson sighed and took two steps towards him, gently put his hand on Robert's shoulder, and drew a warm smile on his lips.

He looked him in the eyes and murmured calmly, "We spent years waiting for this to come. You can't quit now."

His smile grew bigger, making Robert a shade calmer and convinced. However, he was still too scared to blink or even swallow. His snatching eyes kept scrutinizing Mr. Johnson's smiley face, and his shaking lips kept hardly trying to utter some words. Finally, they succeeded... sort of.

"I... just..." he said with a flat voice.

Mr. Johnson interrupted him; touching his other shoulder and using the strong full-of-confidence look to reinforce his steady voice, "You will do great. Trust me." He paused, moved closer to Robert while squeezing his shoulders and trying to give him some strength. "This is your family," he added, saying every single word separately and calmly, waiting for a moment between each of them, giving Robert time to grasp their meaning.

Robert finally swallowed, hardly.

Mr. Johnson went on, "And guess what? It is a good family as well." He paused for a moment. "They will accept you and love you." He stopped again, noticed that his smile faded away, and rapidly twisted his lips, bringing the wide smile back. "Now go. Meet your family. The family that you deserve," he added calmly.

Robert nodded once, grudgingly, completely convinced now. Mr. Johnson rubbed his shoulders again, and then let go of him, giving him a chance to walk towards the main door. When he noticed that Robert didn't move, he pushed him gently, whispering some words into his ear, "Go..."

Robert sighed and started to walk. When he reached the mid point, Mr. Johnson's voice stopped him.

"Hey, Robert!"

Robert turned to him; his pale face didn't change too much.

"Make me proud in there," he beamed.

Robert needed some moments before finally approving by nodding once. Mr. Johnson strode to him, wrapped his left arm around his back, and walked him to the door. Once they reached it, he rang the bell without any hesitation. And a moment later, the door opened.

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"Welcome!"

A beautiful lady exclaimed after opening the door. She has an average body, silky brownish short hair that rested on her shoulders, brown eyes with nothing special about, pale white skin with some freckles on her cheeks, and a big always-smiling mouth. She is wearing a simple long dress which successfully kept track with the simplicity of her features. Once she put her eyes on Robert, she gasped with glee and hugged him tightly. However, he didn't hug back.

*(Who is this lady? Why does she hug me like this? Maybe we are relatives? Let's just wait and see.)*

I wish I could enter his mind and read his thoughts, but for my bad luck, birds can't do this. The kind lady kept hugging him tightly for some moments, and when she noticed how stunned he was, she moved him a little away from her, while keeping her arms around his neck.

"Sorry, I just can't believe you are really here."

She sighed, trying to put herself together and overcome the great excitement in her voice. Then, she kept going with a steadier voice, "I'm Marie, your aunt!"

*(Ok, a nice lady who is my aunt; this is actually a good start.)*

Her eyes were fixed at him, waiting for him to say something, which finally happened after some moments of silence.

“Aunt Marie?” This came out flat and emotionless.

Mr. Johnson joined the conversation. “Yes, Aunt Marie; your father’s sister,” he explained. Aunt Marie smiled, reinforcing Mr. Johnson words.

Robert put a fake smile on his face while stunningly staring at her.

She put her arm around his shoulders. “Let’s go inside; they are eagerly waiting for you!” Her voice was still very excited, just like how she was.

Robert hesitantly walked with her after glancing anxiously at Mr. Johnson who nodded once, encouraging him to go. I know him more than any other person on the whole universe; he was absolutely shaking with fear.

*(Keep yourself together. Don’t panic. Breathe, breathe. We can do it, we absolutely can.)*

The moment he entered the house, the worse the situation became. His feet nailed to the ground while all the eyes were fixed at him. The beads of sweat started to pour out of his skin, and after some moments, he was sinking on his own sweat. He hardly swallowed, while his scared eyes were jumping rapidly between the faces without being able to recognize even a single one.

Aunt Marie broke the silence.

“Everybody, this is Robert!”

Her yell caused some humming in the room. She noticed that all of them waited to hear more, but struggled to keep going. I guess she didn’t know what more to say about him; he was completely unknown for her and for everyone else on this hall.

She decided to step back and let him talk. Robert’s eyes widened in fear the same moment he figured out that everyone in the room was waiting to hear him talking. He needed some moments to put himself together, and then started to talk.

“Uh... umm...”

Exactly as I expected.

Suddenly, something caught his eyes. He squinted and stared at a certain target. From above, in where I was standing, I couldn’t see what attracted him that much. So, I moved and repositioned myself to be just above his shoulders. And yes! I had a perfect view of the scene he was seeing. It was a girl, hiding, and holding a big white drawing sheet with something written on it. She raised it high so he would be able to read it. I wish I could tell you what was written, but you know... birds can’t read.

*(“Trust me, I can help you.” What the heck is this?)*

The girl moved the sheet away and lifted another one up. And again I couldn’t read it, but it attracted more of Robert’s attention.

*(“Read it loudly.” What does she mean?)*

The girl removed the sheet again and brought a third one. Robert gazed at it with more concentration. The curiosity was killing me there; I was dying to know what she wrote on these sheets.

*(“Start now.” What?!)*

She repeated the process again.



*“I’m very happy to be here.”*

His expression lightened.

*(Wait a moment! She is trying to help me! Thanks God!)*

He sighed.

*(Ok... All what you should do now is accurately following her instructions.)*

He took a deep breath.

Finally, he started to talk.

“I’m very happy to be here...” He paused. The girl raised another sheet. He kept going, “I’ve been waiting... for too long...” Again he paused, again she threw the sheet away and got another one, and again he kept going, “For this moment to come...”

The same happened again.

“And I will wait till...”

Again.

“All of you fall asleep...”

Same process.

“And I will kill you all.”

The Girl laughed loudly. Everybody gasped fearfully, and a scared and surprised expression was drawn on all of their faces. The humming increased, raising Robert’s tense, and making him notice what he has just said. He did his best to overcome the surprise and ease the situation.

“Umm... No... No, no, no... I meant...” He struggled. I wish I could help him, but there was nothing there I could do. The tense was above the sky. But suddenly, the smiling girl raised another sheet.

“Kiss... you... all...” he mumbled. He sighed with relief after grasping the meaning of what he has just said. “Yes! To kiss you all! It is absolutely ‘kiss’. Sorry... I was just too nervous.”

The girl kept laughing, and all of them sighed with relief. Robert glowered at her and his lips whispered some words.

*(I will kill you.)*

Whatever Robert has said, it made the hiding girl laugh louder. Then, she raised another sheet. Ok... getting myself a human language dictionary will be at the top of my to-do list, you have my word.

*(“You can... dream... of it.” Really? Just wait and see little girl, just wait and see.)*

Although I can’t tell you what she said and made Robert that angry, I can absolutely describe her for you. There was certainly something special about this girl. Her deep wide dark hazel eyes can cast a spell on you the moment you catch a sight of them, and force you to stare at them forever, unable to avert your eyes or even to blink. Her eyes were very clear, and this made her wide hazel irises appear darker than you may think they are brown. Her dark-blond below-shoulder hair that has some waves near the endings perfectly matched the dark hazel eyes, and completed the calmness of her light pink lips. The fair light tone of her pure clear skin made everything else look very alive and colorful, especially the eyes. She is

wearing a bright orange sleeveless T-shirt and simple jeans shorts. She is about 160 cm height and has an average body. I can't tell exactly how old she is, but from my experience with the humans, I believe she is thirteen or fourteen.

In addition to the cuteness and prettiness of this girl, the thing I liked the most about her was that since I put an eye on her, the smile never left her face. And this innocent smiley face made me feel very happy and relieved, and made me ready to face the life, while being completely sure that the light of her smile will lead me through its darkness.

The anger made Robert blind to see and feel what I was seeing and feeling. He threatened her with his angry firing eyes. The girl ran inside and left him standing. He wanted to follow, but Aunt Marie stopped him by grabbing his arm.

"Where are you going?" She wondered.

He answered without diverting his eyes from the direction in which the girl ran, "I... I..." He paused to think something out. "Yes, I need to go to the bathroom."

He didn't wait for her reply, released himself from her grasp, and dashed towards the hall entrance behind the gathered members of his family.

"It is at the end on the hall." She replied anyway, while the amazed expression was dominating on her face.

Robert moved towards the entrance. I'm a spirit, I didn't need the entrance to enter the hall; I flew directly and penetrated the wall. And being faster than the humans, I reached the hall before he does. I found the girl walking and glancing backward from time to time. Some moments later, Robert entered the hall. I was standing in between them. She glimpsed backward again to find him in front of her. His searching-for-her eyes caught hers.

"Oh-oh!"

"Here you are little devil!"

He gave her a fierce glare. She swallowed and started to run, and he followed immediately.

"There is no place to run!" he yelled.

"Leave me alone," she yelled back. From her voice I could tell that she wasn't scared, and instead she was having a huge fun. I dashed fast, bypassed her using my enormous speed, and positioned myself in front of her. My guess was correct; she was smiling.

She glanced backward again to find him getting closer.

"No!" She exclaimed and tried to accelerate. "Run girl. Run, run, run." She kept trying to encourage herself. Her excitement didn't ease, not even a little.

Her efforts weren't enough, he was almost there.

"Ha-ha! Get ready to pay little girl!" He threatened.

She stopped suddenly and turned around to face him, while keeping the confident smile on her face. He didn't see this coming, and neither did I. He tried to brake to avoid colliding with her, but he was absolutely heading to a great failure. The strange thing was how confident and steady the girl was standing, waiting for the massive collision to occur. A moment before he smacks into her, the girl surprised us again with another move. She dashed left, used her left hand to open a door that we didn't notice its existence, and entered the bathroom, while stretching her right leg to tackle my poor friend.

I believe you can easily imagine the rest.

She sneered at him. "By the way, I'm not little," she challenged.

He tried to get up fast and follow her inside, but she was faster than him and entered the room, locking the door behind her. Robert knocked at the door angrily.

"Open that door!" he yelled.

"Force me," she scoffed.

"OPEN THAT DOOR!" he roared. I did my best to make him notice that Aunt Marie has just entered the hall, but I failed.

"You... do really need... the bathroom, don't you?" she mumbled, completely surprised and shocked because of his loud yell and strong angry knocking. He turned to her and kept staring, unable to find an explanation for his act.

"There is another one upstairs, Ana will lead you."

The little girl who was standing near Aunt Marie, who I was completely sure from the beginning that the angry Robert won't even notice her presence, squinted and scowled at the lady. Aunt Marie ignored the girl's anger and gave her a kind look.

"Yes, she will show you the way up, right Ana?" She murmured calmly.

Ana sighed, with exasperation.

"Fine," she groaned.

She glanced at Robert, putting the grim expression on her face. "This way," she hissed.

Robert stood still, watching her walking towards the stairs.

She turned around after noticing that he wasn't following.

"Hello?" she sneered.

Robert stared for a moment at her strong eyes, and then finally began to move the moment her grimaced face forced him to do so. She turned around again and started to walk as soon as she noticed he became close enough to her to be able to keep track with her speed. They both started to climb the stairs, and so did I.

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Silence... silence... silence... and silence. I wish I was alive, and then I wish I was able to talk so I would break the never-ending silence. They kept climbing the stairs without even looking at each others. How boring!

*(Who is this girl? And why does she hate me that much? Maybe she is my sister? No idiot, she doesn't even look like you. So what? It isn't a rule that brothers and sisters look exactly like each others. What the hell am I doing? The girl is here next to me, I can easily ask her! Uh... finally you used your useless brain... idiot. You knowsomething? You really should stoop calling me idiot. Yep... sure idiot.)*

Finally, when they were about to reach the upper floor, Robert spoke.

“So... You are Ana?”

“Mm-hmm.”

“And you are my....?” He wondered, hesitantly.

“What do you mean?” The grim expression on her face didn't ease.

“I mean... we are relatives, aren't we?”

“How smart,” She scoffed with a low voice, shaking her head.

*(Wow! She really hates me! Ok little girl, another enemy then. Regardless, I need to try again. I need to know who she is.)*

After some moments of silence, Robert was the one to break it again.

“I mean... what is our family relation?”

She reached the upper floor before he does, stopped and turned around to face him. He was just behind her, with three stairs separating them; this made their faces almost at the same level. She sneered at him.

“If you have stayed and respected those who gathered especially to welcome you, you would have known our family relation,” she growled slowly with a calm voice, giving every word the space it deserves.

Robert pulled his eyebrows together in surprise.

*(What the hell was that? I need to defend myself!)*

“I needed to go to the bathroom,” he mumbled, lying, this was clear.

“You went chasing her; I saw what happened!” she growled with louder voice, blaming him.

“Great! Then you saw what she did to me?”

She replied instantly. “She was kidding!” She exclaimed. “And in this house, we don't kill people for kidding with each others,” she explained.

Robert's anger eased a little.

He sighed.

*(She is kinda right. I shouldn't have done this. Don't! Don't! Don't even think about apologizing! Do you hear me! DON'T!)*

“I'm sorry. I didn't mean to... I just...” he mumbled.

*(Oh-boy! You have just apologized idiot! I can't believe this! Howstupid and embarrassing!)*

Ana put her small hand on his shoulder. This made him shudder and glance surprisingly at the hand. He looked back at her eyes to find the angry face vanished and replaced by a full-of-tenderness one. She draw a small smile on her lips and talked, kindly.

“It's ok. I know how you feel. You will need some time to get to this new life. And till this happens, I want you to know that I'll always be on your side, and I'll help you through all of this.”

Robert was frozen on his place by her tender words. His eyes bulged while staring at her, unbelieving what he has just heard. Her words made him feel safe... And how would I know that? Simply because they made me feel safe, and I'm a dead bird! You can then easily imagine their effect on someone who has been alone since his born.

*(Wow! What a girl! I wish she is my little sister; this really would be great. Ok, I shall move her name now from the foes list to the friends list.)*

Oh! Oh my God! I can't believe I did this! I can't believe I didn't describe her for you yet! Ok... let me see... She is about nine years old, maybe ten. Average height and weight; same as most of the girls at her age. She has a light skin tone, dark brown below-shoulder pulled-pack ponytail hair, and brown eyes. Yes, I know this sounds like another ordinary little girl, and I can't argue about that. There is no specific thing in this girl that is unique or incomparable with the other girls. But the whole package is really unique and incomparable, especially when she speaks. The girl was wearing some jeans and a short-sleeves rose shirt. See? Nothing special, but the girl really made them look special.

She spoke again and saved both of us from sinking on our thoughts.

"Let's keep going."

Robert nodded once. She turned around and started walking down the hall. They bypassed some doors before she stopped in front of a certain one.

"This your room."

She looked at the far end of the hall. "And this door there is the bathroom." She paused. Robert turned and looked at the door. She went on, "Some rooms in the house have their own bathrooms... But sorry, yours doesn't."

"It's ok." He nodded.

"Ok then, go take a shower, rest for a while, and then let me know when you intend to unpack your luggage. It is a hard task... you know... I may be a good help to you. But before all of this, make sure to come down after a couple of minutes to meet the rest of the family. It's inappropriate to leave them waiting, ok?"

Robert nodded automatically. Ana smiled. She turned around and walked away. Robert kept following her with his eyes, and so did I. Suddenly, she stopped and faced him again.

"And by the way, I'm your cousin. Your Aunt Marie is actually my mom."

*(No! She is not my sister!)*

He sighed and tried to remove the annoyed expression from his face.

*(Calm down... She is your cousin and your friend as well, and this is actually good. You know something? This is actually great! And she is absolutely more than all what you've ever wished for.)*

Again she talked.

"And the girl you were chasing... Alice... she is your sister."

Oh my god! My poor friend!

*(No! No, no, no, no... She is absolutely kidding! She can't be my sister! We... we... we don't even look like each others! Hey idiot, you've just proved earlier that brothers and sisters don't have to look exactly like each others. I told you to stop calling me IDIOT! Believe me, I tried,*

*but you are not helping actually.)*

“Ok... see you later then.” She said, after losing hope of him uttering a word. She turned around, and headed towards the stairs, leaving the poor guy standing desperate and lost near the door of his room. I knew what he was going to do; he will stay like this for a while, go to bathroom, and then go downstairs. See? Nothing interesting. Therefore, I decided to leave him and follow her.

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She went downstairs; all of them were still there. All the eyes moved to her, and this made her talk immediately without waiting to descend the last few stairs.

“He is coming down, just give him some minutes.”

As soon as she finished descending and reached the ground floor, she went on, “He just needed to go to the bathroom, and he apologizes for this.”

Great! She is supporting him! And he really needs this support.

“He looks suspicious to me.”

The old guy with the gray short hair and brown eyes hissed. In order to be a professional narrator, I spent some time here in the house doing my precise investigations that can never ever be wrong. This guy is called Zac, and he is the one who started this big family from the begging.

His kind wife Susan, who was standing near him, moved closer and gently touched his shoulder.

“Give the boy a chance, Jack.”

Hmm... Yes... Jack... I meant Jack from the beginning, sorry for this mistake.

“Mom is right, we haven’t even met him yet,” Aunt Marie concurred. Jack sniffed.

Suddenly, a beautiful lady with light-brown above shoulder hair and pretty green eyes talked. By the way, her name is Madison. And this time I’m completely sure about the name. I have to confess that I fell in love with her the first time I saw her, and intended to get to know her better. But two facts killed my dream before it even begins; I am a dead bird, and she is married to a good guy called Andy, the tall guy with average well-built body and brown eyes and hair who was standing next to her.

“Hash... he is coming down,” she whispered. All the eyes were fixed at the stairs. A few moments later, Robert made his appearance. Their stares scared him to death; he hardly swallowed and then kept descending.

*(Keep yourself together... Keep yourself together... Don’t panic... Be strong...)*

“Don’t stare at him; we are making him nervous,” Jennifer whispered, and they obeyed her order instantly by avoiding any direct eye contact with him. And who is Jennifer? She is the lady with the dark blonde below-shoulder hair and blue eyes who was carrying a baby on her arms. Jennifer and Marie are sisters. And this little baby is Jennifer’s son, Ryan, from her husband Tom, who didn’t return home yet. I know this is very confusing, but trust me; you will get use to it later.

Robert reached the ground floor, and at the same moment, as I expected, his feet nailed to the ground. A moment later, Ana ran towards him, looked him in the eyes, and grabbed his hand.

“Don’t worry,” she whispered and smiled. Robert smiled back, but his pale face didn’t change.

“Ready?” She whispered again. Robert sighed, took a deep breath, and then nodded once. She walked him towards Grandpa Jack. Once they reached him, she started the talking.

“This is Mr. Jack Wilson... our grandfather!” You can easily sense how proud and excited she was.

“Nice to meet you Sir,” Robert said, stretching his arm to shake hands with his grandpa, who did the same.

“Nice to meet you too...” He paused for a moment, not letting go of Robert’s grasp, and then kept going, “Son.”

Robert smiled. They kept looking each others in the eyes for some moments.

“You have a strong grasp. It’s good to know that my grandson is a tough man.”

Robert smiled again. His lips kept shaking for a moment, trying to say something. And when they failed, he pressed them into a tight line. Grandpa let go of Robert’s hand and moved closer to him. Then he put his arm around his body and walked him slowly.

“Let me introduce the rest of the family,” he said, calmly.

“Ok,” Robert answered, automatically.

“I believe you already met Ana; the girl who makes me proud every time I put an eye on her.”

Ana smiled.

They took another step to be just in front of Madison. Grandpa went on.

“This pretty lady is Madison.”

“Hi...” she greeted Robert, accompanying her sweet voice with a pretty smile.

“And this is her lucky husband; Andy. He is your grandma’s nephew, and more than a son to me,” Grandpa added.

“Hi Robert,” Andy said, waving and greeting Robert.

“H-I,” Robert mumbled.

Grandpa cuddled Aunt Marie. “And this magnificent creature is my daughter Marie,” he said. Aunt Marie chuckled. Grandpa kept going, “She isn’t only the best daughter one can ever have, but she also gave me the best granddaughter one can ever have... Ana.”

“I can’t argue about that,” Robert said. He was a little bit calmer now.

Grandpa let go of Robert, but kept cuddling Marie. He took a few steps with her towards Jennifer. Once they reached her, he used his other arm to cuddle her as well. She smiled immediately.

“And this little girl who makes me fly high above the sky every time she smiles at me, is Jennifer; my youngest daughter.” He paused and looked at the baby on her arms. “And this tiny creature here is Ryan; my youngest grandson,” he added.

Robert smiled again.

A moment later, grandpa let go of the two pretty ladies and walked slowly towards Susan. Once he reached her, a big smile was drawn on his lips.

“And this is my wife, Susan, the one who gave me this wonderful family... The one who gave me the ultimate happiness... The one who gave me life,” he murmured kindly, kissing her forehead the moment he was done talking. The moment he started the long kiss, all of them started to cheer and yell, I could also hear some clapping and whistling. Robert laughed.

“Shut up idiots,” Grandpa yelled, unleashing the laughs that lasted for a few seconds.

“Come here...” Susan said, while the tears were welling up fast in her eyes. Robert swallowed and obeyed her order immediately. Once he reached her, she put his face between her hands and looked him in the eyes.

“You do look like him,” she murmured kindly. Some tears started to ooze out of her eyes. She hugged him tightly, and didn’t seem to have any intention to let go. I moved fast and positioned myself behind her to be able to see Robert’s face. He wasn’t hugging back; this is why I wasn’t surprised to find his face solid and emotionless as I expected. They stayed like this for some time... long time. Finally, Jack decided to put an end to it.

“Susan, he isn’t going anywhere. You can hug him later, but now he needs to rest.”

She moved him kindly away from her as soon as Jack was done talking.

“Sorry...”

“Ok young man, go clean up and rest for a while. You will meet the rest of the family later, when they return,” Grandpa added.

“The rest?!” Robert wondered.

Ana chuckled. “We are a big family,” she said, keeping the smile on her face.

Robert sighed in frustration.

Ana grabbed his hand before murmuring kindly, “Let’s go.”

They both headed to the stairs. But I didn’t follow. Instead, I decided to start using my abilities as a spirit and penetrated the ceiling, heading directly to the door of Robert’s room. I stayed there and waited for them to come.

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Ok, I can see them now. Don’t worry, you have missed nothing, I’m one hundred percent sure Robert didn’t say a word during my absence. And guess what? They kept walking towards the room without uttering a word as well. Ana peeked at Robert’s face from time to time as if she was begging him to say anything, and when she lost hope, she sighed and kept her mouth shut till they reached the room.

“Are you going to unpack your stuff now?” Ana wondered.

“I don’t think so. It was a long trip... you know, I think I’ll sleep for a while.”

“Sure,” she replied instantly. The silence dominated for some moments while they kept looking at each others. And before I get bored, Ana talked again.

“Ok then, you know where to find me, in case you needed any help.”

She didn’t wait for him to talk, she started to move immediately. “Bye,” she added.

“Wait...”



She stopped and turned to face him, and then she kept looking at him waiting for the reason of his request. Robert didn't leave her waiting for too long.

"Actually... I don't know where to find you," he beamed.

Ana chuckled. "You will find me in my room; the first room on the hall, two doors from here," she explained.

Robert nodded twice.

"But if you didn't find me there, you will have to start searching the house. And if I were you, I would start from the living room, downstairs," she added.

Robert couldn't help but smiling.

"Bye..." She turned around and walked away. She passed by two doors on her way towards the stairs, before stopping in front of the last one.

"Here..." she yelled. Robert nodded again.

"And always remember to knock at the door; I don't want you to end up killed by Grandpa," she added, and chuckled when done speaking.

Robert giggled. "Ok..." he said.

She gave him a final smile, waved, opened the door, and went inside. A moment later, he entered his room, and I followed...

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The room was tidy and beautiful. I could see Robert's luggage, which arrived here yesterday, arranged near the bed. Robert's eyes kept wandering around the room, studying its features, and expressing their admiration.

He started to walk towards the second bed; the one next to the wall with the huge window. He sighed and sat at the edge of the bed.

"Hi..."

The sudden sweet voice made Robert's body shudder and his eyes look immediately towards the direction of the voice. He found a little girl smiling and sitting on the other bed. The surprise made him jump out of his place, taking cover behind the bed, between the bed and the wall. The loud sound of the collision between him and the ground made the girl laugh loudly.

*(This is an illusion. She is not really there... She doesn't exist... What? You need a proof? Ok, I'll look now and she won't be there.)*

He hesitantly and slowly raised his head up and peeked at her, but she wasn't there. He moved his head down immediately.

*(I told you! Good to know that I haven't gone mad yet.)*

He raised his head again but faster and more confident than the first time, he found the little girl's smiley face in front of him, at the other edge of the bed.

"Oh!"

The surprise made him fall back, completely forgetting that there was a wall behind him. The loud sound of the strong collision between his head and the wall made the girl laugh again, louder, and made him yell painfully.

"Ouch!" He moved his hand instinctively to the hit spot.

The girl kept laughing for a while, before climbing into the bed and crawling towards Robert. Then she stopped moving and sat on the bed. The laugh didn't end till that moment.

"What the hell are you?" He roared.

"I'm Ashley... the spirit of the great sorceress of light." Her voice was serious, and accompanied by a grim expression. Robert squinted. The little girl stretched her arm, pointing her little forefinger towards Robert's face.

"You will answer my questions, or I shall use the force of light to turn you into an ugly frog," she added, keeping the same tone in her voice.

*(You aren't going to believe her, are you? I... don't know... She does look serious. What? I can't believe it! I can't believe that a little girl scared you! You are absolutely pathetic! I AM NOT SCARED! I'm just taking my precautions.)*

She interrupted his silence...

"What do you say?"

"I agree..." he replied instantly.

"Who are you?" She wondered, seriously. Robert didn't seem very scared anymore. His eyes narrowed while he kept scrutinizing her expression.

"Why don't you use your abilities to know who I am?" He challenged.

The girl expression darkened. "You are doubting my magical abilities, aren't you?"

Robert shrugged. The girl kept going, "Ok... I love challenges."

She stared at his face for some moments, carefully studying his features.

"You... are... Robert..."

*(WOW! She knew my name! She is really a fairy! Hey... Idiot... the whole town knows about you. Oh! You are right, sorry... I just got very excited. Shut up and take her down.)*

"Wow! You are really an imaginary character!"

He tried to act as if he was tricked by her. His bad acting didn't trick me, but it clearly tricked the little innocent girl. Oh! NO! I did the same mistake again! I didn't describe her to you! I'm so sorry, I hope you forgive me, and I promise I'll do my best in the rest of the story. Ok, back to Ashley, she is extremely and amazingly pretty little girl who can easily capture your heart once she looks at you with her wide brown eyes, and then keep it with her forever once she talks to you with her sweet voice. The girl is about five years old and has a light brown above waist wavy hair that perfectly matched her eyes. Finally, she was wearing a beautiful short yellow sleeveless dress.

"Prepare for the next question," she ordered.

"Wait... I want to try something," Robert interrupted.

Ashley squinted. "What do you mean?" She wondered.

"You are a fairy, this means you aren't really here, physically, right?"

"Mm-hmm."

"So, if I tried to touch you, my hand would just pass through your body and come out from the other side, right?"

Her eyes narrowed and she kept staring at him. Suddenly, his lips twisted into an evil smile.

"Don't even think about it!" She exclaimed, before screaming with joy the moment Robert neglected her threat and dashed towards her. She tried to escape, but he wrapped his arms around her small body and calmly pushed her to the bed. Then he started to tickle her, and this unleashed her loud magnificent laugh again.

I heard someone calling her name, I guess...

"Ashley... Where are you?"

Yes... there was absolutely someone calling for her out of the room. Her loud laughs prevented both of them from hearing the feminine voice. And when I decided to go outside and check, she was faster than me and opened the door of the room.

A moment later, an angel with long silky blonde hair and elegant entrancing wide blue-gray eyes entered the room.

Once she noticed Robert's presence, the beautiful teenager winced and her face turned into red immediately.

"Sorry... I... didn't know... someone was here..." she mumbled, holding her place near the opened door. She was too shocked to even move her hand and let go of the handle. Robert was frozen on his place with his widened eyes staring at the pretty girl.

*(Oh! Now we have a real fairy! Calm down idiot and DO NOT waste our chance out of your stupidity. You will do exactly as I say, understood? Yes... yes... completely. Good. Nowtake a deep breath and then start moving towards her.)*

Suddenly, Robert took a deep breath, let go of the little girl, got up, and started to walk towards her.

*(Now, tell her that it is ok... And DO NOT mumble... am I making myself clear? DO NOT MUMBLE.)*

"It... is... ok..." Robert mumbled. The words eased a little of the girl's tension. Robert held his place for a moment, and when he started to walk towards her again, her embarrassment didn't give him a chance, as it forced the girl to dash outside and shut the door behind her immediately. I think I heard her apologizing by murmuring a shy "sorry" the moment she started the fall back operation. I flew immediately and followed her outside, and then used my bird's eye ability to get a complete top view of both of them, and for grandpa as well, who was slowly climbing the stairs.

Once the girl went outside, she rested her back on the closed door and sighed with relief. And Robert? Well, her sudden move ruined his plans

and made him nervous, very nervous.

*(What have I done wrong? I did exactly as you said? Shut up and followher immediately! GO NOW!)*

Suddenly, he ran towards the door.

“Have you found her, Amy?” Grandpa wondered. He still needs some time to reach the upper floor because of his low speed. His loud voice caught Amy’s attention.

“Yes Grandpa, she is...”

Robert suddenly opened the door, interrupting her, and making her jump out of her place.

“Oh!” She exclaimed in fright.

*(You scared her to death idiot! APOLOGIZE NOW!)*

“I’m sorry... I’m so sorry...” he mumbled. The girl’s extremely scared expression eased a little. She exhaled and gradually moved her hands away from her trembling chest.

“Is everything alright up there Amy?” Grandpa wondered anxiously after hearing Amy’s scream. He increased his speed, but it wasn’t enough; he will still need some time to reach her. Amy turned towards the stairs.

“Yes Grandpa, I’m fine.” She paused and turned to Robert again. She kept studying his features for some moments, and then her expression lightened... a lot.

“I just met... Robert,” she mumbled.

*(Ha-ha! She knows my name! Calm down. This is a good start, but we still need to concentrate; a small mistake can ruin everything. Ok... Ok... Just tell me what I need to do.)*

The little girl, Ashley, moved from her place and ran towards the door. She stood next to Robert, but he didn’t notice her presence.

*(Now what? What should I do? What should I say? Do not panic, idiot. It is always a good technique to ask for the name. Oh! You are a genius! There is no doubt about that! Shut up and execute.)*

“And you... are?” He wondered.

“I’m Amy,” she answered immediately.

“And you are my....?” He mumbled hesitantly.

*(Oh! What if she is my sister? NO! Please don’t be my sister! Please don’t be my sister! Please ... Please, please, please...)*

“I’m your sister.”

“Damn it!” He snapped. Amy and Ashley chuckled immediately.

“Watch your mouth young man...” Grandpa groaned. He just reached the upper floor now, and started walking towards them.

*( Ah! The nice Grandfather I’ve always dreamed of.)*

“Or I shall come to you, cut your tongue, and push it into your...”

Robert interjected immediately.

"I got it Grandpa, I got it."

"I'm not really your sister. I'm actually your cousin," Amy murmured. Robert stared at her for some moments, to grasp the meaning of what she has just said I guess, and then sighed with a deep relief.

*(Oh... this was close. Put yourself together. What do you think I'm trying to do here? You have no idea of what I have just been into. I was about to lose my only reason to stay here. I know, idiot. That's why we need to concentrate more. And by the way, being your cousin is a disaster as well.)*

He gasped suddenly. Don't ask why, because I've no idea!

*(Oh-NO! She is my cousin! Ugh... his brain finally worked again.)*

Amy smiled. "Why so sad?" She wondered.

Grandpa reached them. He cuddled Amy immediately.

"Why do you think he is sad? He is shocked to know that this amazing girl is his cousin."

"Grandpa!" She protested, blushing. Grandpa smiled and ignored her. He looked at Robert. "Don't worry kid, she is your second cousin; Andy's daughter," he whispered, winking.

"Grandpa!" She yelled again, loudly protesting.

"Okay, okay... I'll shut up."

Robert smiled and sighed in a deep... deep relief.

*(This is good, isn't it? Yeah... at least it gives you a chance.)*

"It was Alice's idea... to tell you that I'm your sister... I don't know why... But I guess she was just kidding..." Amy added, trying to change the subject and drive the embarrassment away.

*(That little devil again.)*

"You aren't mad at us, are you?" Amy wondered. Her eyebrows pulled together and her expression darkened. This showed me how anxious she was. And the most important was that it showed me how sensible she was.

"No... it's ok..." Robert muttered.

"Am I missing anything here?" Grandpa wondered.

Amy smiled. "No, nothing serious, we were just chatting," she explained.

Grandpa noticed Ashley's presence.

"Here you are. Where have you been?" He wondered.

"She was in Robert's room," Amy answered. "And she will come with me now to give Robert a chance to get some rest, right Ashley?" She added. Ashley nodded instantly. She was about to move towards Amy, but Robert's hand that grabbed her shoulder forced her to stop.

Grandpa squinted. Amy winced.

"I... like her, and do want her to stay, for a while," he mumbled, easing their surprise a little.

"As you wish, but if she drove you crazy, blame no one but yourself," Grandpa said, keeping his voice flat. "Let's go Amy," he added. Both of them turned around and walked towards the stairs. Some moments later, Amy glanced at Robert and gave him a warm smile. Robert's lips smiled back immediately.

"What do you want?" Ashley wondered, putting the serious mask on her face, and rescuing Robert out from Amy's wide blue-gray irises. Robert turned to her and glared. The girl smiled.

"We will have a small discussion."

Ashley chuckled. Robert pulled her into the room and closed the door.

Near the stairs, Grandpa and Amy were about to descend.

"Grandpa, I'll go to rest for a while; I didn't sleep very well yesterday."

"Sure honey."

She kissed his cheek and headed to her room; the room next to Ana's. She vanished inside, and Grandpa headed downstairs.

Which of them should I follow? Ha-ha! Now you will start experiencing the advantages of having a bird as your narrator. I'll eliminate the old guy, and then I'll give you a complete view of what is happening in the two rooms simultaneously. This is too easy for me, especially if the two rooms are too close and separated only by one room, which for my luck, was empty.

\*\*\*\*\*

Amy entered the room to find Alice inside, lying on the bed, and using her laptop. The sound of the door being opened caught Alice's attention. She grinned immediately.

"Hi," Alice exclaimed.

"Hi," Amy replied, heading directly towards Alice's bed, and completely failing in hiding her enormous excitement. This excitement made her jump on the bed the moment she reached it. Alice kept staring at her with an amazed face and eager-to-know eyes.

"What?!" She wondered.

"Guess who have I just met?" Amy said, her eyes sparkled to match her excited voice.

\*\*\*\*\*

"Do you know who I am?" Robert asked Ashley after pinning her to the bed.

"You are Robert," she replied calmly.

"Exactly." He squinted. "Robert... the spirit of the sorcerer of the darkness," he added. Ashley laughed innocently. Robert put his hand on her head. "And you will start talking, or I shall use my dark forces to absorb your brain."

She laughed loudly...

\*\*\*\*\*

"Why are you so excited?" Alice wondered, acting carelessly.

Amy expression darkened a little. "What do you mean? Aren't you excited about having a brother... after all these years?"

Alice looked at her oddly. "Not even a tiny bit," she said every word separately and in a full mouth, insisting and challenging.

\*\*\*\*\*

"What is your name?" Robert asked.

"Ashley."

"No, your real name."

Ashley's eyebrows pulled together in mystification.

"Umm..." She kept thinking for a moment. "Ashley!" She exclaimed, with a wide smile.

"Excellent! Good answer! You survived the first round."

She chuckled.

\*\*\*\*\*

"He is a good guy," Amy said, arguing.

Alice, who repositioned herself to the sitting position the moment the conversation started to turn into an argument, frowned. "Really? And how did you know that?" She scoffed. Amy's situation weakened a little.

"Well... his eyes are beautiful," she mumbled.

"Uh... great," Alice sniffed and jumped out of the bed.

\*\*\*\*\*

"Your age?" Robert asked.

Ashley raised her small hands and used six of her tiny pretty fingers to resemble her age.

"Ok..." Robert said. She put her hands down immediately. The smile never erased off her face since the beginning of the investigation.

"What is our family relation?"

"You are my cousin!" She exclaimed, raising her right arm up with excitement, happiness, and glory. Robert winced because of her overwhelmed reaction.

*(This girl is very cute, and she does like me... a lot. Don't be fooled by her innocent face. Keep going and get the most out of this investigation. Yes Sir.)*

"Now we will go to the next level."

Ashley chuckled, clenching her hands. "Ok!" She yelled, happily.

\*\*\*\*\*

"They can't bring a stranger to me, declaring that he is my brother, and force me to love him," Alice hissed, standing near the dresser, and resting her back to it.

"No one is forcing any one!" Amy protested. She paused to return to the calm tone. "He is your brother. This is a good thing. This was supposed to make you happy."

Alice grimaced. "And guess what? It isn't. Actually, it makes me feel sick," she growled. The word 'sick' sounded louder and angrier than the rest.

"And by the way, having hazel eyes like me isn't a decent proof he is really my brother," she added, keeping the angry tone.

Amy sighed.

\*\*\*\*\*

"I told you, her name is Amy," Ashley hissed.

"I meant what is our family relation?"

"She is your cousin, just like me."

"So... you are sisters?"

Ashley sniffed.

"I got it... you aren't," he mumbled.

"Finally," Ashley said with relief.

"Who are her parents?"

"Uncle Andy and Aunt Madison."

"And yours?"

"Stephen in my father, Julia is my mother, and Edward is my brother," she explained calmly, successfully controlling and hiding her anger.

Robert squinted. "I haven't met them yet."

"This is because they aren't here yet," she scoffed.

"Right," Robert replied automatically. "But you know something? She is not like you. You are my first cousin, but she is my second cousin," he said calmly.



“What?” She wondered, confused.

“Forget it.”

\*\*\*\*\*

“Yes... I know. But I doubt the test result,” Alice growled.

Amy got up from the edge of the bed wherein she was sitting and took some rapid steps towards Alice. She stopped in front of her, keeping some distance to allow the eye contact.

“Alice... The DNA test is the most accurate test out there!” She used a strong confident stare to reinforce her point of view. Alice avoided her stare immediately.

“I... know...” she mumbled in a low monotone and then paused to rearrange her thoughts and prepare for the next round. Suddenly, she exclaimed, “Maybe he is a criminal! He may have faked the result or something.”

Amy sniffed. “You are pathetic,” she snarled, turned around, and headed back to the bed.

\*\*\*\*\*

“How old is she?” Robert wondered, eagerly.

“She is seventeen, turning eighteen next month.”

Robert expression lightened a lot.

*(Great! Perfect age! Only two years between us!)*

“Umm... is she single?” He asked, hesitantly.

Ashley’s face crumpled in sadness. “Yes... she has no brothers or sisters,” she screeched.

Robert chuckled. “No, I meant... umm... is she in love with someone?”

Ashley gasped, and her eyes widened in surprise. “You mean... a boy?” She wondered.

Robert nodded once, hesitantly.

“And how would I know?” She scoffed.

Robert sighed, his face crumpled.

“But I can investigate... for you,” she said, drawing a wonderful smile on her face.

Robert face lightened with hope. “Really?”

“Sure.”

A huge smile was drawn on Robert’s face.

“Can I go now?” She wondered.

“Just another question.”

Ashley sighed. "Okay."

\*\*\*\*\*

"You aren't mad at me, are you?" Alice wondered.

"No..." Amy, who took Alice's place on the bed and lay there, typing on the laptop, spat without looking at her.

Alice sighed and walked towards the bed. Once she reached it, she sat on the edge.

"I just..." she mumbled. Amy looked at her, waiting for her to go on. Alice glanced at her and then went on, "Ok... he may be my brother... but you need to give me some time to accept this weird fact."

Amy smiled and moved to sit next to Alice, and then cuddled her. "And till this happens, you will always have me next to you," she murmured kindly.

Alice smiled. "I know."

Amy smiled back, and then the silence dominated for a moment. Afterwards, Amy let go of her and prepared to get up. "Ok... I'll go to have a shower."

Alice nodded once while Amy was getting up and heading towards the bathroom. She opened its door, and before she goes inside, she stopped and turned around to face Alice again, whose eyes were already following her.

"Umm... when I told him it was you who asked me to say I was his sister, he didn't seem very comfortable about hearing your name. Have you done anything to him?" Amy wondered.

Alice grinned. "You have no idea!" she said every single word separately.

Amy smiled. "Don't go any where. I'll finish showering and then you will tell me the whole story."

Alice chuckled. "And you will tell me how he reacted to knowing that this impossibly beautiful girl is his sister."

"Deal..." Amy said, smiled, and then entered the bathroom. From where I was standing, the bathroom was clearly visible to me. So, I decided to respect the girl's privacy and flew to Robert's room.

\*\*\*\*\*

Ashley sighed. "You said you will ask a single question," she sniffed.

"I know. I just want to make sure I got everything right."

"Ok... go ahead."

"You are six, Ana is ten, my sister Alice is fourteen... and Amy is seventeen, right?"

"Mm-hmm." She nodded twice.

Robert smiled. "Thanks little princess, you have been a great help to me."

"Am I free to go?" She wondered.

"Mm-hmm, and from now on, I'll join the forces of light and will be one of your honored servants."

Ashley laughed. "All right, and the forces of light welcome you."

He smiled. Ashley got up in order to leave, and then she surprised Robert with a tender kiss on his right cheek.

She looked him in the eyes while wrapping her small arms around his neck.

"Welcome home," she murmured and then ran towards the door, leaving both of us stunned by her unexpected move. She went outside after waving and smiling for the last time, and Robert let go of himself and sat on the ground.

"She is... adorable," he whispered to himself, marveling. He stayed like this for a while, and then got up, grabbed the towel out of one of his suitcases, and headed towards the bathroom.

Ok... I guess there is nothing I can do here now. So... I'll go and get some fresh air till this showering frenzy comes to an end. By the way, Ashley headed towards Ana's room after leaving Robert's. Why? Because it is her room as well; they are roommates.

Ok then, back in a few minutes...

\*\*\*\*\*

Oh! What a pretty morning!

What? I'm late? I know I said I'll come back in a few minutes, and I really did come back in a few minutes, to only find the exhausted Robert sleeping deeply after finishing his shower. I flew to Amy and Alice's room. Alice wasn't around, and Amy was sleeping like an angel. I decided to pay a visit to the other girls' room, and I found Ashley playing with her toys and Ana sitting on her disk and reading a book. I respected the rule that prevents me from entering and/or flying above any adults' room and went downstairs directly. Nothing serious was happening there. Some were cooking, others were watching TV, and the rest were chatting outside.

The only important matter that happened was the return of Kevin, Tom, Michael, and Bill shortly after Robert's surrendering to sleep. And who are they? Kevin, the man with the very dark brown long hair, is Aunt Marie's husband, and the father of Ana and her brother Michael; the eight years old kid who inherited his father's sharp and handsome features, and his mother's hair and eyes. Tom, the fleshy guy with curly long black hair and short beard, is Jennifer's wife, and the father of baby Ryan and his brother Bill; the fat seven years old boy who has his mother's beautiful blue eyes, and a short brown hair that I don't know from whom he has inherited.

From where did they return? Well, I'd be lying if I said I know exactly where they were, but at least I can guess. The van was full of groceries, so I

can tell they were shopping. And I wasn't surprised by the HUGE amount of stuff they bought; this is a big family.

So, I decided to wait till Robert wakes up, which didn't happen. He was too tired that he slept to the next morning, and with the absence of Robert, there was no reason for me to stay around. I went outside and enjoyed the rain that started later that night and stopped near the dawn.

Before she went to bed, Ashley checked on Robert. And when she found that he was still sleeping, she gently caressed his hair and then dashed to her room. On her way from his room to her room, she was asked by most of the people in the house if he was still sleeping, especially Michael and Bill, and except Amy and Alice.

It is a new morning now, and it is a very beautiful morning as well. Robert was still sleeping, but everyone else was awake and active as usual. My friend, who was sleeping bare-chested as he always used to do, will soon awake to find a surprise waiting for him; Michael and Bill were in his room, standing near his bed, and staring at him.

They both were totally amazed; you can clearly know this from their faces and widely opened eyes that were too astonished to even blink.

"Wow! Look at these muscles!" Michael whispered.

"They are unbelievable!" Bill said, not diverting his eyes from Robert's body.

"Do you think he trains a lot?" Michael wondered, glancing at Bill.

"He absolutely does."

Bill paused and sighed. "I wish I had such a body."

"Yep... me too," Michael murmured.

They both silenced for some moments.

"He is very handsome," Bill said, his voice sounded flat.

Michael nodded. "If he went to the town, all the girls would be on his tail."

"Absolutely," Bill agreed. He paused for a moment and then went on, "he looks like a movie star... girls love this style."

"You are definitely right," Michael concurred.

They both silenced again.

"I think I'll touch his muscles," Michael whispered.

Bill glanced at him. "I don't think it's a good idea," he said, and then stared back at Robert.

"Why? Just a single touch; to see how strong they are."

"What if he woke up?"

"Don't worry; it will only take a second."

Bill sighed. Michael glanced at him and then moved slowly towards Robert. Once he became close enough, he stretched his arm, aiming his forefinger at Robert's chest. His hand was shaking and moving slowly, that's why it needed some seconds to reach its destination. The moment it touched Robert's body, Michael shuddered and pulled it away immediately.

"Oh!" he exclaimed.

"What is wrong?" Bill wondered, nervously and curiously.

"It's... he is... they are..."

"What?!"

"It's harder than a stone!"

"A stone?!" Bill wondered, completely amazed just like his cousin. He paused and then went on, "you got to be kidding me!"

"Check for yourself!"

Bill glanced at Robert and then hardly swallowed.

"Come on! Go!" Michael pushed him gently towards Robert. Bill swallowed again. "Ok..." he mumbled.

It took the fat boy some seconds of hesitation before he finally used his hand to touch Robert's chest. Once his hand touched his skin, Robert's eyes opened suddenly to find two scared kids staring at him.

"Oh!" Robert screamed. The surprise made him roll on the bed, before falling to the ground... again.

"Run Bill! Run!" Michael yelled fearfully. The astounded Bill obeyed instantly and ran back towards him. Once he reached him, they held each others hands and ran towards the door.

"Freeze!" Robert roared suddenly. They both froze on their places, too scared to even turn to him. I moved to be in front of them to be able to see their faces, and I wasn't surprised to find them extremely scared. Robert was standing in where he fell, between the bed and the wall. I wondered how he managed to get back on his feet this fast.

"We are dead," Michael whispered.

"There is no doubt about it," Bill agreed.

"Turn around," Robert ordered, and they obeyed instantly. I moved to get a side view.

"Come closer."

They both hardly swallowed, simultaneously, but didn't move.

"You know... I usually don't repeat what I say twice."

They dashed towards the bed immediately.

"Good... Now who exactly are you?" He asked, calmly.

"I'm Michael and he is Bill," Bill replied instantly.

"Yes... he is Michael and I'm Bill," Michael agreed.

"Yes... I'm Bill and he is Michael," Bill said.

"Exactly... I'm Michael and he is Bill," Michael Said.

"SHUT UP!" Robert yelled. They both shuddered and hardly swallowed.

"Who is Bill?"

"I am..." Bill replied instantly.

"Yes... he is..."

"And this makes you Michael, right?"

"Yes..." Michael said.

"Exactly," Bill followed.

"Good. What are you two doing in my room?" He was calmer now.

"We were..." Bill mumbled.

"Yes... we were..." Michael agreed.

"You were...?" Robert wondered.

"Yes... we were." Michael said.

"Aha... we absolutely were," Bill said, and Michael nodded to reinforce him.

Robert pulled his eyebrows together in confusion.

*(They are crazy; there is no doubt about it.)*

"So... you were?" He pointed his words to Michael.

"Yep."

"And you were as well?" This time he was speaking to Bill.

"Aha... just like him," Bill answered with relief.

The door knocked suddenly, the three of them shuddered.

"Who is it?" Robert yelled.

"It's Ana," she answered from behind the door.

"Hold on Ana."

He grabbed his shirt from the ground and put it on immediately.

"Come on in."

She opened the door and entered the room, to find the three of them staring at her. The girl winced, took some random steps inside, and then held her place when their eyes didn't divert from her.

Robert noticed how stunned she was, so he started the talking.

"Is something wrong?"

She looked at Robert. "No... I just came to wake you up and tell you that the breakfast is ready." She paused and looked at Bill and Michael. "But I can see they already did that." You can sense some anger in her voice.

"Yes, they already did," Robert said, trying to act normally. The smart girl took some steps towards the two astonished kids, while here eyes kept studying their faces curiously searching for some explanations.

"What are you looking at?" Michael wondered. His voice was choking.

She stopped and shrugged. "Nothing... I was just wondering what you two are doing in here," she answered calmly.

"They were," Robert replied immediately.

"Yes... we were," Michael added confidently.

"We absolutely were," Bill said.

Ana squinted and kept staring at the three of them. She stayed like this for some moments; I guess she was waiting for one of them to go on. And when this didn't happen, she talked again.

"You... were... that's it?" She wondered.

The three of them nodded immediately.

"Umm... people usually say something more. Like, we were playing... for example," she said calmly, scoffing.

"Oh!" Robert chuckled. "No! This is a common mistake!"

"Exactly!" Bill exclaimed.

"Oh, really?" She scoffed again.

"Yeah, there is no doubt about it," Robert concurred.

"Fine."

She sighed, turned around, and shook her head. "Boys..." she whispered to herself.

Their eyes followed her till she reached the door. She turned around for the last time.

"Robert, don't be late, we are all downstairs waiting for you."

"Ok."

She left and closed the door behind her.

The three of them sighed with relief.

"See you downstairs," Michael said. And before Robert acts or says anything, they ran towards the door and dashed outside, smashing the door behind. Robert sighed again, grabbed his towel, and headed towards the bathroom. Don't worry, he won't be late; his morning shower only takes five minutes.

\*\*\*\*\*

After finishing his shower, Robert dashed downstairs. Once he reached the ground floor, he ran into Tom. Remember him? He is Aunt Jennifer's husband; the fleshy guy with curly black hair and short beard. The moment he saw Robert, he stopped and turned to him, offering his hand to him.

"You must be Robert."

"Yes Sir, it's me."

"I'm Tom."

"Nice to meet you Sir."

They kept staring at each others for a couple of seconds. Robert was waiting for more info, and it took Tom some time to figure this out.

"I'm Jennifer's husband," he explained. It only needs a single glance at Robert's face to figure out that this new info changed nothing.

"Bill's father..." Tom added, breaking another some moments of silence, and totally erasing Robert's confusion.

"Oh... yes..."

Tom's expression lightened with relief.

"Come on, let's wipe some plates!" He laughed and strongly punched Robert on his shoulder. Robert grimaced; his face hardly managed to hide the pain.

*(What the hell was that?!)*

"Follow me," Tom added, heading towards the kitchen. They actually weren't heading to the kitchen; they were heading to the huge dining room next to the kitchen.

Grandpa was sitting at the head of the wide table, Susan was on his right, and for my surprise, Amy was on his left. Next to Susan sat Aunt Marie and her husband Kevin, and next to Amy sat her parents; Andy and Madison. Next to Madison was Jennifer, with an empty chair next to her, to where Tom headed directly. Next to Kevin, there were two empty chairs left. Next to them sat Jessica... Don't worry, you will know who she is in a couple of minutes. And again there was an empty chair left next to Jessica. Next to Tom were Bill and Michael, and next to the empty chair next to Jessica, sat Alice. Next to Michael sat Ana, and finally, Ashley was on the other head of the table. Robert stood still, amazed by what he was seeing.

"This is crazy," he whispered.

Grandpa finally noticed his presence, he glanced at him.

"Oh... you are finally here."

All the movements and humming stopped, and all the eyes stared at Robert. He froze on his place without uttering a word.

*(Oh no, not again.)*

Grandpa broke the ice.

"Come on, sit on your father's place," he ordered. Jessica and Alice scowled immediately, staring at grandpa. Robert didn't move. Grandpa ignored their anger and went on, looking at Alice, "There... next to this elegant young lady."



Robert looked at Alice immediately and so did she. Her face crumpled with anger and so did his. However, he moved to execute the order. Alice kept glaring at him, not diverting her eyes from his expressionless face, till he reached the empty seat and sat between her and Jessica. Robert had no idea of who was Jessica; this made him automatically peek at her from time to time. Suddenly, she talked.

“I’m Jessica... your stepmother.”

Robert winced and she smiled. I couldn’t see through her smile and tell whether she likes him or not. And from his expressionless face, I can tell that neither he figured that out.

*(Great... a stepmother... this is all what I needed.)*

“Can we eat please? We don’t want to waste the day staring at each others.” Grandpa hissed, diverting all the eyes from Robert, and forcing everybody to continue eating.

Robert started to eat, hesitantly.

Grandpa looked at him suddenly. “And you young man, finish your food and prepare to start taking your responsibilities.”

Robert squinted.

*(What does he mean? It sounds like the old guy has some plans for me. Shut up idiot and wait and see.)*

“Jack... it’s still too early!” Susan protested.

“No it’s not.” He moved his eyes from her to him. “You will drive them to school.”

Robert winced.

“Yes!” Ashley exclaimed.

“No way!” Alice protested.

“What?!” Ana wondered.

“Cool!” Michael said.

Bill nodded. “Yeah...”

Amy was surprised, but she didn’t react.

The humming increased.

“He doesn’t know the way!” Andy said.

“Maybe he doesn’t even have a driving license!” Jennifer added.

“And maybe he does have a driving license but can’t drive!” Tom said.

“Exactly...” Andy concurred.

“OH! He may kill them!” Madison yelled fearfully.

Grandpa thumped the table with his strong fist.

“ENOUGH!” He roared. All of them silenced immediately. Grandpa went on, calmer, “It’s already decided.” He paused for a moment. “I suggest you start eating; you don’t want to be late for school,” he said, pointing his words to all the kids, and moving his look between them.

The silence dominated, Robert hardly swallowed, and all of them started eating again.

After a couple of minutes, Alice left the table, Amy followed her outside immediately, Ana needed four more minutes to follow, and Michael followed her after one more minute. Grandpa noticed that most of them were done eating, and being completely aware of the fact that Bill would never stop eating, he decided that this was the time for Robert to get moving.

“Go now young man. You will find the keys on the table in the living room.”

“Yes Sir.”

Robert obeyed immediately and got up. Ashley followed instantly and grabbed his hand. Once he felt her soft skin touching his, he looked at her. She looked back and smiled. Bill noticed that both of them were about to leave, and this forced him to stop eating and catch up with them. The three of them took some steps, but were stopped again by grandpa’s voice.

“You can drive, can’t you?”

Robert turned around to face him. He looked him in the eyes and smiled.

“You have no idea.”

Grandpa’s lips twisted into a confident smile.

Robert turned around and headed outside...

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“You got to be kidding me!”

Yes... this was my friend Robert uttering some desperate words that reflected his shock after putting an eye on the van he was going to drive.

“Elvis, baby, it’s not a van.”

"Really?"

"It's a classic Jeep."

"Oh... thanks mom."

I'm so sorry everybody; I'm not good when it comes to cars.

"Come on driver, what are you waiting for?" Alice sneered, awaking Robert from his bad nightmare. He looked at her immediately.

"Go ahead," she added.

"Okay," he muttered.

*(Calm down, we have been through worse than this.)*

"I need someone to give me directions."

"I will," Amy replied immediately.

"Great... Now let's move."

He walked towards the car, opened the driver's door and got in. None of them followed. Some moments later, he noticed that.

"What are you waiting for?" He wondered.

"It was raining all the night," Ana said.

Robert got out of the car and stood near the driver's door. "So...?" He wondered.

"The engine won't start," Michael said.

"Yeah... we have to push," Bill added.

"Push?!" Robert wondered. Bill nodded.

Robert sighed. "Ok everybody, if we have to push, then this is exactly what we will be doing. But... no girls."

All of them was surprised, especially the girls.

"No girls? What does this mean?" Bill protested.

"This means that only the guys will push."

"But this is not fair!" He protested again.

Robert ignored him and walked to the passenger's door. He opened it.

"Okay princesses, stay inside your magical cart till we get the tough job done."

The four girls smiled and glanced at each others, and then they obeyed the order. Alice was the first, Ana helped Ashley to get inside and then followed, Amy was about to get in, but was stopped by Robert.

"Amy... I need you to start the engine."

"No problems." She smiled. Robert smiled back, and she headed to the driver's seat.

"Ok guys... let's push this piece of jerk."

Bill sighed. Michael glanced with sorrow at him, and then they both followed Robert to the back of the car.

"Ready?" Robert whispered, talking to Bill and Michael. They both nodded.

"Good," he said, and then looked at the driver's side window. "Ready Amy?"

She looked at him, out of the window, and smiled. "The keys...?"

"Oh... sorry."

He threw them towards her, and she grabbed them easily.

"Ready... steady... GO!"

The three of them started pushing. Amy kept trying to start the engine, but it didn't work.

"Come on, come on, come on," she said to herself, still trying.

"Amy...?" Robert wondered.

"I'm trying."

"Use the clutch, and put the car on the second gear."

"Okay."

She did as he said; the engine didn't start, but the car shook, giving them a sign of hope.

"Well done Amy, now keep trying."

"Got it."

She kept trying over and over again...

Suddenly, a loud explosion occurred.

Amy screamed, opened the driver's door, and jumped out of the car immediately. The other girls screamed at the same moment, but it took them some moments of shock before deciding to follow her.

"We are under attack! Take cover!" Bill yelled. The completely shocked Robert and Michael froze on their places, while their widely-opened amazed eyes were watching him throwing himself into a muddy lake. The astounded girls held their places, watching the dense smoke coming from under the hood. Bill lay in the lake for some moments, and then he realized that the danger was gone. He got up; covered with mud and dirt.

"What the hell was that?" Robert yelled. The shocked Michael shook his head.

Robert remembered the girls; he dashed towards them.

"Are you alright?"

Most of them nodded; I guess they were too scared and shocked to be able to speak. Robert looked at Amy and went on, "Are you okay?"

"I think so," she mumbled, still trembling.

"Is everybody okay?" They all turned towards the direction of grandpa's voice. They didn't see him coming, but I did. He got out from the house a moment after the loud explosion and dashed fast towards them, waiting till he gets close enough to speak.

"Yes... I guess," Robert answered. Grandpa glanced at all of them, one after another, checking for any signs of injuries. When he was completely sure all of them were good, he turned around and yelled at the rest of the family members who gathered near the main door.

"Don't worry, they are fine."

All of them sighed with relief, especially the scared mothers. They needed some more seconds to believe him and get back inside the house. He turned to face the kids again.

"What happened?"

"I... don't know... I..." Amy mumbled and then looked at Robert, as if she was asking him to help her finding the right words. Robert started to talk, "We were trying to start the engine." Amy nodded, looking at him. He went on, "But something exploded suddenly."

"Yes," she concurred, turning towards grandpa.

"I see."

"What are we gonna do now?" Ana screeched.

"Get back into the house. I'll try to fix it."

Alice frowned. "We will be late for school!" she groaned.

"No! The Wilson's have never been late before!" Michael screeched.

"Don't you have another car?" Robert wondered. All the voice silenced, and all the eyes stared at him. Suddenly, Alice smiled and looked at Amy. Amy kept staring at her for some moments, studying her expression, and then she shook her head the moment she grasped what Alice was up to.

"No... no way."

"At least we can try," Alice said.

"Forget it, we aren't even allowed to touch her," Amy explained.

"What is going on here?" Robert wondered. The two of them looked at him, but it was Michael who spoke, "I think there are talking about my dad's new car."

"Forget it Alice," Ana agreed to Amy's point of view.

"Maybe Robert can convince him!" Ashley exclaimed.

"I don't think so." Alice said.

"Guys, I'll go to clean up till you reach a decision," Bill said, interrupting the conversation, and then he ran towards the house.

"I think Ashley might be right," Grandpa said, looking Roberts in the eyes. "Go, give it a try, and I'll start the fixing in case you failed," he added.

Robert nodded. "Ok," he said.

"This is a waste of time," Ana sniffed.

Grandpa replied immediately, "No... it is a use of time that will be wasted in fixing the car." He silenced for a moment and then went on, "Now go."

Robert nodded again. "Let's go," he ordered, and they obeyed instantly. All of them headed back to the house.

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"Don't even think about it!"

Uncle Kevin said every single word separately and in a full mouth, looking Robert in the eyes.

"But Uncle... we will be late," Alice muttered.

"No."

"Please Uncle Kevin," Ashley begged, but her innocent eyes and sweet voice failed as well.

"I said NO," he spat.

"Dad!" Ana snapped. Kevin shook his head.

"Why don't you do it?" Robert asked. You can feel the anger hiding behind his calm voice.

Kevin squinted. "What do you mean?"

"You take them to school," Robert explained.

"Forget it... It is your mission; father said so. If you want me to do it for you, I need to hear him saying this," Kevin said.

"Ugh," Ana sniffed.

“Ok... no problems... we will figure something out,” Robert said, calmly and carelessly. “Come on everybody,” he ordered and they followed him to the living room.

“What are we going to do now?” Amy wondered.

“We will go to school,” Robert answered, calmly and confidently.

“But how?” Alice wondered.

Robert answered immediately, “We will use his car.”

“Didn’t you hear what he said?” Ana wondered.

“I did.”

They all silenced and stared at him, and then he smiled... evilly.

“You are going to steal it!” Michael said, whispering excitedly.

Robert’s smile grew into a grin, reinforcing Michael’s suggestion.

“No way!” Amy protested. “This is completely wrong,” she added, angrily.

“Ok... she is out. Now... who is with me?”

“I’m absolutely in!” Alice exclaimed, drawing a wide smile on her lips.

“Great!”

“I can’t steal my own dad, but you can torture me and force me to say that he hides the spare keys under the clothes on the upper shelf of the dresser,” Ana said.

“That’s what I’m talking about!” Robert yelled excitedly.

“I can steal my own dad... I’ll get the keys,” Michael said.

“And I’ll distract him,” Ashley added.

“Oh-Yeah! Now we need to name our mission,” Robert said.

“What about the absolute wrong?” Amy scoffed.

Robert looked at her. “I like it!” He exclaimed.

“Same here!” Alice agreed.

“The absolute wrong! Cool! I’m finally a criminal!” Michael said.

“Ugh...” Amy sniffed and dashed outside.

“Ok everybody... Let’s dance!”

A wide smile was drawn on his face and on theirs as well.

“Have I missed anything?” Bill wondered, just arrived.

“Go outside and make sure Amy won’t reach grandpa,” Robert ordered.

“What is going on?”

“We are stealing my dad’s car!” Michael answered.

“Yeah! Now we are talking!”

“Go and do your mission,” Robert said.

“Yes Sir...” He dashed outside. His mission will be very easy; Amy was standing outside, angry, but has no intention to betray them.

“Ashley...” Robert said, looking at her.

“Moving to execute,” she said and started to move immediately.

“Michael, go upstairs and wait for my sign.”

“Consider it done.” He moved immediately. He ran to the upper floor and stood near his father’s room. And then he looked at Robert and nodded once. Robert looked at Ashley and nodded, she smiled and nodded back.

She ran towards Kevin, and once she reached him, she threw herself to the ground as if she has stumbled on something. She held her right knee and screamed painfully. Kevin dashed towards her immediately and kneeled in front of her.

“Are you hurt?” He wondered anxiously.

She kept screaming. “It hurts very much.”

“Let me see.”

“Go away!” She kept screaming painfully. Robert took advantage of the situation and looked back at Michael. He nodded, giving him the green light to execute the mission. Michael moved immediately.

“Ana... Go to Amy and Bill and take them to the garage. Wait for us there.”

“Okay.” She moved immediately.

Some seconds later, Michael came out of the room, raising the keys up with glory. Robert smiled and nodded. Michael put the keys on his pocket and dashed downstairs.

“Alice... Get Ashley and meet us outside.”

“No problems.”

Alice headed towards Ashley and Kevin, Michael reached Robert and they both headed outside.

“Ashley, we will be late,” Alice said, kneeling next to Kevin.

“Her knee hurts, and I don’t know what to do,” Kevin said.

“Don’t worry Uncle Kevin; I’ll take care of her.”

“Thanks Alice, I owe you one.”



“You are welcome. Now go and finish your tea, it doesn’t even hurt her anymore, right Ashley?” Alice winked.

“Yes... I’ll be fine.”

“See? Go now and don’t worry about her.”

“Okay...” he muttered, got up, and walked towards the kitchen. The two girls ran outside immediately. They found Robert and Michael waiting for them outside.

“What took you so long?” Robert wondered.

“Sorry.” Alice said.

“Let’s go.”

They headed towards the garage, and there they met the rest of the gang. Robert pushed the button to open the garage, and it slowly moved up to reveal the monster captured behind it.

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“OH! This must be a dream!” Robert exclaimed, unbelieving what he was seeing. He laughed, out of his huge excitement. “Oh-Yeah!”

Michael and Bill grinned, sharing him his enormous excitement. Robert walked slowly towards the red 2010 Dodge™ Challenger™ that was standing inside the garage just like a wild angry strong brutal predator that is waiting to be released. And how did I know the car although I’m bad when it comes to cars? Well, I’m a big fan of the muscle cars.

“Elvis, stop lying.”

“Umm... sorry mom.”

Ok... I heard them talking about her last night. Back to Robert, the moment he reached her, he touched her hood gently with his hand.

“Oh... you are on fire babe... you are on fire.”

“Can we start moving please?” Amy snarled. All the girls didn’t seem very excited about the car, except Alice.

Robert sighed. “Sorry, I couldn’t prevent myself.”

Amy shook her head and headed to the car, and the rest followed her immediately. She sat on the front seat, and the rest sat on the back seats. Alice, Ana, Ashley, Michael, and Bill; this was their order from the left to the right.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, I suggest you fasten your seatbelts.”

He noticed that the number of seatbelts is very less than their numbers; this is why he spoke again, “And those who don’t have one, I suggest you stick to each others... tightly.”

“Yes Sir,” Bill said, still excited.

“Ready?” Robert wondered. All of them nodded, except Amy who was still angry and uncomfortable.

“We are completely ready,” Bill yelled.

“Good.”

Robert started the engine. The car roared angrily and loudly the moment he touched the gas.

“Yeah! Roar honey... Roar and release your anger!”

He hit the gas again, the car roared louder.

“Can you hear this sound?” He asked.

“Oh-Yeah!” Michael and Bill answered at the same moment.

Robert went on, “Do you know what is it?”

They kept staring at him, through the rearview mirror. He went on, “It is the sound of more than three hundreds strong untamed furious horses being squeezed together.”

The two hardly swallowed.

“Do you know what this process produces?” He wondered. They shook their heads.

Robert hit the gas stronger, and the car roared louder.

“Power...” he said in a full mouth.

Amy grimaced and looked at him. “Robert... Don’t try anything cra—”

It was too late; the madness has already started. And her desperate words were interrupted and replaced by a loud continuous scream while the car was blasting out of the garage and flying towards the main gate. The other three girls followed her immediately and made them four screams instead of one. The screams didn’t stop, not even for a single moment, and when the car passed the main gate and was absolutely going to hit a massive tree if Robert hasn’t timed the drift right and put the car pack on the right track, the loud screams just got louder. Michael and Bill were absolutely enjoying themselves, but their loud yells of excitement easily vanished inside the girls’ louder cries. The car kept moving fast, and the girls kept screaming. Suddenly, one of the screams stopped and was replaced by some desperate words.

“The... school...” Amy mumbled with low voice.

“Don’t worry. We will be there in no time.”

“No... it is...”

“What?”

“It is on the... other direction!”

“Oh! Ok... don’t worry.”

Without any introductions, Robert used the handbrake and performed a half donut drift that put the car on the other direction.

“You are the best, man, you are the best!” Bill yelled. Robert smiled, while hitting the gas and accelerating.

The girls didn’t stop screaming, and I can’t blame them. I was scared enough to escape and fly outside. The view of the speedy car dodging and barely missing numerous consequent collisions scared me to death from above, and I couldn’t stand only imagining myself back inside it. But... I have to do it, this is my job; I have to get back inside the car again to tell you exactly what was going on.

“Slow down!” Amy yelled.

“Closing your eyes is always a good solution,” he replied. Ashley closed her eyes immediately, and used both of her small hands to cover them.

“Turn right!” Amy screamed. Robert used the handbrake again to enter the sharp corner.

“I suggest you warn me earlier,” he hissed.

“I suggest you slow down so I may stay alive to warn you earlier!” She yelled angrily.

“Forget about her Bro, I know another way,” Bill said.

“Is it shorter?” Robert wondered.

“Not really, but it is more exciting,” he said, conspiratorially.

“Cool!” Robert grinned. Bill winked.

“Take the next turn, behind that bus.”

“Ok...”

Robert followed the instructions, to find himself stuck behind a huge slow bus. He made a sudden move and dashed left to bypass it, to find a fast truck coming on the opposite direction. Robert winced, the loud screams just got louder, and then he did an amazing instinctive move when he dashed left again and drove off-road, barely missing the truck, and finding a light pole in front of him. Every time I become convinced that those screams already reached their maximum volume, something happens and proves that I was totally wrong. And this time this thing was the unbelievable maneuver performed by Robert, when he amazingly avoided colliding with the light pole by dashing right and getting back to the road, then avoiding hitting the fast car that was behind the truck by dashing right again to barely put the car in front of the bus that caused the problem from the beginning. It all happened in a blink of an eye with an unbelievable timing and skill.

“Hooray!” Michael cheered.

“YOU ARE CRAZY!” Amy screamed.

Ana finally gathered herself and yelled, “You are going to kill us all!”

The car entered another Road. It was wide, almost empty, but for some farmer’s trucks, and has cornfields on both of its sides, which were wet because of the last night’s heavy rain, and was sparkling because of the today’s bright sun.

Robert grinned. “Bill, you are super smart!” He exclaimed.

“At your service, buddy,” Bill said, smiling as well.

“A breath-taking landscape... an empty wide road... and a fast angry car... Guys, prepare for the real fun!”

“Yeah!” Alice exclaimed, raising both of her arms up in a great excitement. It looks like she has finally overcome her fear and decided to enjoy the trip, just like me, and Ashley who reopened her eyes and smiled after she heard Alice’s yell.

“3... 2... 1... Go!”

After finishing the count down, Robert smashed the gas pedal and the car blasted like a fast bullet. The screams were back again, but this time

It was accompanied by laughs and joy, at least for Alice and Ashley. Amy was holding tightly to her seat, and Ana was holding tightly to her brother, burying her face into his chest out of her fear. Robert kept amazingly bypassing the cars by dodging at the last moment to add more fun and fear. With the speed in which the car was traveling, and the rate with which it was cutting the distances, they will only need a minute or two to reach their destination, however far it was. But suddenly, something unexpected happened... an officer appeared.

"Pull over now!" He yelled.

"Oh, great!" Amy growled.

"What was that?" Robert wondered.

"I guess it was a police officer who has just asked you to stop the car," Ana scoffed, yelling angrily.

"Cool! We are going to jail!" Bill exclaimed.

"Awesome!" Michael shared him his excitement.

"Yeah!" Umm... Ashley also shared him his excitement.

"Great! He will add more fun! Ladies and gentlemen, prepare for the hot pursuit!" Robert said. Michael, Bill, Alice, and Ashley cheered loudly.

"Are you out of your mind?" Amy yelled.

"You absolutely are!" Ana followed.

"No I'm not!"

"Stop the car now," Amy ordered.

"I will, but we will have some fu—"

"STOP IT NOW!" She roared, interrupting him, and making him automatically depress the brakes. The car squealed for some seconds before it finally completely stopped. The officer stopped his car behind them, got out, and walked towards Robert's side window.

He stared at Robert's face for some moments, scrutinizing his expression.

"Your papers, please."

"Sure..." Robert handed him his driving license, after checking his pockets for some moments.

The officer studied it for a while.

"You aren't from around here, are you?"

"No Sir."

"Do you know how fast were you driving?"

"I'm so sorry sir; I think I will need some time to get used to the rules of this beautiful to—"

The officer interrupted him. "Amy?! Amy Wilson?! What are you doing here?"

"I was... umm... this is..."

He gasped, his eyes widened, and he pulled his gun immediately and pointed it to Robert's head after glancing at the backseats.

"Oh!" All of them winced and exclaimed at the same moment.

"You kidnapped the Wilson's!"

"WHAT?!"

"Put your hands where I can see them, and get out of the car immediately!" He yelled.

"No officer Jackson, this is Robert, our cousin!" Amy yelled.

Officer Jackson stared at her for a moment.

"Are you sure?"

She nodded. "He has just arrived," she added.

"He still has to get out of the car," he said, still pointing the gun to his head. "Come on, and keep your hands visible to me," he added.

Robert finally obeyed him. The officer walked him away from the car, just a few steps.

"Ok Amy, the danger is gone now, you can tell the truth and he won't be able to touch you."

She opened the door and got out, standing near the car. "Officer Jackson, he is our cousin," she insisted, looking very calm and convincing.

The officer glanced at her, and then looked back at Robert again. "I have to believe her; this angel never lies," he said, pointing his gun down.

Amy smiled, and Robert sighed with relief.

"You know that I should give you a ticket, and maybe arrest you as well. But I'll let it go this time, just because you are new here."

"Thanks Sir."

"Now go."

Robert nodded and started to move. The officer put his hand on his shoulder forcing him to stop. He smiled. "By the way, it was really a nice driving out there."

Robert grinned. "Thanks Sir."

The officer squinted suddenly. "Don't ever, ever, ever do it again, am I making myself clear?"

Robert hardly swallowed. "Very clear Sir."

"Good... Go then."

Robert headed back to the car. Once he reached it, Amy got in, and he did the same.

"Take the first exit, and then turn right," Amy ordered, not looking at him. He started the engine and obeyed her order.

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During the five minutes it took them to reach the school, no one uttered a word. Once the car stopped, Amy opened her door and dashed outside, before smashing the door behind her and walking rapidly and angrily away from the car. Alice opened her door immediately and rushed to

follow her friend, but on her way, she stopped by Robert's side window.

"This was the most amazing thing I've ever been through in my entire life!"

Robert smiled.

"Bye."

She left him and ran, trying to keep track with Amy's speed.

"Amy! Wait for me!" She yelled.

Bill and Michael got out of the car, followed by Ana and Ashley. They stopped by Robert's window as well.

"You are the best, buddy," Bill said.

"The best driver ever!" Michael added. They both ran to the school's main door.

"What are you going to do now?" Ana wondered. There was a combination between anger and compassion on her face and voice.

"I don't know. I think I'll explore the town for a while."

"No, I mean when you return home with the stolen car. You know that there is a fire on the house now waiting to burn you, don't you?"

"Don't worry about that."

"No, you don't understand, this isn't going to pass easily."

"I can handle it, don't worry about me." He smiled and went on, "Now, go get them all."

Ana sighed, completely uncomfortable.

"What are you waiting for? Go and enjoy your day. I'll be fine, I promise."

He smiled and she sighed again.

"Bye," she sniffed. "Come on Ashley," she added, turning around and walking to the school.

"Bye..." Ashley said with a smile and a wave. They both glanced at him for the last time the moment they reached the main door, before vanishing inside.

*(Ok... what now? I don't know... some free roaming or something. You know, it's actually a good idea, sort of. Really? This is the first time you like something I suggest. I said sort of. What do you mean? We will introduce a slight modification. And this would be? Umm...the beach. Oh, forget it. Why? Why don't we take the best out of this hot ride and use it to get some chicks? I said no. Oh-Yeah, I see; your stupid restrictions again. They are not stupid! They absolutely are, and they are pathetic as well, just like you. This is the end of this conversation!*

*Look buddy, if you want to keep the back seats clean, you can do it anywhere else. Shut up! No I won't shut up! I can't stand still, watching you ruining your life. I'm not ruining anything! Be brave and go. Never! But why? Because this is cheap, very cheap and disgusting as well. Oh great, the old lie of the pure girls is back. It is not a lie! It is for me, and for them as well, it's you who are blind to see. Open your eyes Bro and see the truth.*

*Look, we have a sister now, would you be happy to see her running around semi-naked and ready to sleep with any guy just because they*

both wanted to have fun? Would you be happy while watching her jumping between dozens of boyfriends who mainly aims to taste her and then brutally break her heart because they just found another more delicious lollipop?

*Who cares? It is her life. It is a free country and she is a free girl. She can do whatever she wants. Wait a moment... please don't tell me you are going to ask her to stay pure... Oh no! You are going to do this, aren't you? Umm... I think I'll try... and do my best to... convince her. YOU GOT TO BE KIDDING ME! No I'm not, I'll do my best, and it's up to her at the end. Excuse me, if all the girls did as you say, how the heck would we have fun?*

*Exactly... this is what I'm talking about. This is the only thing we want; having fun and fulfilling our desires. We came up with a big lie; you are a pure girl then you are an old fashioned girl. Neglecting the fact that the girl is a rare amazing unbelievably-expensive diamond that is precious enough to be kept safe inside its quilted-with-silk box, till the prince who completely understands her value finally comes.*

*And for some reason, they believed us. This trick widely opened the door for us to get in and do whatever we want, with whoever we want, whenever we want, and without caring about any responsibilities as long as we take our precautions. This trick was the gold mine that brought us an enormous fortune. Now we can taste all the types, enjoy all the styles, and the best part is that it has no limitations or restrictions.*

*Sadly, we turned into hungry animals that aim only to fulfill their hunger, and turned them into delicious but cheap candies that can be tasted at any time for free.*

**YOU ARE COMPLETELY OUT OF YOUR MIND!**

*Why? Because I believe the girl should keep herself for the right guy who will happily stick to her although he knows he will get nothing from her but her care and tenderness till they get married? Tell me what will force him to stay with her although he can't touch her body? I tell you, the girl inside that body is what will force him to stay and even to fight. She will capture him in her deep eyes. Her smile will be the only light he sees through the darkness of his life. Her voice will be the air he breathes, and her laugh will be the source of his power. And when the long awaited night comes, she will give him everything he wanted and dreamed of. There, he will feel the great happiness of the physical contact he kept hearing of and waiting for through the past years. And there he will become convinced that this happiness may be great, but it is not the ultimate happiness. Because he has already tasted this ultimate happiness, every time she captured him in her eyes, her smile lighted his dark life, her voice was his air, and her laugh gave him power to keep going.*

*This is what is called "Love", and this is what I believe every girl deserves.*

*Take us home... and don't ever, ever, talk to me again, idiot.)*

"Elvis, wake up, the car is moving."

Oh... I'm so sorry. I can't believe I did this. He just... It took him too long. I'm sorry again.

Ok...the car moved, and I followed immediately. He kept roaming around the town with no certain destination. He kept doing this for too long, forcing me to follow his aimless boring journey. Suddenly, he pulled over and talked to an old guy who was standing on the pavement. Sorry, I don't know what he said; I was flying high above him to get a complete picture of the area. Regardless, the car moved again. I guess the old guy gave Robert directions to a certain place.

The car slowed down before finally stopping. Some moments later, Robert got out. So, what was the place? It was a beautiful beach.

There weren't a lot of people out there; I guess the rest were either at their works or their schools. But the warm sun, the sandy golden beach, the clean calm water, and the fresh air were enough to make you stay and enjoy.

Robert didn't enter the beach; he leaned on the outside stony fence and kept watching. He didn't look either happy or enjoying himself. I know him well; there is absolutely something annoying him... a lot.

*(So, Mr. Morals came to the beach after all. Shut up, I guess you said we won't be talking to each others again. I did, but it can't be done; I'm stuck with you buddy. Yeah, I know, for my bad luck.)*

Some minutes passed, silently.

"Hi..."

Robert turned towards the sudden sweet voice to find an amazing girl standing next to him.

*(Oh-Yeah! What a chick! Go for it buddy, go for it! Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!)*

"Hello...?" The girl talked again.

"Sorry, I was just ... kinda lost," Robert finally talked, mumbling.

"It's ok. We all have these moments." She smiled. Robert smiled back.

"So, you are new here, aren't you?"

Robert nodded. "Yes, arrived yesterday."

"You will like it here; it's very calm and beautiful. People are good too."

"I hope so."

They both silenced for some moments.

"I'm Catherine."

"Nice to meet you Catherine."

The girl kept staring at him, smiling, and waiting for him to go on. But he didn't.

She chuckled. "You do have a name, don't you?"

Robert laughed. "Yes, sure, I'm so sorry. I'm Robert."

"Nice to meet you, Robert."

"Thanks."

The silence dominated again. This is a very common thing when it comes to Robert. When he is participating in any conversation, be sure that it will include a lot of silence sequences. And if this girl didn't talk, he will never do, and they will stay like this forever, or till she becomes bored enough to leave.

Suddenly, her friends, the three girls in the convertible car, yelled at her.

"Catherine, come on, we are leaving!"

She turned to them. "Ok... just wait a moment." She turned to Robert again.



“Umm... I have to go, but I can give you my number, in case you needed someone to show you around,” she beamed.

*(This is your chance, seduce her. What the hell are you talking about? Don't worry, you don't have to do anything more, I just want to prove something to you. What do you mean? Just do it, and see how she would respond. I got it. I'll do it, just to prove you are wrong, totally wrong. Let's wait and see.)*

Suddenly, Robert talked.

“Why don't we go somewhere private where we can freely exchange our numbers?”

What? Did you hear that? Did you hear what he has just said? I can't believe my ears or my eyes! He is trying to seduce her! What the heck is wrong with you Robert? And the worse is that she doesn't seem very annoyed by what he has just said. Instead, she bit her lips and grinned. And then answered after studying his expression for some moments.

“Ok--ay... I guess I'll ask them to leave then,” she mumbled.

*(Ha-ha! I told you! I never mistake babe, I never mistake!)*

“Damn it...”

He turned around immediately and dashed to the car. The surprised girl held her place, stunned by what has just happened.

“What is wrong?” She wondered, still totally stunned. Robert didn't answer her. He jumped in the car and drove away immediately.

*(To where now loser? Wanna try another beach? Or maybe try a more hard-to-get girl? It will all end the same way. The effort and the time will vary, but the end will always be the same. SHUT UP! As you wish, loser.)*

I followed him again, and this time, he returned home.

\*\*\*\*\*

Exactly as I expected, Kevin, grandpa, and Aunt Marie were waiting for his return.

“Here he is,” Kevin groaned. Grandpa and Marie turned around to find Robert parking the car and getting out. Kevin dashed towards him immediately.

“Kevin! Wait!” Aunt Marie yelled, but it was too late. Once Kevin reached Robert, he grabbed the collar of his shirt.

“You stole my car!” He shouted. Robert didn't act back. Grandpa, who followed Kevin immediately, desperately tried to release Robert from his strong grasp.

“Kevin! Take it easy!”

“What?! HE IS A THIEF!”

“Calm down!” Aunt Marie yelled.

"I'll kill you!"

"That's enough!" Grandpa roared. Kevin squinted and glared at Robert.

"Let him go," Grandpa ordered. Kevin sighed, and then obeyed after some moments, letting go of Robert's shirt.

"I'm not done with you yet," Kevin threatened, and then turned around and headed to the house. Aunt Marie glanced with sorrow at Robert and then followed him.

"What the hell were you thinking?" Grandpa growled.

"Nothing... I borrowed the car, took the kids to their school on time, and returned it without a single scratch."

"Enough... You are punished."

"Really? And how would you punish me? You will lock me in my room? Or maybe you will take my favorite toys away?" He scoffed.

"You are exiled," he answered calmly, ignoring Robert's sneering.

Robert winced. "Exiled?!"

"Yep."

"This means... I should leave?" Robert wondered, still confused.

"Not really. You can leave of course, but you can stay as well; it's up to you."

Robert frowned. "I don't understand."

"Look... you aren't allowed to speak to any one of us, and none of us are allowed to talk to you. In other words, you act as if we don't exist, and we act as if you aren't really there."

Robert stared at him for some moments.

"Got it?" Grandpa asked.

"I think so."

"Good... This ends tomorrow, if we didn't decide to extend it of course."

"Ok," Robert mumbled.

"And those who helped you will be punished as well."

"No one helped me," Robert said fast.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes... I told them that he agreed to give me the car after I begged him for a while."

"Really? And how did you get the keys?"

Robert hardly swallowed. "... told Ana... that her father wants her to get me the spare keys, and she believed me."

"I have to confess, you have a strong story. Ok, I believe you."

If you asked me, I'll absolutely say that grandpa wasn't tricked by Robert's lies.

"Ok then, it starts now, and ends tomorrow morning."

"Yes sir."

He turned around and walked towards the house. Suddenly he stopped and turned around to face Robert Again.

"The car isn't fixed yet, and you still have to bring the kids from school and drive them to it tomorrow. So... I suggest you figure something out."

Robert nodded.

"And find a place to serve you dinner; we have no food for you here."

"Ok."

Grandpa walked to the house and left him standing.

"Great..." Robert sniffed.

*(Can we go to the beach now? Sure, why not? Really? Of course not! Ugh... then what are you up to? Just wait and see.)*

After standing still for some moments, Robert left the house, and of course I followed.

\*\*\*\*\*

Robert didn't go too far. Actually, he didn't go far at all; he wandered around before stopping by one of the neighbor's houses. He stood in front of the short wooden fence and kept staring at the beautiful house. I repositioned myself to be just behind his shoulder, here I figured out why he especially chose this house after wandering around the neighborhood, and I also figured out at what he was staring; the bicycle.

He stood still like this for some minutes. He either was waiting for someone to appear, or was planning to steal the bike.

"Can I help you?"

Robert shuddered and turned around immediately to find a beautiful teenager riding a bike and staring at him.

"Umm... I'm Robert... Robert Wilson... Your new neighbor," he mumbled.

"Yes, I heard about you," the girl said, completely uninterested. She removed the helmet to reveal her long light-brown hair, while looking him in the eyes with her blue ones.

Robert went on, "Is this your house?"

"Mm-hmm."

"Look... umm... what was your name?"

"I didn't give my name."

*(Fall back immediately. Apologize politely and then go; you absolutely have no chance against her. Really? Or maybe I should seduce her? NO! No, no, no, no... Don't even try! But why? I guess I heard you saying that all of them are seducible. Ok, I surrender, not all of them... better now? Sort of.)*

"I'm so sorry I disturbed you. I'll go now, bye."

He turned around and was about to leave.

"No, wait..."

He turned again.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be rude," she mumbled, paused, and then went on, "I'm Mandy," she said with a smile.

Robert smiled back. "I'm Robert."

"Yeah, you already said that."

He chuckled. "I guess so."

"So, did you want anything?"

"Umm... actually I need a favor."

"Whatever you want."

"I need to borrow that bicycle," he said, pointing at the bicycle near the swimming pool.

"Oh... I'm so sorry."

"It's ok... I understand."

"No, I was just saying that this is my brother's bicycle... I can't give it to you."

"Oh... I see."

"But you can take mine." She smiled.

"Really?"

"Of course."

He sighed. "You've just saved my day."

She laughed, moving away and giving him some space to ride the bike. "Then save your life and bring it back in one piece."

He laughed and rode it. "Don't worry about that."

She handed him the helmet. "And make sure to wear this."

"No problems." He smiled and wore the helmet.

"See you later then."

“Wait... umm... thank you, really thank you.”

She smiled. “You are welcome.”

“Umm... what if I’m a thief who tricked you to steal your bike?”

“Well, my dad is the sheriff of the town; he will catch you in a blink of an eye.”

He laughed. She chuckled and went on, “And actually I saw you arriving yesterday.”

“I see... I guess I’m a famous man.”

She chuckled.

“Why aren’t you at school?” He wondered.

“Hello, I’m nineteen.”

“Oh... sorry.”

“It’s ok.”

They both silenced for some moments.

“Ok, I’ll be going then. I promise I’ll return it to you as fast as I can.”

“It’s ok, take your time, I’m not going anywhere.”

“Ok, thanks again.”

“You are welcome, again.” She smiled, and he smiled back.

“Bye,” he said and started to move.

“Bye,” she replied.

A moment later, he lost his balance and fall. She laughed and ran towards him, giving him a hand, and helping him to get up.

“Are you okay?”

“Sorry, it has been too long since I rode a bicycle.”

“I can give you a ride; at least you will arrive in one piece.”

He laughed. “No, don’t bother yourself, I can handle this.”

“If you say so.”

She moved away, giving him some space to move, and this time, he did it right.

He glanced at her and waved. “Bye...”

She smiled. “Bye.”

I really wanted to stay with her to do my precise investigations, but my curiosity forced me to follow Robert, and he headed directly to the town.

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I'm tired! He kept wandering around the town for two hours! Two continuous hours! Can you believe it? Wait a moment; he is going to stop again. I wish that this time he is going to do or say something, instead of just staring at the place for some moments and then go away. He stopped by a big shop with a huge colorful sign. Maybe I can't read the sign and tell you what this place is, but I can absolutely tell that it has something to do with cars, simply because it has a huge yard full of cars. Oh! I got it! I'm super smart! He is going to rent a car!

He glanced around for some moments and then headed to a guy standing near the shop. I guess he was the manager; he was giving orders and yelling at the employees.

"Hello Sir."

"Hello, how can I help you?"

"Umm... actually I was looking for a job."

He was looking for a job! Sorry, I didn't see that coming.

"Oh... I'm so sorry; I have no jobs currently available."

"No problems, thanks anyway."

He was about to turn around, but the guy stopped him.

"You may want to check the Thompson's restaurant; I heard they have some jobs available there."

"Thank you sir, but I needed a job related to cars; this is the only thing I'm good at."

"I wish I could help you."

"Thanks, and sorry for wasting your time," Robert said and then walked back to the bike.

"Hey Kid..."

He turned towards the voice to find an old guy wearing a blue cap and staring at him.

"Can I help you sir?" Robert wondered, holding his place, and staring at the guy who started walking towards him.

"Actually, yes, you can."

Robert squinted. The guy kept walking till he reached him.

"I heard you are looking for a job."

"Yes Sir," Robert said, keeping his face expressionless and hiding his excitement.

"How good is your driving?"

"Very..." he answered confidently.

"Well, I don't have a constant job to offer, but I have a... umm... you can call it a one day task."

"I'm listening."

"You will come to my farm, help me load the truck, deliver the cargo to someone outside the town, and then return to me and receive your payment. See? Too easy."

Robert kept his silence, while studying the stranger's expression.

"What is your call?"

"I'll take it."

"Good."

"But I have a condition."

The old guy squinted, before laughing loudly for some moments. Later, he put himself together and talked. The laugh garbled his voice. "A condition?"

"Yes sir," Robert said, still calm and confident.

"And this 'condition' would be?" he said, emphasizing on the word 'condition'.

"When I get the job done, I want to borrow your truck for two hours, instead of the cash."

The smile disappeared from the old guy's face and was replaced by an amazed expression.

"Are you sure about that?"

"Completely."

"As you wish. But I have a condition as well; if you played tricks on me, I'll borrow your body for two hours and feed it to my dogs."

Robert laughed. The old guy ignored him and went on, "Do we have a deal here?"

"Absolutely."

"Good... let's get going."

"Whenever you are ready sir."

The old guy smiled, and they both walked to his truck.

"I need to test your skills first."

"Sure, no problems," Robert said confidently.

"Good..."

They reached the truck. The old guy headed to the driver's side window and leaned inside, searching for something on the front seat. Suddenly, he grabbed a gun and pointed it towards Robert.

Robert showed a fast and impressive reaction when he pulled the gun out of the old guy's hand, pushed him to the old truck, and put the muzzle on his forehead.

"Woo, take it easy young man."

"What the hell was that?"

"Your skill test, and congratulations, you got yourself an A+."

Robert sniffed, glaring at the smiling old guy.

"Put the gun down, we've already wasted a lot of time."

He slowly pointed it down and then handed it to the old guy.

"Sorry, I had to make sure that you can defend my business."

Robert kept staring at him.

"Come on, let's go." He entered the truck, but Robert didn't move.

"What are you waiting for?"

Robert glanced at him, put the bicycle on the back of the truck, and then followed the old guy inside. A moment later, the truck started to move.

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The old guy's farm wasn't too far; it only needed them about ten minutes to reach it. They needed about an hour to fully load the truck, and then Robert started the next stage of the deal; the delivery.

With Robert's skillful and fast driving, it only needed him another two hours to reach his destination, deliver the cargo, and return to the old guy.

"Oh, impressive," The old guy said once he saw the truck pulling over and Robert getting out. He got up from his wooden chair and walked towards Robert, who was already heading towards him. They met at a mid point.

"Welcome back young man," he said with a wide smile.

"Here is the cash," Robert said, handing the money to the old guy.



“Faced any troubles?”

“Nothing at all.”

The old guy grinned again. “Well done.”

“I did my part of the deal.”

“And I’ll do mine as well. But first I need to know what do you need the truck for?”

“I need to take my cousins home from their school.”

The old guy squinted. “That’s it?!”

“Yes sir.”

“Weird...” he murmured.

“I really need to go.”

“Oh, yes, sure. The truck is yours.”

“Thanks, I’ll be back in two hours.”

“No problems, take your time.”

Robert nodded. “Thanks,” he said, turned around, and started to walk.

“Wait kid...”

Robert turned to him.

“You can’t put your cousins into that piece of jerk, can you?”

Robert stared at him, glanced at the miserable truck, and then looked back at him. The old guy went on, “I think I have something more interesting.”

Robert squinted, and the old guy smiled evilly.

\*\*\*\*\*

“No way!”

Robert exclaimed once he put an eye on the black car the old guy just showed him.

“I know how you feel; I felt the same way the first time I saw her.”

“She is incredible!” Robert said while revolving around the car.

“Yes, she is my baby.”

“A classic black Ford <sup>tm</sup> Mustang <sup>tm</sup>! You got to be kidding me!”

“Take it easy young man; you didn’t even drive her yet.”

“Yeah, and I can’t wait!”

“Then go ahead. Here are the keys.” He threw the keys to the extremely excited Robert, and he grabbed them easily.

“Thank you sir, this is really a dream came true.”

“If anything, and I mean anything, happened to this car, I’ll...”

Robert interrupted him. “Don’t worry sir, if anything wrong happened to this car, I’ll kill myself.”

The old guy laughed. “Go now, and don’t keep me waiting for too long.”

“Ok...”

“And when you return, I have an offer to discuss with you.”

“If you want we can talk now; I still have some time.”

“Well, my grandsons are spending the summer with me, and I need someone to help me fixing the house and preparing the place.”

“Then you’ve just found your man, sir.”

The old guy smiled. “Don’t wanna discuss your payment?”

“With a car like this around, there is no need to discuss anything.”

The old guy laughed again. Robert was about to get in the car, but suddenly he stopped and faced the old guy again.

“By the way, my name is Robert... Robert Wilson.” Robert said with a smile.

The old guy smiled back. “I know... I have your ID, remember?”

“Right.”

“Here it is,” he said, throwing Robert’s ID towards him. Robert caught it.

“By the way, I’m Adam... Adam Craig,” he said.

“It was nice to do business with you Mr. Craig.”

“Same here, Kid.” He smiled, and Robert smiled back.

“And if you are some way or another a relative to the Wilson’s, send my greetings to the great Mr. Jack.”

“I’ll make sure to do this.”

“Have a nice day.”

“With this car, this will be too easy.” Robert winked. Mr. Adam smiled. Robert got in the car, started the engine, yelled with excitement the moment he hit the gas, and then blasted out of the farm. Suddenly, he stopped the car and drove reversely, returning to Mr. Adam. He stopped the car and got out.

“Sorry, I forgot the bicycle.”

“Oh, I put it over there.”

“Okay.”

He got the bike, used the racks on it to attach it to the back of the car, and then drove out of the farm, after waving for the last time at the old guy.

\*\*\*\*\*

Robert decided to make a full use of the time left before going to get the kids and headed back to Mandy’s house. He parked the car in front of the house, got out, and then detached the bicycle. He glanced at the house garden, but found no body. So, he decided to head to the main door and ring the bell. Some moments later, she opened the door. Once she saw him, she smiled.

“Hi,” she said, keeping the smile on her face.

“Hi.”

“I’m glad to see you are still alive.” She paused after glancing at his covered-with-sweat clothes and his miserable shape, and then went on, “Sort of.”

He chuckled. “Yeah, it wasn’t an easy day.”

“I hope my bike survived it.” The smile returned to her face.

Robert chuckled again. “Don’t worry; she is alive and healthy as well. I put it out there, next to your brother’s bike,” he said, pointing at the bikes.

“Okay.”

“Umm... is there anything I can do to express my appreciation for all of your help?”

“Well, a ‘thank you’ always does the trick,” she said, smiling.

Robert smiled back. “No, seriously, there must be something I can do.”

“It’s ok. I’m glad I could help.”

“I must return your favor.”

She giggled. "You won't give up, will you?"

"Never."

"Okay..." She sighed. "I'll figure something out and let you know."

Robert's expression lightened with relief. "Really?" He wondered.

"Mm-hmm."

Robert squinted and stared at her smiling face for some seconds, studying her expression.

"You aren't going to ask for anything, are you?" He wondered, still looking her in the eyes.

She chuckled while staring back at him, challengingly. "I will..." she said.

"No, you won't"

"Yes, I will."

"You won't."

"I will."

He surrendered by diverting his eyes away from hers, while still looking at her face.

"I do hope you will," he murmured.

She smiled. "You said it. Don't blame me for the consequences."

He laughed. "I won't."

They both silenced for some moments, looking at each others.

"I got to go."

"Okay."

"See you around?"

She smiled. "You can count on that."

He smiled. "Okay... later then," he said, turned around, and headed to the car.

She replied immediately, "Bye."

She waited till he got in the car and glanced at her for the last time, and then she went inside and closed the door after waving and smiling back at him. He started the engine and dashed to the school.

\*\*\*\*\*

Robert reached his destination just in time, to find the kids standing in front of the school, waiting and annoyed. First, they didn't recognize him. But after he parked the car and got out, Ashley's wandering-around eyes easily caught him. She grinned and pointed at him.

"There!" She exclaimed. Her yell caught their attention and made them look at the direction at which she was pointing. Once they saw Robert, Bill, Michael, Ana, and Alice smiled with joy and relief. On the other hand, Amy didn't express any happiness. Robert smiled back at them, and then they headed towards him.

"Nice ride!" Bill marveled. Michael didn't talk, but his eyes expressed the same amazement.

"Yeah, she is amazing," Robert concurred.

"I hope you didn't steal it too."

"Amy!" Ana snapped.

"Ana, it's ok," Robert said immediately, calming her down a little. Amy escaped the situation and got in the car, in the back seats this time.

The silence dominated for some moments.

"What are you waiting for?" He wondered, breaking the ice. The kids got in the car, one after another. It was Alice who sat in the front seat this time. Robert made sure that all of them were on board, especially Ashley, and then opened the driver's door and got in, pressed the gas, and started the returning home journey... And this time, he drove responsibly.

Some minutes passed... They almost reached the house.

"How did it go?" Ana wondered, anxiously.

"I'm... umm... exiled."

"Exiled?!" Amy wondered.

"No!" Michael snapped.

"This is not fair!" Ana protested.

"I was exiled before, and it really sucked," Alice screeched.

"It's ok, I can handle it."

"What about us?" Bill asked.

"Don't worry, I covered your backs."

"What does this mean?" Amy wondered.

"It means that he protected us!" Michael exclaimed.

"This means we aren't punished, doesn't it?" Alice wondered.

"Exactly," Robert answered.

She sighed with a deep relief and grinned. "Thanks, this means I can go Grace's birthday tonight."

"If anyone asked, you'll say that I told you that uncle Kevin agreed to give me the car after I've begged him for a while." He paused and glanced

at Ana via the rearview mirror and went on, "And you will say that I tricked you by saying that he asked me to ask you to bring me the spare keys from his room, understood?"

"I'm not gonna lie."

"Then you are going to be punished, just like him," Alice said.

"Whatever."

"Hey, listen to me; it wasn't your fault."

"It wasn't yours either."

He sighed.

"Ana, I think he has a point here. If you spoke up, all of us will be punished," Michael said.

"No!" Ashley exclaimed.

Alice frowned. "And this also means that none of us will go to the tonight's party!"

"Please Ana, I want to go," Ashley begged.

"Don't worry, I'll say I was the one who helped him and brought him the keys. No one of you will be punished."

"Oh... what a sacrifice!" Alice scoffed.

"Shut up!" Ana yelled with exasperation. Alice grimaced and turned to her. "Open your eyes! He is already punished! And your stupid self-blaming will change nothing!"

"It's none of your concern!" She yelled back.

The car reached the house.

"Guys, calm down, we don't want them to see us arguing, do we?" Robert said, calmly.

Ana sighed, and Alice turned around, both of their angry expressions didn't ease. Once the car stopped, Alice opened the door and angrily dashed outside. She didn't wait for Amy who followed her, after losing some seconds, waiting for Ashley to get out. Bill and Michael followed them, and Ana was the last to leave the car.

"Ana, wait," Robert said. She stopped and turned to him. He walked to her and then kneeled in front of her. He looked her in the eyes and started to speak.

"You don't have to do this."

"You didn't have to do this either."

"It was my idea."

"Yes, but it was my dad's fault from the beginning. He forced you to do this."

He caressed her hair gently. "You'll miss the party."

"It isn't a big deal; I'm not very much into parties anyway."

He smiled, still caressing her hair. She went on, "Actually, I prefer to stay with you."

He smiled again, and then put a long tender kiss on her forehead. The moment the kiss ended, he cupped her face gently between his palms. "I wish you were my sister," he murmured.

"We don't have to share the same parents to be a brother and sister," she beamed.

Robert chuckled. "You know something, you are really smart. You make me feel how stupid I am in comparison to you every time we talk."

She laughed. "It is not my problem."

He smiled. "Right."

"Are you coming in?"

"No, I have to return the car first."

He noticed she was about to ask, so he answered in advance, "I borrowed it from an old guy in the town in return for a favor I did to him earlier."

"I see."

"Ok, see you later then."

She nodded once. He let go of her and stood up.

"Bye..." she said and then turned around and headed to the house. He held his place watching her for some moments, and then he got back to the car and left. This time, I followed Ana inside.

\*\*\*\*\*

Once Ana entered the house, grandpa and Aunt Marie who were sitting on the couch in the living room, apparently waiting for her, stood up immediately. Ana tried to ignore them and stride directly to her Room, but Aunt Marie's call stopped her.

"Ana," Aunt Marie yelled. Ana sighed and then turned to her. Aunt Marie went on, "We need to talk."

"Sure," Ana said calmly. Aunt Marie walked to her, held her hand, and then walked her upstairs. They headed to Aunt Marie and Kevin's room, entered the room, and closed the door behind.

Aunt Marie put her hands on both of Ana's shoulders, looked her in the eyes, and started to talk.

"I need to know what really happen today," she said, calmly.

Ana's confident expression didn't change. "Nothing, Robert wanted the car to drive us to school and I gave him the keys."

Aunt Marie frowned. "You mean you helped him steal the car?" She wondered.

"We didn't steal it, we borrowed it," she explained, keeping the same calm tone.

Aunt Marie's angry expression darkened more. "You sneaked into our room and took the keys, this is clearly a theft!" She yelled.

"If you say so," Ana said quietly and carelessly.

"Ugh..." Aunt Marie sniffed and turned around. She took some random steps around the room, and then took a deep breath, trying to calm herself a little. She walked back to Ana.

"Ana, honey, listen to me; you can't trust someone that easy."

Ana grimaced. "He is not someone, he is my cousin!" She protested, interrupting her mother.

"I know he is your cousin, it's not like I'm saying he is your stepmother or something. But still you can't trust him that easy; we only knew him for a single day. A single day for god's sake! And believe me; one day is totally insufficient to judge a person."

"It is for me," she said quietly.

"What is wrong with you?!" Aunt Marie yelled.

"With me? There is nothing wrong with me. It is both of you who should trust me a little more," she yelled louder.

"What?!"

"I'm not a kid anymore, and you should start respecting me and what I want more than this. You wanna know what happened today? I'll tell you what happened. Dad made a mistake and I did my best to fix it. And as I'm one hundred percent sure he will never confess that he was wrong, I returned home completely sure I'll be punished. So, punish me and end this; I really need to get some sleep."

Aunt Marie froze in her place, completely stunned by what she has just heard. After some moments of silence, her lips finally managed to utter some words.

"Get out," she murmured.

Ana sighed, turned around, and walked to the door. Just before she gets out, Aunt Marie talked again.

"And by the way, you are punished."

Ana glanced at her and then went out. I followed her, waiting to see some tears or something, but this didn't happen. And instead, she headed calmly to her room as if nothing has happened. She entered the room to find Ashley inside. Once Ashley saw her, she jumped out of her bed and ran towards her.

"Are you punished?" She wondered fearfully.

"Sure..." Ana said while bypassing her and heading to her bed. The moment she reached it, she threw herself on it, and lay on her back, staring at the ceiling. Ashley followed her and sat on the edge of the bed.

Ashley frowned. "This means you aren't coming to the party, right?" she groaned.

"I think so," Ana said, still staring at the ceiling.

"Then I'm not going as well," Ashley sniffed, while huddling up into the bed. Ana slowly repositioned herself to the sitting position, and then put her right arm around Ashley's shoulders.

"Why?" She wondered kindly.



Ashley looked at her and smiled. "I'll stay with you."

Ana gently pulled Ashley closer to her and went on, "What if I want you to go?"

"Really?" Ashley expression lightened a lot, and her smile developed into a grin. Ana tenderly rubbed Ashley's arm and went on, "Mm-hmm."

Ashley moved herself closer to Ana, and then buried her face into her chest, while trying to hug her by wrapping her small arm around her waist.

Ana automatically cuddled her more, while using the palm of her right hand to rub her back gently.

"I want you to go and have fun. Make sure to laugh and enjoy as much as you can," she murmured.

"Okay..." Ashley murmured back. They stayed like this for some seconds, and then Ana kindly pushed Ashley's head a shade away from her chest, just to be able to see her face and look her in the eyes. She patted her face with her left hand.

"You know something... I think we shouldn't waste any moment from our weekend."

"What do you wanna do?"

"Umm... swim?"

"Yeah!" Ashley cheered loudly. Ana smiled and went on, "Then what are we waiting for?"

Ashley chuckled.

"Come on..." Ana said. The two girls moved out of the bed. I knew they were going to put on their swimming suits, so I decided to respect their privacy and flew outside. The house has its own swimming pool, and I'll go to check on them later. I decided to go to Robert's room and wait for his return.

\*\*\*\*\*

*About thirty minutes later...*

Robert finally returned home. Knowing that he has no money, and seeing him sinking in his own sweat, I figured out he walked all the way home.

He entered the house, ignored everyone, and headed directly to his room. He grabbed the towel and went to have a shower. He had to wait for a couple of minutes because Bill was inside, and I had to wait for about ten minutes till he finishes his shower. He hesitantly got out of the shower, wrapping the towel around his waist, glanced around, and then strode to his room. He was lucky enough to reach his room without running into any females, and this made him sigh with relief once he entered the room and closed the door behind.

He walked to his bed, and lay on his back. Suddenly, he heard Ana and Ashley's laughs. He waited till he heard them again, just to make sure it wasn't a hallucination, and then walked to the window. He opened it and looked at the swimming pool that lies under it; he saw them swimming and enjoying their time.

He smiled. "Oh! Two beautiful girls swimming! What a view!" He yelled, catching their attention. The two girls looked at him and smiled.

"Welcome back," Ana said, making her voice loud enough so he would be able to hear her.

"I see you are talking to me, and this means you are punished as well."

She chuckled. "Yes."

"Cool... congratulations!" He said, with a smile. Ana chuckled again. "Thanks."

"The water is awesome!" Ashley exclaimed. Robert winced. "Oh! You are talking to me as well! Are you exiled with me?"

"No."

"Then you broke the exile rules!"

She laughed. "I'm the queen of light, remember? The rules don't apply to me."

He chuckled. "Right, forgive my stupidity, princess."

The two girls laughed.

"Fancy joining us?" Ana wondered. Robert grinned. "Sure."

"Great!" Ashley yelled.

"Ok princesses; find yourselves a hiding spot, because an angry hungry monster is coming."

They laughed. He went inside, closed the window, put on his black swim short and white plain shirt, and went out. He dashed towards the stairs, but suddenly, he stopped after bypassing Amy and Alice's room. He glanced at the closed door and held his place for some seconds.

*(What are you up to? It's none of your concern. It absolutely is. Okay, I'm going to apologize to Amy for what I've done earlier. Apologize? Again? What the hell is your story with apologizes? You suddenly fell in love with them? And what exactly have you done earlier? I... umm... disrespected her and her fear, and scared her to death, just because I wanted to have some fun. I can't believe my ears! I can't believe my ears! You have absolutely gone mad! Whatever, I'm going to apologize, whether you liked it or not. Ugh... you can't do this to me! Watch me.)*

He finally walked to the door and knocked at it without any hesitation once he reached it.

"Yes...?" Alice answered.

"Hmm... it's Robert," he mumbled, totally tensed.

"Go away! We aren't allowed to talk to you!" Alice yelled.

"I know, you don't have to talk to me, but at least you can listen."

Some moments passed without getting an answer, so he decided to go on.

"Is Amy with you inside?"

"Mm-hmm, but don't enter, we aren't dressed properly."

"I won't... umm... I just... wanted to apologize to her... for what I've done earlier," he mumbled.

*(Oh boy! You really did it! I'm damned; there is no doubt about it.)*

His face turned into red and his body shivered while waiting for her to talk. However, this didn't happen. Regardless, he decided to keep going, "I just want her to know that I didn't mean to disrespect her or anything. I was a stupid careless reckless person who only cared about his joy and ignored everything else, and I'm really... sorry."

He sighed with relief, took a deep breath, and then went on, "And I do hope she forgives me."

He stood in front of the door for about a minute, desperately waiting for an answer. And when this didn't happen, his face crumpled with sadness and he prepared to move. Suddenly, a paper was pushed underneath the closed door. He kneeled anxiously and grabbed it, and then he eagerly and curiously started to read it. I wonder what the paper said. Ugh... the curiosity sucks.

*(I forgive you.)*

"Yes!" He exclaimed suddenly, causing me to shudder, and making the two girls who were standing on the other side of the door laugh loudly. Yes, I know they said they weren't dressed properly, and yes I ignored this fact and moved to get a view from the top using my see-through-walls-and-roofs ability. Why did I do this although I'm a bird who respects the morals? Simply because I don't know what is the difference between a properly dressed girl and another who isn't dressed properly. But, sure, I totally agree with them. Robert mustn't see them dressed this way; no man should, although I saw many girls wandering around in public with outfits more exposing than this. This is why I respected these two girls more; they respected themselves, forcing you to feel the same about them.

Oh, sorry, I talked too much. Robert, who started to move immediately after exclaiming happily, just reached the swimming pool now.

Ashley and Ana smiled once they put an eye on him.

He squinted. "I see you two didn't hide." He paused. Ashley chuckled. Robert went on, removing his top, "Prepare to face the consequences."

The two girls screamed at the same moment he started running towards the pool, and then their full-of-excitement screams got louder when he jumped in it.

"Woo... it is too cold," he said, wiping the drops of water away from his eyes and face. The two girls chuckled. "You will get use to it," Ana said, still smiling. Robert widely opened his eyes and kept glancing at the girls, moving his look between the two of them. He kept doing this for some time.

"What?" Ana wondered.

"What?" He asked.

"What are you doing?" She said; her chuckle garbled her voice.

"Nothing, I'm just trying to decide which of you will be attacked first."

They laughed and held their places cautiously in anticipation of his upcoming strike. They kept their eyes widely opened and their bodies on the steady position. Suddenly, Robert yelled and dove in the water. The two girls screamed instantly and started to swim, hardly and desperately trying to escape their super fast invisible chaser. Ana noticed that he wasn't aiming at her, and this made her stop and look at Ashley.

"Ashley! He is coming for you!" She yelled excitedly. Ashley screamed louder and tried to swim faster, but it was a desperate move in comparable to Robert's speed. I can't dive under the water but I can easily tell you what has just happened. He moved to be exactly under her, put her legs around his neck to make her sit on his shoulders, and then suddenly moved up fast. Ashley screamed while being carried high out of the water. Robert completely stood up in the pool while keeping Ashley sitting on his shoulders. Well, Robert isn't the tallest person I've ever met, actually he is average. But his height, with the smallness of Ashley's body, gave the little girl the feeling that she was flying high in the sky, and this made her scream louder when she noticed that Robert was considering throwing her back into the water.

"Prepare for the jump."

"No!" She exclaimed, extremely happy and excited.

"Ready." he started the count down.

"Put me down!"

"Steady."

"No! Please! Ana help!"

"Go...!" He yelled while throwing her backward to the water. The girl screamed again, the loudest and most excited of all of them, while heading towards the water. A moment later, she reached it.

"Uh... uh..." She kept mumbling and laughing while using her small hands to clear her eyes from the water. Robert didn't give her a chance, he dashed towards her immediately. The girl opened her eyes, finally able to see again, to find him coming fast towards her.

"No!" She screamed and tried to escape, but he was faster. He wrapped his arms around her body and pulled her to his chest. He firmed his grasp till she became totally unable to move, but this didn't prevent her amazing laugh from coming out and lighting the whole world. Ana kept laughing loudly and continuously since this hunting mission started that her face turned red and the tears started to ooze out of her eyes.

"Let me go," Ashley begged, her voice choke because of her non-stopping laughter.

"I will, but first I have to eat this soft arm," he said, holding her left arm.

"No! You can't do this to me!"

"But why? I'm very hungry!"

"How would I live with a single arm?!"

"Come on, don't be selfish, you have another one, and two legs as well."

I noticed that Amy and Alice were laughing while watching out of their window; I guess the loud continuous laughs caught their attention.

"Please don't!"

"Sorry, it has to be done." He moved his mouth slowly towards her arm. The closer the mouth got to the arm, the louder the combination

between screaming and laughing became.

“Ana! Help me!”

It was too late; the mouth reached the arm. But instead of eating it, it started kissing it gently. Ashley chuckled.

“You didn’t believe I’m really going to hurt you, did you?” He murmured kindly.

Ashley shook her head. He repositioned her to face him, still wrapping his arms around her body, and holding her tightly and closely to him. He looked her in the eyes and went on, “You know why?”

She smiled. “Because you are my cousin.”

“Partially correct, you need to try harder.”

Ana finally managed to put herself together and swam closer to them. Once she reached them, both of them glanced at her and smiled. She smiled back and moved closer to Robert, putting her hand on his shoulder, and using it to support her.

“Umm... because you are my cousin who cares about me,” Ashley murmured, after moving her eyes back to Robert’s.

“Almost there.”

“Because you are my cousin who cares about me and loves me.”

“Just one more time.”

She chuckled. “Okay... because you are my cousin who cares about me and loves me more than any other thing in the whole world.”

“Yes! This is my girl!”

She laughed.

“Because I’m your cousin, who lived the whole of his life alone, fighting and suffering, hopping and praying that someday he will have a beautiful sister who will light his life.”

He paused, released his left arm from around Ashley’s body while keeping the other arm holding her tightly and closely to him, and put it around Ana’s shoulders, drawing a smile on her face, and pulling her closer to him. Then he went on, moving his eyes between the two girls, “Then he woke up one day to find out he was given two elegant sisters instead of one.”

The silence dominated for some seconds, while the three kept glancing at each others.

“Three sisters.” Ana murmured.

“What?”

“Three sisters; you forgot Alice, your real sister.”

“She hates me.”

“No she doesn’t,” Ashley said immediately.

“Ashley is right. Actually, Alice can’t hate. She may appear stubborn and careless, but she is very kind, cute, and adorable.”

“Yeah,” Ashley concurred. Ana went on, “And I believe you will find a way to reach her. It won’t be an easy sailing, but I trust you to do the right.”

She smiled, and he smiled back, rubbing her arm.

They stayed like this for some moments.

“Oh, I forgot something. There is another reason.” he said.

Ana squinted and Ashley’s eyebrows pulled together in mystification. “What are you talking about?” She wondered.

“There is another reason that prevented me from eating your arm.”

The confusion disappeared, and was replaced by relieved smiley faces.

“What is it?” Ashley wondered. Robert squinted and explained, “I found another fleshy arm.”

Ashley stared at him for some moments, and then her lips twisted into an evil smile when she fully grasped what he was trying to say. The two of them glanced at Ana. She held her place, scrutinizing their strange expressions. Some moments later, her eyes widened; I guess she finally understood that Robert was talking about her arm, which is not actually fleshy, but absolutely bigger than Ashley’s small one.

“No, don’t even think abo—”

He didn’t give her a chance. He interrupted her by wrapping his arms around her body, preventing her from moving, and turning her words into a scream. The girl laughed loudly when he started tickling her. This was the first time since I came to this house, even before Robert’s arrival, I hear this girl laughing that loud.

“Stop it!” She begged.

“I enjoy hearing you laughing; your voice is very sweet, it makes me feel happy.”

“Stop it, and I’ll laugh to you anytime you want,” she mumbled, barely able to make her choppy voice clear through the loudness of her screams and laughs.

“Ok, but this doesn’t mean you won’t be thrown like her.”

“You can’t throw me; I’ll close my legs and prevent you from diving under me.” Her voice was still chocking, but this time because of the effort she was consuming trying to release herself from his grasp.

“I’d never dive underneath you. You aren’t a little girl anymore; you are a grown young lady now. And diving underneath you will be just inappropriate.”

“Glad you figure this out by yourself; you saved your face from a strong kick.”

He laughed. “But this also doesn’t mean that you aren’t gonna be thrown like her.”

“And how would you do this?”

“Watch me...”

He used his arm to push her he legs upwards; this made her body float on the water surface, and this gave him a chance to carry her in his arms. His speed and sudden moves gave her no chance to do anything but screaming. He stood up and raised her body up in the air. Yes, he is very well-built and has strong arms, but she isn’t actually that heavy.

"What do you say now?" He wondered; you can feel the glory of the victory in his voice.

"I surrender..." she yelled.

"Good, but you are gonna be thrown any way."

"No!" She screamed.

Suddenly, Ashley grabbed a floating ball and threw it at Robert's face.

"Ouch! What was that?!"

"It was me, defending my best friend," she challenged.

"No! This is not fair! This makes you two against one!"

She squinted. "Exactly..." she insisted, while grabbing another bigger ball. "Put her down!" She ordered.

"You've just chosen the worst words ever to be said in such a situation."

She winced.

"Oh, no!" Ana yelled. Robert threw her immediately, and it only needed her some moments of screaming to hit the surface.

"I'll make sure you will pay for this!" She threatened, and grabbed a floating ball from the surface of the water. She glanced at the stunned

Ashley. "Ready?" She said. The surprised expression vanished and the challenging determining one returned to Ashley's face. "Sure..."

"Girls, calm down."

"Now!" Ana yelled.

The two girls started to throw the balls on Robert simultaneously, giving him no chance to even catch a breath.

"Hey! Take it easy!" He begged, while falling back and covering his face with his arms.

"Ashley, show him no mercy!"

"With pleasure."

He noticed that Amy and Alice was up there and glanced at them.

"I need some help!" He yelled. I flew to their window immediately.

"I'm going to join them," Alice said, already turning around and moving to execute. Amy stopped her by holding her arm.

"Hey, wait..."

Alice turned to her. "What is wrong?"

"If they saw you talking to them, you will be punished as well."

The excited expression on Alice's face vanished gradually.

"Do you think so?" She screeched.

"There is no doubt about it," Amy concurred.

Alice held her place, glancing at them out of the window and at Amy's obstinate serious expression simultaneously, totally confused to be able to make a decision.

Suddenly, her expression lightened a lot, and a wide smile was drawn on her face; I guess she has figured something out.

"We don't know that they are exiled!"

"What are you talking about?" Amy kept the same expression, ignoring Alice's enormous excitement.

"No one told us!"

"Robert did."

Alice smiled evilly. "No he didn't," she said conspiratorially.

Amy squinted, staring at Alice's face. Some moments later, she smiled. "I think you are right," she said.

"So, are you in?"

"Of course not!" she answered immediately, making it sound like a fact.

Alice frowned. "But... why?" She groaned.

Amy sighed, turned around, walked slowly to her bed, and sat on its edge once she reached it. She seemed confused... a lot.

"What is wrong?" Alice wondered.

"Nothing, it's just I'm not in the mood of swimming now."

Ana and Ashley's loud screams interrupted their conversation making Alice more excited than before.

"Hold on for a moment," she said, turned to face the dresser, opened it, and grabbed her bathing suit. "Here it is," she said with relief. She turned to face Amy again and started to remove her top. I diverted my eyes immediately and turned around, focusing the view on Amy only.

"It's Robert, isn't?" She wondered. Amy sighed, still looking at her. "Sort of," she sniffed.

"Amy, he is your cousin."

"My second cousin."

"Whatever."

"I know. I am just..."

Alice interrupted her. "Turn around," she said.

"Okay," Amy said, and turned to the right, diverting her eyes from Alice.

She went on, "I'm just... uncomfortable."

"I know exactly what you are talking about."

"Do you?"



“Done...” Alice said. Amy turned to face her immediately, and I returned to my initial position. She went on, “He is a stranger to you.”

“Exactly... He's just arrived yesterday. I can't swim with him the next morning; we don't even know each others.”

Alice walked to the bed and sat next to Amy. She put her hand on her thigh.

“This is not what I meant.”

“What do you mean?”

“I know you very well, and I can clearly say you are shy of him.”

“No... it is not... this way...” She mumbled, reinforcing Alice's point of view with her shaking voice and red face.

“It is this way. He may be your cousin, second cousin... but he is a strange young man as well.”

Amy sighed. Alice diverted her eyes to the ground and went on, “I can't blame you. I feel the same about him... But they say he is my brother, and this at least means I don't have to be shy of him.” She paused and looked at Amy. “You know something, I think I'm gonna swim topless!”

“What?!” Amy fumed.

Alice chuckled. “Hey, I was kidding!”

Amy sniffed and shook her head.

The girls' loud laughs and Robert painful scream made the two girls look at the window instantly. Amy looked back at Alice kindly. “Go...” she said.

Alice smiled. “Okay.”

“I'm really not in the mood of swimming, even if he wasn't around; I'm very tired.”

“I know that. Because if you wanted to swim and his presence annoyed you, we would have put a decent plan to kick him out of the pool, and even the house... just like what we have done to Chris last summer.” She smiled.

Amy chuckled. “Exactly.”

Alice got up and grabbed a towel. “Excuse me; I have a battle waiting for me.”

Amy laughed. “Okay, and I'll be standing here, witnessing your victory.”

Alice chuckled. “Okay.” She wrapped the towel around her body, turned around, headed to the door, and went out. Amy got up and dashed to the window. I followed her and then flew out of the window, back towards the pool. Oh no! The two girls were tearing Robert apart.

“Girls! I surrender!”

“It's too late,” Ashley said, throwing another ball.

“Where do these balls come from!”

Ana chuckled. “We have a lot.”

“I can clearly see this.”

“Ashley! Aim at the face!”

Ashley obeyed Ana’s order immediately, achieving a direct hit.

“No! Not the face again!” He protested. The girls laughed. About a minute later, Alice suddenly interrupted them.

“Hey, buddy, fancy some company?”

Everything stopped and the three of them turned immediately to look at her. They found her standing confidently near the pool, holding two huge water guns on her hands, smiling and glowering at the two girls.

*(Oh! She looks incredible! I love the strong girl who shows up suddenly and saves the day!)*

She interrupted his silence.

“What do you say tough man?” She said.

Robert grinned. “I say you are more than welcome.”

She squinted, and her lips twisted into an evil smile.

“Let’s dance.”

She threw one gun towards Robert, while skillfully jumping into the water. Robert grabbed the gun easily because of her accurate aim, and then he pointed it directly at Ashley and Ana. The two stunned girls desperately turned around, trying to find an escape, to find another gun pointed at them; Alice’s.

“I suggest... we... negotiate...” Ashley mumbled.

Robert looked Alice in the eyes. “Too late, isn’t it?”

She nodded, crumpling her face with a full-of-sorrow expression.

“Then what are we waiting for?” He wondered.

“For your sign, commander.” She smiled confidently.

Robert smiled back. “Let the party begin,” he said.

“You’ve picked my favorite sign ever!” She exclaimed, pulling the trigger, and aiming at Ashley. Robert instantaneously did the same, but aiming at Ana. And the result was the same for the two girls; screams and laughs.

“Stop it!” Ashley begged.

“Look who is begging now,” Alice sneered.

Robert looked at Alice, still shooting at Ana, and she still laughs and screams. “Agent 4388, prepare to...”

Her loud laugh interrupted him and made both of them stop shooting. Ana took advantage of this, grabbed two balls, and threw them at Robert.

“Hey, I’m taking fires here!” He yelled. Ana’s strikes made him start shooting again, aiming at the two girls this time.

Alice did a massive effort to put herself together. “Agent... 4388?” She said, barely able to overcome the laughing and hardly trying to keep her

voice steady. She started shooting again, aiming at the two screaming girls who started to blindly and randomly throw the balls around, failing to hit their targets.

Robert chuckled. "I always wanted to be a scriptwriter."

She laughed. "I'm glad you didn't." She silenced for some moments, waiting for him to stop laughing, and then went on, "So, Commander, what did you want from Agent... 4388?" She said the numbers slowly and in a full mouth.

"We are running out of ammo. Take my gun and cover my back... I'm gonna end this with my bare hands."

"No!" Ana yelled. "Not again!" She added.

"Ready and waiting, Commander," Alice said.

Robert threw his gun towards her, and once she grabbed it and started heavily firing at the two girls, making them blind because of the dense splashes. He dashed towards Ashley. The poor girl didn't see him coming till she felt his cold arms wrapping around her body and carrying her up. The desperate girl could do nothing except screaming and waiting for the certain end, which came some moments later when Robert threw her back into the water.

"Objective completed."

"Roger that."

"Moving to the next target."

"Wait, we wanna finish it in style."

"What are you proposing, soldier?"

"The swinging finish."

Robert squinted. "I think I know what you are talking about."

She smiled evilly and put the guns aside.

"Ana! Watch out!" This was Amy's voice trying to save the poor Ana, but it was too late. Robert and Alice reached her. She screamed immediately, but this didn't prevent them from what they have come for. Robert held her arms, and Alice held her feet. They both stood up carrying her, and then they started swinging her body.

"Ready?" He wondered.

"I'm always ready, Commander."

"Help!" Ana desperately asked for mercy, but got no answer from the laughing-with-tears Ashley who was in the water, standing still near the edge of the pool, and using it to support her and prevent her from collapsing and sinking into the water.

Robert and Alice kept swinging Ana for multiple times.

"Now!" He yelled suddenly. They threw her immediately, and she flew in the air for some moments before finally falling into the water.

"Yeah!" Alice exclaimed, raising both of her hands up, and waiting for Robert to hit them with his opened hands, and he did it immediately, celebrating their victory.

"We finished them off!" he said.

"With no mercy!" She added.

"None at all!" He approved.

"It was an honor to serve with you, Commander."

"And it was a pleasure to have you on my side, soldier."

She smiled.

"Wow! What a wonderful enjoyable punishment we have here."

They all looked at the direction of the voice, to find grandpa standing far enough from the pool, and staring at them. I wonder how long he was standing there... Sorry, I didn't see him coming at all. He started walking towards the pool.

"You are dead, there is no doubt about it," Robert whispered.

"Don't worry, I can handle this."

She waited for the old guy to come closer, and then started to speak excitedly, putting a wide smile on her face, "Oh! Grandpa! Are you going to join us?"

Robert winced. "What the hell?" He fumed, whispering.

"Shut up, and let me get us out of here in one piece."

"No young lady, I'm not here to join, I'm here to know why you are enjoying the company of your exiled brother."

Alice grimaced immediately and turned to face Robert. She looked him in the eyes. "What?! Are you exiled?!" She hit him in the chest, pushing him away from her. "Why didn't you tell me?" She roared.

Robert winced. "What?! Aren't you exiled with me?" He wondered, acting innocently.

"No, I'm not!" She shouted. He hit his head with the palm of his hand. "Oh no! I can't believe we did this mistake. I'll never forgive myself," he moaned.

"Me neither," she screeched.

"So... She thought you aren't exiled, and you thought she is exiled?" He scoffed.

"Exactly..." They said at the same time.

"Great..." he sniffed and turned to Ana and Ashley. "And you two?"

"We were swimming, and they attacked us," Ashley said, infusing her tone with pain and sadness.

Grandpa sighed.

"I'll count to three, and then I don't want to see anyone of you here."

They didn't wait for the countdown to start; they all dashed out of the pool, grabbed their towels, and ran to the house. I followed them. They

didn't stop; they rushed directly towards the stairs, while laughing and smiling. They didn't stop till they reached the upper floor, in where they stood in front of Amy and Alice's room.

"This was hilarious!" Alice exclaimed, hardly catching her breaths.

"I enjoyed every moment!" Ashley concurred.

"I have never ever laughed in my life as much as I did today!" Ana joined them.

Suddenly, Amy opened the door of her room and went out, making all of them shudder immediately.

"Amy! You scared us to death!" Alice groaned.

"Sorry, I just can't believe you all survived this."

"Guys, we need to move; we don't need more surprises," Ana said.

"You are right," Robert agreed.

"Someone is coming!" Ashley yelled.

"Tomorrow, after the exile ends, we will do it again," Robert whispered.

They all approved, excitedly. Ana and Ashley ran to their room, Amy and Alice did the same, and Robert headed directly to the bathroom. I moved to get a view from the top. Robert stopped and returned to his room again to get some clothes; I think he wanted to avoid coming out of the shower in his towel again. Alice grabbed some clothes and ran to the shower, and finally Ana and Ashley were preparing to bath together. No, sorry, Ana has just said she is going to help Ashley showering, and then she will shower alone, because they both needs privacy. Whatever, I'm not going to stand here watching all of these showering sessions, I'll go to wander around and then come back later.

\*\*\*\*\*

After some minutes, Robert finished his shower and returned to his room. And although he was very exhausted, he started unpacking his luggage. I watched him for a couple of minutes, and then how boring the process was forced me to leave the room. I decided to head to Amy and

Alice's room. As I said before, I'm a polite bird who respects the privacy of people, especially when it comes to girls. So, I flew towards their room, using the hall, and avoiding breaking into any closed rooms to protect their privacies. Once I reached their room, I stood in front of the door, closed my eyes to avoid any inappropriate scenes, and entered the room. The room was quiet, but for the sound of the water drops colliding with the ground. It wasn't raining, so I figured out Alice was still in the shower. I hesitantly opened my eyes, starting with my left eye, and the other eye followed immediately after I found out that Amy was on the room, wearing a simple rose nightgown, and resting on her bed, reading a book. I sighed... Her pure angelic face and silky blonde hair caught my eyes, giving me one of the most beautiful scenes I have ever seen on my short life. And although I was one hundred percent sure that the rebellious Robert has no chance with this decent girl, I cut a promise on myself that I'll do whatever I can to help him winning her heart, if he decided to go for this impossible dream.

The sound of the door being opened awoke me from my thoughts. I turned towards the bathroom door to find Alice coming out, wearing a cute white tank and pink shorts, and striding towards her bed.

"It is too cold," she murmured with a smile on her face, while running to her bed.

Amy turned to her and chuckled. Alice reached her bed and jumped under the sheet to get some warmth. Some moments later she started brushing her hair.

"What are you reading?" She wondered, glancing at Amy.

"Eclipse..." Amy replied, without diverting her eyes from the book. I didn't understand why would a book be titled 'Eclipse', regardless, I memorized the name, if she likes this book, then Robert must be informed with this fact.

"Amy... This is the thousands time you read this book," Alice sniffed.

Amy replied instantly, glancing at Alice this time, "I know... I am planning to go watch the movie this weekend, and I thought that recalling the events from the book may be a good idea. What do you think?"

Alice shrugged. Amy smiled. "Are you coming?"

"Sure... why not."

"Great..." Amy exclaimed, and then returned to her book.

Now I have two pieces of valuable information; firstly, I need Robert to know that Amy loves a huge book titled 'Eclipse'. Secondly, that they are going this weekend to the movies to watch a movie that has the same name and events of the book... Why would anyone do this? Ugh... humans.

"I'm considering changing the color of my hair," Alice murmured, still brushing.

"Why? I like it this way."

"Me too, I just want to add some blue to it."

Amy smiled, closed the book, and repositioned herself to be on her side facing Alice.

"Blue?!" She wondered.

"Aha... I think it will look cool."

"I think... it's not... a good idea," Amy mumbled.

"But... why? Blue is my favorite color."

Ha-ha! A new valuable piece of information; blue is Alice's favorite color.

"I know... but this doesn't mean you color your hair with it."

"I don't... know," she mumbled.

"We will see about that later. Now we have a more urgent matter to discuss."

Alice squinted. "What is it?" She wondered, seriously.

"Your brother," Amy explained. Alice sighed and the grim expression on her face disappeared gradually.

"What about him?" She wondered, carelessly.

"I see you had a great fun with him today."

"Mm-hmm."

"So, I think this is a good start for you two to have a real relationship."

Alice sneered and stopped brushing. "A real relationship?!" Her mocking voice kept track with her sneering eyes.

"Yes, a brother and sister relationship," Amy explained. Alice diverted her eyes from her and resumed brushing her hair. "Sure, why not," she murmured, scoffing.

"You can't keep acting as if he doesn't exist!" Amy fumed, raising the tempo.

Alice pulled her eyebrows together with exasperation. "What do you want me to do?" She snarled.

Amy replied instantly, returning to the low quiet calm tone, "I think you should get to know him better. He is your brother... he is the closest one to you of all of us."

Alice protested immediately, "I don't even know him!"

"Exactly, and you should start working on it. Having a brother is a good thing... Believe me. You will need him... someday or another," Amy replied.

Alice sniffed, put the brush aside, moved to the lying position, and pulled the sheet angrily to cover her completely. She peeked at Amy just before the sheet covers her head.

"See you later."

"That's it? You can't just runaway like this," Amy growled.

Alice's reply came from under the sheet, "I just did."

Amy jumped out of her bed, heading towards Alice's. Once she reached the bed, she grabbed the sheet and pulled it, revealing Alice's face. The astounded girl yelled angrily, "Go away!"

"Not before we finish our discussion," Amy growled; this is the first time I see her angry. Both of the girls kept pulling the sheet, one to remove it, and the other to hide under it.

"I'm done talking."

“But I’m not...”

“Fine!” Alice snapped, letting go of the sheet and repositioning herself to the sitting position, to be face to face with Amy. Both of the outstandingly pretty girls grimaced and kept glowering at each others.

“I’m listening,” Alice muttered.

Amy did an enormous effort to overcome her anger and get back to her calm tone. “Alice... you are more than a sister to me. I want the good for you,” she murmured kindly.

Alice’s expression lightened a little.

Amy kept going, “I know it is hard for you to accept him. But all what I’m asking for is that you give it a try. And who knows? Maybe it turns to be a good thing after all.”

Alice stared at Amy for some moments.

“No...” she insisted. Although for a moment I thought that she was convinced. Amy put the grim expression on her face immediately. “Ok... Then I guess I should start searching for someone else to give her my hot-pink and silver dress,” she murmured, looking Alice in the eyes.

Alice squinted. “Don’t even think about it!” She threatened. Amy ignored her anger and kept going, “She would look very pretty in that pyramid-halter-neckline silk chiffon hot-pink gown. While the elegant silver beading on the front and the crossed back straps would keep her sparkling the whole night..”

“Fine...” Alice sniffed, interrupting. “I’ll talk to him,” she screeched.

“Promise?” Amy murmured. Alice took some moments before nodding once. Amy smiled and kissed her forehead gently. “Let’s get some sleeping then; we want to look pretty in the party tonight, don’t we?” She smiled and Alice nodded again.

Amy got up and headed to her bed.

“This makes the dress mine now, right?” Alice wondered. Amy turned around and smiled at her. “It always was... and will always be,” she murmured. Alice grinned. Amy kept going to her bed, and then the two girls slept. Now what? Where should I go? Robert will absolutely be beaten by his tiredness and fall asleep once he is done with his luggage, and maybe even before.

“Elvis! It’s the lunch time!”

“Yes!”

See you later guys, I have a hot meal waiting for me. Well, I know that ghosts don’t eat, but they do enjoy staring at the delicious food. I’ll be back once Robert wakes up, and I do hope he wakes up soon.

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I'm back at the girls' room now. Why am I whispering? Because I'm about to execute a perfect plan that will help make Robert and his sister get closer. Yes... this is my duty, and the least thing I can do to help my best friend.

Ok... I think they are deeply sleeping. It is the perfect time to execute my plan. Robert... my friend... you will thank me for this later.

Put yourself together. No need to panic. The plan is very simple and pretty doable. All what I have to do is to fly fast, dash towards the bed sheet, and carry it away. Then I need to hit something...umm... the dresser for example, to make her wake up. No... no, no, no... this will make Amy wake up as well idiot. Think... think... think...

Yes! I found it! I'm really a genius! I can tickle her feet, yes, this will absolutely awake her. Ok... Take a deep breath... Gather your strength... Ready, steady... GO!

Aim at the bed... done. Fly under the sheet... completed. Now fly up and take the sheet away with you... YES! Mission accomplished. The ghost is ready now! All what I need to do now is awaking her, and this is really the easy part.

Once I tickled her feet, Alice opened her eyes immediately to find a white huge ghost standing near her bed. She hesitantly moved to the sitting position, put her legs to her chest and wrapped her arms around them, and froze on her place, completely scared to even scream. She squinted, and kept blinking over and over again, not believing what she was seeing. When I figured out she won't move, I decided to force her to. I moved slowly towards her. I chose to fly in between the two beds to force her to run away to the other direction, and get out of the room instead of jumping towards Amy's bed. And the plan went just perfect.

The moment I got closer enough to her that she became sure I was real; she screamed and jumped out of her bed and ran towards the door. She was too scared that her scream came out too weak to awake the deeply sleeping Amy. She stood near the door and glanced back at me. I followed immediately to avoid giving the smart girl any chance to think or act decently. Once the girl saw me coming, she screamed again and ran down the hall. I kept following, completely sure she would head to Robert's room.

When a girl feels the danger, she escapes to her safe place. This safe place is the heart of the man who she believes loves her the most. And for a single girl, this man would be either her father or her brother. That's why I believed she would head to Robert's room. Not because she believes he is the man who loves her the most, but because he is the only man available.

The girl smashed the door and rushed to Robert's bed. I let go of the sheet and returned to my invisible shape to be able to watch them. Alice jumped on the bed and started to shake him violently, trying to awake him. And as I knew him for the whole of my life, awaking him is a very easy task; he actually barely sleeps.

"Robert... Wake up!" She yelled, fearfully.

He didn't need the yell to be awoken; he woke up after the first touch.

“What is wrong?” He wondered anxiously. Alice’s scared expression made him reposition himself to the sitting position immediately.

“There is a ghost chasing me!” She exclaimed. Robert winced. The girl squinted after noticing the first sign of unbelieving appearing on his face. He just stared at her, but when the grim expression on her face became more serious, he figured out she was waiting for him to speak. And as I expected, he didn’t say too much.

“A ghost?” He scoffed.

The mocking made the girl angrier. “Yes... a ghost.” She sneered.

*(Is this another stupid trick of hers? What is she up to this time? Umm... she looks really terrified... but... I have to stay alert. She won't get me this time.)*

What in the world is he waiting for? Come on man hug your sister and make her feel safe. Or at least listen to her and try to calm her down. Come on! Even I can tell her the old never-changing human's big lie... everything will be just fine.

I kept waiting for his move, and so did she. And at the end he let all of us down, and told the scared girl who rushed to him seeking safety the worst words that can ever be told in such a situation.

“What do you want me to do?” He wondered.

The girl sighed, and actually so did I. She glared at him for some moments, as if she was unable to find the decent answer. Finally, she talked.

“I’ll sleep here,” she murmured confidently.

Robert wondered grudgingly, “Here?! With me?”

She replied instantly, “Of course not!” She exclaimed, paused for a moment, and then kept going, while looking him in the eyes to support her confident voice, “I’ll sleep here... Alone.” She emphasized on ‘alone’. Here I figured out that I put my only friend in a deep trouble.

Robert kept staring at her, scrutinizing her obstinate expression.

*(The girl absolutely went crazy! If she is going to sleep in my room, alone... Then where would I sleep? This is not happening; this is absolutely a bad nightmare.)*

“Hello,” She said, trying to get him back from his thoughts. He mumbled immediately, “And... where would I sleep?”

Alice replied instantly, “This is your problem, not mine.” She kept the same strong gaze. What have I done! This will absolutely end bad... very bad.

*(.....?!)*

My poor friend kept staring at her, unbelieving what he was hearing, and completely unable to say anything, or, as I can see from his amazed face, even think. Alice surprised him, and me actually, when she bypassed him and crawled into the bed. Robert noticed her move before it was too late, turned around, and wrapped his arms around her waist to prevent any further progress.

“Let go!” she muttered.

“Never!” Robert insisted.

His strong arms kept her on the bed on her hands and knees, unable to crawl more into his territory.

"You can't stop me," Alice mumbled, gathering her strength to overcome his strong grasp.

"This is my land! You can't just come and invade it this easy!" Robert growled with a shaking voice. I guess because of the energy he was consuming in holding the furious girl.

Everything was moving towards a great victory for my friend, but the girl had another opinion.

"Ouch!" Robert yelled painfully while letting go of her and falling back because of the strong hit he received on his face by her elbow. The girl took advantage of this and crawled fast into the bed, lay under the sheet, and hugged a big pillow, maybe to reinforce her position, or maybe to use it as a weapon. She kept glowering at him, keeping herself on the steady position, prepared for any sudden reaction.

The stunned Robert escaped for his life and left the bed. He stood still near it for some moments, while using his hand to check his mouth for any sign of blood. And when he was completely sure he wasn't hurt, he took a step closer towards the bed and was about to say something, but Alice left him no chance. She threw the pillow at his face, and the bullet hit its target accurately.

"WHAT THE HEI—"

He was trying to yell, but another pillow interrupted him, accurately at his face, and even worse than its predecessor.

"OK... OK... I surrender!" He snapped, successfully avoiding a third hit a moment before it was unleashed.

"You surrender?" She wondered, checking if what she heard him saying was correct.

"YES! I surrender!" He concurred, saying the word 'yes' loudly and in a full mouth.

Alice put the pillow aside, hesitantly. Her expression lightened, a little. Robert spent some moments staring at her, to check if the danger was gone I guess, then he desperately uttered some words.

"I'll sleep downstairs... on the couch."

"No you won't," the girl yelled instantly, stopping him from completing his turn towards the door, and forcing him to face her again.

"What have you just said?" He scoffed.

"I believe you heard me," she sneered, putting the serious expression on her face.

"I don't... understand," he mumbled.

"How would you explain it to them? Especially when they discover it was me who kicked you out of your room?"

"I think I'll tell the truth," he replied automatically.

Alice commented instantly, "That's why you won't sleep there."

She glowered at him. He held his place, staring back, and pulling his eyebrows together in confusion. Some moments later, his expression lightened a bit.

*(Aha! I got it! The strong girl wants to keep the ghost story a secret! Ha-ha! This is my chance to take her down.)*

And then he talked, after twisting his lips into a mocking smile.

"What do we have here? A brave girl's reputation being destroyed?! How bad!"

No... Robert No! Please don't do this! Please don't turn around and move away from her. This girl is dangerous. I did underestimate her. Don't turn around... don't turn... don't turn!

"Don't do it," she agreed to my point of view, keeping herself calm and confident.

"Watch me."

NO! He turned around and walked towards the door. Alice jumped from her place immediately and ran towards him. This time he heard her coming, and a moment before she reaches him, he dodged. She missed him, and then he took advantage of her being in front of him and wrapped both of his arms around her body and pulled her towards him, putting her back to his chest and holding her tightly.

"Let me go," she yelled, fighting to get free from his strong grasp.

He chuckled. "Who is the tough one now?" He scoffed.

The girl replied immediately, "I'm."

"What?!" He exclaimed. It was clear that he didn't see that answer coming, and to be honest, neither did I. But the girl didn't leave us astounded for too long. She used the back of her head to hit him in the face. The hit stroke his chin, mouth, and maybe his nose as well. My poor astounded friend moved his hands instinctively to his face to check on his mouth and nose, while he was taking some back steps away from her. Again he was lucky and found no blood. That was when he decided to move towards her again. He took two steps and was about to talk, but the girl had another thing in her mind.

She surprised him with a strong punch by her right fist on his left cheek. The came-from-no-where strike made my friend lose his balance. And before he was able to act or even think, the girl did an amazing acrobatic move that ended with her right leg fully stretched to make her foot accurately reach its target; Robert's stomach.

The shocked and astonished poor guy moved his hands instinctively to his stomach, before he began to fall backward slowly towards the ground. A moment later, the collision between his back and the solid ground occurred, and he lay there motionlessly.

I repositioned myself and flew to the ceiling to get a bird's eye view, just to be able to see his face. I sighed with relief when I saw his irises moving. Although they were the only two things moving, it was a good sign he was still alive. Suddenly, Alice dashed towards him and bent over, putting her face in front of his, preventing me from seeing either of their expressions. So, I rapidly repositioned myself again to get a side view.

"Don't ever... ever... mess with a well-trained girl who has just been chased by a ghost. Am I making myself clear?"

Robert nodded once, hardly.

"Good... Now I'll go to sleep in your bed, and you will sleep here on the ground. And when I wake up, I'll find you here, right?"

He nodded again, fast and hopelessly.

The girl grinned.

"Have a nice sleeping," she whispered, and then dashed to the bed. Robert hardly turned towards her and followed her with his eyes till he made sure she reached the bed. He sighed with relief the moment he became sure the danger was gone.

*(I survived! Ha-ha! I can't believe I'm still alive! I wanted to warn you. I wanted to tell you that what happened between you in the pool doesn't mean she likes you. Yeah, I was tricked; I actually wish you warned me earlier. I wish I did as well.)*

He closed his eyes. I wish I could read his thoughts.

*(Ok... You didn't lose the battle yet, this is only the first round. Now relax and gather your strength, you will need it to get your revenge... the brutal merciless revenge.)*

"Do you have a laptop?"

He shuddered and jumped off his place because of her sudden voice. He opened his eyes to find her kneeling in front of him. I saw her coming, but his closed eyes prevented him from doing the same.

"What?" His voice came out flat and emotionless.

"Do you have a laptop?" she repeated her question, keeping her face expressionless, and her eyes staring at his.

"Y-e-s," he mumbled.

"Where is it?" She wondered, confidently. His eyebrows grudgingly pulled together.

"You know that... umm... laptops usually contain private stuff," he mumbled.

She squinted and glowered at him. He hardly swallowed.

"It is on its bag. There... on the upper shelf."

"Thank you."

She got up, headed to the glass shelves near the dresser, grabbed the laptop, and returned to the bed. Robert kept following her with his eyes.

*(Ok... You didn't lose the battle yet; this is only the second round.)*

The beautiful girl got the laptop out of the bag, switched it on, lay on her front on the bed, and started to use it.

"What is the password?" She wondered.

"Elvis," Robert answered instantly.

She let go of the keyboard and looked at him. "Elvis?" She wondered.

"Yes... Elvis," Robert scoffed.

"Who is he?" She ignored his sneering and kept wondering. She kept looking at him, although he lay on his back and didn't look back at her.

"It's none of your concern," he hissed.

"It is," she insisted.

He suddenly repositioned himself to be on his side facing her. And then he gazed at her and snarled, "He was my only friend, and he is dead now. Better?"

The challenging expression on the girl's face gradually vanished, and was replaced by a full-of-sorrow and compassion one.

"I'm... sorry," she mumbled with sorrow. Robert didn't reply. He lay on the ground again and closed his eyes. Yes... Elvis was his only friend.

And yes... Elvis is dead, and I'm glad to know that he didn't forget me after these whole five years.

Alice tried to ease the situation and change the subject.

“Don’t worry; I’ll just check my inbox for any new messages.” She paused. “Umm... it isn’t an easy task for me to sleep after being awaked, especially by a ghost,” she added.

“Ok,” he muttered.

*(Celebrate your victory now little girl. Because tomorrow it is gonna be different... completely different.)*

He closed his eyes. Alice stayed awake for another ten minutes, and then she kept her word and put the machine away. Finally, she went to the bed, turned the light off, and closed her eyes.

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The worst thing about being a spirit is that you don’t sleep. I know this may sound perfect in some situations, but believe me it is very annoying in others. Enough to say that you have to spend about ten hours every day, doing nothing except talking to yourself and waiting for the humans to wake up from their never ending boring sleeping. And guess what? You have to do it every day.

Only ten minutes passed since the girl’s strike; it looks like I still have to wait for too long.

I sighed...

Wait! She is moving! Alice turned to face Robert and kept looking at him. Then she huddled up on the bed without averting her eyes from him. She sighed and stayed like this for a while.

A moment before I lose hope that she may move again, she hesitantly crawled out of the bed. I prepared myself to have some upcoming action, but the girl disappointed me and just sat at the edge of it. She kept biting her lips and watching Robert.

I could tell from her face that she was very confused and nervous. The hesitation was killing her and me actually. I don’t know what takes human this long to take a decision, and what takes them even longer to execute it. Suddenly... the girl put the serious expression on her face, put herself together, whispered some encouraging words to herself, took a deep breath, and got up and took some rapid steps towards Robert. Once she reached him, she kneeled and touched his chest with the fingertips of her right hand.

“Robert,” she murmured.

The kind touch and quiet voice was enough to make him open his eyes immediately. Alice winced and shuddered; I guess she didn’t expect him to wake up this fast. Robert’s eyes narrowed the same moment they got the vision of her. His expression darkened, and his face crumpled with anxiety.

“Is something wrong?” He screeched, choking on his words, and moving to the sitting position.

“No... no... nothing... I’m fine,” she babbled. Robert’s worried expression eased a little. Alice put herself together and went on, “It’s just... cold

here.”

Robert squinted. “The ghost is back?” He wondered.

Alice chuckled. “No,” she said in a full mouth, fighting the laugh that garbled her voice.

“Then what do you want?” Robert’s voice sounded offensive, this raised the girl’s tense.

“Umm... I...” she mumbled. And when she felt how choked her voice was, she paused and swallowed, hardly. “I think you should sleep in your bed; you will absolutely get sick if you slept on the freezing ground.” The steadiness of her voice surprised all of us, especially her.

“Really? I mean... can I?” Robert wondered, mumbling, astonished.

Alice nodded once, licking her lips.

“And where will you sleep?”

“Umm... I think I’ll go downstairs and watch TV or something.”

“No, you look tired; you do need to sleep.”

“I know. I’m just... I don’t want to return to my room, at least now,” she mumbled.

“Then stay here.”

*(Really? Is this your brutal merciless vengeance?! Shut up! She is my sister and I’ll never ever abandon her, especially when she badly needs me.)*

She smiled. “Okay... You know something, I have an idea!”

“What is it?”

“We can share the bed. But we will draw a vague line separating our territories, and the one who crosses it will be killed.”

Robert smiled. “Okay!” He exclaimed.

Alice grinned. I can easily and clearly see the happiness and relief emitting from her pretty glowing face. She got up and dashed to the bed, and then she crawled into her place. Robert followed in a moment.

“The line is here. This is your land, and this is mine,” she explained, lying on her side to face Robert, and using her beautiful fingers for the pointing and explaining.

Robert smiled and stared at her.

*(I really misjudged this girl. She is very sensible and kind. Well, she is stubborn and absolutely has one of the strongest fists I’ve ever seen... but she is tender and cute. This is my sweet little sister, and I’ll start treating her this way. Ok, move her name from the foes list to the friends list.)*

“What?” She wondered.

“What?” Robert replied automatically. His voice sounded flat.

“What are you staring at?”

Here Robert noticed that he spent a lot of time doing nothing except staring at her.

“At your eyes; they are entrancing.”

“Shut up and sleep.”

She immediately turned around and lay on her side, facing the wall, and giving me and Robert her back. At the same moment, she pulled the sheet and covered her body. But before she completes her turn, I saw a smile being born on her lips. That’s why I flew immediately to the other side of the bed to be able to see her face... and yes, her pretty smile was a grin now.

Robert, who lay on his back, chuckled suddenly.

“What are you laughing at?” She wondered, still facing the wall.

“At us.”

“At us?!”

“Mm-hmm. We bothered ourselves fighting, drawing a vague line, and sharing the bed, although the room has another empty bed,” he explained.

Alice chuckled.

“You should have figured this out the moment I kicked you out of the bed. You could have saved us a lot of time.” She turned around for a moment and glanced at him, his eyes caught hers immediately. She went on, putting a mocking smile on her lips, “and fighting.”

Robert smiled. She turned around again.

“You should have figured this out the moment you entered the room from the beginning,” he scoffed.

Alice smiled. “This makes us equal then,” she murmured.

“Yes... this makes us a stupid brother and sister.”

She laughed.

“I still can leave if you want,” he murmured after waiting for some moments till her joyful laugh ended.

“It’s ok; you can stay.” she murmured.

He sighed.

The silence dominated for a couple of minutes.

Alice turned around, lying on her side, and facing Robert. Once she did this, he did the same, and turned on his side to face her. She looked him in the eyes for some moments.

“What?” He wondered.

“Umm... did I hurt you?” She wondered, looking at him kindly.

He laughed. “No,” he said in a full mouth. “I mean you are strong, but your hits had little effect on me.”



“This means... you aren't suffering any pain now?”

“No.”

“Are you sure?”

“Hey... calm down! I'm fine.”

She sighed with relief.

Another minute of silence and staring passed.

Alice smiled. “I enjoyed being with you today.”

“Really?”

“Mm-hmm.” She moved closer to him. He didn't act back.

“I'm glad you did.” He paused for a moment and then went on, “And actually, I'm happy that you came to me now.”

She smiled. “Really? You mean that you aren't mad at me?”

“Of course not! You came to me when you wanted to feel safe, and this means a lot to me, more than you can imagine.”

She grinned, bit her lips, but said nothing.

The silence returned.

“So... how did the ghost look like?” He wondered, smiling.

She chuckled. “He was huge and white.”

Robert laughed.

Alice squinted and went on, “You don't believe me, do you?”

“Well... I'd be lying if I said I believe in ghosts, but I do believe you, and believe that something really scared you there. And whether it was a real ghost or a bad nightmare, I do need to thank him for giving me a chance to get this close to you.”

She smiled.

“And now prepare to be killed,” he beamed.

“What?!”

“Your hand has just crossed the line.”

She gasped. “Oh!”

“How do you wanna die pretty girl?” He wondered, smiling evilly.

She chuckled. “No, please, I have a party tonight. You can kill me later.”

He laughed. “Okay... I'll postpone the execution, but you have to give something in return.”

She smiled. "Okay... what do you want?"

"Umm... I always wondered how it feels to be kissed by my sister."

"Forget it; you can kill me now."

He laughed. "What about a hug?"

"Make sure to kill me fast and painlessly."

"Can I at least cuddle you?"

"Sure."

His expression lightened, and a wide smile was drawn on his face. "Really?"

"Yep... you can sleep and dreamed of it."

The excitement disappeared immediately.

"Umm... but there is something you can do," she said shyly.

"What is it?" He wondered, carelessly.

She smiled. "You can keep the hand the crossed the line."

He squinted. "You mean... I can touch it?"

She nodded.

"Great! This is more than enough!"

She chuckled. He hesitantly touched her hand and then kissed it gently. Alice smiled and slowly moved her head closer to Robert, till it crossed the line as well. He smiled, and she chuckled. She kept looking him in the eyes, waiting for his next move.

"It is mine now, right?" He wondered, smiling.

Alice nodded.

"Great!"

He gently caressed her hair. After doing this for a while, he gently patted her cheek. Sorry for my tears; I can't stand these emotional moments.

Alice sighed with relief.

"Sleep now little princess," he murmured, looking at her kindly.

She smiled and closed her eyes.

He kept holding her hand with one hand, and caressing her hair with the other. Alice relaxed, stretched her body, and took a deep breath. It didn't take the beautiful girl more than a couple of minutes to sleep deeply, surrounded by Robert's caring and tenderness, and it needed him more than ten minutes to do the same.

I started to move when I was sure they both slept, wiped my tears, and flew away.

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*More than one hour later...*

Oh, he is finally awake! He smiled and glanced at Alice, who was still sleeping next to him, and then slowly released his hand from hers. Then, it took him some minutes to get up and leave the bed, and some more to go to the bathroom and wash his face. Later, he returned to his room, put some clothes on, and went out. I thought he was heading to the stairs, but he was going to Amy's room. He knocked at the door, and she answered immediately.

"Yes?"

"Amy... it is Robert."

"Come on in."

He opened the door, to find her sitting on her disk, and typing on her laptop.

"Come on in," she said again with a pretty smile, trying to encourage him to get in and move away from the opened door he was standing at.

"No, it is ok. I just wanted to tell you that Alice is in my room. I thought you may be worried about her."

She smiled. "I know."

"You know?"

"Yep... I searched the whole house for her, and when they told me she didn't leave, I figured out she was with you."

"Oh... smart."

"And actually I found the sheet of her bed in front of your room. I found no explanation for this, but it was another sign she was in there."

"You could have entered the room and checked."

She chuckled. "Yes... I did this at the end. I'm sorry; I was too worried about her."

"Don't be; it is okay."

She smiled.

“Okay, I’ll be leaving then.”

“Okay.”

He was about to leave, but then he stopped and faced her again.

“Wait a moment... you have just broken the exile rules!”

She laughed. “Yep. Make sure to keep it a secret.”

“Don’t worry about this.” He winked.

She smiled.

“Bye...” he said and headed outside.

This time I was sure he was heading downstairs, but I was wrong again. He headed to Ana and Ashley’s room. He knocked at the door, and a moment later, he got his answer.

“Who is it?” Ana wondered.

“It’s Robert.”

“Come on in,” She said immediately. He opened the door and went inside, and then held his place near the door. The two girls were lying on their fronts with their legs on the air on Ana’s bed, with a drawing sheet in front of them, and coloring pens scattered around. I wonder what they were doing. However, the two girls looked at him and smiled once he entered the room.

“Hi girls,” he said.

“Hi,” the two girls answered simultaneously.

“What are you doing?”

“We are drawing!” Ashley said happily. Drawing, yes, I absolutely knew this from the beginning.

“Why are you standing there? Get in. Actually, we may need your help,” Ana said, putting a smile on her face after uttering the last word.

“Actually, I was going to the town to find something to eat. And as I know you are exiled with me, I thought you may be hungry as well.”

“No, they gave me my lunch earlier.”

“Oh, this is good.”

“I would have come, I really enjoy being with you, but I promised Ashley that we will finish this painting today to hang it there, with its friends.”

He looked at the direction at which she pointed, to find many beautiful colorful paintings hanging on the wall, above the desk.

“They are beautiful!” He marveled.

“We drew them all!” Ashley said, happily and proudly.

“Wow, you two are very talented!”

They chuckled. "Thanks," Ana said.

"When we grow up, we will have our own gallery," Ashley added.

"I bet you will," Robert concurred. "Ok, I'll go and leave you to complete your work."

They nodded.

"Bye," he said, while getting out of the room.

"Bye," Ashley replied instantly. "Take care," Ana add. Robert smiled and closed the door.

He went downstairs, ignored everybody and headed towards the main door. Suddenly, Grandma Susan stopped him.

"Robert."

He turned to her. She walked slowly till she reached him.

"Where are you going?" She wondered kindly. Before Robert utters a word, Grandpa intervened. "Susan, he is exiled."

She turned to him and sneered. "He is my grandson, and I can talk to him whenever I want!" she growled, challenging.

"You know the rules."

"Your rules don't apply to me," she snarled, glaring at him. He weakened in front of her strong staring angry eyes. "Umm... I think I'll make an exception, but only this time," he mumbled.

Susan shook her head and turned back to Robert. Her angry stare vanished and was replaced by a kind look.

"Did you eat anything?"

"Not yet, but I'm going to the town now to find a restaurant."

She squinted. "A restaurant?" She paused and turned to grandpa again. "Are you happy now?" She fumed. Robert gently put his hand on her shoulder. "Grandma, it's ok, I can deal with it."

She turned to him immediately. "No, it is not ok!" She yelled, saying every single word separately. "This is your house, and this is where you will eat," she added, insisting. Robert didn't comment, and neither did grandpa.

"Come with me, I'll get you something to eat," she said calmly, held his hand, and turned around preparing to go to the kitchen.

"Mom, you can rest; I'll do it." This was Aunt Marie's voice trying to stop grandma. She got up from her seat in the living room next to Jennifer, and prepared herself to go to the kitchen.

"No... I'll cook for him," grandma insisted, making Marie hold her place, Jennifer squint, grandpa sniff, and Kevin, Tom, Michael, and bill divert their eyes from the video game they were playing together and stare at her.

"By yourself?" Marie wondered, totally stunned, just like the others.

"Yes."

"Susan, you need to sit down, didn't you hear what Dr. Malcolm said about your legs?" Grandpa said.

"You should have thought about that earlier," she shouted angrily.

“Mom, they are right. Your legs are weak now; you will absolutely fall,” Kevin said anxiously.

“I’m stronger than you... video game kid,” she yelled, sneering. Kevin hardly swallowed, and Bill and Michael chuckled.

“Shut up!” He yelled at them, and the two silenced immediately.

She turned to Robert again. “Come on, let’s go.”

“Grandma, you don’t...”

She interrupted his murmuring. “Don’t worry, I have a plan.” She whispered conspiratorially, smiled, and winked. Robert smiled, and the two walked to the kitchen. Once they reached it, Robert helped grandma to sit on a chair.

“Now what?” He wondered.

“We will just wait,” Grandma said calmly.

“Wait?”

“Yes, she heard me yelling, and she will be here soon.”

Robert squinted. “What are you talking about?”

“Just wait young man. Soon she will pass through that door, searching for me, and when her wide gray eyes tell her that I’m fine, a wide smile will be drawn on her angelic face... Just give her sometime to put some decent clothes on.”

“Amy?!” Robert wondered.

“Exactly.”

“But... umm... maybe she will refuse to help.”

“What?!” She paused to give some space for her choppy laugh and then went on, “You just don’t know her well, kid. Helping people and making them feel happy and comfort are the sources of her joy.”

Robert kept staring at her, totally confused. She went on, “She is just like... umm...” She paused, searching for the correct words, and then kept going, “A pure crystal. With a single glance, you can see through her, and with a very tiny effort, you can make her sparkle.”

Robert expression didn’t change. Grandma sighed and went on, “She is always smiling, and when she is hurt, she hides so her tears won’t annoy you.” She sighed again. “She is the best thing that happen to me and Jack in our long life, but the source of our biggest fears as well.”

Robert’s face crumpled in confusion. “How is that possible?”

“We wonder if she would be able to survive the harsh life.”

“She will learn by—”

“Grandma, are you alright?” Amy interrupted them and strode through the door. Robert smiled, totally amazed, and grandma smiled as well.

“Calm down, I’m fine.”

Amy sighed with relief and the extremely scared expression vanished gradually from her face. She put her hands on her chest, trying to keep

her thumping heart inside.

"I searched for you outside and they told me that you are here," Amy said with a steadier voice.

Robert and grandma kept staring at her.

"What?" She wondered. Her lips twisted a little, trying to form a smile.

Grandma smiled. "We need your help."

"Okay," She said. Her smile grew bigger, and the scared expression totally vanished, but her face stayed pale... just a little.

"This poor young man here didn't eat anything the whole day."

Amy frowned. "Really?" She screeched, looking at him kindly. He nodded once. Grandma went on, "So, I need your help to prepare something for him to eat."

She smiled immediately. "Sure," she said happily. "But he should prepare himself for the worst meal he will ever have in his life," she added, smiling, and walking towards grandma. She glanced at Robert while talking and bypassing him, and then sat on grandma's lap once she reached her, loading her weight on the arm of the chair. Grandma grinned and put her arm around Amy's waist, pushing her gently closer to her.

Robert smiled. Amy went on, "Whatever you want, grandma." She gently kissed her cheek. Grandma smiled.

"Wait a minute; you have a party to attend, don't you?" Robert wondered suddenly, making them look at him.

"So...?" Amy wondered.

"Don't you need to prepare or something?"

"Of course I do! But we still have some time; the party starts at 8."

"I see."

She turned to grandma again. "What do you want me to do?"

"Nothing, you will just follow my instructions."

Amy smiled. "Finally I had a chance to learn from the best cooker in the world." She paused and looked at Robert. "And you will be my first victim."

He laughed. "No problems."

She got up. "Okay, let's do it!"

\*\*\*\*\*

The cooking started, and the more it progressed, the more I hoped that birds were able to cook and enjoy this enormous fun. But later I figured out it isn't the cooking itself that is funny; it is the company that makes the difference. Amy didn't stop laughing during the meal preparation time,

and the reason was Robert's funny comments. He didn't stand still, watching his meal being prepared, he stepped in the battlefield and was a good help to Amy whenever she has asked for his help. And during the minutes she worked on her own, he froze on his place, staring at her, without diverting his eyes from her for even a single moment. It was as if she had cast a spell on him, preventing him from looking anywhere but at her eyes. Finally, the meal was ready, and this meant that the fun was over, and I believe this was the reason of Robert's sudden annoyed expression.

Amy started putting the dishes on the table.

"Here... you... are..." She perfectly adjusted the speaking tempo to match the speed of arranging the plates, so they end simultaneously. And once this happened, she took some steps away and stood next to grandma, smiling, putting her arm around her shoulder, and looking at Robert.

They both stared at him for a while, waiting for him to taste the meal. He pulled a chair and sat down, and then started to eat after staring at the meal for some moments.

"Wow! It is delicious!" He exclaimed.

Amy chuckled. "Really?"

"Absolutely one of the best meals I have ever had in my entire life!"

She laughed. "You are mocking of me, aren't you?"

"Come and see by yourself."

"Okay," she said, walked to him, pulled a chair, and sat next to him.

She tasted it.

"Oh! It is outstandingly delicious!"

He smiled. "I told you."

"I can't believe I did this!"

Grandma laughed. "Don't ever underestimate yourself."

Amy chuckled. She noticed that Robert stopped eating. "I'll go and let you enjoy your meal."

"No!" He exclaimed immediately. Amy winced. He went on, "We will share it."

"No, it is your meal!" She protested. "And actually I'm not hungry," she added.

"I won't eat without you."

"What?!"

"That's it; I'll just walk away and waste your massive effort."

"You can't do this to me!" She said, trying to act angrily, and totally failing.

"Then start eating."

"But... why are you so insisting?"



"Nothing, I just enjoy being around you."

She winced immediately.

*(What the hell was that? I... don't know... I... just... help me please! Ugh... change the subject immediately. What?! Change the subject...*

*DO IT NOW!*

"I mean... you prepared it... and you deserve to enjoy it," he mumbled, easing the girl's tense a lot.

She sighed. "If you say so."

She started to eat, and he followed in a moment.

They kept eating for some minutes. Actually, she kept eating and he kept staring at her, barely eating, for some minutes. Suddenly, Alice dashed into the room.

"Amy! We aren't going to the party!" She yelled angrily.

Amy frowned. "What are you talking about?"

"Grandpa says that Grace's house is on the other side of the town, and the truck is broken down. So, we can't go!"

"Oh no!" Amy screeched, got up, and ran with Alice outside. Robert stood up immediately and was about to follow, but grandma stopped him.

"Wait for me, young man."

He turned and dashed to her, gave her a hand, and then walked with her outside. It took them a couple of minutes to return to the living room, where all the family gathered.

\*\*\*\*\*

Granny is slow, that's why they entered the living room in the middle of the conversation.

"Grandpa, I'm not a kid anymore!" Amy fumed.

"You are for me."

She sniffed. "Ugh... all of our friends will be there," she groaned.

"Don't blame me; it's your bad luck that prevents you from going," he said calmly, ignoring the girls' huge anger.

"Grandpa, please!" Alice begged.

"It's done. There are four men in this house now, convince one of them to take you to the party and then bring you home, and I'll immediately

give you my approval. Otherwise, the TV is always a good option to spend the night.”

Ana, Amy, and Alice were about to talk, but Grandpa was faster than them. “And you can start by eliminating me; it was a tough day and I need to sleep early. So, only three men left; Andy, Kevin, and Tom.”

The three girls sighed with disappointment.

“Hmm... I believe I can be counted as a man as well.”

All the eyes turned to Robert.

Alice expression lightened, and a big smile gradually appeared on her lips. “Right!”

“Sorry, you are exiled; you don’t exist,” grandpa said.

“He does exist!” Alice protested. She dashed towards Robert and strongly punished him in his chest.

“Ouch!” He moaned.

“See, he felt my hit; this means he is really there,” she explained.

Robert sighed, shaking his head. “Smart girl,” he muttered with a choking voice because of the pain.

“Sorry, this changes nothing,” grandpa murmured, still extremely calm.

The girls sniffed with anger.

“I still don’t understand why can’t they just hail a cab?” Robert wondered. Grandpa glared at him immediately. Robert winced and hardly swallowed. Grandpa walked to him, and started to speak once he reached him. “Although you are exiled, I’ll break the rules and tell you why,” he growled, took one more step closer to Robert, and then went on, “Because Abby Mayer, who hailed a cab to take her home last week... was raped. And guess what? She was 20 and had her little brother with her,” grandpa said slowly, giving Robert enough time to grasp the meaning of every word, and using a strong continuous glare to support him.

Robert hardly swallowed. “Who said anything about hailing a cab?” He mumbled.

Grandpa stared at him for another some moments, and then left him standing and turned around. Robert sighed with relief immediately. “Was it the driver?” He wondered.

“No, the driver escaped for his life; it was some bandits who hide in the forest and cut the road between the two parts of the town,” Ana explained.

“I see.”

“Grandpa, the sheriff said that he sent his men to secure the road and search for the bandits,” Alice said. Her angry and annoyed expression didn’t ease.

“The sheriff says what he wants to say, I’ll never put you in danger.”

“Wait a minute! What about the sheriff’s daughter, is she going?” Robert said suddenly.

Amy squinted and stared at him immediately. “Mandy?” She wondered, totally surprised.

“Mm-hmm.”

"Her father will drive her to the party, and then will take her home at the end of his night shift," Alice pointed out.

Amy didn't divert her eyes from Robert. "Do you know her?" She whispered, still grimaced. Robert nodded once. "Yeah, we met earlier. She is a good girl," he said, calmly and carelessly. Amy sniffed and turned around, peeking once at him before the turn completes.

*(Why is she annoyed? She is not annoyed, she is just confused. No idiot, she is annoyed, and this means she is really into you. What?! Are you crazy? No, I'm not... I'm just more experienced than you.)*

"Then why doesn't the sheriff take them too? His house isn't far from here," Kevin said. Grandpa frowned and turned to him immediately. "Because I can't ask a stranger to take my girls to a party because their father wants to enjoy his date night," he fumed. Kevin hardly swallowed.

"Date night?" Robert wondered.

"We have a reservation; we won't be able to either drive them or pick them," Aunt Marie explained.

"I can't stand still watching my beautiful girl's night being ruined. I'll take them."

"Dad!" Amy exclaimed once she turned around after hearing Andy's voice and seeing him descending the stairs. The moment he reached the ground floor, she ran towards him, and threw herself into his arms. He cuddled her with his right arm and gently rubbed her back.

"Good, the first part of the problem is solved. Now we need someone to bring them home," Grandpa said.

"Uncle Andy can do it as well," Ashley said.

"Sorry sweetheart, I have a night shift in the hospital tonight and won't be back till the morning," Andy explained with sorrow.

"It's ok dad, you are still the best," Amy said, still being hugged by him, looking him in the eyes, and putting a delightful smile on her face.

"And knowing that Tom's sacred snooker night never ends, we only have one option left," Grandpa said and then looked at Robert. All the eyes followed him immediately. "Him..." grandpa added.

The four girls grinned, while their eyes were begging and their faces were sparkling with hope. Robert squinted, and grandpa walked to him.

"You bring them home."

"Umm... sorry... I can't hear you... I don't exist, remember?"

"Don't play games with me kid."

"I'm not playing; I'm just respecting the rules. I adore the rules respecting; it's one of my favorite's hobbies." He sneered, infusing his voice with mocking.

Grandpa grimaced. "Are you... challenging me?" He hissed.

Robert kept his calmness. "No sir, I'm just obeying your orders."

"Then you will obey this ORDER and bring them home," Grandpa snarled, emphasizing on the word "order" and saying it in a full mouth.

"I'll only do it if they asked me to do it. And only because they deserve it, no more and no less," Robert said, matching grandpa's slow tempo and low monotone.

Grandpa's eyes narrowed with anger. Robert avoided his angry glare and looked at the girls.

“Please!” The four girls begged immediately.

“Okay.”

“Yes!” They cheered. Robert looked grandpa in the eyes for the last time, and then walked to the girls. Ana and Ashley ran to him and hugged him immediately. Alice was extremely excited to be able to speak, and Amy kept looking at him for some moments, searching for something to say, and then decided to choose the oldest method of thanking.

“Thanks,” she murmured.

Robert smiled. “You are welcome,” he said. “But I have some conditions,” he looked at grandpa and added, easing the girls happiness a lot.

“And they are?”

“First, my exile ends now.”

“Ok,” he sniffed.

Robert went on, “Ana goes with them, and this means her punishment ends as well.”

“It wasn’t me who punished her.”

“But it will be you who end her punishment.”

He sighed. “Done,” he fumed.

Ashley chuckled and hugged the smiling Ana who wasn’t less excited than her. Robert went on, “And finally, as it is my responsibility to bring them home... the girls stays there for as long as they want, even if this means they stay till the very end of the party.”

Grandpa silenced for some moments.

“Ok—ay,” he muttered.

Robert smiled and looked at the girls. “Are you still here? Come on girls, you have a party to prepare for!” He yelled, making their excitement high above the sky again. The girls cheered and ran excitedly towards the stairs. I heard some thanks, but I could only recognize Alice’s voice, because it was the louder and most excited of all of them.

“Take your time; I can wait here forever.”

“Okay,” this time it was Amy’s voice, gradually fading away while she is vanishing upstairs.

“I owe you one,” Andy said, walking towards Robert.

“They are happy, and this is what really matters.”

“Exactly.”

Andy reached him. He put his hand on Robert’s shoulder and smiled.

“You are a good kid.”

Robert shook his head. “No, I’m not... But they are good girls, and being with them is enough to make anyone look good.”

Andy laughed. "With a mouth like yours, you can get any woman you want." He winked.

*(Uh... please tell him. I did my best to convince him, but totally failed.)*

"You can go to your work sir; I'll take them to the party, and bring them back."

He smiled. "This makes me owe you two instead of one."

"Don't mention it," Robert said, smiling. Andy hit him gently twice on the shoulder. "See you later then, and make sure to take care of the girls,"

he said, preparing to leave.

"You can count on me."

"I'm sure about that." He paused for a moment. "Okay, bye."

"Bye."

Andy headed outside, after smiling for the last time. Robert waited for the girls in the living room. They kept him waiting for some time, and when they were ready, they all headed to the party. On their way, Alice said that they would have invited him to come with them, but the party is for girls only. The way to the other side of the town was long. And yes, grandpa was on the right side; the forest part of the road was scary, I can't argue about that. Finally, they reached their destination; Grace's house.

"Have a good fun."

"We will," Alice said, getting out of the cab with the girls.

"No drinks, understood?"

"Don't worry about that," Amy said, and Ana nodded to reinforce her. "Robert, it is a birthday party; there are no drinks here," she added.

The girls left the cab and walked to the house. Amy stopped and turned around. "The party ends around midnight."

"Stay as long as you want. Whenever you come out, you will find me waiting here."

She smiled. "Okay."

Robert smiled back and watched her running to the other three girls who already beat her to the main door, and then watched the four girls vanishing among the dozens of other girls. The cab started to move again, and I knew exactly to where it will go; to Mr. Adam's farm.

\*\*\*\*\*

“You?! What are you doing here?” Mr. Adam wondered immediately once he saw Robert passing the outside fence and walking to the house.

“Hello sir,” He said, still walking. Mr. Adam’s grim expression didn’t change. He gazed at Robert, and held his place waiting for him to speak.

Robert started to talk, after stopping in front of Mr. Adam, keeping a fair distance between them.

“I thought I may start working now.”

“Now?!”

“Yes, if you don’t mind.”

Mr. Adam didn’t seem very convinced.

“What is wrong, kid?”

“Umm... I just... I need the car,” he mumbled.

Mr. Adam’s obstinate expressionless face didn’t change. “And why do you need it this time?” He wondered, sneering.

“My cousins... they are having a party tonight in the other side of the town, and I have to bring them home.” He paused to catch a breath and then went on, “Of course I can hail a cab, but...”

Mr. Adam interrupted him. “You don’t have money.”

Robert sighed. “I put the last amount of money I had in the cab that took them to the party.”

Mr. Adam took some steps closer to Robert. “Look kid, we aren’t friends so you can borrow my car whenever you want.”

“I understand sir. I’m sorry.”

Mr. Adam ignored him and went on, “But... I’ll give it to you.”

“Really?”

Mr. Adam turned around and walked towards a chair. Then he grabbed the gun and threw it to Robert, who caught it easily.

“What is this?” He wondered.

“It is a gun.”

“Yes, I know this part. Why are you giving it to me?”

“You will do me a favor.”

“A favor?”

“Listen young man, the girl that was attacked last week...”

Robert interrupted, pulling his eyebrows together in confusion. "Abby?!"

"Exactly... I know her father; he is a good guy. They are good people. And those who did this to her must pay."

"Sorry sir, I can't kill."

"You aren't going to kill anyone. All what you have to do is to keep the gun in case you run into any of those outlaws, and use it to bring them to me."

Robert's tense eased. "Sure, this is an easy task." He said confidently.

"Good, you will find some ropes in the back of the car."

"Okay..."

Mr. Adam walked to Robert, put his hand on his shoulder, and looked him in the eyes. "Abby is more than a daughter to me... Do this, and the car will be yours."

Robert winced.

"For the rest of the week end," he added, smiling evily.

Robert smiled and did a great effort to overcome his surprise and return to the expressionless face. "I'll do this for her, you, and your friend. The only reason I won't kill those bastards is that death is very merciful for what they really deserve. And about the car, I'm planning to make it mine... when I have enough money of course."

"You will never have enough money. You will never be able to afford her price."

Robert smiled. "You will make a discount for me."

Mr. Adam laughed. "Deal."

"The keys?"

Mr. Adam handed it to him.

"Good, I'll return soon... but I won't return alone."

"I'm sure about that."

"And about my offer to start working now? I still have some time till the party ends."

"You can start working on the roof, and I'll catch up with you in a moment."

"Okay."

Robert headed to the car and put the gun under the driver's seat. Then he removed his top and climbed up to the damaged roof. Some moments later, Mr. Adam followed him and handed him the tools box. Robert started working immediately, following Mr. Adam's instructions. The roof was in a miserable case, and it will absolutely need more than a single day to be fixed. However, Robert kept working without stopping till he noticed that only one hour separated us from the midnight.

"Sir, I have to stop now."

“Ok, you did a great job today.”

“It will be ready in a couple of days.”

“I’m not worry; we still have some time.”

Robert descended the wooden stair and then faced Mr. Adam. “I’ll be here early tomorrow.”

“Are you kidding? Enjoy your weekend kid.”

“No, it is okay, I can work.”

“As I said before, we still have time.”

“If you say so, sir.”

“Go inside and clean up.” He paused, smiled, and then went on, “And if any of your cousins is a pretty girl who you are trying to impress, I suggest you take a shower; you look miserable.”

“I think I’ll go for the shower then,” Robert beamed.

“Go ahead.”

“Okay.” He said, grabbed his shirt, and went inside. He spent about five minutes in the shower and then went out. He noticed that he was running out of time, and this made him dash to the car immediately after saying goodbye to Mr. Adam.

Before he drives away, he got out and looked at Mr. Adams again. “Aren’t you going to take my ID?”

Mr. Adam smiled. “Go kid.”

Robert smiled and returned to the car. A moment later, he drove away.

The road was long, but the car was fast, and this made him reach Grace’s house before the party was over. He stopped the car in front of the house, killed the engine, and waited. I thought that he would be bored because of the long waiting, but instead, he looked very entertained that he was even smiling. I wondered why, I searched for a reason, but I found nothing. Then I noticed that Robert’s smile increases every time he hears a loud full-of-joy laugh coming from inside the house, so, I concluded that this must be the reason. Robert was never a happy person, and when he is alone, I always heard him saying very strange words. I never understood them, but now I do. He always said that if you can’t be happy, do your best to make the people around you feel happy. And if you can’t enjoy the happiness, you can always enjoy seeing it in the faces of those who you love. I believe this is what he is trying to do now; making everyone around him happy, and as usual, forgetting about himself.

The girls started to get out of the house, and this was the announcement of the end of the party. Robert waited for his girls to come out, and they did after about a minute. They kissed some of their friends and then ran towards the car the moment they put an eye on it. They looked extremely happy; I guess they enjoyed the party.

The girls reached the car. Ana, Ashley, and Alice got in the back seats. And Amy returned to her favorite front seat again.

“Was it good?”

“Uh... you have no idea!” Amy exclaimed, clenching her hands.

“We enjoyed every moment!” Ana added.



"This was the best party ever, and today was absolutely the best day in my life!" Alice said.

"For me too!" Ashley yelled.

"I'm glad you enjoyed your time."

The car started to move.

"Let's play a game," Alice said.

"Alice, I'm exhausted," Ana protested.

"No, it is a simple game. Actually, it is a poll."

"A poll?" Amy wondered.

"Mm-hmm."

"I'm in!" Ashley said.

"Me too," Ana concurred.

"Me as well," Amy approved.

"Good, here is the poll; which part of the day you enjoyed the most!"

"The swimming!" Ashley exclaimed immediately.

"Ok, one for the swimming part. Ana?"

"The party was awesome, but the swimming was unforgettable. So, I vote for the swimming."

"Two for the swimming... Amy?"

"Umm... I didn't swim with you. So, I vote for the party."

"No!" Ashley snapped.

"Sorry," Amy said, smiling.

"Without any doubt or thinking, I vote for the swimming," Alice said.

"Yeah! We won!" Ashley yelled. Amy chuckled, and so did Robert.

"Loser," Ana sneered, hitting Amy gently on her shoulder.

"Shut up!" Amy yelled, smiling, and turning around, trying to hit Ana. The two girls kept fighting for some moments, laughing, and making everyone else in the car laugh.

"Girls... stop it... We forgot about Robert," Alice yelled suddenly. The two girls stopped immediately.

"Right," Ana said.

Amy turned to face him. "It's your turn; which part of the day did you enjoy the most?" She kept the smile on her face.

“Me?”

“Aha.”

“Mine... is yet to come.”

Amy squinted. “What do you mean?”

The car entered the forest. Robert slowed down, and started to glance around.

“My best part of the day didn’t come yet, but it will soon,” he said, not looking at her, and this annoyed her a little. She sniffed and turned to look out of her window.

“I though you enjoyed swimming with us,” Ana groaned.

“Me too,” Alice agreed.

“I did. Actually it was the most entertaining thing I have ever done in my life.”

“But...?” Alice wondered.

“Just wait and see.”

Amy turned to him suddenly. “Robert! There is an old lady standing alone in the dark and asking for help!”

Robert slowed more.

“Good.”

Amy frowned. “Aren’t we going to help her?”

Robert laughed. “Actually... this is why we are here.”

Amy’s expression didn’t change, and the three girls weren’t less confused than her. Robert stopped the car.

“Stay here and lock the doors behind,” he said, looking at Amy, and grabbing the gun from under his seat. Once Amy saw it, she winced, gasped and squinted. Robert didn’t wait for her to say anything; he opened his door, got out, and closed the door behind, while hiding the gun on his back, under his shirt. He walked towards the lady.

“He has a gun!” Amy exclaimed, totally stunned.

“Oh! He is going to kill her!” Ashley yelled.

The girls turned around and looked through the rear window. Their eyes were widely opened, and so were their mouths. They were too shocked to even blink. Robert kept walking, cautiously.

“Hey... lady... do you need any help?” He yelled, acting with ignorance.

The mysterious lady who was standing in the dark, wearing a long black cloak that covered her body, including her head, and made her face invisible, didn’t speak. She just kept waving for Robert.

Robert peeked at the dense trees behind and near the lady after noticing some strange movements there. He kept his face solid, and hid his expressions, till he reached the lady. He stood still, keeping some distance between them.

“How can I help you?”

The lady didn't answer. Suddenly, two more men jumped out of the forest. At the same moment, Robert's gun was already pulled, and it's back already stroke the lady's head, brutally enough to make her fall to the ground. The cloak fall off her head to reveal her face; she was a man... a bandit.

“He killed her!” Ashley yelled. Ana and Alice screamed. Robert made the best use possible of his sudden strike and struck the two stunned bandits, one after another, with the back of his swinging gun. He made his hits very strong, as if he wasn't going to get another shoot. The smashing hit was enough to make the second attacker fall to the ground immediately, but failed to do the same for the third one, who was the hugest and strongest of the all three.

“Amy! He killed the old lady!” Alice yelled, turning to face Amy. The two other girls followed her immediately, and the three started at her.

“She is not a lady: she is a man!” Amy yelled. The three girls winced and turned around immediately, staring at the lady... I mean the man.

“Oh! He turned her into a man!” Ashley exclaimed.

“Ashley, she is a man!” Ana explained, totally astounded, just like the rest of the girls.

“Oh! They are the bandits!” Alice yelled. Amy, the least shocked of all the girls, shook her head. “How smart,” she scoffed.

While the girls were yelling, Robert wasn't giving the huge guy any chance to put himself together and move to attack. He kicked him in his right knee, making him scream painfully, and the most important was that the hit made him bend, making his head an easy target for Robert. He used the back of the gun to strike the head again. The guy yelled, but didn't fall. Robert gathered his strength and hit him for the third time, stronger than the past two attacks. The guy yelled louder, but again didn't fall. Robert grimaced, sighed, swung the gun as far as it can get, yelled, and hit the guy's head again. This time... the enormous hit was enough to knock him to the ground. Robert dashed to the car, opened the trunk, grabbed the ropes, and tied the men. Then, he pulled them to the car, one after another, and put them inside the trunk. Yes, the car's trunk is big. No, it can't contain three full grown men. How did he manage to put them inside? Well, believe me, you don't want to know.

He closed the trunk and returned to the car, to find the girls' amazed and widely opened eyes staring at him.

“Hi,” he said, starting the engine, and pressing the gas. He got no answers from the opened mouths and shaking lips.

The car started to move... but their eyes didn't.

“What?” He wondered calmly, glancing at Amy, and at the other three stunned girls through the rearview mirror. He got no answers, although I believe Amy was trying to say something, but her frozen lips refused to utter it.

“What is wrong with you guys?” He wondered again, smiling, and acting as if nothing has just happened.

“Umm... you have just killed... three men,” Alice said with a flat emotionless low shaking voice, and a totally amazed face.

“First, they aren't men; they are bandits. Second, I didn't kill them; I just punished them for what they have done to Abby.”

“What about the old lady?” Ashley screeched.

“Ashley, there was no old lady; he was one of the bandits, dressed as an old lady to trick us,” Ana explained, her voice was still amazed, but steady enough to be understandable.

“Oh!” Ashley exclaimed, totally astonished. “How did you know it was an ambush?!” She wondered. All the eyes returned to stare at Robert

again.

“Umm... you can say that... I have some secret abilities.”

“I knew it! I knew you aren't a normal guy!” Ashley yelled excitedly, grinning.

Alice, who was sitting behind Robert, smiled, moved closer to Robert's seat, got up, and wrapped her arms around his neck, resting her palms on his chest. She smiled again and started talking to his right ear.

“I can't wait to tell my friends my brother did this!” She murmured excitedly.

Robert smiled. “The plus side is that this is the first time you call me a brother.”

Alice, still putting her arms around his neck, chuckled, and I noticed that Amy smiled as well.

“And I guess it won't be the last,” Alice said.

“I hope so. Your voice is so sweet, and hearing you saying it is a great joy.”

She chuckled. “Liar...”

“No! I swear I'm telling the truth!” He protested, defending himself.

She chuckled again. “Okay... I believe you.” She said, and then let go of herself and fell back to her seat.

“I still can't believe you took three bandits down that easy,” Amy murmured, glancing at Robert.

He smiled.

“They could have killed you!” Ana hissed.

“It takes more than three losers to take me down.”

The four girls smiled.

“Girls, imagine Bill and Michael's faces when we tell them what happened!” Alice said.

The three girls laughed, and Alice followed immediately.

“They already believe you are a super man,” Amy said, her voice was choking because of the laughing.

“Me?!” He wondered.

“Yes, they say your muscles is stronger than a rock,” Ana added, laughing as well.

Robert laughed.

“I can't argue about that; my fist still hurts me since I punched you earlier, to prove you do exist,” Alice said.

“I'm sorry about that.”

She moved closer to him again. “Umm... did you feel any pain?”

“No.”

"Not even a tiny bit?"

He shook his head. Alice sighed. "This was my strongest punch ever!" she groaned.

Robert smiled. She returned back to her place. "Well, I admit, it was strong. You are a strong girl, and this is my favorite type," he said.

Alice chuckled. "Thanks."

Amy sighed. "Right..." she sniffed, shaking her head, and turning to face the front window. Robert, who was peeking at her, noticed that, but decided to ignore it.

*(What do you say now? She is angry because she believes she isn't your favorite type, or can't you see this as well, idiot? I... don't... know... I do know and you will exactly follow my instructions to get her as fast as you can. What?! Why can't you be polite while talking about girls? You may want to try and respect them more. Dude... don't act innocently; you know that this method is the best. They don't care about the polite guy, but they do care about the HOT guy. Tell them what they want to hear, and it will end the way the two of you want the most. NOT ALL OF THEM ARE THE SAME!)*

He pressed the brakes suddenly. The car harshly stopped. The three girls collided with the front seats, and Amy barely avoided hitting the front window.

"What is wrong with you?!" Amy roared.

"I'm... so sorry... really sorry," he mumbled. He covered his face with both of his hands and stayed like this for a while. This made Amy's expression change immediately from the angry one to the kind one.

"Are you okay?" She asked anxiously. Her left hand gave me an indication for a moment that it will land soon on his shoulder, but this didn't happen. She pulled it back and put it on her thigh, after hesitantly leaving it hanging in the air for some moments. Robert moved his hands away from his face.

"Anyone is hurt?" He wondered.

"No."

He pressed the gas again. The car started to move.

"I'm so sorry... I didn't mean to..." He mumbled, glancing at Amy.

"It's ok, no one is hurt," She murmured calmly, looking him kindly in the eyes.

"You hit the glove compartment, didn't you?"

"Don't worry about that, nothing serious."

"It did hurt you, right?"

"A little."

"I'd never forgive myself."

"Robert, it is okay."

"No, it is not."

She repositioned herself to face him. "Believe me, it is," she insisted.

"It happened to me before, and it did hurt me."

"Well, we were moving in a low speed."

"It still hurts."

She frowned. "I can take it. As you can see, I'm kinda strong as well," she hissed.

Robert squinted and looked her in the eyes immediately.

*(Ha-ha! Shut up now. I was just trying to say... I said shut up! As you wish, idiot.)*

"Umm... sort of..." She added, trying to ease the situation, but this didn't happen. Her face turned red, and she tried to escape the embarrassment by diverting her eyes from his, and turning to face the front window again. Robert diverted his eyes from her, but kept peeking at her from time to time.

"What are you gonna do with those guys?" Alice wondered.

"What?"

"The bandits, what are you gonna do with them?"

"I'll take them to a friend, and he will take them to jail."

"Good, they deserve more than this."

"Indeed."

Some minutes later, the forest part of the road ended, and this meant they were getting closer to the house. Robert accelerated, and they reached their destination in about ten more minutes. The girls headed inside, and Robert headed to Mr. Adam's farm, after opening the trunk for a couple of minutes to give the bandits some air to breathe. Some minutes later, he reached the farm, to find Mr. Adam and another bald old man waiting for him.

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"I knew you will show up! And I was sure you will do it tonight!"

Mr. Adam exclaimed once he saw the car entering the farm. Robert turned the car around, and then moved it reversely, to make the trunk face the two guys who got up from their chairs the moment they saw it. He stopped it, keeping some inches between its back and the coming men.

"You won the bet!" The other guy said. Mr. Adam laughed. Robert opened the door and got out. He dashed directly to the back of the car and opened the trunk.

"Your cargo, sir."

"Oh-Yeah!"

"I can't believe my eyes!" The other guy yelled.

"I told you, he is a tough kid, and you should always believe what the old Mr. Adam says," Mr. Adam said, laughing, and rubbing the other guy's

shoulder.

“Before taking them, I need to have your word that you won’t kill them.”

The other guy laughed. “Kill them?” He scoffed and walked till he reached Robert. He looked him in the eyes and went on, “Believe me... killing is very merciful for what we’ve planned for them.”

“Good... this is exactly what I wanted to hear,” he said, smiling evilly.

The other guy chuckled. “Would you like to stay and enjoy the show?”

“Well, it is a pleasure. But... I’m exhausted and famished. I need to return home.”

“So sad you will miss the best part.”

“I’ve already enjoyed my best part,” Robert said, smiling, and looking him in the eyes. “Okay gentlemen, have a nice time,” he added, preparing to leave.

“Wait kid, I believe I owe you some money,” Mr. Adam said, handing Robert some cash. “Enough?” He added. Robert nodded. “More than,” he said. Mr. Adam smiled. “Good, now help us unpack the cargo, and then take the car and go home,” he said.

Robert winced. “Take the car?”

“We had a deal, remember? But make sure to give her an amazing weekend.”

Mr. Adam smiled.

Robert squinted. “Her?!”

“I meant the car.” He smiled evilly. Robert sighed with relief. Mr. Adam went on, “The last time I took her out in a vacation was ten years ago.”

“Oh... I see.”

“Now let’s get the job done.”

“Okay.”

“By the way, this is Mr. Tony Mayer; Abby’s father.”

“Nice to meet you sir, and sorry for your daughter.” Robert said, stretching his arm towards Mr. Tony to shake hands with him. Mr. Tony did it immediately.

“You shouldn’t feel sorry, they should,” he said, looking at the bandits. “And they will,” he added.

“I’m sure you will give them what they deserve.”

“You have my word.” He smiled. Robert smiled back and let go of his hand.

“Let’s don’t waste more time,” Mr. Adam said.

“Sure.”

“Okay.”

The three guys pulled the three bandits out of the trunk. Robert closed the trunk, greeted the two men, promised Mr. Adam that he will show up in Monday, returned to the car, and then drove home.

Once he parked the car, he dashed inside the quiet and dark house. And then he ran faster towards his room. The moment he closed the door behind him, he removed his clothes and wrapped a towel around his waist. He rushed to the shower and spent about ten minutes inside. He returned to his room and put some clothes on. And while he was finally heading to his bed, something caught his eyes and made him slow down. I moved to look above his shoulders, and this made me see what caught his interest that much; it was a paper put on the nightstand next to the bed. He hesitantly walked closer and grabbed it. Then, the part I hate the most started; the reading.

*(Sorry I entered your room without permission. If you returned home alive and read this paper, let me know immediately. I and the girls are extremely worried about you. I won't sleep till you return... Amy.)*

Robert smiled and sat at the bed's edge immediately. He stayed like this for about a minute, doing nothing but staring and smiling.

*(What are you waiting for? Go to her immediately. I don't... know What?! Come on! She asked you. She said let me know but didn't say break into my room while I'm sleeping and let me know you are alive. And how in the world are you going to tell her without entering her room? I don't know... what if they sleep topless or in their underwear or something? Oh-Yeah! I hope so! Move now!*

*You are extremely sick and pathetic. I'll go to her room and politely knock at the door and wait for her answer. If she answered, I'll just tell her. And if she didn't, then waking her up after this exhausting day will be a crime. See? Very easy... all what you need to do is to have some respect, at least for those who deserve it.)*

He got up suddenly and went out. He walked down the hall, heading to the stairs. Later, he stopped in front of Amy and Alice's room. He knocked at the door gently and quietly, as if he didn't want to disturb them. The poor human didn't know the fact I knew; Amy was already awake and huddling up on her bed. Woo... despite the reading part, I totally love being a dead bird!

The moment she heard the door knocking, she shuddered and jumped out of the bed immediately. She ran to the door and stood just behind it.

"Robert?" She wondered, murmuring.

"Yes... umm... I saw your message," he mumbled.

"Are you still alive?" She wondered anxiously, putting the grim expression on her face.

Robert laughed. She smiled; I guess she noticed her mistake. "Sorry...umm... I meant are you hurt or something?" She mumbled.

"No, I'm fine."

"I would have opened the door and let you in, but I'm just... you know... not dre—"

He interrupted her mumbling. "I know what you mean and I totally understand. Actually, I'd like to take this chance and express how much I admire and respect you. I love the rules and restrictions you put around yourself. I know that most girls don't care about them anymore, but I believe that this makes the girls who still care very unique. It makes me feel... umm... as if you are a... umm..."

He stopped, failing to find the correct words.

*(Keep going, you are doing great! I can't find the word! Oh boy! You are really a loser! You aren't helping! Ok... ok... what about: As if you are a hot chick waiting for the right hunter? WHAT THE HELL?! You didn't like it, I got it.)*

She interrupted his silence.



“Are you still there?”

“Oh... yes... sorry... I was saying that these rules and restrictions you put around yourself... makes me feel as if you are a...” He paused again.

“Damn it...” he sniffed, whispering to himself. He kept hitting his head with his hand, trying to find something, but totally failed.

*(A moon... What have you just said? I said: A moon... Oh! I can't believe my ears! You are a genius! I gave you a key, start building on it. Right away!)*

“It makes me feel as if you are a moon,” he said confidently, with a steady voice.

She chuckled. “A moon?!”

“Yes... The stars can sparkle the whole night. They can do whatever they want to catch our eyes and make us see how beautiful and attractive they are. But do you know what their problem is? They all are stars; they all look the same and act in the same way. They may have different colors, styles, characters, and shapes... but they are all stars. They force themselves to do many things that they sometimes hate, and that sometimes are against their nature and make them uncomfortable, just because the other stars did them, just because they are afraid of doing the right and being different.”

He paused to catch a breath.

“But... for the moon... it is another story. He catches our eyes with no effort at all. His calm light easily passes through our bodies and touches our souls and hearts without even a permission from us. And unlike the stars, he isn't afraid of being different and unique. Actually, he enjoys it, and forces everyone to respect him and his uniqueness. Once the moon shines, no one cares about the stars, simply because his presence covers them all... Every girl can easily be a star, but very few of them can be moons. And I believe you are one of the few moons out there.”

Oh! I want to cry...

*(.....?!!!! Don't ask.)*

Amy? She sighed and crossed her arms over her chest, resting her back and the back of her head to the door. She tried to say something, I knew this from her shaking lips, but the smile that was fighting to see the light prevented her. And when she noticed the smile was about to beat her shy and show up, she put her hand on her mouth, desperately trying to stop it. Finally, the battle was over, and the prettiest smile on the whole universe shone on her face.

*(What happened to her? Do you think she died? Maybe, who knows. Should I check on her? Sure... but I doubt she would be able to say anything. I'll try anyway.)*

“Umm... Amy?” He murmured.

The girl hardly swallowed, sighed, and did a massive effort to put herself together again. “Yes,” she said.

Robert sighed with relief. “Glad to see you are still alive.”

She chuckled. “I am. I was just thinking about what you have said.” Her steadier voice was a clear sign she overcame the shock of Robert's words.

“And...?”

“I believe that one of the bandits must have hit you on the head.”

*(What?! No! I was about to declare our victory in a moment! I thought she was flirted enough to open the door and kiss you! Or even more!*

*She is a moon, maniac... She is a moon... So, stop bothering me and start treating her this way.*

*Listen to me, idiot. Don't waste your time with her.*

*As you've just said: my time, and I'm free to waste it with whoever I want.*

*Then don't ask for my help again! As you wish.)*

"Hello?" She said.

"Yes... I'm still here."

"Okay."

"I just want to know what is your story with the bandits? Didn't you watch me taking them down? Why were you so worried about me?"

"Umm... We thought that their brothers may go after you, trying to get their revenge."

He laughed, loudly.

"What are you laughing at?" She said; her voice struggled to beat her laugh.

"Nothing... sorry," he mumbled, still fighting to stop laughing.

"No, really, what made you laugh?"

"You watch a lot of gangs' movies, don't you?"

She frowned. "Great, I stayed awake, worried about you, and waited for your return, so you would mock of me later," she groaned.

"I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to..."

"Good night," she hissed, interrupting him, and then... umm... she kept stepping on her own place, trying to make him believe she was heading to her bed. She stopped after some moments, and then the silence dominated.

Some moments of silence passed.

Robert smiled. "You are still behind the door, aren't you?"

"How did you know!" She exclaimed, excited like a little girl.

"I told you, I have some special abilities," he said, with a smile.

She chuckled.

The silence returned for some other seconds.

"Aren't you going to leave?" She wondered, smiling.

"Oh... sorry..."

She interrupted him. "I was kidding."

He sighed with relief. "However, I have to leave."

"Sure..." She said, acting as if she is uninterested.

"We can't keep chatting the whole night."

"No, we can't. Of course you can stay for a while, but you are tired and need to get some rest. So... go."

"Okay... good night then."

"For you too."

He was about to move.

"Hey, wait..."

"What?"

"Have you read the notes on the back of the paper?"

"No."

"Ok, then make sure to read and execute them."

"Okay."

"Good night."

"I wish the same for you." He hardly started to walk away, after staring at the door for some moments. The girl did the same, and headed to her bed once she became sure he left. She lay on her bed, totally covering herself with the sheet, and hardly trying to stop smiling. I don't know whether she was flirted or not, but I'm one hundred percent sure that this girl won't sleep tonight.

I dashed to Robert's Room. He was standing in front of the bed and reading the paper. I believe I have to wait then.

*(Bill and Michael said that you sleep bare-chested, you shouldn't do this; you may catch a cold, and we won't find anyone to take us to school.)*

He paused, laughed, and then went on.

*(I thought you will be starving, so, I prepared something for you and put it on the upper drawer. Don't worry, nothing serious, just a sandwich. Make sure not to waste my effort and eat it; you are the only fan of my cooking, and you have to eat anything I cook.)*

He laughed again.

"She is crazy!" He murmured, smiling, and opening the upper drawer of the nightstand. Umm... this may sound strange... but... he has just found a sandwich in it! He sat on the bed and started eating. And when he was done, he threw his body on the bed and lay on his back. And the most interesting and strange thing was that he didn't sleep bare-chested for the first time since I met him.

Some moments later, he stopped smiling and closed his eyes, putting an end for this very strange night.

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Finally... finally... finally... the sun finally rose, announcing the end of my every night boring waiting. I waited for another hour, until I started feeling some movements in the house, and then dashed towards Robert's room. He was deeply sleeping, but soon he will wake up to find an unpleasant surprise waiting for him; Bill and Michael.

"Umm... I think we should wake him up now," Bill mumbled, whispering, and staring at the sleeping Robert.

"I don't think it's a good idea."

"I just... can't wait."

"Me too, but I'm not ready to face his anger."

"Same here."

"Let's just wait."

"Okay."

A couple of minutes passed.

"Do you think... he can hear us?" Michael wondered.

Bill winced. "Oh! I can't believe I didn't think about that earlier! He absolutely can."

"How did you know? What makes you so sure?"

"I can prove it."

"Really?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"Look... I'll try to attack him, and before I touch him, he will wake up and take me down, and this will prove my point of view; this dude isn't an ordinary human being."

"Are you crazy? He can kill you in a blink of an eye!"

"I know... but it's a sacrifice that has to be done."

Michael nodded. "You are right."

"The princess deserves it."

"There is no doubt about it," Michael concurred immediately.

Who is the princess? I have no idea. Bill turned to him, put his hands on his shoulders, and looked him in the eyes. "If anything bad happened to me, tell the princess that bill sacrificed himself trying to save her, and that he doesn't regret it."

Michael hugged him. "I'm so proud of you." Bill kept hugging him for some moments, and then he pushed him away gently. "Michael, it was a proud to have you as a friend."

"Same here, buddy."

"Send my greetings to the princess, and make sure to tell her that bill died for her."

"Don't worry about that."

Bill nodded. "Bye... my friend."

They hugged each others for the last time, and then Bill started walking hesitantly closer to Robert. Once he reached him, he closed his eyes and raised his fist up in the air, preparing to hit him in the chest. The fear and the hesitation kept his hand hanging on the air for some moments, before he finally put himself together and let it fall towards its destination.

A moment before it hits him, Robert's eyes opened suddenly, and his hand moved fast and stopped it. Bill screamed.

"Don't kill me... don't kill me," he begged.

"What the hell are you doing here?!" He roared.

"I'm so sorry," he mumbled.

Robert noticed Michael's presence. "You should stop doing this to me!" He yelled angrily.

"We promise we will," Michael said immediately.

"Yes, we do," Bill concurred.

Robert sighed. He let go of Bill's hand, and then put both of his hands on his face, while repositioning himself to the sitting position.

"What time is it?" He wondered, still covering his face with his hands.

"It is... umm... seven," Bill mumbled.

"WHAT?!" Robert roared, glaring at bill. Bill shuddered and hardly swallowed. Robert went on, "Why in the world are you waking me up at seven?! IT IS THE WEEK END!"

"We are so sorry," Bill said.

"Yes, we are," Michael concurred.

Robert sniffed and squinted. "What did you want?" He wondered, calmer.

"Umm... nothing... we wanted to check whether Alice lied to us or not," Bill mumbled.

“Alice?!”

“Yes... she told us... about... what happened yesterday,” Michael said.

“The bandits,” Bill added.

“What about them?”

“She said you took the three of them down in less than one minute, without even conceding a single hit,” Michael explained, amazed, with a shaking voice.

“So...?” Robert wondered.

“Is this true?” Bill wondered, and then the two of them stared at Robert, eagerly waiting for the answer.

“Yes, it is true, can I sleep now?”

The two boys smiled and glanced at each others.

Robert squinted, while studying their strange very excited faces expressions. They kept staring at him, just smiling.

“Are we done here?” He wondered.

The two of them nodded, still smiling.

“Then... what are you two waiting for?”

“Nothing,” Bill said.

“Then, I believe you may want to get out,” he hissed.

“Oh... sorry... you want us to leave,” Bill said.

“Okay, we’ll go,” Michael added.

“Bye,” They said, turned around, and ran to the door.

“Wait,” Robert yelled. They stopped and faced him. He went on, getting up, and moving to sit at the edge of the bed. “Any of the girls woke up?”

“All of them,” Bill said.

“Really?”

“Yep,” Michael approved.

“How active!” Robert marveled, scoffing.

“Alice, Ana, and Ashley are downstairs. Amy has just woken up, and is having a shower,” Bill explained.

Robert sighed.

“Ok, go now.”

The two boys dashed out immediately. Robert grabbed the towel and headed to the bathroom. Afterwards, he went downstairs, to find that

most of the family members have already had their breakfast, except Amy, Kevin, and Aunt Marie.

“Good morning,” He said, pulling a chair, and sitting down. The three looked at him. Amy and Aunt Marie smiled, but Kevin didn’t.

“Good morning,” Amy replied. “Umm... you look tired,” she added.

“Yea... I didn’t sleep well last night.”

“Same here.”

The silence dominated for some moments.

“So, how was your date?” He wondered, pointing his words to Aunt Marie and Kevin.

“Good,” she said, clearly not meaning it.

“Glad you had fun.”

“Shut up and eat,” Kevin hissed.

“Actually, I’m done... I usually don’t have breakfast,” he said calmly, getting up.

“Where are you going?” Amy wondered.

“I don’t know, maybe I’ll search for a cup of coffee.”

She chuckled. “Don’t bother yourself; I’ll get you one,” she said kindly.

“Really?”

“Yep... Mom was preparing the machine. When she is done, I’ll bring you a cup.”

He smiled. “Thanks, this will save my day from being ruined.”

She laughed. “The girls are outside, go to them, and I’ll catch up with you later.”

“Okay... thanks again.”

“You are welcome.”

He smiled and left, heading outside.

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Outside the house, Grandpa, Alice, Ana, Tom, Jennifer, Bill, and Michael, were enjoying the prettiness of the new wonderful morning. Grandpa was sitting on the sofa, Jennifer was next to him, and her husband Tom was next to her. Bill and Michael were sitting on the same chair, and Alice and Anna chose to sit on the ground, relaxing, and stretching their legs. Once Robert passed the main door and put an eye on them, he held his place. He hesitated for a while, confused between keep going or returning inside, before finally deciding to go to them.

“Good morning,” he said, greeting everyone, and sitting on the empty chair.

“Oh, the super hero is finally awake,” Jennifer said, smiling, and looking at Robert.

“What?!” He wondered.

“You should start giving me lessons,” Tom said, smiling, and rubbing his paunch. Bill and Michael laughed, and so did Alice and Ana.

Robert sighed. He bent forward towards Alice who was sitting on the ground in front of his chair. “You couldn’t prevent yourself, could you?” He whispered.

She chuckled. “No,” she said and then turned to face him. “I was so proud of you,” she added, smiling, and forcing him to smile back. He returned to his place.

“We won’t ask you how you did it, because this young lady left nothing more to be said,” Grandpa said, looked at Alice, and smiled. She smiled back, and he went on, “But we do need an explanation on how did you get that car.” He pointed at the black Mustang.

“Don’t worry, I didn’t steal it.”

“No one said you did.”

“You can say that I got it in return of a favor I’ve done earlier.” He smiled and glanced at Alice. She chuckled immediately after he gave her a wink.

“Really? You got it forever?” Tom wondered.

“No, only for the weekend, and then I’ll return it to its owner. But he gave me permission to use it whenever I need to.”

“Strange story,” Grandpa said.

“Yeah, and guess what? You don’t have to believe it,” Robert growled immediately, keeping track with Grandpa’s scoffing.

Amy has just come out of the house, holding a mug, and headed towards them.

“Take it easy, guys,” Jennifer said, trying to calm them. Grandpa sniffed and diverted his eyes from Robert after glaring at him for some moments.

“Hi,” Amy said, smiling at everyone, and moving her pretty eyes between them.

Her appearance erased Grandpa’s anger immediately. “Oh, here came the princess,” he exclaimed. Maybe she is the princess Bill and Michael were talking about earlier? I’m not sure... Let’s just wait and see.



Amy chuckled and sat on the arm of Robert's chair. She looked at him and smiled. "Your coffee," she murmured.

"Thanks," he said, smiling back. She got up immediately and sat next to Grandpa, putting her head on his chest, and using her beautiful smile to ask him to cuddle her. He put his right arm around her shoulders immediately, and gently pushed her closer to his body. And then he used his other hand to caress her hair. She smiled again and closed her eyes, relaxing.

"You didn't sleep well, did you?" He asked quietly.

"No," she murmured.

He used both of his arms to hug her tighter, and she reacted by putting her right arm around his waist.

"It's ok, you can sleep, and I'll carry you to your bed later... like the old days, remember?" He smiled.

She chuckled and opened her eyes, looking at his face. "Yes, I do. But you are old now; you can't carry me anymore." She smiled.

He laughed, and so did the rest, including Robert.

"I'm stronger than ever, pretty girl."

She giggled. "There is no doubt about that," she murmured, rubbing his chest gently with her hand.

"Video games time! Anyone wants to join?" Tom exclaimed suddenly.

"Yeah!" Bill and Michael yelled.

"This thing is gonna kill you," grandpa said.

"Who cares!"

"We still need one more player," Bill said.

"Yeah, so we would play two on two," Michael added.

"Right." He silenced for some seconds, before yelling suddenly, "Maybe Robert can play!"

All the eyes moved to Robert.

"Sure, why not. I can give it a try."

"Cool!" The kids exclaimed. "He will play with me," Bill said. "Forget it," Michael protested. "It's done, he is with me," Bill argued. "No way!" Michael yelled. The girls, including Amy, laughed at them.

"It's settled. I'll play with uncle Tom, and you two play together," Robert said, getting up.

"No!" They both yelled sadly.

"Yes!" Uncle Tom exclaimed.

Everyone laughed.

"Let's go!" He yelled, and dashed towards the house. The boys followed him immediately. On his way, following them, Robert glanced at Amy and smiled.

“Thanks again,” he said. She nodded and smiled.

“Guys, wait for me,” he called out and then ran towards the house.

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The thing I know about the video games is that once it is started, it never stops. However, I followed them inside and watched them playing. About half an hour later, the girls went inside and headed to their rooms. I didn't follow them; the excitement of the game prevented me. After another thirty minutes, all of them went downstairs and headed outside. It looked like they were going out. This time, I followed them, and so did Robert, who paused the game and got up.

“Guys, where are you going?”

“To Mandy's house,” Amy said.

“Really?”

“Mm-hmm, she invited us,” Alice said.

“We are going to swim!” Ashley exclaimed.

“Great! Can I come?”

“Of course not!” Amy protested immediately.

Robert frowned. “But... why?”

“Because no boys are allowed; girls only,” Ana said.

“We can go to the beach then; there are no rules there.”

“No!” The three girls protested immediately. “No!” Ashley glanced at them and then followed them after some moments.

Robert's face expression reflected his confusion. “And this would be because?”

“Because we will never ever wear a bathing suit in public,” Amy said, looking him in the eyes.

“Ever,” Alice followed, concurring.

“Ever... ever,” Ana added.

“I got it,” Robert yelled, interrupting. I'm glad he did; it didn't seem they were going to stop soon. He shook his head and sighed. “Guys, I don't like them very much either, but all the girls wear them. I see no harm,” he mumbled.

Amy took some steps closer to him, and then looked him in the eyes confidently and challengingly. “All the girls can wear whatever they want to wear, but no one can force us to follow in their footsteps.”

Robert squinted, totally confused.

Ana tried to help easing his mystification. "There is nothing wrong about wearing a bathing suit, but it's totally wrong to wear it in public... for us at least."

"We can't wander around naked with everyone's eyes following us. There is a word called SHY that prevents us from doing this," Amy explained further, emphasizing on the word 'Shy'.

"Naked?!" Robert wondered automatically.

"As you can see, they practically cover nothing," Alice explained.

*(Exactly! This is the best part! This is the best thing we like about them! Imagine a beach with all these girls running in their bikinis... Oh! I could lie there forever! SHUT UP!)*

"Nothing at all," Ana added.

"They can't take our undies, make them colorful, change their names, and then ask us to wear them in public," Amy hissed.

"It is not the same," he mumbled.

"It is exactly the same, you just need to look deeper," she replied immediately.

"Well, boys can wear whatever they want and go shirtless almost everywhere," Robert said.

"They can do whatever they want, simply because there is nothing special about them," Amy said calmly.

"What are you talking about?" Robert growled.

"The reason why the girl shouldn't show her body the same way the boy does, is that she is more special than him... more valuable and unique."

"This is not true!" He protested.

"Really?" She wondered with a smile.

"Yep."

"Then why we never heard of anyone asking the boys to cover their bodies? The answer is simple; there is nothing special about them! But for girls, it is totally different. When we keep our bodies covered, it is not because we are less than the boys and can't do what they are allowed to do... but because we are more valuable than them. And because they are jealous of us, they did their best to pull us to their level... and sadly, they succeeded."

*(Cool! I like that! It is making a great sense! You really like what you are hearing? She is humiliating us idiot! No... she is praising herself, and giving it what it really deserves.)*

Amy went on, "I want you to imagine a very rare gemstone... something unbelievable... something incomparable... a one of its kind."

"Umm... okay."

"Great... Now imagine that this unique stone was given to you, what will you do with it?"

"Well, I'll keep it safe and away from all the eyes, but my eyes, and the eyes of my very special ones."

"Excellent! However precious the gemstone you imagined is, the girl's body is more precious. So, she should keep her jewel covered, safe,

and hiding from all the hungry eyes that are dreaming of glancing at it, for even a single moment, to enjoy its prettiness and uniqueness. The only lucky eyes that can have that honor should be the eyes of the girl's very special persons, and the eyes of the lucky man she will one day chose carefully, from all the men out there, to be her long-awaited knight."

His eyes widened in surprise and amazement. He stared at her, mouth agape, and lips too stunned to utter a word.

*(Why are you looking at me? There is nothing more left to be said. This is girl absolutely doesn't belong to this world... by any mean or another.)*

The girls weren't less amazed than Robert, and this made the silence dominates for a while. Alice decided to break the silence.

"Look, I'll simplify it for you. We'll never ever wear our undies in public. The bathing suits are actually colored undies, and then we'll never ever wear bathing suits in public. See? Very easy," Alice explained, calmly.

"Look... if they told you that to go to the supermarket, you have to be naked, will you do it?" Amy wondered.

*(Of course I will! Especially if the girls will do it as well! SHUT UP! SHUT UP! SHUT UP!)*

"No, I won't," he mumbled.

"Even if everyone else started to do it, till it became a common thing?" She added.

"Umm..."

She interrupted him. "You will do it, and you won't feel wrong, because everyone around you will be doing it as well." She paused, and took another two steps closer. She confidently looked him in the eyes and went on, "But you can always say no. And instead of forcing yourself to do something you hate or are uncomfortable with, because everyone around you asks you to do it, you can always refuse anything that is against your nature and morals, even if every single one in the whole world is doing it." She paused for a second and then went on, slower and clearer, "It is always your choice. You decide whether to be a star... or a moon."

She stared at him for some seconds, and then turned around and walked away.

"Let's go girls," she said, proudly. The three girls followed her towards the gate. Suddenly, she turned around, walking backward, and started to speak again.

"Always remember... we make the rules... rules don't make us."

She turned again and walked outside with the rest of the girls. The astonished Robert followed them with his eyes till they disappeared, and then held his place, staring at the main gate, and thinking about what he has just heard.

"Are you coming or not?"

He shuddered and turned towards the voice, to find Bill standing near the main door.

"I'm coming."

He murmured, and headed back to the house.

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*One hour later...*

"Hey, buddy, we need to concentrate. We haven't won any game yet," Tom said.

"I'm sorry... I'm just... tired," Robert mumbled.

"Yeah!" Bill exclaimed.

"Oh, great, another goal," Tom muttered.

"I'm done," Robert said, putting the game controller aside, and getting up.

"Where are you going?" Michael wondered.

"I don't know. I'll go and get some fresh air. It is not a good idea to spend the weekend indoors," he said.

"As you wish," Tom said.

"Anyone is coming?"

The two boys shook their heads.

"Okay," Robert said and walked out. He headed to the car, started the engine, and stood still for some seconds.

"Ok babe, where do you wanna go?" He said... umm... talking to the car I guess. "What? I can't hear you." He paused again. "Okay... okay... the beach, I got it."

He pressed the gas twice, and then put the car on the first gear. He pressed the gas again, and this time the car blasted off immediately. He wandered around for some time, and then headed to the beach, and this time, it was at its full capacity.

*(Oh! My dream came true! I can't believe my eyes! Look at all these girls! Don't get very excited, we are here to enjoy the beautiful morning only. Look buddy, you enjoy your morning, and I'll enjoy my girls. Whatever.)*

He got out and entered the beach, and again he just leaned on the outside fence, and stood still, watching and enjoying.

*(You aren't going to just stand here, are you? Yes, I am. Are you crazy?! Maybe... Come on! Move! Actually, I'm not in the right mood now. What? You aren't going to let her ruin our day, are you? What are you talking about? I'm talking about your gray-eyed girl.)*

*Amy?! Exactly. She has nothing to do with this. Of course she has. What do you mean? You know what I mean. No, I don't! Come on, stop tricking yourself, open your eyes and see the truth. The truth?! Yep... the truth... this girl isn't for you. You are crazy! No, I'm not, but you are blind, and this is a fact. Blind? Yes. The man, who can't see that a girl isn't suitable for him, is absolutely a blind man... and a stupid man as well. Because he wastes his time with someone, although he is one hundred percent sure they will never be together. Umm... it's not that way. It absolutely is. Dude, she won't even let you kiss her!*

*You may be right... but at least I can try.*

*Do whatever you want, but don't say I didn't warn you.*

*What are you proposing?*

*Enter the beach, choose a hot girl who wants to have fun as much as you want, go out with her, and start enjoying your life. See? Very easy.*

*And believe me, she will make you happy, I guarantee that.)*

Suddenly, something caught his eyes and made him start moving immediately.

*(No, no, no, this is absolutely a bad idea. Shut up. No! You are going to embarrass yourself! It's not your problem. Buddy, the beach is full of hot girls, pick whoever you want... except that girl. It is too late; I already made my decision. Oh boy!)*

I figured out that he was heading towards a girl, and when I look carefully, I discovered that she is the girl he met the last time. Umm... I don't know how the humans think, but if you asked me, I'll say it is absolutely a bad idea.

He reached the lying girl and kneeled.

"Hi."

She turned to him, and once her eyes saw his face, she grimaced. "It's you again." She slowly moved to the sitting position.

"Yes... it is me again," he said with a smile.

"And what do you want?"

"I want to apologize."

*(Great! Another apology... howpathetic!)*

The girl was surprised by what she has just heard. "Oh... really?" She wondered, sneering.

"Yes... I didn't mean to be rude. And I'm really sorry for leaving you the way I did."

"Who cares..."

"Look, I know I hurt you. I just wanted you to know that I didn't mean to do this."

"Look... umm... your name was Robert, right?"

He nodded. She went on, "Look Robert, you did hurt me."

"Yes, I know, that's why I'm here today."

She smiled. "But you can make up for me."

"Really?" His expression lightened with relief.

"Yep."

"What should I do?"

"Well, what you've done was wrong... but what I did was wrong as well."

He squinted. She went on, "It was me who gave you a chance to do what you've done from the beginning... and actually this taught me a

lesson.”

“A lesson?”

“Mm-hmm. From now on, I’ll be careful when dealing with boys... because some of them are really stupid.”

*(Thank you, you said it for me.)*

He smiled. “I won’t argue about that.”

They both silenced for some moments.

“So, how can I make up for you?”

“Well, maybe you can buy me a drink.”

“Sure.”

She got up. “Ok, wait for me, I’ll put some clothes on and meet you outside.”

“Okay, I’ll be waiting.”

“Good... bye for now,” She smiled, turned around, and walked away.

“Hey,” Robert yelled suddenly. The girl stopped and turned to him. He went on, “You aren’t coming back, are you?”

She laughed. “Ugh... I though I have tricked you!”

He smiled. “Let’s act as if you did. I’ll wait for you outside, you won’t come, and I’ll be punished... Deal?”

She chuckled. “Okay.”

She turned and walked again, and again he stopped her.

“Catharine.”

She turned again.

“What now?”

“Umm... we are good now, right? I mean... no bad feelings?”

She bit her lower lip and stared at him with her smiley face for some seconds.

“I think so,” she said, still smiling.

“Good, now I can sleep at night.”

She laughed.

“Okay, I’ll head outside and start the waiting.”

She nodded. “And I’ll change and meet you there.”

“Okay.”

“Catch you later,” she said, turned around, and walked away. Robert kept staring at her till she disappeared.

He smiled. “They practically cover nothing... nothing at all,” he murmured, smiling and shaking his head, and then headed outside, and waited near the car.

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*Some minutes later...*

“You really waited.”

He turned to the direction of the amazed voice to find Catharine.

“And you really came,” he said, not less amazed than her. She smiled and kept walking till she reached him.

“So... your offer of buying me a drink is still standing?”

“Sure.”

“Then what are we waiting for?”

He chuckled. “For your orders.”

She smiled. “Ok, get in the car, and I’ll lead you to my favorite café.”

“After you, my lady.”

He moved fast and opened the door for her.

“If you say so,” She smiled, and got in the car. He dashed to his seat, started the engine, pressed the gas, and unleashed the car’s power.

*(She is beautiful. I can’t argue about that. Yeah, especially when she was undressed. No, I think that girls look better when they are dressed than when they are wearing these humiliating bathing suits. Here we go again; the crazy person is awake. I’m not crazy! Look buddy, either you and your strange girls are crazy, or the rest of the girls in the whole world are, and if you asked me, I’ll absolutely vote for you and your crazy family. I didn’t say the other girls are crazy, they just didn’t see it the way I see it now. Ok, and until they see it the way you see it now, you will be crazy, at least for me.)*

“You aren’t quite a talker, are you?”

She saved him from his thoughts.

“No, not really.”

“Turn right.”

“Okay.”



"I love to talk."

"Sure, most girls do," he replied immediately.

The girl laughed. "Yes, we do." She paused for a moment and then went on, "But... talking is a good thing."

"Yeah, sure it is."

"It helps you get to know new people, and reinforce your relationships with those you already know."

"Exactly."

"The next turn."

"No problems."

He followed her instructions.

"So... why did you run away last time? Was it your girlfriend?"

"No, I just remembered I had an important appointment."

"I see," She silenced for some moments. "Ok, take the next turn, the café will be on your right."

"I can see it already."

"Good."

He stopped the car in front of it. They got out and headed to an empty table, outside the café, and sat down.

"Nice place."

"Yep, I usually come here alone. You are the first person to come here with me."

He smiled. "Should I take this as a compliment?"

She chuckled. "Maybe."

"Great!"

The waitress came to their table.

"Good morning Ms. Catherine," she said politely.

"Good morning Ellen."

"Your usual coffee?"

"Mm-hmm."

"What about our new guest?"

"Actually, I already had my coffee. So, I'll take any fresh juice."

"Orange, for example?" She said, smiling.

“Okay, orange is just perfect.”

“Right away, sir.”

She left them and walked inside.

“She is a nice lady,” he said.

“Yeah, very nice. I love talking to her very much. Sometimes I feel as if she is my mother or my elder sister or something.”

“Oh, really?”

“Yep. And she usually calls me Cathy. I guess it’s your presence that added the word Ms. To my name.” She smiled, and he laughed.

“Right,” he said.

The silence dominated, and again if the girl didn’t talk, he will never do.

“How old are you?” She said, breaking the silence.

“Twenty... You?”

“I’m eighteen.”

“Nice,” he said.

“Yep,” she followed immediately.

The waitress returned after some seconds.

“Your hot coffee,” she said, putting the coffee in front of Catharine. “And you fresh juice,” she added.

“Thanks.”

“Thanks, Ellen.”

She smiled, nodded once, and then returned inside.

“So... why did you bring me here?” He wondered, breaking the ice for the first time in his life.

“To buy me a drink, remember?” She smiled.

He chuckled. “You know this isn’t the answer I was waiting for, don’t you?”

She smiled again. “Really? Then what were you waiting for?”

“Well, maybe for an explanation.”

“Explanation?!”

“Yep, for being the first to share you your favorite place.”

“You can say that... I think you are different,” she mumbled.

He smiled. “Different?”

"Yes." she paused to take a sip of her coffee, and he made a good use of the chance and drank some of his juice. She went on, "You are the first boy to... umm... reject me."

"I didn't reject you!" He protested immediately. He paused to return to the calm tone and then went on, "I just... don't do this kind of..."

She interrupted him. "I got it. Although I remember that it was you who asked for it from the beginning."

"Yeah, I know. It was just some kind of... a bet."

"A bet?! With whom?"

"Umm... myself."

She laughed. "You are crazy!"

"Maybe... I just want to say that you should stop doing this kind of relationships as well."

She grimaced. "It's my life, remember?" She growled.

"Yeah, sorry."

The embarrassment shut Robert's mouth immediately. The girl tried to ease the situation a little, "I'm sorry... I didn't mean to."

"It's ok."

She smiled. "We are totally different human beings. We don't have anything in common!"

He smiled, hardly. "Yeah, we are two different types."

"The strange thing is that I think I do like you," She beamed.

"This is impossible!"

She kept smiling and got up from her place, preparing to leave. "You will be around, won't you? In case anyone of us changed into the other's type... someday."

The surprised expression vanished gradually from his face and was replaced by a smile.

"I'm not going anywhere."

"And if this didn't happen, I still can call you a friend, right?"

"With pleasure."

"Good. Don't forget to pay the check. You may want to leave her some tips as well."

He smiled. "Sure."

"Ok, see you around."

She started to walk away.

"Have a nice day!" He said.

She turned to him and smiled. "I will." She turned and walked away.

*(You have just wasted a great opportunity, and lost a perfect girl. No, I didn't. She is not my type, and actually she did me a great favor and helped me to be sure who my perfect match is. No, you aren't talking about her, are you? This is the end of this conversation... No, listen to me, NO!)*

He got up suddenly, called for the check, headed to the car, and returned home.

The girls didn't return yet. Bill, Michael, Tom, Kevin, and Grandpa weren't around as well, and the ladies, including Grandma Susan, were drinking tea outside. Robert parked the car, said a "hello" to them, and then dashed to his room. He threw his body on the bed, and lay on his back, staring at the ceiling. And for my bad luck, he stayed like this for some time.

*(Ok, what is the plan? Excuse me, are you talking to me? Of course I am. Sorry, I'm out. What do you mean? I clearly mean that if you are going to waste your time with this blonde girl, you are going to do this alone. You can't quit now! Of course I can, because I'm smart enough to see how it will end. And how will it end? It will end with a disaster, and a lot of broken hearts. But... why?! The answer is simple; because she is an incomparable angel, and you are a sinful demon. Demon?! Yep... Never ever forget your past, am I making myself clear?)*

*I don't... deserve her.*

*Exactly, now you started to see the truth. She... deserves a decent man... who can love, protect, and take care of her. Great! I see some eyes being opened. All what I will do... is turning her life into a hell... and it will end with breaking her heart. Welcome to the real world, buddy!*

*That is it... I'm leaving.*

*This is the only thing you can do. And by time, she will forget you; I can guarantee this.*

*It is done; this is my last day in this house.)*

He turned on his side to face the wall, and stayed like this for some minutes. Then... he closed his eyes, and when I became sure he fell asleep, I left the room.

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"Robert, Wake up."

He opened his eyes immediately and turned around, to find Alice sitting on his bed, rubbing his shoulder, and trying to wake him up. She shuddered and moved her hands away instantly because of his sudden reaction.

He squinted. "What is wrong?" He screeched.

"Hey, calm down. It is just the lunch time," she mumbled, totally astounded by his anxiety.

He sighed with relief. "You scared me to death."

"You are strange, you really are."

“Strange?!”

“Yeah, I mean... what is so scary in waking up?” She wondered.

He sighed again. “Sorry,” he muttered and then paused for some moments, shaking his lips, and trying to keep going. And when he failed to find another words, he put his lips together and just stared at her.

“Umm... we are going to the movies tonight, are you coming?”

He moved himself to the sitting position, not diverting his eyes from hers. “I don’t think so.”

She frowned. “But... why?”

“Why do you want me to come? You can enjoy another girls’ night out,” he growled, sneering.

The girl kept her calmness. “Well, Ana and Ashley want you to come; they think your presence will make the night better. Amy... umm... she doesn’t care.”

He winced. The girl went on, “And for me, I do want you to come... really do... because this means you will take us with your car, and save us from getting into the whole cab argument thing again.”

He grimaced. “That’s it? You want me to come just because I have a car?”

She stared at him for some moments. “Well... I love to be honest.”

“Umm... I thought that... yesterday... you know,” he mumbled. He failed to say anything more. So, he sighed and turned his face away from her. The girl sighed as well, and moved closer to him. Then she sat there, peeking at him from time to time, and searching for something to say. Finally, after some seconds of silence, she started to talk.

“Umm... you have to understand that... I’m fourteen now,” she mumbled.

He interrupted. “I know that you aren’t a little girl anymore.”

“No, this is not what I meant.”

He looked at her and waited. She didn’t leave him waiting for too long.

“I meant that this means I lived whole fourteen years without a brother.”

He chuckled. “I know a worse case.”

She smiled. “Really?”

“Yep, I know a guy who lived twenty years without a family.”

The smile disappeared gradually from her face. “I wonder how he managed to survive.”

He was the one to smile this time. “I always ask myself the same question,” he murmured, emotionlessly. This is the first time I see how kind-hearted this outgoing stubborn girl is. I wonder if Robert was able to see this in her caring eyes, just like I did.

She broke the silence again.

“I have an idea!” She exclaimed.

“Go ahead.”

“Why don’t we go out together?” She suggested excitedly, smiling.

He squinted. “On a date?!”

She laughed. “Date?! I’m your sister!” She continued her loud laugh.

“Oh, sorry, I need some time to get used to this.” He paused for some moments, till her laugh ended, and then went on, “But if you weren’t my sister, and you were a little bit older, I would have absolutely asked you to go out with me.”

She smiled. “You mean... you would have absolutely dreamed of asking me to go out with you.”

“Oh! We have a beautiful hard-to-get girl in our hands here.”

She laughed. “Shut up!”

“Fair skin tone, entrancing deep hazel eyes, long dark-blond hair, and a magnificent killing smile... Woo... this girl here does have the full package, and I can already see the long line of waiting lovers, whose greatest dream is only getting a smile from her.”

“I’m out of here!” She started to move immediately, but Robert held her arm and stopped her.

“Okay, okay, I’ll stop,” he said with a smile, gently pulling her closer to him again. The girl didn’t resist, putting a shy smile on her face.

“I didn’t know that you are shy.”

“Well, you did now.” She smiled.

He smiled back. “Okay, but I want you to know that I really meant it; you are really a very special girl.”

“Okay... thank you... Now, can we skip to the next point please?”

The best thing I love about girls is when they try to act as if they hate hearing people telling them how pretty they are, although deep inside them, they are enjoying every single word being said. And this girl here was trying to do this... her voice was acting angrily, but her smile was clearly reflecting her happiness.

“Okay, why don’t you go downstairs and tell them not to wait for us?”

She grinned. “You are taking me out, aren’t you?” She wondered happily.

“And you are coming because you want to come, not because I’m a good looking man who have a car and will save you the cab fee, right?”

She chuckled. “Absolutely.”

“Ok, go tell them, and I’ll go and wash my face till you return.”

“Okay,” She exclaimed, jumped out of her place, and ran excitedly towards the door. Suddenly, she stopped and turned to him again.

“Umm... give me some time to put something on, okay?”

“Why? You look perfect!”

“Come on! This our first date!” She exclaimed.

He laughed. "It is not a date!"

She chuckled. "Yep, but it is very much more important to me."

"Very... much... more?" He laughed, saying every single word separately.

"Mm-hmm."

"Go girl, wear whatever you want, I'll be waiting here. I'm sure you will teach all those girls out there what the words 'pretty girl' mean."

"Okay!" She exclaimed, turned around, and ran outside. I never saw her that excited since I came to this house.

*(Are you really gonna do this? What do you mean? You are going to waste your time with a fourteen years old girl? What about our plans of leaving?*

*Didn't you see how happy and excited she was? Just because I'm going out with here?*

*Look buddy, she is your sister, okay, this is a fact. But this doesn't mean you have to be best friends as well.*

*Best friends? Being her best friend is too great to even be a dream.*

*You aren't really leaving, are you?*

*Of course... I... am...*

*No you aren't. Two crazy boys, two little girls, a teenage sister, and a gray-eyed girl of morals will stop you... How pathetic!*

*This is not going to happen.*

*Let's just wait and see.)*

He got up, headed to the bathroom, and then returned to his room after a couple of minutes.

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*Some minutes later...*

"Alice, are you in there?"

Robert said, knocking at the door of Alice's room, after waiting for her for too long.

"Yes, I'll be ready in a minute."

"What is taking you so long?"

"Sorry, I'm almost ready."

"Are you alone?"

"Yep."

“Can I get in?”

“Umm... sure... I mean... wait... no...” She laughed. “I don’t know!”

He laughed back. “Calm down, and let’s start it all from the beginning, okay?”

She chuckled. “Okay.”

“Are you dressed?”

“Umm... sort of... I mean... I’m dressed... but I’m not at the same time.”

He laughed. “You are absolutely crazy!”

She laughed. “Wait for a moment, okay?”

“Okay.”

He waited.

“Okay, I think you can get in now.”

He put his hand on the handle and was about to open the door.

“No! Wait! Umm...” She laughed.

“Look, I’ll be waiting in my room, finish whatever you are doing in there, and come to me, okay?”

She laughed again. “Okay.”

He sighed and turned around, preparing to walk away. But, he stopped when he saw Amy coming.

“Hi,” he said.

“What are you doing here?” She wondered, smiling.

“Here?”

“I mean in front of our room. Did you need anything?”

She reached him.

“Oh, no, I was just checking on Alice.”

Amy smiled. “Are you really going out with her?”

“Yep.”

“I think this is just great!” She exclaimed. “It will help you create a strong bond,” she added, calmer.

“Yeah, I know.”

“And she is actually extremely happy and excited!”



"I know... but I think she may have gone crazy."

She laughed. "Why are you saying this?"

"I don't know. I think it will be better if you checked on her."

"Okay."

"And tell her I'll be waiting in my room."

"Sure."

"And by the way, I'm taking you to the movies tonight."

"No, you don't have to. You won't like it."

"It's ok, you two can watch whatever you want, and I'll search for some anime movie for the kids... and for me as well. You know, I love watching them."

He smiled, and she laughed. "Sounds great!"

"Okay, go now and see if she is still alive."

She chuckled. "Okay, see you later."

She entered the room, and he headed to his. I followed Amy inside.

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"Oh! I'm glad you came!"

"What is wrong?"

Amy held her place immediately after noticing what Alice was wearing. "Wow! What do we have here?! Girl, you look incredibly beautiful!"

"Amy, shut up," she screeched.

She started walking towards her. "No, really. This is the first time I notice how grown you are!"

"Amy!" She snapped.

Amy squinted immediately. "What is wrong?" She wondered anxiously, putting her hand on Alice's shoulder.

"I think I need someone to teach me how to be a sister."

Amy laughed. "What?! There is no such thing!"

"I mean... someone experienced. Someone to tell me how to deal with Robert."

Amy kept staring at her, waiting for more explanations.

Alice went on, "I want to know the rules. What is allowed and what is not. Do you understand me?"

"Sure, and I have the answer."

"Really?"

She smiled. "Mm-hmm. The answer is simple; there are no rules between a brother and a sister."

She squinted. "What do you mean?"

"I mean they two put their own rules and decide how strong their relationship will be. They choose what is allowed and what is not, and then they start acting according to it."

Alice smiled, and the grim expression that started to vanish once Amy started talking, was completely gone now.

"I think I understand what you are trying to say."

"Good. Start putting your rules according to what you feel. And make sure to keep them flexible. I mean to give them a chance and a space to be changed later, when you get to know each others better."

"You will help me, won't you?"

"Well, I can give you my opinions, but it will remain your decision at the end."

"Okay... I'll make you my consultant."

She smiled, and Amy laughed.

"Great! I finally found a job!"

Alice chuckled. The two girls stared at each others for some moments.

"You are the best sister ever," Alice said.

Amy smiled and gently caressed her well-dressed hair.

"Alice! I'm leaving!" Robert yelled, interrupting them. The two girls chuckled.

"Go to him."

"Okay."

Alice kissed Amy's cheek and dashed outside. Once she opened the door and Robert put an eye on her, his eyes widened with a huge surprise, and his feet were nailed on their places.

He kept blinking over and over again, not diverting his eyes from her.

"What?" She wondered happily.

"What?! Don't you have any mirrors in your room?!"

She laughed. "Of course I do."

"And what did they tell you?"

“Nothing... just another girl.”

“You mean just another impossibly beautiful girl!”

She chuckled. “Shut up!”

“Okay, okay, calm down.”

“Let’s move; I’m famished!”

“After you, princess.”

She smiled and held his hand. They headed downstairs, and then went outside after greeting grandpa and grandma who were sitting in the living room. They got in the car.

“Where do you wanna go?”

“Just head to the town, I’ll lead you from there.”

“Okay.”

The car started to move, and after about ten minutes, it reached the town. Alice gave him directions till they reached a restaurant. He stopped the car, and they headed inside.

“What is this place?”

“It’s the McDowell’s restaurant.”

“I know this; I read the sign.”

She opened the door and entered, and he followed immediately.

“I love the place, and Mr. Tony is a very nice man.”

“I see.”

An old guy grinned and got up immediately after seeing her entering the place.

“Oh! The pretty Alice Wilson is here!”

She chuckled, walking towards him. “Hi, Uncle Tony.”

She reached him. He kissed her forehead. “Hello sweetheart.”

She smiled. “This is Robert, my brother.”

“Oh, the warrior who took the bandits down.”

Robert winced. Tony went on, shaking hands with him, “It is a small town. News spread fast here. And actually, the Sheriff always has his morning coffee here, with me, and we talk about everything.”

Robert nodded.

“Ok, let’s find you a good table.”

Alice smiled. "Great!"

He took them to a window side table, and then took their order by himself.

Robert watched him walking away, and then started to talk.

"He is really a nice guy."

"Yes, he is one of grandpa's best friends."

"Really? Grandpa doesn't seem a very friendly person."

She winced. "What?! He is one of the most popular guys in the town, and one of the kindest men I've ever met in my life."

"But... he doesn't seem to like me very much. Actually, he doesn't seem to like me at all."

"No, you are totally wrong. He likes you, and he likes you a lot."

Robert squinted. "Really?"

"Mm-hmm."

"What makes you so sure?"

"He trusted you to take care of us, and this is his highest level of trust."

He nodded and stared at her for some moments. "I think you may be right."

After some minutes, their meals arrived.

"Thanks," Alice said to the waitress. They started to eat.

"It is delicious!" He exclaimed.

Alice smiled. "I told you, this is the best restaurant in the town."

"I can't argue about this."

Some seconds passed.

"How is your school going?"

"Fine."

"Make sure to enjoy every single moment; these days will never come back."

"I know."

"Do you have any friends?"

She laughed. "Of course I do! Actually... I have many friends. Almost all the girls in my class are friends to me, and all the boys dream of it."

"I won't blame them."

He smiled, and she chuckled.

“Any best friends?”

“Sure... two girls; Chloe and Kelly.”

“Any boys?” He smiled.

“Not really; I can call them just colleges or friends.”

“I see.”

“You are the first boy to go out with me.” She smiled.

“Oh! What an honor!”

She chuckled. “Yeah.”

She took a bite of her sandwich, and then went on, “What about you?”

“What about me?”

“You are twenty, right?”

“Yep.”

“Any friends?”

“No, only one; Elvis, and he is dead now.”

She frowned. “Only one friend?!”

He nodded. “You can say that I had a unique life.”

She put her sandwich down, and totally concentrated on him, putting the grim expression on her face. “What do you mean?”

“Well, it is not a good story to be heard on our first date.”

She smiled. “It is not a date! I’m your sister!” She exclaimed.

He chuckled. “Yeah, the prettiest girl on earth always has to be the sister, so the brother would keep regretting his bad luck every time he sees her.”

She laughed. “Stop saying this!” She grabbed one piece of her French Fries and threw it at him.

“Oh! You want a war then!”

“No! I didn’t mean to!”

“Prepare to defend your plate!”

She laughed loudly. He grabbed one of his fries and started moving it towards her dish.

“Soldier, fight for your country!” He yelled, talking to his French fry. Alice kept laughing, louder. “You are crazy!”

"Keep going! The plate will be ours!"

"This is not gonna happen!" She yelled, still laughing, and grabbed one fry and put it at the edge of her plate, waiting for Robert's fry to arrive.

"Go soldier, go! You can take him down!" Robert yelled.

"Only in your dreams!" She moved her fry and started the attack. She used her fry to push his away, and this made it fall immediately.

"Yeah!" She cheered.

"It's not over yet, baby." He grabbed his small wooden fork and gave it to his fry, as a weapon. "Go, go, go! Tear her apart!"

"Oh! No!"

She glanced around the table till she found her own wooden fork. She put it to her fry and moved to attack. The two fries started their sword battle.

"You aren't going to beat me!" He yelled.

"Beat... is the least word that can describe what I'll do to you," she challenged.

"You will regret it, stubborn girl."

"Oh, I can hear a loser talking."

"I'm not gonna lose!"

"You are."

The battle tempo increased.

"No, I'm not!"

"Yes... you are," she insisted. Her fry seemed to be heading towards a victory, and his fry kept falling back.

"No... I am not gonna lose!" He said every word separately and in a full mouth.

"Finish him, now!" She yelled. Her fry did an acrobatic move, and then stabbed his fry in the heart with the wooden fork.

"No!" Robert yelled with sorrow, watching his fry being killed. He put some ketchup on the wound spot, and then changed his voice into a childish tone, mimicking these voices you hear in the anime movies, which are my favorite genre, and his as well. "I am bleeding! Oh! Help!" The fry moaned... umm... I mean Robert moaned.

Here, Alice laughed too loud that everyone else in the restaurant turned to look at her. And although she noticed that all the eyes were on her, she couldn't stop laughing. Her childish innocent loud continuous laugh forced Robert and everybody around her to do the same. She kept laughing, while the wounded fry was screaming and falling to the ground, till the tears started to ooze out of her eyes.

"I'll relief you from your pains," Robert said. "Please do this!" The fry replied. Robert grabbed him, opened his mouth, and moved him slowly towards it.

"Good bye my friends; I'm going to a better life!" the fry said, talking to the other fries.

Alice laugh just got louder, and her oozing tears were pouring now. Robert put the fry in his mouth and chewed it slowly, enjoying its taste.

Although the battle and the strange crazy show were over, Alice couldn't stop laughing. Robert kept smiling, chuckling and looking at her, waiting for her laughing frenzy to stop. The girl needed about two more minutes of continuous laughing to be able to put an end to it.

"Finish your food and let's get out of here, before they kick us out," he whispered, smiling, and peeking at the surrounding people.

She chuckled. "Okay."

They two finished their meals fast, and then dashed out of the place. Once they went out, Alice started to laugh again.

"This was crazy!" She said, her voice was choking because of her non-stop laughing.

He laughed. "Yeah! The best dinner I ever had in my life!"

"Me too!" She exclaimed.

They reeled to the car.

"What should we do now? We aren't going home, are we?" He wondered.

"Of course not!"

"Have anything in mind?"

She smiled. "Mm-hmm."

"Then what are we waiting for?"

She chuckled. "Don't you wanna know to where I'll take you? Maybe you won't like it."

"But you will absolutely like it, and this is totally enough for me."

She smiled, and looked him in the eyes for some moments, saying nothing, and just biting her lips.

"Oh! I think she is considering kissing me now!" He murmured happily.

She laughed. "You ruined it!" She yelled, infusing her voice with anger.

"Oh no!"

"Let's go."

She started to walk away.

"No! Wait! I can't believe this!" He begged.

She laughed and headed to the car's front door. "You missed your chance. Now get in and drive," she said, acting angrily, but smiling.

Robert sighed. "I'm the most stupid person on the whole universe!" He yelled while getting into the car, and Alice laughed while doing the same.

"Ok, to where now?" He groaned, still annoyed.

"Just drive, I'll lead you."

He started the engine and stared at her for some moments.

"What?!"

"You were really going to kiss me, weren't you?"

She smiled shyly and nodded once.

"How stupid am I!"

She laughed. "Very."

He pressed the gas and the car moved. Alice gave him instructions, and he followed them, to find themselves in front of a forest. He stopped the car, and then the two of them went out.

He looked at her, totally confused. "It is a forest."

She smiled. "I didn't say it is Disney land," she scoffed.

"Yes, I know. I mean, what are we doing here exactly?"

"We are going to enter the forest," she said confidently.

"What about the bandits?"

"There are no bandits here. This is the northern forest; a place where most of the town men come to hunt."

"I still don't understand why you brought us here."

"Just follow me... okay?"

He looked at her for some moments and then sighed. "Okay," he muttered.

She entered the forest, and he followed immediately.

They kept walking inside for a while, till they reached a place. It was a small lake in the middle of the forest, surrounded by colorful flowers and green grasses, and sparkling because of the clear bright sunrays. Once they entered the place, Robert's eyes widened with admiration, and kept glancing around the magnificent place.

"This is just... amazing!" He marveled.

She chuckled. "I told you." She sat on a huge rock.

"How did you find this place?" He wondered.

"Well, Uncle Tom and Uncle Kevin used to take Bill and Michael and go hunting in this forest. I was forced to go with them once, and this was when I discovered this beautiful place. No one of them noticed it, but I memorized its location, and was determined to come back to it later. No one cared to bring me here again, but when you returned, I was sure you would do it for me."

She smiled and he smiled back.

"Okay, what will we do now? Beside enjoying the incredible view?"

"Well, I have two dreams in my mind. Two things I wanted to do the most, and kept waiting for a chance to achieve them."

"What are they?"



She got up and walked to him.

“First, I wanted to swim in the lake. Second, I wanted to climb that tree.” She pointed at a tree near the lake and went on, “And swing in the air using that hanging rope, and then fly and fall into the water.”

“Sounds like a lot of fun.”

“Yeah.”

“Well, I don’t mean to be pessimistic, but you can’t achieve your dreams now.”

She grimaced. “Why?”

“Because you don’t have a bathing suit, and you can’t swim with your clothes on; you will absolutely get sick.”

She smiled. “Actually, I’m wearing my bathing suits.”

“What?!”

“I was sure that you will agree to bring me here, so, I put them on.”

“Smart girl!”

She chuckled.

“What are you waiting for? Go girl!”

“Okay!” She exclaimed happily, pushing him towards the trees.

“What?! Why do I have to stand behind the trees?” He growled.

“Just for some moments, till I remove my clothes.”

He pulled his eyebrows together in mystification, still being pushed by her. “I don’t get it! You already have your bathing suits underneath your clothes, right?”

“Yep.”

“Then...?”

“I don’t know! It is just... I can’t remove my clothes with your eyes staring at me! It is embarrassing!”

He sighed. “Ugh... girls.”

She chuckled and let go of him once they got close to the huge trees surrounding the place. He headed to the trees and turned around. “I’ll keep my eyes open; in case anyone showed up.”

“Okay, but promise you will never look at me.”

“I can’t guarantee this.”

“Come on!” She yelled.

"How about a brief peek?"

"Robert!" She growled.

"Okay, I promise."

"Good, I'll start now."

"Okay."

Some minutes passed.

"Okay, you can look."

"Ugh... finally," he said, getting out from behind the trees.

"Stand here and watch me. Take care of my clothes; don't let them fall, okay?"

"Okay."

He obeyed her orders, and she ran excitedly towards the tree. She climbed up and stayed up there for some seconds.

"Wow, the view is amazing from up here!" She marveled.

"I bet it is."

"Aren't you going to join?" She wondered excitedly.

"No."

"Hey, come on!"

"Thanks, I'm fine... Just take care up there."

"Don't worry, I'm a professional!"

He sighed.

She held the rope and prepared to jump. "Come on girl, be strong... Come on, come on, come on."

Suddenly, she jumped.

Robert gasped. The girl screamed loudly and excitedly while swinging on the air and heading to the lake. Once she became above it, she let go of herself and flew on the air. A moment later, she fell into the water.

"Are you alright?" Robert asked anxiously.

"Woo... this was just... unbelievable!"

He took some steps towards the lake.

"The water is awesome! Too warm and clear!"

"Good," he said, a little uncomfortable, and she noticed that. "What's wrong?"

“Nothing. Enjoy yourself in there, I’ll go and sit on that rock, to enjoy the fresh air and the amazing view, and to give you some space to play around.”

“Okay,” she said. He turned around and headed to a nearby rock. He sat there, took a deep breath, relaxed, and closed his eyes, letting the gently blowing air enter his lungs. The girl started to swim around.

Some minutes passed. Alice did the jump twice again, before finally relaxing in the water.

“You aren’t going to just sit there and stare at the sky, are you?”

“It is beautiful! I’m totally enjoying my time,” he said, pretending, and infusing his voice with excitement.

“No, you aren’t. You are just doing this for me.” She paused for a moment. “And I do appreciate it, but I want to see you happy as well.”

“I’m happy, I swear. Okay... I’m not enjoying the place very much, but seeing you happy is more than enough for me. I have never been a happy person, and I have never ever made anyone feel happy before. So, I do enjoy my time now.”

She laughed. “Why do I get the feeling that you... umm... love me?”

“What?! I absolutely love you! You aren’t only just a sister to me. You are the family I kept waiting for during the whole of my life, and the old dream that finally came true.”

She chuckled. “Okay, calm down, you do love me, better now?”

“A little.”

“What is the story of that old dream that finally came true?”

“It is a part of my miserable story.”

“I wanna hear it.”

“You will, but not now. We are here to enjoy, remember?”

She smiled. “Yeah.” She went on, “Actually, I wish you could join me.”

“I can’t; I didn’t bring my shorts.”

“I know, I said: I wish.”

He laughed. “Right.”

“You would have added a lot of fun.”

“It’s ok; we can come here over and over again. The lake isn’t going anywhere, is it?”

“Right.”

She swam for another couple of minutes.

“Why don’t we play a game?”

“A game?”

"Mm-hmm, like what we've done in the restaurant."

"Oh! It is a great idea! I love these things!"

She smiled. "Great."

He got up and turned to her. "What do you wanna do?"

"Umm..." She kept thinking for a while. "Yes! I have an idea!" She exclaimed suddenly.

"Go ahead."

"I'll be an enchanted girl who was captured in this lake, and you will be my savior!" She said, totally excited.

"Oh! Sounds interesting!"

She chuckled. "Ok, go now, hide behind the trees, and then come out, acting as if you don't know I'm here."

"Okay." He ran towards the trees and stayed behind them for some moments.

"Ready?" She said.

"Just a minute."

"Okay."

He came out after about a minute, with a grimaced face, some tree leaves around his head, a fully stretched body, and a long tree branch on his hand as a sword. Once she saw him, she laughed loudly.

"Alice! You ruined the show!"

"Sorry... you just look... too stupid!" She mumbled with a choking voice because of her continuous laugh.

"Shut up and concentrate; we don't want to miss our chance to be famous and have our own TV show."

"Okay, sorry, do it again."

He headed back to the forest, and then came out after some seconds. Alice hardly prevented her laugh. He walked slowly towards her.

"Oh, I'm so sorry; I didn't know that there was anyone here."

"Oh! I can't believe my eyes! You finally came!" She yelled.

He squinted. "What are you talking about?" He said with a steady voice, keeping his face solid.

"I have been waiting for you for too long."

His face crumpled with confusion. "For me?!"

"Yes."

"Who are you?"

"I'm princess... umm..." She paused, searching for a name. "Princess Fiona!"

Robert squinted. "Alice, we can't steal the name from the movie!" He whispered.

"I loved her!" She whispered back.

"Let's hope they won't chase us in the courts."

She chuckled.

He put the warrior mask on his face again. "And what are you doing here Princess Fiona?"

"I'm captured!" She groaned.

"Captured?!"

"Yes. My evil stepmother used her black magic to cast a spell on me."

"Oh!"

"And I have been imprisoned in this lake for a very long time."

"Is there anything I can do?"

"Yeah! You can break the spell!"

"Really? How?"

"I can't believe you'll do this for me!"

"Of course I'll! Once I saw your angelic face, the rays of your pure heart touched me deep inside, telling me that you are the girl I've been waiting for through the whole of my life." He said, mocking the lovers who appear in the fairy tales.

She laughed because of his voice tone and face expressions. "Robert, I'm your sister!" She whispered.

"Yeah, but the audiences don't know this," he whispered back.

"Oh! Right!"

He winked.

"Oh my hero! I'm flirted!"

This time, he was the one to laugh loudly.

"Shut up!" She hissed.

"Sorry," he said, doing a huge effort to stop laughing. Alice went on, "I can't believe you will save me!"

"Of course I will! Just tell me what I need to do."

"Okay... umm..." She took some seconds to figure something out. "Okay, find a white flower and a red flower, tie them together, and put them in the water. This will break the spell."

"Right away Princess!"

He started to search around the place for the two flowers. He easily found the red one, but failed to find the white.

“Alice, I can’t find any white flowers!” He whispered.

“Oh!”

“Yellow will do it?”

“Sure, who cares, they won’t even notice it.”

“Good.”

He grabbed a yellow flower, put the two flowers together by wrapping their stems around each others, and then turned around and took two steps towards the lake.

“It is all set, Princess.”

“Great! Now put them in the water.”

“Alice, I can’t get any closer,” he started the whispering sequences again.

“Why?”

“The princess is supposed to be undressed, and with such clear water, he will be able to see her body, which will be just inappropriate.”

“Right.” She paused for a moment. “Okay, just threw them towards the lake,” she added.

“Okay.”

He threw them towards the lake, but the distance was too long for the light flowers to fly and reach their destination. They fall in between them. Alice ignored this.

“Wow! You did it!”

He laughed.

“Oh, what is happening to me?! I feel my bones being squeezed, and my body being stretched. Oh, this is very painful!”

“Put yourself together princess, it will all end soon.”

“I’m trying... it is just too much pain to be handled.”

“Stay strong my lady.”

“I cant... umm... I think I’m...”

She stopped, closed her eyes, and kept her body hanging motionlessly in the water. She stayed like this for a while. Robert squinted and kept staring at her.

She opened one eye and glanced at him.

“Robert, the princess lost conscious. You should get in the water and save her,” she whispered.

“Oh! Sorry.” He took one step closer to the lake, and then stopped again.

"Alice, I can't get in the water and carry you out. You are supposed to be undressed, and my clothes will get wet."

"No! I'll never ever do a nude scene!"

"Yes, this is what I'm talking about."

She kept her eyes closed. "What should we do now? I can't stay like this forever!"

"Umm..." He kept thinking for some seconds. "I have an idea!"

"What is it?" She continued whispering, keeping track with his voice.

"To be continued!"

"What?"

"We will put it on the screen and end the episode. This will make the audiences eager to know what will happen, and will make them count the hours to the next episode!"

"Oh! You are a genius!"

"And when this happens, we will start the episode just after he carries her out of the water, puts her on the ground, and covers her body!"

"Awesome!"

He used his stick to write the words on the air.

"Done! The show ended!"

"Yeah! This was amazing!"

"You are a very talented actress!"

She chuckled. "Thanks, and you aren't bad as well."

"Come on, lets do another one!"

"Yes!" She exclaimed, extremely happy and excited.

"What will we do this time? One of the classics?"

"No, we will do something new."

"Okay, any suggestions?"

"Umm... let me see..." She spent some seconds of thinking and then went on, "I found something!"

"Great!"

"I'll be a princess, who is swimming in her secret place. And you will be an evil enemy who followed her with his soldiers in order to capture her and threat her father, the king of the kingdom."

"It is amazing!"

"Okay, let's do it!"

“Yeah!”

He ran to the forest again, and then came out after some seconds.

“Oh! How dare you!” She roared once she put an eye on him.

He smiled evilly. “Oh, oh, oh... what do we have here?” He said, and she squinted. He calmly walked closer, and then went on, “The beautiful princess Celina having a wonderful time.”

She smiled. “I love the name!” She whispered.

He smiled back. “Let’s keep going.”

“Right.” She removed the smiley face and put the grimaced one back.

“If you took one step closer, I will...” She growled. He interrupted, “What are you going to do? Use your invisible bow to shoot a deadly arrow to my heart? Or maybe splash me to death with this magical water?” He scoffed.

She hardly swallowed, still squinting and glaring at him.

“What do you want?”

“Well, as you can see, there is nothing here but you. Then I believe I clearly want you.”

“Attacking a bare woman isn’t one of the knights’ morals.”

“Oh, excuse me? What?! Morals?” He laughed and glanced around, acting as if he was surrounded by his soldiers, who were laughing as well.

“Did you hear that?! Knights’ morals?!” He laughed again. The princess kept glaring at him. He took another step closer to the lake. “Lady, I think it is clear that I’m not a man of morals. And you know something? I’m not a knight either.”

He laughed again.

“Leave me alone... I beg you.”

“Sorry Princess, this is a chance that can’t be missed.” He paused and glanced at his soldiers. “Guards, go get her.”

“No!” She yelled. The guards ran towards the lake and got in the water. They dashed towards the princess, and once they reached her, they tried to pull her out of the water. However, the princess kept fighting.

“Leave me alone!” She yelled, swinging her arms on the air, trying to hit the surrounding guards.

“Bring her to me! Now!” He roared after noticing that the strong guards are having difficulties to take the weak princess down.

“Go away!” She yelled again, still fighting.

“If I came to you and pulled her out of the water by myself, I swear that none of you will sleep tonight with his head on his neck!” He roared, yelling at his soldiers. He stood there waiting for them to bring her out.

“Robert, they can’t pull me out of the water,” she whispered.

He pulled his eyebrows together with mystification. “Why? They are absolutely stronger than you.”



"I know, but I believe I made my position clear earlier about doing any nude scenes."

His eyes widened, I guess he understood what she means. "I see."

"What are we gonna do?"

"Umm... I don't know," he mumbled.

She sighed. "We can't stop now," she screeched.

"We won't." He paused, thinking of something. He exclaimed suddenly after some seconds of silence. "Yes! I found it!"

She grinned. "Really?"

"Yep, the talented scriptwriter saved the day!"

She laughed. "What are we gonna do?"

"Just keep track with me."

"Okay."

He took a deep breath, and then returned to the evil warrior character again.

"Guards, stop!" He yelled suddenly. The soldiers stopped pulling the princess out of the water. He went on, with a calmer and quieter tone. "This woman is going to be my favorite lady, and your stinky miserable eyes absolutely aren't allowed to share what will be mine."

She grinned. "Cool! Nice idea!" She whispered. He winked and went on, "All of you... leave now."

He paused for a moment and then went on, "But?! There is no but idiot! Follow the order... NOW!" He roared. I guess that the soldiers started to come out of the water.

Some moments later.

"Return to the camp; I'll bring the princess and meet you there."

This time, they followed his order immediately, and without any arguing. Robert, who was wearing an unbuttoned orange shirt with a white cotton T-shirt under it, removed his shirt, and kept it hanging on his hand.

"Here... put this cloak on... it shall cover you," he said calmly.

The princess held here place, squinting, and staring.

"Come on, what are you waiting for? I'll close my eyes till you come out of the water and put it on. You will be mine anyway, and I guess I can wait for it for some more hours, till we return to the camp."

The princess seemed convinced... a little, but she was still anxious and scared to execute his order.

He sighed. "I won't touch you till we reach the camp, you have my word. Can you start moving now please? I don't want to waste the whole day here."

She sniffed and bit her lips. Then she mumbled after some moments, "Ok-ay."

“Good.”

He stretched the arm with the shirt... I mean the cloak, turned his face away, and closed his eyes. Once the girl started to move, I closed my eyes as well, and we both waited.

Waiting...

Still waiting...

Waiting for some more moments...

Waiting...

Waiting...

What is taking her so long?! Oh! How stupid I am! Why did I close my eyes from the beginning, when the girl is actually dressed!

“Done,” she whispered, finally. We both opened our eyes immediately, to find her wearing the shirt, holding a long stick, and putting its tip on Robert’s nick. Robert is much taller than her, and his long shirt covered most of her body. Once he saw the stick aimed at his nick, and the princess evilly smiling, he squinted and smiled back.

“Form where did this sword come from?”

“It is the sword that the well-trained girl uses to teach the non-morals guys some lessons,” The princess said, confidently.

He smiled. “You want to add some action then? Okay, but I can’t guarantee your safety.”

She gave him a mocking laugh. “My safety? If I were you, I’d have worried about my own safety first.”

He didn’t reply. He moved fast, put her sword down, rotated around her, pull her to him, putting her back to his chest, and wrapped his arms around her body, preventing her from moving.

He smiled. “Yes... I’m fast,” he said proudly.

She smiled back. “Yes... I’m faster.” She used her elbows to hit him in the stomach, forcing him to fall back and let go of her. She turned around immediately, trying to use her sword to finish the battle, but he was fast enough to use his sword and block her attack.

“Not so fast, princess.”

The sword fight started.

“When my father know what you’ve down, he will tear you apart.”

“Umm... this won’t be a problem, because he is dead now.”

She winced. “NO!” She yelled painfully.

“I’m sorry; it was something that had to be done.”

She sniffed. “You will pay for this!”

“I don’t think so.”

The angry princess started to strongly and desperately attack him. She was moving so fast that he was hardly able to catch up with her speed

and drive away her strikes.

“Prepare to die!”

“Take it easy princess.”

“Enjoy having your head on your neck, because this is the last time you will see it there.”

She got angrier, and her strikes became stronger and faster.

“Alice, calm down,” he whispered.

“Oh... sorry.”

“It is ok; just don't aim at the head.”

“Got it.”

They two resumed the battle.

“Why did you kill him? He didn't deserve to die.”

“No, he didn't. But he died, and this is what really matters.”

Her angry grimaced face just got angrier.

“Do you want to know what his last words were?” He said calmly.

She didn't answer. He went on, “I don't want to die! Please!” He said, mimicking the king, and then went on, “He begged for mercy, just like a lady,” he said every single word separately and in a full mouth.

His provoking words raised the girl's anger to its highest level. She sniffed with anger and then performed some consecutive brutal attacks that ended up with a final enormous attack that threw his sword away. He followed the flying sword with his eyes till it reached the ground, and when his eyes returned to the princess again, they found her sword heading to him. He couldn't do anything but watching it penetrating his chest.

“No!” He moaned.

“This is for killing my father.”

He lost his balance and started to reel around.

“I can't... believe... you killed me,” he mumbled.

“Don't say I didn't warn you,” she replied calmly and confidently. He used a nearby rock to support him and prevent him from falling, but after staring at the smiling princess for some seconds, he started to reel again, before finally falling to the ground, on his back. He stayed like this for some moments, and when we noticed that the irises of his opened eyes weren't moving anymore, we figured out that he was gone.

He stayed like this for a while.

Alice smiled and walked to him. She bent over to be face to face with him.

“Robert, you can get up. The show is over!”

"Oh... sorry... I thought I was really killed."

She laughed and lay next to him.

"This was hilarious!"

"Yeah."

She looked at him. "You are the best brother a girl can have," she said, accompanying her sweet voice with a smile.

"Yeah, only because I let you win every time."

She chuckled and faced the sky again. "No! I really mean it."

He smiled, facing the blue clear sky as well. "I know, but this is only because you are the best sister ever."

She chuckled again. "Shut up."

He looked at her, and when she noticed this, she did the same.

"No, really. If they asked me to draw a picture of the girl I want to be my sister, and let me choose everything starting from how she looks like to how she shyly bites her lips every time someone tells her how beautiful she is, she would never ever exceed you. Actually, she wouldn't even come close."

She smiled shyly, and then moved herself to be on her side, facing him. She looked him in the eyes and stayed like this for some moments.

"How come you love me so much, although you only met me two days ago?" she murmured.

"Because I love you even before you were born. So, when I finally met you, the love I kept carrying for you inside my heart through all these years... just came out."

She chuckled and moved herself closer to him.

"Look, I know that you have been alone for a very long time. So, I decided to teach you some stuff," she murmured, keeping their quietness.

He laughed. "Okay, what do you wanna teach me?"

She repositioned herself to be on her front, and put her hand on his chest. He shuddered immediately.

"You shuddered!"

"No I didn't!"

"Yes, you did!"

"Okay... I did."

"Then what will you do when I let you cuddle me?" She smiled.

"Cuddle you?!"

"Mm-hmm... look..."

She paused and gently held his hand, and then moved it away from his chest, trying to widely open his arm. Although he didn't get what she

wanted to do, he didn't resist. After stretching his arm, she put it on the ground.

"When you open you arm like this." She paused and moved closer. "And I get closer to you like this." She lay next to him, on her front, with her head on his chest, and her arm wrapped around it as well. "And then you put your arm around my body like this." She turned around for a moment to hold his hand and pull his arm closer, putting it around her body, and then moved her body to touch his again, putting both of her head and arm back to their initial places; on his chest. She looked him in the eyes and went on, "It is called a cuddle." She smiled.

"Oh... I absolutely didn't know this."

She chuckled. "I doubt you did."

"Why are you saying this?"

"Because you aren't actually cuddling me now, you are just putting your arm there."

"Oh... sorry... forgive me... it is my first time."

She laughed. "It is okay. Fix it now."

"Okay."

He pulled her closer to him. She relaxed and stretched her body. He moved his other arm and put is around her as well. He hugged her tightly with both of his arms, and pulled her even closer to him, as if he was trying to push her inside his chest and protect her from the whole world. Alice smiled and took a deep breath, clearly very enjoying it.

"Better?" He murmured quietly.

"Mm-hmm... very."

He started to caress her hair, moving down to her back, rubbing her back, and then returning to the hair again. She chuckled.

He smiled. "What?"

"Nothing..."

"No really, what made you laugh?"

"I like it... very much," she murmured, with her face still buried into his chest.

He pulled her closer to him, and she reacted by relaxing and stretching her body more. "I know. I never thought that... it will be like this," he mumbled.

"Me neither."

"We should do this a lot."

"Yeah, every time we have a chance."

"Yep."

She moved her face a little away from his chest, just to be able to see his eyes. "When you put both of your arms around my body like this, the cuddle changes to be a hug." She smiled.

He laughed. "Okay... teacher." She chuckled and put her face back to his chest.

They stayed like this for some seconds.

"You know, I always watched Amy taking every chance available to be cuddled or hugged by someone... her father, grandpa, grandma, and even her uncles. I always wondered why does she do this? Why does she love to be hugged that much? But now... I knew the answer."

He smiled and hugged her tighter.

"If you asked me, this is the best thing I have ever done in my entire life." He paused and used his hand to gently move her face to be in front of his. He kindly looked her in the eyes and went on, "I can feel your pulse, the warmth of your body, hear your lovely heart beating fast, count your breaths, feel their warmth when they gently collide with my face, and even smell their sweet scent." He paused for a moment, watching her lips slowly twisting into a smile. He went on, "What else one may ask for? Believe me... Hugging someone you love is the only thing that worth it in this entire life."

Her smile completed and rapidly turned into a grin.

She swallowed and bit her lips. "And this takes us to today's third lesson."

He smiled. "And this would be?"

She swallowed again and then slowly moved her face closer to his. She put a long tender kiss on his cheek. After the kiss ended, she moved her face a little away from his and looked him in the eyes. And although she was smiling, the tears willed up fast in her eyes.

"This is called a kiss... from a girl who really loves her brother. Not because he is a well-looking man who has a car that will save her the cab's fee, but because he is the one she truly loves more than anyone and anything else on the whole creation."

The first tear oozed out from her right eye.

Robert gently wiped the tear away from her soft cheek. He smiled and kissed her forehead. And when her eyes asked him to hug here again, he put her the closest she can get to his chest, and hugged her tighter than ever.

They stayed like this for some time... some long time.

"Umm... I don't mind staying like this forever. So, if you didn't let go, I won't either," Robert said.

"I won't let go."

"Then how would this end?"

She chuckled. "Who cares..."

"Right."

"Actually, I think I'll sleep for a while," she murmured, still hiding her face inside his chest.

"We do have to go if you wanna clean up and rest for a while, before going to the movies tonight."

"I know, I'll only sleep for a short time."

"Umm... half an hour is enough for you?"

"More than enough."

“Ok then.”

He hugged her tighter, and started to caress her hair and back again, trying to help her to relax and sleep. The tired girl only needed a minute to deeply sleep, too different from her brother who needs hours and massive effort to do the same.

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*More than half an hour later...*

“Alice, honey, time to go,” he said, gently patting her face. Alice opened her eyes to find his smiley face in front of her, with his eyes kindly looking at hers.

She smiled. “I can’t believe I did sleep.”

He laughed. “Me either.”

“Do we have to go now?” She wondered with a quiet voice.

“Well, I guess so.”

“I wanted to swim for just one more time,” she said, smiling, and begging him with her innocent wide eyes. However, this didn’t have much effect on him. “Absolutely no.”

She frowned. “Why?”

“First, your body is too warm now, and if you get in the water, you will catch a cold immediately. Second, your hair will get wet again, and it will need ages to dry. Third, we don’t have time, if you wanna go out tonight. Fourth...”

She interrupted him. “Okay... I got it,” she sniffed.

He smiled. “I promise we will come here over and over again; I totally love the place.”

“Okay,” she said, still annoyed.

He laughed.

She squinted. “What are you laughing at?”

“Well, I enjoy having a little sister who follows my orders.”

“Oh, really, is it so?” She scoffed angrily.

“Yep, I decide what she can do and what she can’t.”

She sighed. “Okay, now watch me disobeying your first order,” she challenged and was about to get up, but he held her arm and stopped her.

“Hey, calm down. I was joking!”

She sighed again. He went on, “I’ll never ever control you or force you to do what you don’t wanna do, or prevent you from something that makes you happy... okay?”

She nodded, smiling. “I know.”

“Good, now get up and put your clothes on. I’ll be sitting here watching you.”

“What?!”

“Umm, I mean I’ll be standing there, waiting for you.”

She smiled. “Okay.” She got up, and he did the same. He walked towards the forest again, but was stopped by her.

“Robert.”

He turned to her. “What?”

“Umm... Can I keep this shirt? I like it very much; It makes me feel comfortable.”

“This is one of my favorites!” He protested.

“Please! Please!”

“Alice...”

“Please! Please! Please! Please!”

“STOP IT! Okay! YOU CAN TAKE IT!”

“Thanks!” She cheered excitedly.

“But you have to give something in return,” he added.

She squinted. “What do you wanna take? My bathing suit?” She sneered

“Thanks, but not interested.”

“Then what do you want?”

“Well, I need a green card to kiss you whenever I want.”

“Okay,” she agreed immediately.

“Really?!”

“Yep. Although I think it is a stupid request, considering that I’m your sister and you already can kiss me whenever you want, as long as I don’t mind.”



His eyes narrowed. "Really?" He wondered.

"Mm-hmm."

"I didn't know that!"

She laughed. "Now you did."

"Ok, I'll ask for something else."

"Sorry, you had one shoot, and you already wasted it."

"No, this is not fair!"

"Life was never fair."

He sniffed. "Right."

"To avoid falling in such a mistake again, I'll teach you some of your rights, and make you aware of mine as well."

"Great!"

"Okay... I'll start by my rights. I can come to your room whenever I want."

He interrupted. "What if I was changing?" He wondered.

"Well, this is not my problem. You can remember to always lock the door when you are doing this."

He sighed. "Okay."

"The second rule: I can use all of your stuff, including your amazing laptop, whenever I want, and without needing your permission."

"WHAT?!" He protested.

"I think you heard me."

"Who put these rules?"

"I did."

"Are they negotiable?"

She shook her head. "Sorry, they are the worldwide standards."

He squinted. "Really?"

"Yep."

He shook his head with sorrow. "Go on."

"I can always check your clothes, and I'm free to take whatever I like."

"My clothes?!"

"Yes."

“Alice, I’m a boy and you are girl!”

“Oh, really? You have just surprised me.”

“No... umm... I mean that... why would you want my clothes anyway?”

“Well, girls can wear some boys’ stuff, like their shorts and shirts for example. And the best part is that they can’t do the same!”

“And why would you want to wear our clothes?” He wondered, sneering.

“For me, I’m always searching for comfort, and your clothes are very comfortable. Take this shirt as an example, it can easily cover most of my body, and at the same time, makes me feel free as if I was wearing nothing at all.”

“I see, but at least leave me some shirts to wear.”

She smiled. “Okay.”

“Any other rules?”

“Yep. It is your responsibility to take care of me, protect me, defend me, and help me every time I put myself into troubles, even if I was on the wrong side.”

His expression lightened. “Now we are talking!”

She chuckled and then went on, “You have to listen to me whenever I want to talk. I can freely talk with you about anything and everything, without restrictions or limits, and without being shy or embarrassed. I can ask for your help and advices whenever I want to, and you have to happily and honestly give them to me.”

He smiled. “Keep going.”

“You have to take me out, every time I’m sad, angry, stressed, or just wanna have fun. You have to help me doing all the things I always wanted to do and couldn’t because you weren’t around. You missed whole fourteen years from my life, and it is your responsibility to learn everything happened in them, and make up for me for not being around to watch me growing up.”

He laughed. “Okay.”

“There are things that we have missed and can’t be done now... like bathing together, or destroying each others toys, and so on. And it is your responsibility to make up for me for missing all these things as well. Never ever give me the feeling that you are annoyed to have me in your room asking for help or wanting to talk, because if this ever happened, you will make me feel so stupid and self-embarrassed, and I’ll never ever forgive you.”

“I promise that this will never happen.”

“Good... The last rule; you will never ever leave me alone again.”

*(Okay, that is enough. Tell her now that you are leaving tonight. No, I won’t. Excuse me? No, I won’t say that because I’m not leaving. Buddy, listen to me... NO! You listen to me! I AM NOT GOING ANYWHERE! This is my sister, she is my family and my life, and the place where she is, is my only home.)*

“I knew that you are going to leave,” she groaned.

"No! NO! I'm not. I promise that I'll never ever leave you again. I won't go to any place without having you around."

She chuckled. "Really?"

"Yep, I was just thinking how I would manage to deal with the losing-my-shirts problem."

She laughed.

"Any more rules?"

"I have nothing in mind now, but I'll keep you updated."

"What about mine?"

"You can't enter my room or use any of my stuff without my permission, and if you wanted my help, or wanted to talk to me, you can come to my room, and I'll help you whenever I have some free time."

"That's it?!"

"Yep."

"Oh-boy!"

She laughed loudly.

He sighed. "I think I can live with it."

"Good. Now go away and let me wear my clothes."

"Okay." He turned around and headed to the forest. She stopped him again. "Umm... I've just remembered something."

"What now?"

"I can hug and kiss you whenever I want to."

"Cool! This will be my favorite rule!"

She laughed. "The final rule; you have to help me with my homework."

"Oh! No!"

She shook her head. "Sorry, it's something that has to be done."

"Okay," he muttered.

"Good... go now."

This time, she didn't stop him. And after wearing her clothes, they headed back to the car and then returned home.

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“Going out with you today was the best thing I have ever done in my life.”

Alice said, standing with Robert in front of her room, wrapping her arms around his neck and hanging there.

“Yep, if we excluded the pool battle, the driving, and the party.”

She chuckled. “Okay, it is the best thing I have ever done in my life, in addition to the swimming, the crazy driving, and the party!”

He laughed.

“Okay, go now, clean up, rest for a while, and prepare for going out in a while.”

“Okay.”

She smiled and kissed him on the cheek. She entered her room and closed the door behind. Robert held his place, smiling.

“Oh! You are back!” Amy exclaimed.

“Yeah!”

“How was it?!” She wondered excitedly.

Alice laughed. “Unbelievable!”

Robert smiled and walked to his room, giving the girls some privacy. However, I stayed.

Amy laughed back, too excited. “What happened to your hair?”

“You won’t believe what I have done today!”

“You are gonna tell me everything and in details!”

Alice laughed. “Of course! Just give me some minutes to have a relaxing bubbles bath.”

“No! I can’t wait!”

“Okay, maybe we can bath together, like the old days!”

Amy smiled. “Alice, we were kids.”

She chuckled. “I know. I just... really miss these days.”

“Me too.” She paused for a moment and then went on, “I think I’ll have to wait then.”

“Not really. I’ll prepare the bubbles and get into the water, and then you can come in.”

Amy smiled. “Okay, but keep it fast; I can’t wait!”

“Don’t worry, just give me a minute.”

“Okay.”

Alice entered the bathroom, and Amy sat on the bed, waiting for her. I had no reason to stay longer, so I flew away and headed to Robert's room. He wasn't there. I figured out he was having a shower as well. I decided to make the best use of this free time and go hug some of my family members. Life is very difficult, and it is always doing a huge effort to keep us busy and away from each others. And the more the time passes, the more separated we become, till we finally end as some strangers who know nothing about each others. But now I figured out that we can easily ruin the life's enormous effort with a single hug and kiss. They can easily refresh our emotions and feelings, and keep us strongly attached to those who we love and care about, even if we only have five minutes every day to be with them.

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"We are ready!"

Alice exclaimed once she and Amy reached the ground floor and put an eye on Robert who was waiting for them in the living room. His eyes widened with surprise, and an extra amazed expression was drawn on his face once he saw the two elegant girls. I moved to get a view from just above his shoulder, here I noticed that his eyes were staring at the impossibly beautiful Amy, and I won't blame him for this. He stayed like this, standing still, amazed and staring, till the two smiling girls reached him.

"What?" Amy wondered, smiling.

"Uh... umm..."

Alice chuckled. "What is wrong with you?"

"Umm... well... you..."

"I think he is trying to say that he has never ever seen anything that exceeds the prettiness of the two of you."

Robert turned immediately towards grandpa. "Thank you!" He yelled with relief.

Grandpa winked. "You are welcome."

Amy and Alice laughed, and so did Ana and Ashley who came down earlier, already had their compliments, and was standing next to Robert. Bill and Michael didn't comment. Grandpa walked to Amy and Alice, stood between them, and cuddled the two girls.

Robert chuckled. "You know, you are a very lucky guy; you can cuddle and hug all the pretty girls in this house."

The three of them laughed. "Well, this is the only upside in being an old grandfather," grandpa said.

Robert laughed. "Yeah, I think so."

"Guys, we need to move," Ana said.

"Ana is right," Amy agreed.

"Okay then, you... take good care of them," grandpa said, looking at Robert.

"You have my word," Robert replied immediately. Grandpa went on, glancing at all the kids, "And you, have the maximum fun one can get."

"Okay!" They yelled.

"What are you waiting for? Go!" He yelled, and everybody started to move immediately. They headed to the car, and got in it in the same order.

"Everybody is on board?"

“Yeah!”

“Ashley?”

“I’m here!”

He glanced at the back seats through his rearview mirror, and when he became sure that everybody was in the car, he looked at Amy.

“Ready?”

She smiled. “Yep.”

“Okay, let’s Roll!” He yelled, raising their excitement, and pressing the gas. The car moved, and with Robert’s speed and Amy’s directions, they didn’t need too much time to reach the movie theater.

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Robert found a perfect spot in the parking, and then all of them got out of the car and started to walk. Bill and Michael were in front. Amy, Ana, and Ashley were behind them, and Alice and Robert were the last in the row.

“What are you going to watch?” He wondered.

“Eclipse,” Alice said.

*(Oh, great; this is all what we needed.)*

Amy glanced at him. “Don’t you like the saga?”

“Do you?” He wondered.

“I’m a big fan!”

“Me too!” Alice concurred.

*(Oh, girls!)*

“Well, I’m a big fan of the books; it’s extremely well written. But I don’t like the movies very much.”

“Same here,” Ana said.

“Then what are you gonna watch?” Alice wondered.

“I’ll take the kids and find some anime movie.”

“Yeah!” Ashley exclaimed.

They came out of the huge parking, and started walking towards the theater.

“Guys, do you know a girl called Catherine?”

“Are you serious?” Alice scoffed.

"I know that there are dozens of girls with this name, but I think this one... is kinda special."

The four girls stopped and looked at him.

"What do you mean by... special?" Ana wondered.

Robert noticed that Bill and Michael didn't stop. "Hey, guys, go and pick a good anime movie for us," he yelled.

"Yes Sir!" Bill exclaimed. They two started to run towards the theater.

"You didn't answer her," Amy said, seriously.

"Oh, sorry. Umm... she is amazingly beautiful... and... you know..."

"Hot?" Alice said.

"Exactly."

"So?" Amy wondered.

"So?" Robert said.

"So... there are many girls who are amazingly beautiful and hot, and are called Catherine as well." She scoffed, uncomfortable.

Alice gasped and her eyes widened with extreme surprise. "Maybe he is talking about Catherine Jones!"

"No, I don't think so," Ana said.

"It is a small world," Ashley added.

"I know Ashley, but not that small," Amy said.

"How did she look like?" Alice wondered, still excited.

"Well, she is tanned, has a curly long brown hair, and beautiful green eyes."

Amy squinted. Alice, Ana, and Ashley yelled excitedly at the same moment, "IT IS HER!"

"And she has a strange butterfly tattoo on her torso, just beneath her chest."

"I can't believe it! It is really HER!" Alice yelled.

Amy grimaced. "You saw her torso?" She growled.

"I met here on the beach. You know, the bathing suits... almost naked... or actually naked with those pairs she was wearing."

"You better start telling us what exactly happened between you and her, and in very details," Alice said excitedly.

"Sure, but first I need to know who she is."

"She is the most popular girl in the school. All the boys are after her, but she only goes out with the most handsome and popular of them. And having a date with her is a dream that is almost impossible to be achieved," Ana explained.

"I see."

"Start talking now," Alice hissed.

"Okay, well, I met here on the beach, she said she likes me, and asked me to go out with here."

"OH!" Alice exclaimed, and so did Ashley.

"No WAY!" Ana followed them immediately.

Amy's angry expression just got angrier. "And what did you say?" She growled.

"Umm... I said yes."

"Yeah!" Alice cheered.

Amy sniffed, and held Ana's hand with one hand, and Ashley's with the other.

"Let's go," She hissed, glaring at Robert, turned around, and strode away angrily. Robert and Alice held their places, watching the three girls moving away.

"What is wrong with her?"

*(You know what is wrong with her, idiot.)*

She took his arm and started walking arm in arm with him.

"Well, she doesn't love Catherine very much."

"Why?"

"I don't know, She just doesn't."

"What about you?"

"I think she is a very beautiful and smart girl... but... umm..."

"What?"

She moved closer to him, and whispered something to his ear.

He laughed. "Why are you whispering?"

She chuckled. "I don't know."

He laughed again, and then spoke after the laugh ended. "I think this is the reason why Amy doesn't like her," he said, concluding.

"Maybe."

They almost reached the theater, that's why they slowed down to give themselves some space to talk more. However, Michael and Bill ran to them.

"Robert! We found an amazing movie!" Bill yelled.

"Yeah! And we need the money to get the tickets," Michael added.

"Okay," He put his hand on his pocket and brought some money out. He handed the cash to Michael.



“Get us... umm... five tickets.”

“Okay!”

They both ran back to the tickets window.

“Okay, where were we?”

“The reason why Amy doesn't like Catherine.”

“Oh, right. So, Amy doesn't like her because she is not...”

Alice interrupted. “Yes.”

“And this means that you are...”

She interrupted again. “Of course we are!”

He laughed. “Take it easy!”

She chuckled. “Sorry.”

“How long do you intend to keep it this way?”

“Till we get married of course.”

He squinted. “Really?”

“Mm-hmm, do you have any problems?” She hissed.

“No... no... of course not. I actually think that it is great! Only a few girls can do this. Actually, only the special girls can do this.”

She smiled. “Really? Is this your opinion?”

“Yep.”

“It is strange to hear a boy saying this.”

“I know.” He paused and put his hands on her shoulders. “I want you to know that you will always have me on your side. I'll support and help you till you finally achieve this dream.”

She laughed. “I appreciate your effort, but it isn't really that difficult.”

He squinted. “Really?”

“Yep. Having Amy on my side is more than enough. And don't forget my friends as well.”

“Great!”

“Yeah.”

“Robert, Alice, the movies is starting at any moment!” Ana yelled.

“We are coming,” Alice yelled back.

“What about Amy?”

She sneered. “What a stupid question! When you asked me, I guess I answered using *we*.”

“Right.”

“Actually, she was the one who started all of this. I walked on her shoes, and most of my friends walked on mine. Ana and Ashley will follow our footsteps as well, in a couple of years I guess.”

*(Oh-boy! A huge group of crazy persons. Shut up!)*

“Guys, I think that this is very great! You are giving yourselves something really special!”

“I know. Can we go watch the movie now?”

“Oh... sure... sorry.”

“We will talk later,” she added, walking him towards the theater.

“Okay.”

They met the others and went inside. I decided to go with them, and although I'm a big fan of the anime movies, I decided to follow Amy and Alice; I just wanted to check on something.

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*About two hours later...*

The movie finally ended, and Amy and Alice headed outside immediately. Alice seemed enjoying her time, but Amy was totally annoyed and uncomfortable during the movie. And if you asked me, the movie absolutely wasn't the reason of her anger.

They went outside, to find the rest waiting for them.

“What took you so long?” Robert wondered.

“It is a long movie,” Alice replied.

“Did you like it?” Ana said.

“Yep, very much.”

“What about you? Robert asked, looking at Amy.

“Me?”

“Yes.”

“Oh... yes... it was good,” she mumbled. Robert kept looking at her for some moments, studying the fake happy expression that was desperately trying to hide her solid emotionless face, and totally failing.

“What about you guys?” Alice wondered.

“The movie was awesome!” Ashley yelled.

“Yeah!” Bill and Michael added.

“The 3D effect was amazing,” Ana followed.

“I can’t argue about that, although it gave me a headache,” Robert said.

“Yeah, this happens, usually on the first time,” she explained.

“Okay, it looks like we all enjoyed our time. What are we gonna do now?” Alice said.

“Guys, before we go anywhere, I just want to make a correction,” Robert said.

“What?” Ana wondered.

“It is about Catherine.”

Amy sniffed.

“What about her?” Alice wondered.

“Well, she did ask me to go out with her, and I did say yes. We went to a café and had a drink. We talked for a while about some general matters, and at the end, she said that she likes me and wants to get to know me better.”

“Great!” Alice exclaimed.

“And you said?” Ana wondered.

“I said: sure, we must get to know each others better... but only as friends.”

Amy smiled with relief, and Alice frowned. “Friends?!”

“Yep.”

“You said NO to Catherine Jones?! Are you crazy?!” She added.

“Maybe.”

“Dude, she is the hottest girl on the whole universe,” Bill said.

“You are absolutely crazy,” Michael followed.

“I can’t argue about that,” Ana added.

Ashley shook her head with sorrow, “Me either.”

“Umm... why... did you do that?” Amy mumbled, trying to act carelessly.

Robert kindly looked her in the eyes. “Because she is not my favorite type. She is a star, and I only go for the moons.”

She blushed, and a magnificent wide smile was drawn on her face, and made the whole world shine and dance in happiness. Robert smiled back, and they kept looking at each other for a while.

"Let's cut to the chase, what are we gonna do now?" Alice said.

"I suggest we go home and enjoy the weekend dinner," Ana said.

"Cool!" Bill agreed.

"The weekend dinner?" Robert wondered.

"Yep. Every weekend, all of us have dinner together, and then sing and dance till we get tired enough to sleep," Alice explained.

"Sounds interesting."

"Yeah, and a lot of fun as well," Amy said.

"What are we waiting for then? They must have started eating now," Michael said.

"Let's go!" Ashley yelled.

They all followed her order and headed back to the car. They reached home in no time, and during this short journey, Robert and Amy didn't talk to each others, but kept peeking from time to time.

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*About ten minutes later... in front of the house...*

"Guys, go inside. I'll go to check something, and will be back soon."

"Okay," Amy said, getting out of the car, and standing next to the rest.

"But don't be late," Alice added.

"I won't."

"Great."

"Catch you later."

They headed inside after greeting him, and he drove away. It didn't take me much time to figure out that this was just another aimless free roaming. And when it took more than two hours, I figured out that he was wasting the time till the family's party is over. He added more thirty minutes to the boring roam, and then headed home.

He killed the engine and sighed. He stared at the quiet dark house for some moments. The whole world around him changed to the better, but my friend didn't change; the same sad lonely person I always knew.

*(Should I get back inside? Or should I go for another roam? I'm hungry. I told you idiot to eat something when we had a chance. Why are you yelling at me? We always slept hungry, and I believe doing it for another one more time won't harm. Why are you angry anyway? You are the one who decided to stay. I know... but I'm just... terrified. Terrified?! Yes, they are good people, and she is the best girl I've ever met in my*

*life. I won't forgive myself if I hurt any of them.)*

He sighed again.

*(Come on, let's go inside; we need to sleep after all.)*

He opened the driver's door and went outside. Then he desperately, hopelessly, and hesitantly – as he always has been – walked towards the house. He opened the door quietly and went inside, and I followed immediately. He started to walk slowly through the darkness towards the stairs, but suddenly a voice stopped him.

“Robert,” someone called his name, someone beautiful; it was clear from the voice. He shuddered, stopped and turned around, and so did I.

It was Amy.

Although she was the one who called him, his turn towards her and the surprise look in his staring-at-her eyes made the shy girl nervous. She licked her lips and crossed her arms over her chest and waited for Robert to talk, and he automatically did.

“Is something wrong?” He wondered anxiously.

*(There is absolutely something wrong. Sure idiot, or why would she stay awake till now, waiting for your return? What do you think has happened? Maybe someone is sick? Or maybe someone is dead? Oh! No! Maybe there was a mistake and I don't belong to this family after all! Then who am I? Would I be homeless again? Would ...)*

“No,” she exclaimed. She noticed how loud and excited her voice was, and this made her pause to return to the calm tone. “Everything is fine.”

He sighed with relief.

She smiled. “Sorry... I did not mean to... panic you,” she mumbled, taking some steps towards him.

“It's ok, I'm fine.”

The shy girl kept walking towards him.

“So, where have you been?” She wondered, acting carelessly. But the innocent girl bad acting couldn't hide her obvious caring.

Robert did exactly as I expected; he stood still.

*(Why is she asking? This is weird. The answer is simple; because she obviously cares about you idiot.)*

Please! Please! Answer the girl! Your silence will make her embarrassed. Robert, my friend, please save her and please do it fast!

He didn't. Actually, it was too late.

“I'm... I'm sorry... I didn't mean to... intervene in your... personal matters,” she mumbled, and hardly swallowed.

“No, no, it is ok! I just... didn't use to people... you know... care about me.” Robert's mumbling successfully eased her tension. The girl smiled and started to walk again towards him. She reached him in no time, keeping a fair distance separating them, and then looked him in the eyes. This made the tense moves from her to him. He couldn't stand a direct stare from her wide gray eyes, and I won't blame him. His eyes kept jumping between hers and the ground. He hardly swallowed and the beads of sweat started to pour out of his cold skin.

“Then I suggest you start getting used to it,” she murmured.

He winced.

(.....?)

I kept begging her not to smile, Robert was astonished enough and won't stand it, but she did. And her outstandingly magnificent smile made things even worse to him. He became covered with his own sweat, hardly swallowed, and I didn't need to get closer to him to see his heart beating fast, trying to jump out of his chest and rest on her hands. Some moments of silence and staring passed before Amy saved him from falling apart, and she really timed it right.

"I bet you are hungry," she murmured, keeping the smile.

Robert returned to life, sighed, and mumbled, "Y-e-s... Yea... Sure... I'm starving actually."

"Ok, follow me then."

She didn't wait for his answer; she left him standing and headed to the kitchen. The moment her eyes let go of his, he sighed with relief and used his hand to wipe the sweat beads off his forehead.

*(Put yourself together and don't get very excited. She is just another pretty girl like the dozens you met through your life. Ok, she might be a little unique. Fine! I surrender! She is completely unique. She is the prettiest kindest cutest most innocent and caring girl I've ever met. Hey! Calm down bro! You are coming too strong! This girl isn't..)*

"Are you coming or what?" Her sweet voice and pretty smiling face awoke him.

"Sure," He answered automatically, and this was clear in his flat voice. He dashed towards the kitchen, and sure I followed.

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By the time we reached the kitchen, Amy was putting a plate on the kitchen table. Once she saw Robert standing near the door, she smiled again.

"Come on in! Have a seat," she said. You can easily feel the massive happiness and excitement in her voice, and the huge kindness and caring in her eyes. While she was dashing towards the oven, Robert's lips twisted into a small shy smile and his feet started to walk hesitantly towards the table.

She grabbed a cake out of the oven, and then put some of it on his plate. She turned around and headed back to the oven.

"Most of the men wanted to sleep early tonight. So, the dinner, singing, and dancing ended after one hour."

She put the cake away and headed to the refrigerator.

"So, I decided to cook something for you, trying to improve my cooking, and being sure you will forget to eat before you return home. Grandma helped me of course, a lot actually."

She smiled, and then faced the refrigerator again. She opened its door and grabbed a bottle with some juice inside. The juice was orange, so I easily concluded that it was an orange juice. On her way back to the table, she grabbed a cup. She reached her destination in no time, put the cup in front of Robert's dish, and then started to pour the juice in it.

“And here is some orange juice because you hate drinking milk.”

*(How did she know I hate drinking milk?!)*

How did she know he hates drinking milk?!

“How did you know I hate drinking milk?!” Robert exclaimed.

Amy winced and hardly swallowed. She licked her lips and put the bottle on the table, while her face was rapidly turning red from embarrassment.

“Umm... I... asked,” she mumbled.

*(She asked?!)*

Asked whom?!

“You asked?!”

“Yes, I asked.” Her voice came out flat and defensive, and although it was steadier than the first time, it couldn't hide how nervous the girl was.

“Mr. Johnson... I asked Mr. Johnson.” She paused and hardly swallowed. “And he told me... us... He told us.”

“Us?!”

She replied instantly. “Yes... me, Ana, and Alice,” she explained, mumbling.

*(Why would they do that?)*

Why would they care to ask?

“Why did you do that?”

“Why did we do that?!”

Yes... why did they do that?

“Yes... why did you do that?”

“Because we are preparing a list of the things you love and hate.”

WHAT?!

*(Prepare? A list? Love and hate? For ME?!)*

“But... why?”

Yes... WHY?

“Because I wanted to get to know you better,” she exclaimed.

Robert winced.

She hardly swallowed, and her face turned red again. “We... wanted to get to know you better,” she said, returning to the calm tone, hardly, emphasizing on ‘We’.

The silence dominated.

Some moments later, Amy tried to ease the tension a little and escape the embarrassing situation when she grabbed the bottle again and headed to the refrigerator.

"I'll put this away so Aunt Marie won't kill me in the morning."

She chuckled while peeking at Robert on her way to the fridge. She put the juice away, and when done, she stood near the head of the table, put a pretty smile on her lips, and kept looking at the surprised Robert whose eyes didn't divert from her from the beginning.

The silence dominated again, and again she broke the ice.

"You are not eating," she murmured kindly. "Don't you like it?" She added.

"No... I do... It's very delicious... I just..."

She interrupted his mumbling. "Ok, eat then. I won't leave till I make sure you finish it all." Her pretty smile just got prettier and bigger.

Robert smiled. "Ok."

"Don't worry about him; I'll make sure he eats everything."

*(Who is this?)*

Where did this voice come from?

"Grandpa!" Amy snapped. She sighed and ran towards the door of the kitchen. Robert turned around and followed her with his eyes, and I repositioned myself to get a clear view. Once she reached her grandpa, he cuddled her, but this didn't ease her anger.

"Why are you still awake? Didn't Dr. Albert say you have to sleep early?" She screeched.

He laughed, while both of them were walking towards Robert's seat.

"Don't worry young lady; your grandpa is still strong as he has always been."

Amy sighed again. At the same moment, they reached Robert. Grandpa put his hand on Robert's shoulder.

"Ok princess, go get some sleeping and I'll take care of him."

Amy smiled. "Okay." She kissed her grandpa's cheek.

"Good night," she murmured and then looked at Robert who was already looking at her.

"Good night... Robert." She grinned, turned around, and walked fast towards the door. Suddenly, she stopped and turned around again.

"Make sure he finishes his supper."

"Yes ma'am," grandpa replied.

Amy chuckled. "And please clean the plate and put everything away," she begged.

"Don't worry about that," grandpa murmured.



Amy smiled. "Ok, good night."

She walked towards the door again. And by the time she reached it, she turned around for the last time. "And you two, don't stay up for too long," she ordered, trying to put a grim expression on her smiley face, and partially succeeding. This time Robert was the one to answer, "Ok."

Amy smiled for the last time and went outside. Robert's eyes kept staring at the door, as if they wanted to follow her, or as if they were waiting for her to come back for the last time.

"Hey... you... I'm here," grandpa who already pulled a chair and sat next to Robert murmured, trying to gain his attention. Robert hesitantly moved his head and looked at him. "Sorry," he mumbled.

"You need to be very careful while dealing with her; she is a charming angel, and if she cast her spell on you, you will absolutely be in a huge trouble."

*(You should have warned him earlier; it's too late now.)*

The old guy chuckled. Robert kept his face expressionless. "What are you talking about?" He wondered, trying to trick the old guy.

The old guy laughed loudly...

"Finish your food, clean the dishes, put everything away, and go get some sleeping. Tomorrow you will help me to fix our car, and we will have a long chat about what I'm talking about." He paused and moved his face closer to Robert's. "The old expert decided to give a young lover some of his professional advices," he whispered, winking.

Robert smiled, and so did his grandpa. Then he hardly got up, put his hand on Robert's shoulder, and walked slowly towards the door. It took him some time to reach his destination and leave the room. I was sure that Robert will waste some time recalling the events and considering them. And then he will waste more time eating and cleaning. So, I decided to head to the girls' room.

I wasn't surprised to find Amy awake and huddling up on her bed, but was totally surprised that Alice wasn't around. I thought that she may be in the bathroom or something. Regardless, the time passed, Amy didn't move, and Alice didn't appear.

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*Some minutes later...*

Once she heard his footsteps outside the room, she jumped out of her place and dashed towards the door.

“Robert, is that you?”

“Amy?! Why are you still awake?”

“Umm... nothing.”

He smiled. “Go get some sleeping; you must be very tired,” he said kindly.

“I will... I just wanted to check... if you liked the cake.”

“Yeah! It was amazing! And I was totally famished. Girl, you saved my life!”

She laughed. “Tomorrow I’ll take it to the next level!”

He chuckled. “I can’t wait.”

The silence dominated.

“Ok, I’ll go now.”

“Okay.”

“Good night.”

“For you too.”

He held his place, staring at the door, for some seconds, and so did she. I got the feeling that he was waiting for her to say something, and she was doing the same. But I was also completely sure that this will reach a dead end. Robert isn’t brave enough to talk, and Amy is shy enough not to talk.

“You are still there, aren’t you?” He murmured, surprising me.

“Mm-hmm.”

“Why?”

She chuckled. “Because you are still there as well.”

“I’m still here because you are still there!”

“No, I’m still here because you are still out there!”

He chuckled. “No! I’m still here because I’m waiting for you to move!”

She laughed. “You are wrong! It is me who is waiting for you to go away!”

“No, it is clearly me who is waiting for you to go!”

"It is my room! This makes me the one who is waiting for you to go!"

He laughed, defeated.

"Right... Okay... I'll go."

"Umm... now?"

"Yep."

She sighed. "Okay."

"Good night."

"For you too."

This time, he started walking immediately. She sighed while hearing him going away, and then headed back to her bed. I followed Robert to his room, and once he opened the door and entered, he found a surprise waiting for him...

Alice was sleeping on his bed.

He didn't look surprised or annoyed. He went inside, fast and quietly changed his clothes, and then headed to the bed.

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"Honey, wake up."

He murmured kindly, sitting on the edge of the bed, and gently caressing her hair and patting cheek. Alice opened her eyes, and once she saw him, she smiled.

"Hi," she whispered.

He moved himself down, kneeled on the ground, and rested his chin on the edge of the bed. This made their faces be at the same level. He looked her in the eyes and smiled.

"Is it the ghost again?"

She chuckled. "No."

"Anything bad or wrong?"

She shook her head. "I just thought that I should start using my rights."

He laughed. "Sleeping in my bed wasn't one of them."

She smiled. "I added it."

He laughed again, louder. "I see."

She repositioned herself slowly to the sitting position, pulling the bed sheet with her hand to keep the lower part of her body covered.

"Actually, I wanted to talk to you. I waited for your return for too long, used your laptop for a while, and then decided to sleep when you never showed up."

“Sorry about that.”

“It’s okay. We still can talk, can’t we?”

“Sure,” he said with a smile. He climbed into the bed, and she moved herself a little to give him some space. He sat there, looking at her, and waiting for her to talk. However, she didn’t. And instead, she kept staring at him and smiling.

“So...?” He wondered.

“I want to hear your story.”

He squinted, and his expression darkened a lot. She noticed this, and this made her move closer to him, and gently caress his cheek with her warm hand. She looked him in the eyes and went on, “Don’t worry, it will change nothing.”

He hardly swallowed. She smiled and nodded once, encouraging him to start talking.

“Okay, I’ll tell you my story, but first I need to hear yours.”

“Mine?!” She wondered, surprised.

“Yep. Today when I hugged you, I easily got the feeling that I’m the first man to do this. And this actually surprised me a lot, considering that you had your father around till the last year, when he passed away.”

“Our father; he is yours as well.”

“Whatever.”

She sighed and silenced for some moments. “He... wasn’t really... around,” she mumbled.

“The whole story, from the early beginning.”

She sighed again. “Okay.” She swallowed and then went on, “We used to live in a small apartment in New York.”

He interrupted. “Really?” He wondered.

“Don’t get very excited; it was a small stinky one with dozens of drunk and crazy neighbors around.”

“Oh.”

“Those were the worst days in my life... ever.”

“I’m listening.”

“I was too young, seven years old I guess. I wasn’t sure what exactly my dad’s job was, but there were two things about him I was completely sure about.”

“I know one of them; he was a womanizer who loved women more than any other thing in his life. And as you can see, I’m the result of one of his adventures.”

She chuckled.

“And the other?” He added.

“Gambling...”

“Oh, right. I should have figured this out by myself.”

“He spent most of my life away from home. I was barely able to see him.”

“What about your mother? By the way, I haven’t seen her around since I met her yesterday.”

“And you won’t see her again, not very soon at least.”

His eyes narrowed. “What do you mean?”

“She always wanted to be a singer, and she is trying hard to achieve her dream since my dad was gone.”

“Oh.”

“She must be somewhere now, performing, or trying to convince someone to let her perform.”

“Convince?”

She shook her head with sorrow. “Her voice isn’t that good.”

“You mean that she…”

“Yes, I mean that she… uses other methods to convince people to let her sing.” She paused and then went on, “And why am I so sure? Because I saw her with my bare eyes doing this! Better now?” She roared angrily, emphasizing on “bare eyes” and saying it loudly and in a full mouth.

“Hey, calm down,” he said calmly, caressing her hair gently.

She sighed.

“She has been like this since I was born.”

He grimaced. “What the hell?! What about your father?” He hissed.

“He is our father!” She growled.

“Okay, if you say so, what about OUR FATHER?!”

“Well, they weren’t really a couple. It was just a joyful night and I was its result. See? We aren’t very different.”

He kept staring at her, and she went on, “But unlike you, he knew that she was pregnant. So, he stayed… sort of.”

“What happened then?”

“I became their worst nightmare. He wanted to go and live his life, and she wanted to go and achieve her dream. But for their bad luck, someone needed to sacrifice and stay to take care of me.”

“Which of them made this huge sacrifice?” He scoffed.

“She did.”

“Great.”

“But not for too long.”

He didn't ask, but his confused eyes did the job for him. Alice gave him the answer, "I was five when she started to chase her dream again."

"FIVE?!"

"Mm-hmm. I remember that they had that massive fight. I remember their loud yells, and I remember her screams when he started to beat her."

"Damn it."

"Watch your mouth."

"Sorry."

"However, the fight ended with the result she wanted; he allowed her to go, and promised to help in taking care of me."

"Great."

"Not really."

"Why?"

"He couldn't keep himself from leaving. He couldn't force it to stay with his little boring annoying girl."

"What happened?"

"Nothing, the loud angry thunder roared and awoke me in the middle of a freezing night, to find myself alone in my dark room."

He squinted. "What did you do?"

"The moving shadows scared me to death. Every time the thunder stroke, my heart jumped out of my chest... literally."

The tears welled up in her eyes.

"I started to scream. I started to call out their names, but only the blowing wind and the roaring thunder answered me."

The tears started to ooze out of her eyes, and her voice started to choke.

"I hardly left my bed and tried to head to the door, but when the thunder roared for another time, my feet nailed to the ground, and my shaking body collapsed."

The tears are pouring heavily now.

"I huddled up under the window... freezing and scared. I became too weak to be able to scream or yell again. I was one hundred percent sure that I'm going to die, and that the next thunder strike will absolutely aim at me."

She paused and desperately tried to wipe her tears, but she totally failed. So, she just went on.

"And the worst part was that... I..."

She paused again

"You what?"

She lick her lower lip. "I... wanted to pee... badly." She mumbled.

He smiled. "What is wrong about this?"

"I was too scared to go to the bathroom."

"Oh."

"I tried to hold it... but I couldn't."

The crying beat her and forced her to stop. Robert moved immediately to hug her, and while he was pulling her towards his chest, she uttered some desperate words that were hardly recognizable because of her choking voice.

"I peed myself... and stayed like this through the whole night."

She reached his chest, and he started to gently rub her back immediately.

"Hash... it is okay... you are fine now."

She kept crying, heavier. He hugged her tighter and kept caressing her back and hair.

They stayed like this for a while.

"Well, if this will make you feel better, I know someone who peed himself as well."

She chuckled, despite the crying, and moved herself a little from his chest to be able to see his smiling face.

"Who is this?" She mumbled, her voice was still choking and shaking.

"I am!" He said proudly.

She laughed. "What makes you so happy?!"

He chuckled. "I don't know!"

"Come on; tell me how it happened."

"I will, but I need to hear the rest of your story first."

"Okay."

"What happened after that night?"

"When he returned in the morning and found me lying unconscious on the ground, he decided to stay again."

"He might be a good father after all."

"The doctors in the hospital threatened him."

He chuckled. "Okay, I won't interrupt again."

"Yeah, that's better."

"So, he did stay this time?"

"Yep."

"Umm... was it for the good?" He wondered hesitantly.

"No. He brought his friends home, and turned it into a... umm... gambling club."

He frowned. "And what did you do?"

"Nothing. I stayed in my room and watched them every night playing and drinking."

"This really must have sucked."

"Yeah, especially when one of them came to my room and tried to rape me."

"WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!" He roared immediately.

She ignored his enormous anger, grimaced face, firing eyes, and went on, "I was seven."

"What did you do? He didn't really..."

She interrupted him. "Of course not!" She exclaimed. "I fought him!"

"Good girl!"

"Well, he did tear my clothes apart, but I beat him hard and ran to the window. There was a huge tree at it, and I used it to climb down."

"Oh! I see! A professional climber! I got it now."

She squinted. "Robert, I fall and broke my arm and my leg."

He frowned. "Oh, you must have learned how to climb later in your life then."

She chuckled. "Yep."

"What happened then?"

"Well, this turned to be the best thing that ever happened to me in my entire life."

"Really? How is that possible?"

"He decided to bring me here... to the family house."

"Oh, I see."

"Grandpa and grandma took good care of me, and gave me a new mother."

"Amy, right?"

She smiled. "Yep. She considered me as her sister... or maybe more. She took good care of me and taught me everything she knew. She let me play with her toys, sleep in her bed, and even wear her clothes. She made me feel as if she loved me more than any other thing in her life... even herself."

"Wow!" he marveled.

"She became everything to me, and I became everything to her. And since that day, we are more than two sisters."

He smiled. Alice went on, "She saved my life... literally."



“There is no doubt about this,” he concurred.

“That’s it; this is my story.”

“I’m glad that it had a happy ending after all.”

“Yes, it did. Your turn now.”

He sighed.

“Come on, you promised,” she insisted.

“Okay,” he muttered. She moved to the sitting position and looked him in the eyes, eagerly waiting for him to start talking. He did after some moments of silence.

“Should I start form the “pee” part?”

She chuckled. “No, from the beginning.”

“As you wish. Okay... I was seven, my mother was pregnant, but she died while she was giving birth to her.”

“Oh! No!”

“Alice, if you are gonna cry again, I’ll quit now.”

“No, keep going, please.”

He sighed. “Okay. I had no place and nobody to go to. I escaped and jumped in a bus, and it took me to Chicago.”

“Chicago?!” She wondered, totally stunned.

“Yep. I found myself alone in a strange city, with no family or home... nothing at all.”

“What did you do?” She wondered anxiously.

“Okay, I’ll make it short and simple. I ate from the garbage, and slept in a stinky alley. And guess what? It was a freezing night with massive pouring rain and angry roaring thunder.”

“Oh! Someone could have killed you! Or you could have frozen to death!”

“Alice, calm down. As you can see, I’m still alive.”

His words calmed her a lot. She sighed with relief, and he went on, “Suddenly, while I was hiding in that alley, I heard two men fighting.”

She interrupted him. “No! I knew you would get killed!”

“Alice! I AM STILL ALIVE!”

“But they could have killed you,” she screeched, too sad.

He chuckled. “Yes, but they clearly didn’t.”

She smiled. “I’m sorry. Go on.”

"I peeked at them, and I wish I didn't."

"Why?"

"One of them pulled a pistol and blew the other's head."

She gasped, her body shuddered, and her eyes widened with fear. "Oh my God!"

"Yes, I know."

"What did you do?"

"Nothing. The torn apart head and the spilled around blood prevented me from doing anything, even catching a breath. And unlike you, I didn't have to fight the pee... it poured out immediately."

She laughed.

"Then, something worse has happened."

The smile disappeared and her face grimaced again. "Worse than this?"

"Yep. The pee flow slowly on the uneven ground, heading directly towards the killer's feet."

"Oh-No! He will notice your presence! No! You are the only witness of his crime! HE WILL KILL YOU!"

"Alice!" He yelled, interrupting her. "No one killed me! I'm alive!" He went on, using a calmer tone. She threw herself into his arms, and he hugged her immediately. She hid her face into his chest, and he pulled her closer to him.

"That's it, I don't wanna hear more," she muttered.

"It is okay. I swear I'm still alive."

She laughed, loudly, moving her face away from his chest. "Thank you, I really didn't know this."

"Okay little girl, time to go to your bed now."

"No!"

"Yes... it is an order."

"First, I'm not gonna sleep now. Second, I'm gonna sleep here tonight, and those are orders as well."

"What?! Why do I have to share my bed with you?"

"This is your destiny."

He laughed. "My destiny, right."

She smiled and went on, "And before I sleep, you will finish the story first."

"You said you don't wanna hear more!"

"I know; I changed my mind."

"You are crazy!"

"Shut up and keep going."

"Well, I'd have said no if I wasn't sure that this is an order as well, and that the next part of the story is better."

"Great! What are you waiting for then?"

"Where were we?"

"The pee part!" She exclaimed.

He chuckled. "Right... umm... I remember that those few seconds were the scariest and slowest seconds in my entire life. I watched the pee moving slowly towards the guy's feet, while being completely sure that every distance was slowly cut by it, was rapidly getting me closer to my death."

"Why didn't you run away?"

He laughed. "Really? You thought I didn't think about this?"

She chuckled. "I see, you were too scared."

"Exactly. The pee reached the guy's feet, and for my bad luck, it did catch his attention and made him turn around... to find me shaking and staring at him. He didn't hesitate or think. He aimed the pistol at my head and prepared to pull the trigger. Here, I ran for my life."

"What did he do?"

"He manically chased me. But I was fast... very fast, and the reason is simple; I had to run for my life many times before."

"He didn't catch you?"

"No, but he didn't quit. He kept running as fast as he could, following me, and aiming his gun at my head. But at the end, I managed to beat him. I was sure that he would never ever give up... So, I jumped."

She chuckled. "Jumped?! Into what?!"

He laughed. "Oh, sorry. I though I've mentioned the river I found in front of me."

She chuckled again. "No, you didn't."

"I did now. I found a river, took a deep breath and held it inside my lungs, and then jumped."

"Good thinking!"

"Yep, and it managed to do the trick. I stayed under the water for some seconds, and then returned to the surface for a moment to catch another breath. I did it over and over again till I became sure the danger was gone."

He paused to swallow and then went on, "I hesitantly got out of the cold water. It was freezing, and my wet clothes made things even worse. So, I removed them, and huddled up on the bank of the river, under a huge tree, and stayed like this, waiting for the cold to do what the killer failed to achieve."

She frowned, and was about to utter something, but he interrupted her, "No, I didn't die."

She laughed. "How did you survive this time?"

"I was lucky enough."

"Lucky?!"

"Yep, very lucky. I heard a car pulling over, a door being opened, and some footsteps getting closer. I didn't think or hesitate; I jumped out of my place and ran towards the sounds. I found a stranger standing near a black car. Once he saw me, he took his coat off and ran towards me. He covered me with his coat and took me with him."

"To where?"

"I remember that I lost conscious, and I guess I spent some days in a hospital, but when I got better, he took me home with him."

"Then?"

"He raised me up, and taught me everything."

"Everything?"

"Yes, everything... good and bad." He paused for a moment and then went on, "He sent me to school to learn how to become a good person who can help his people, and at the same time, he taught me how to kill a man with a single touch."

She gasped and grimaced. "Kill?"

He hardly swallowed. "Eight years... Eight years of learning. First, I didn't understand what was going on. Actually, I enjoyed it. He was turning me into a very strong well-built man who can use all the types of weapons and master all the fighting skills. He even taught me how to drive manically. What else would a young man ask for?"

Her annoyed grim expression didn't change. "Kill?" She screeched.

"Don't worry, I ran away before things get any serious."

She sighed with relief. "How old were you?"

"I was fifteen."

"You were still too young."

"Yep. But I was old enough to see that he was turning me into an unstoppable killing machine."

"And why would he do this?" She wondered.

"Well, because he was a major gangster."

"Wow!"

He laughed. "What?! You like it?!"

She chuckled. "Sort of."

"Well, I won't lie and say that I hated those days, but when you know that the money used to raise you was bloody money, believe me, you will change your mind."

"I can't argue about this."

"This is what I thought."

"What happened then?"

"Two things. The first thing, I ran away. And the second, a beautiful little girl is going to sleep."

"NO!"

"It is done; it is too late, and both of us are exhausted."

"I'm not!"

"You are."

"No, I'm not!"

"Yes, you are."

"Robert!"

"It is an order!"

"Fine," she sniffed. "But you will let me sleep here."

He sighed and looked at her for some moments. "Okay," he said, not very comfortable.

"And you will hug me till I fall asleep."

"No problems."

She smiled and moved closer to him, he cuddled her, and she put her head on his chest and closed her eyes.

"Good night, brother," she murmured.

"For you too... sister."

She chuckled, and he closed his eyes.

The boring sleeping started, bringing the never-ending waiting with it. But whether it was going to be a long slow night or a short fast one, the sun will always return, and when this happens, I'll be ready.

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## ***A New Morning: A pink dress***

Robert opened his eyes when the first warm ray of the sun entered his room and gently touched his face.

*(Don't worry. Calm down; he is not really there. This is only a dream. Close your eyes, and he will be gone.)*

"You must be Robert."

*(Okay, he is really there, and this is not a dream.)*

"I'm Edward; your cousin."

Robert squinted, still frozen on his bed, staring at the good-looking kid.

*(I think... I recognize the name. Really? I don't.)*

"I'm Ashley's brother."

"Oh."

Edward chuckled. Robert, who became less surprised and the blood started to flow again to his face, slowly repositioned himself to the sitting position, to face the boy, and avoid awaking the deeply sleeping Alice.

"I'm sorry for awaking you this way, I must have scared you to death," Edward said politely.

Robert took a deep breath to relief his tense, but from his emotionless solid face you can say that he failed. "It is okay," he muttered.

"This is Alice, right?" Edward wondered, looking at the covered girl who was barely visible.

"Yes, she is," Robert said, calmer and more comfortable; this was clear in his steady voice.

"I'm afraid that you'll have to wake her up; I need to change," Edward said, keeping the same emotionless tone.

"Okay," he sniffed, glaring at Edward.

The boy kept himself calm, and the smile on his face didn't change. "Maybe you can carry her to her room; you look strong enough to do so."

"Nice thinking," Robert sneered.

The boy ignored his sneering and went on, "Thanks."

Robert put his arms under Alice's body and was about to carry her, but once the lifting started, she opened her eyes.

"Robert?" She whispered.

"Good morning sweetheart, I was carrying you to your room; this dude asked me to do this."

"Dude?" She whispered again, still lying somewhere between being conscious and unconscious.

"Yep, his name is Edward."

She jumped out of her place immediately.

"Ouch! Alice! Watch your steps!" Robert yelled painfully.

"Edward! You are back!" She exclaimed, very happily and excitedly, hunkering on Robert's legs, while his arms were keeping her balance and preventing her from falling off the bed.

Edward smiled. "I'm so sorry I had to wake you up; I just wanted to change. And... you know... I can't change in the bathroom."

"It is okay, I was going to get up anyway."

"Hello! Could you please continue your conversation away from my smashed legs?!" Robert hissed.

"Oh, I'm so sorry," she said with sorrow, while moving herself off Robert's body, and getting out of the bed.

Suddenly, Robert squinted. "Buddy, you are on a wheelchair!"

"Robert!" Alice snapped.

"Thanks for reminding me, just keep doing it from time to time; I have a bad memory."

"I... I'm... so sorry... I didn't mean to," he mumbled.

"It is okay," he said calmly. "Now get out," he added, angrily.

"I think as I'm a boy like you, I can stay... right?"

Alice took some rapid steps back towards the bed before Edward says anything, held Robert's hand, and pulled him out of the bed.

"Come on," she murmured. She walked him towards the door, after glancing at Edward and greeting him for the last time. "Welcome back, Edward."

They went outside and closed the door.

"Now what the hell is going on?" Robert growled, still standing with Alice just outside the room.

"This is Edward, he is our cousin, he is twelve, and yes, he is paralyzed... this is what is going on," she fumed.

"And why did he kick me out of my room?"

"Because it is actually his room."

"Oh, but this doesn't mean he can kick me out like this. You and Amy change in front of each others, right?"

"Yes, but as you can see, he is paralyzed, and changing clothes is a huge trouble for him. He refuses to let anyone help him, or watch him. Got it now?" She hissed, keeping her face grimaced.

Robert exhaled, and the silence dominated. They stayed like this for some seconds.

"What are we gonna do now?" He wondered, calmer.

"I'll have a shower."

"Good idea."

"Okay, see you downstairs then." She left him standing and headed to her room. Robert stood still on his place, before turning to face the door of his room again. He stayed like this, staring at the door with kind eyes, for a while.

"Hey, buddy."

"What do you want?" Edward answered from behind the door.

"Umm... do you need any help?"

“Why would I need your help?” He scoffed.

Robert silenced for some moments, searching for something to say.

“Uh... umm...”

He interrupted his humming. “Well, you could do me a huge favor and leave.”

“Fine,” Robert sniffed. “But at least hand me my towel,” he added.

“Where is it?”

“Umm... somewhere inside.”

“If you are going to be my roommate, I’m afraid you will have to learn how to be organized.”

“Yeah, sure,” he said. “Only in your dreams kid,” he whispered to himself. Suddenly, the door partially opened, and the towel was thrown at Robert’s face.

“Here you are.”

Robert sniffed. “Thank you!” He spat.

“You are welcome.”

Robert shook his head and stared at the door for some seconds. Then, he headed to the bathroom and knocked at the closed door.

“Who is it?” Bill answered.

“It is Robert.”

“Sorry buddy, I’m in a deep trouble here; I’m afraid you will have to wait.”

“For how long?”

“Well, if I were you, I would have started searching for another bathroom.”

“Ugh... great,” he sniffed. “What a wonderful morning,” he scoffed, turned around, and walked down the hall. He headed to Ana and Ashley’s room.

“Guys, are you in there?”

He got no answer.

“Great... and if I opened the door and entered, someone is gonna kill me,” he whispered to himself. He stood still in his place for some minutes, waiting for bill to come out, or for Ana and Ashley to come back.

Suddenly, the door of his room opened, and Edward came out.

“What are you doing there?” Edward wondered.

“What do you think I’m doing? I’m searching for a bathroom.”

“And you went searching in the girls’ room?!” He wondered, sneering.



“As you can see, I didn’t enter the room, because no one is in there, and I’m a polite young man who doesn’t enter others’ room without permission,” Robert growled.

“Good for you.”

“Yeah, very good, and it would be better if you left me alone.”

“Okay. By the way, you can check the other bathroom; it is downstairs.”

“Oh, thanks,” he scoffed. He shook his head and headed downstairs, and for his good luck, the bathroom was empty.

“Oh, thanks God.”

He went inside and closed the door.

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*Some minutes later...*

“Good to see that you are finally awake,” grandpa said, once he saw Robert coming out of the house. Robert didn’t answer; he just kept walking towards him.

“Meet your Uncle Stephen, and his pretty wife, Julia,” Grandpa added. Robert winced and looked at the direction at which grandpa pointed, to find grandma, the four girls, Madison, Marie, Jennifer, and two other persons, a man and a woman. I concluded that they were Stephen and Julia, and so did Robert who walked to them. Stephen was a handsome average man with brown hair and green eyes, and Julia was a very beautiful lady, with long above waist brown hair, a little lighter than Stephen’s, and green eyes as well. Now I knew from where Ashley and Edward got their prettiness, wavy brown hair, and entrancing green eyes.

Stephen and Julia got up.

“Hello sir,” Robert said, stretching his arm to shake hands with him, but Stephen hugged him instead.

“Welcome home.”

Robert didn’t hug back. Alice looked him in the eyes, over Stephen’s shoulders, and kept moving her lips, trying to tell him something. I easily read her lips, and so did he.

*(Hug... him...)*

Robert sighed and hesitantly put his arms around his uncle’s body. Alice smiled, and they stayed like this for some moments. Stephen let go of him, and then Robert greeted Julia.

“Nice to meet you,” he said politely.

“Nice to meet you too, Robert.”

Well, the two of them tried to act kindly, but it was clear from Stephen’s crumpled-with-sadness face and Julia’s narrowed eyes that they were annoyed. Robert squinted when he noticed this. He was about to talk, but Tom’s yell stopped him.

“Oh, you are finally awake! Ready for some fishing?!”

He turned towards the voice, to find Tom, Kevin, Michael, and bill heading towards him.

“Fishing?” He wondered.

“It is a tradition; every Sunday they go fishing,” Aunt Marie explained.

“Yeah, and they never caught a single fish; it is a tradition as well,” Jennifer added, making everyone laugh.

“We will this time... I can feel it,” Tom said with confidence.

“I hope so,” grandma said.

“So, what do you say? Are you coming with us?” Michael wondered. Robert’s lips moved to utter something, but Ana’s lips were faster than him.

“No, he is not.”

“What?!” Bill wondered.

“I guess you heard her,” Alice added.

“Great, let’s move then,” Kevin said with relief.

“Wait for a moment,” Tom said to him. He looked at Alice and went on, “And this is because?”

“Because he is coming with us,” Ashley answered, challengingly.

“And where are you going exactly?” Michael wondered.

“We are going shopping,” Ana explained.

Tom grimaced. “Shopping?!”

“Mm-hmm. We will go to the town, eat something, wander for a while, and then will go shopping,” Alice explained calmly.

“Oh, really? Let me teach you something young lady. No man, however stupid he is, will go shopping with girls. Do you know why? Because it sucks!” Tom said.

“Yeah! This is my dad!” Bill exclaimed. Tom smiled.

“He is not going with you, or with you. He is staying here to help me fix the car,” Grandpa said.

*(Boring fishing, boring shopping, or boring fixing... buddy, you are on your own.)*

Robert looked at grandpa and prepared to say something, but grandpa was faster.

“It is an order.”

Everyone, boys and girls, including Robert himself, sighed with frustration. Tom shook his head and looked at Stephen. "Are you coming?"

"No, it has been a very long trip. I need to sleep."

"Okay." He glanced at his colleges. "Let's go and get some fish!"

"Yeah!" Bill and Michael yelled, and then the four of them left.

Alice, Ana, and Ashley dashed to grandpa.

"Grandpa, please!" Alice begged.

"The car needs to be fixed."

"He can do it later, and we will help as well," Ana said.

"Yes, we will," Ashley concurred.

"It is settled... he stays."

Alice sniffed and shook her head, and so did Ana and Ashley. No one but me was concentrating on Amy, who was sitting next to her grandma. She didn't say anything during the argument, and kept smiling and laughing. But when grandpa decided that Robert will stay, her face clearly showed how upset and disappointed she was. Regardless, when she became sure that the argument was over, she got up and headed to the three girls.

"Let's go then," she said calmly, infusing her tone with carelessness.

"And I'll give you a ride," Stephen said.

Robert turned to him. "Do you have a car?"

"Yep, but I was looking forward to check that Mustang™ out."

Robert smiled. "It is all yours, but take care of her; she is not mine."

Stephen smiled back. "Don't worry about that."

"Okay, I'll go and get you the keys."

"And we will be waiting near the car."

"Okay."

Robert ran inside, headed to the upper floor, and then entered his room. He found Edward inside.

"Hi," Robert said.

"Hi."

Robert grabbed the keys from his hanging jeans.

"Umm... should I knock at the door next time?"

Edward smiled. "No, it is okay."

“Great, now we are talking, you know... like two grown men.”

Edward laughed.

“Oh, you can laugh!”

He laughed again. “Yes, I can.”

“What are you doing here anyway?”

“Here?”

“Yeah, I mean in this small dark room, while the whole world out there is enjoying the beautiful morning.”

“Robert, it is almost noon now.”

Robert winced. “Really?!” He paused to overcome his shock and then went on, “Who cares? The sun is still out there, and this enough for me.”

“Whatever, I’m reading.”

Robert squinted and took some steps towards him. “Reading?!” He sneered. “Buddy, it is the Sunday morning!”

“What do you want me to do?”

Robert got closer, and then kneeled in front of him. He put his hands on Edward’s thighs, looked him in the eyes, and then talked, “Go and have some fun,” he said every word separately and in a full mouth. Edward swallowed and kept looking at him.

“So?” Robert wondered.

Edward sighed. “Look, as you will be my roommate, you should know some stuff about me. The first is that I can’t go out, because I can’t go downstairs, because I’m on a wheelchair, and wheelchairs can’t descend the stairs,” he said it calmly and made it sound as a fact.

Robert smiled. “Have you ever heard about something called... help?” He said, keeping track with the kid’s calm tone.

The boy squinted, adding more strength to his already-strong gaze. “I did. But I also heard about something called compassion, and when I tried it... it really hurt.”

Robert hardly swallowed.

“Go; they must be waiting for you.”

“What if we made a deal?”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, if I helped you and you helped me in return, it won’t be considered compassion.”

“And why would you need my help?”

“Because I’m stupid, and you look like a smart kid. I can absolutely use this.”

He chuckled. “What do you want exactly?”

Robert moved his face closer to his. "Can you keep a secret?" He murmured, conspiratorially, totally gaining Edward's attention and curiosity.

"Absolutely."

"It is Amy."

"Amy?!"

Robert nodded. Edward kept staring at him, scrutinizing his expression, and then his eyes widened when he figured out what Robert meant.

"Forget it."

"But... why?"

"You don't understand; she is not an ordinary human being," he whispered.

Robert's eyes narrowed, and his eyebrows pulled together.

"An alien?" Robert wondered seriously, whispering as well. Edward laughed loudly.

"Robert, what is taking you so long?" Amy wondered, entering the room through the opened door. Robert turned to her immediately, while Edward laugh was getting louder.

Amy squinted. "He... is... laughing?!" She wondered, mumbling.

Edward did a massive effort to overcome his laugh, and then whispered some words to Robert. "Avoid her eyes, they can turn you into one of them."

"Okay."

Robert got up and walked towards her. "Sorry for the delay. Here are the keys," he mumbled, handing her the keys, and avoiding looking in her eyes.

She smiled. "What is wrong?"

Edward laughed again, louder than before. Robert glanced at him, and then looked at her again, still avoiding her eyes. "Nothing."

She kept the smile on her face. "You asked Ashley to check if I have a boyfriend?"

Robert winced, his eyes widened, his face turned red immediately, his body shuddered, and then he hardly swallowed.

"I... I... umm..."

Edward's laugh didn't stop. Amy kept her calmness, while smiling and staring at his rapidly moving eyes.

"I... yes... I did... I was collecting information about you... I mean about all of you."

"Oh, really?" She wondered, scoffing.

"Yep."

"Well, next time, you can ask me."

"Okay, do you have a boyfriend?"

His sudden and unpredicted question carried the tense from him to her. However, the girl managed to quickly put herself together and overcome the surprise.

“Use your imagination,” she murmured confidently, putting a smile on her face. “Bye,” she said, turned around, and left immediately. Robert followed her with his eyes till he made sure she left.

He sighed with relief and then turned to face Edward again. He was done laughing, but was still smiling.

“An alien, right?” Robert hissed.

“Sorry, I couldn’t prevent myself.”

Robert walked to him and kneeled again. “So, are you in or not?”

“I already told you; forget it.”

“Yes, and I already asked you... why?”

“Mm-hmm, and I already said: because she is not an ordinary human being.”

“Oh, great. Here we go again.”

“No, really,” the boy said, seriously, gaining Robert’s attention again.

“What do you mean?”

“Avoid her eyes, and you will be just fine.”

“Why does everyone keep telling me this?”

Edward sighed. “Let’s get going; we can talk on our way down.”

“Really? This means you are in, right?”

The boy smiled. “Sort of.”

Robert grinned. “Great!” He exclaimed. He moved towards the back of the chair, and started pushing Edward. They left the room, and headed towards the stairs.

“Look, there is a huge problem when it comes to dealing with Amy.”

“What do you mean?”

“Let me break it down for you.”

“Yes, please.”

“As you must have already noticed, she is a unique elegant person. She is very sweet and kind, and cares about everyone. And to make things even worse, she is one of the prettiest girls out there. And to complete the picture, her eyes are enchanting and irresistible.”

“I can’t argue about any of this.”

“So, with a single glance and a beautiful smile, accompanied by a tiny amount of caring, you may get the feeling that she is interested in you,

which is totally wrong.”

They were on the stairs now.

“Wrong?”

“Yep, simply because she does this with everyone.”

“Everyone?”

“Yes, this is her method of dealing with people; love and caring.”

“I think... I understand... what you mean.”

“Good.”

“Umm, do you think she has a boyfriend?”

“No,” he answered fast and confidently.

“Why are you so sure?”

“Firstly, because she is so special, and none of the ordinary boys here can even catch her attention. And this is why I believe you have a chance, and a great one as well.”

Robert grinned. “Me?! Really?!”

“Yep, you are not less special than here.”

“Hey, come on, stop mocking of me.”

“No, I’m not. You really are. Why do you think I’m helping you? I never take a losing bet.”

They reached the ground floor.

“How do you know this? We’ve just met.”

“Well, you made me laugh, and convinced me to leave my room. Believe me, this makes you a very special person.”

Robert laughed. “I bet it does.”

“Secondly, she said: Use your imagination.”

They have just passed the main door. Yes, Robert is fast.

“And this means?”

“It means: No, I don’t have a boyfriend, but I’m not the sleeping beauty and you aren’t my brave prince. If you want to get to know me, you should start trying harder.”

Robert stopped pushing. “Wow! You are super smart!”

“She is too shy to open the door for you, and at the same time, she is afraid of closing it and losing you.”

Robert squinted and stared at him for some moments. “Excuse me, how old are you?”

He laughed. "I'll be thirteen next month."

Robert kept staring at him, still amazed. Edward went on, "Life teaches a lot."

Robert laughed. "Right."

He started pushing again. They bypassed the gathered family members, who looked totally astounded to see Edward out of his room, after greeting them, and then headed directly to grandpa, who was waiting near the car.

"I see that you brought some company," grandpa said.

Robert moved closer to him. "Yep," he said.

Grandpa glanced at the smiling Edward, and then looked back at Robert. "Good, he will be a great help."

"This is what I thought."

"Okay lads, let's start fixing this piece of jerk," Grandpa yelled, ordering them, and making his voice loud enough to be heard by the gathered family members.

"Follow me," he whispered to Robert, and then walked to be behind the car, invisible to the others. Robert followed, and so did Edward.

"Okay, what do we have?" Grandpa wondered excitedly.

Robert winced.

Edward answered, "He asked her if she has a boyfriend, and she said: Use your imagination."

"Oh, great! Now we know that she is single, and now she knows that you are into her."

Robert smiled, still surprised. "Guys, what is going on here exactly?"

"I'm keeping my word," Grandpa answered calmly.

"Your word?"

"Yep. I promised you yesterday that I'll help you winning her heart."

Robert grinned. "Really? You are really going to help me?"

"Of course I will."

Robert sighed and sat on the ground, near Edward. Grandpa did the same, completing the circle.

"But... she is my cousin," he mumbled.

"Oh, really?" Grandpa scoffed. "She is your second cousin; this won't be a problem," he added.

"I agree," Ed concurred.

Robert sighed again. "Okay... but we still have another problem."

"What is it?" Ed wondered.



"What if I don't deserve her?" He muttered.

"Buddy, you need to make a decision here; are you going for her or not?" Edward said.

"He is right. And if this is gonna make you feel better, you are the only boy I met in my life who deserves her."

Robert's face lightened with happiness. "Really?"

"Yes. You are tough enough to protect her, and kind enough to take good care of her at the same time. There is a huge chemistry between you two, and she clearly enjoys being around you. And I already tested your abilities and made sure that you are a good kid."

Robert smiled.

"Can we start now?" Grandpa wondered.

Robert nodded. "What about the car?"

"Don't worry about that; I took care of it earlier."

Robert squinted. Grandpa went on, "I just wanted to save you from go fishing with some losers, and go shopping with some girls."

Robert grinned. "Thanks."

"Guys, we are wasting our time," Edward growled.

"He is right. What do we have in our hands?" Grandpa wondered.

"First, before we start, I need to warn you. If this ended bad, and you made a single tear, only a single tear, ooze out of her eyes, you will be in a deep trouble," Edward threatened, looking Robert in the eyes, and saying it slowly and calmly.

Robert hardly swallowed. Edward went on, "You will have a long list of predators who are aiming only at your head. A long list of angry men. A list that has grandpa on its top, and Mr. Murphy on its bottom."

"Mr. Murphy?!"

"Yep, the bakery."

"Oh."

"So, do you still want to go for her?"

"More than before," he answered confidently. Edward grinned, and so did grandpa.

"Ok, let's start," Grandpa said.

"Okay, where were we?" Edward said.

"She has no boyfriend, and she knows I'm into her."

"Right."

"She baked a cake for you, stayed awake till your return, and then made sure that you ate it," Grandpa said.

"Good, but not decisive." Edward said.

“Really?!” Robert asked, surprised.

“Yep.”

“Umm... okay... she refused to swim with me in the pool.”

“Well, although she never swims with boys, this still can be considered as a good sign,” Edward said.

“How?”

“She is not considering you as a cousin or a brother, like she does with bill and Michael. And this means that she wants you to be more than just a sibling,” grandpa explained.

“Oh, I see.”

“What else?” Edward wondered.

“Uh... when I told her that I met Mandy, our neighbor, and said that she is a wonderful and pretty girl, she looked kinda annoyed.”

Grandpa and Edward smiled, and their eyes sparkled.

“Now we are talking!” Grandpa cheered.

“I have more!” Robert said, raising their excitement to its highest level. They kept staring at him eagerly. He leaned in towards them, and they did the same.

“Guess what did she do when I told her that a girl asked me to go out?”

The two of them gulped, and their widely opened eyes just got wider.

“And guess what did she do when she knew that I rejected the offer?”

“Guys, I can’t see any fixing. What are you doing exactly?”

The three of them shuddered immediately.

“Julia! You almost killed us!” Grandpa yelled.

Robert hardly inhaled, and Edward sighed with relief.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to.”

“Mom, do you need anything?”

“Not really, I was just checking on you.”

“I’m fine; we were just chatting.”

“Okay. If you needed anything, you know where to find me.”

“Mom,” he screeched.

“Fine, see you all later.”

She walked away.

"This place isn't safe," grandpa said.

"Yes," Robert concurred.

"Let's go to the river's bank," Edward suggested.

"Great Idea! And we can test the car as well."

"Okay, if you say so," Robert agreed. The three of them got up. Robert helped Edward to get into the backseats, and then headed to the front seat. Grandpa headed to the driver's seat, and when he tried to start the engine. Everything went just fine.

"Well done grandpa!" Edward cheered.

Grandpa smiled, and then took them out of the house. They headed to a nearby river, stopped the car on the road side, and then sat on the bank of the river.

"It is beautiful!" Robert marveled, and I can't blame him. The gently blowing wind that made the flowers and grasses dance under the rays of the sun, and the clear calm water that sparkled and reflected the faces of the happily flying birds, in addition to the quietness of the place, made it just perfect.

"This is my favorite spot," grandpa said.

"And mine as well," Edward added.

"And it has just become mine too," Robert said, smiling.

"Great!" Edward said. "We have many things in common!" He added.

Robert smiled. "Indeed."

"Let's don't waste more time," grandpa said.

"I agree," Edward concurred.

"Okay, what do you propose?" Robert wondered, glancing at the two of them.

"I'll vote for the old fashioned method," Edward said.

"The old fashioned method?"

"Yep. You wait for the best moment, and then confess to her."

"No. If she rejected him, he won't be able to even look in her eyes again, and this will lead to him leaving the house." Grandpa explained.

Robert nodded. "You are absolutely right."

"Do you have any better ideas?" Edward wondered.

"Sort of." Grandpa said. They didn't say anything, but their eyes forced him to keep going. "Look, you will start acting as if you aren't interested in her, not even a tiny bit."

"Then?"

“Whether she really likes you or not, her dignity will make her act the same. Then, we will just wait.”

“Till?”

“If she does like you, she will give you a chance, and partially open the door for you for a moment.”

“And when this happens, you will be ready to get in,” Edward added.

Robert expression lightened a lot. “Oh! This is how I’ll never be rejected! Because actually she was the one who gave me a chance to get closer!”

“Exactly,” Grandpa said.

“Guys! You are two genius men!” He exclaimed. The two of them giggled.

“Okay, I’ll leave you now; I have to go to the town and meet a friend,” grandpa said.

“Okay.”

“I’ll take the car; I believe you two are strong enough to go home on your own.”

“Sure,” Robert said.

He got up and put his hand on Robert’s shoulder. He looked him in the eyes and talked, “You have me on your side; you can count on that.”

Robert smiled and nodded. Grandpa smiled back. “Okay, see you later then.”

He turned around and walked to the car.

The two boys followed him with their eyes till he got in and drove away.

“It is just the two of us now,” Edward said.

“I think so.”

Edward relaxed and looked at the beautiful scene. Robert did the same, and they stayed like this for a while.

Suddenly, Edward broke the ice.

“Robert, what is your dream?” he wondered.

“What do you mean?” Robert mumbled, pulling his eyebrows together in mystification.

Edward smiled. “Don’t you have a dream? Something you do really want to achieve?” He paused, looked at the clear blue sky, and then kept going, with a louder and more excited voice. “Something great... something impossible...” He paused for a moment to turn back to Robert and look him in the eyes again, and then he went on, “Something that gives your life a meaning.”

Robert’s eyes bulged. Edward stared at him for a moment, and then he smiled again.

“You don’t have one, do you?” He murmured.

Robert put his lips together and shook his head once.

"You should start searching then," He added.

"Searching?" Robert mumbled.

"Yep, searching for a dream," he explained immediately.

Robert looked at him for some moments, and then he turned to look at the clear water. "Ok... let me see..."

The silence dominated for some moments while Robert was thinking.

"What about running my own company?"

"No, this is a goal, not a dream."

"A goal?" Robert wondered.

"Yes, a goal; something achievable," he explained.

"What is the difference?"

"Well, the goal is something that can easily be achieved later in your life, if you worked hard to get it. Let's take your own company as an example. First, you work for someone, you learn how to master the job, and then you start working for your own. Later, you have enough money to start a small company, and at the end, you will have your huge one... someday. See? Straight forward."

Robert nodded. "I got it."

"Good."

"What about... umm... going to mars?"

Edward laughed. "This is called: losing your mind."

Robert laughed back. "Right."

"Give it another try."

"Ok-ay... let me see..." He took some moments of thinking and then went on, "What about being with the girl of your dreams, and live happily ever after with her?"

Edward smiled. "The mars dream is more achievable than this."

Robert laughed.

The silence dominated for some moments.

"What about you?"

"What about me?"

"You have a dream, don't you?"

"Of course I do."

"Can I know it? Just to walk on your shoes."

“Well, if you promised you won’t laugh at me.”

“Okay, I promise.”

“Fine.” He silenced for some moments, swallowed, and then went on, “Somewhere in England, there is a city called Manchester. Have you ever heard of it?”

“Well... sort of.”

Edward smiled. “It doesn’t matter. In this city, there is a huge and famous soccer stadium; the greatest of all the stadiums in the whole world.”

His words enthralled Robert. “Wow! Although I’m not very much into soccer, but this sounds interesting.”

“It is. This stadium is called: The Old Trafford stadium. It is the home ground for the famous Manchester United team.”

Robert expression lightened. “Oh... yeah... I know those guys. Umm... they call themselves the red devils, right?”

Edward grinned. “Exactly!” He exclaimed.

“They come to the United States every year for some sort of a... pre-season tour.”

“You know more than I’ve expected!”

Robert chuckled. “Yep.”

“But there is something I’m sure you don’t know.”

“What is it?”

He moved his face closer to him, excited, and his eyes sparkling. “A secret; only the real fans of the club know it,” he whispered, conspiratorially, carrying the excitement to Robert.

“Cool! Go ahead!”

“The stadium, it has another name!” He whispered excitedly.

“Really?”

“Yep.”

“What is it?” Robert whispered, not less excited than the kid.

“The Theater of Dreams.”

Robert eyes widened to keep track with Edward’s eyes. “The Theater of Dreams?”

He nodded, totally enthralled.

“How did you know that?”

“Firstly, I’m a real fan. Secondly, it is clearly written on the stands of the stadium, but most people don’t notice it.”

“Oh... interesting! I’m gonna check it out.”

"Yes, you should."

"So, your dream is to visit the Theater of Dreams?"

"No!" Edward screeched. "This is not a dream! I can easily book a ticket and attend a tour."

"Then what is your dream?"

A smile slowly drawn on the kids face. "I'll score a vital goal in a tough game at the end of the season, and this goal will earn us the title."

The surprise prevented Robert from uttering a word. He just kept staring at the excited boy with wide and amazed eyes.

"I know you may think it is impossible, but... it is a dream; it doesn't have to be achievable."

"Well... umm..."

"One day, I heard some words that touched my heart; a man's dream is a key to his greatness."

Robert kept staring, totally confused.

"Uh... sorry... it didn't touch my heart, it didn't even come closer."

Edward laughed.

"Do you want to hear my dream now?"

"Sure."

"I'm starving! And I need to eat!"

He laughed again, louder.

"Can we go home?"

"Sure, I'm kinda hungry as well."

"Great! Wanna race me home?"

"What?! You will easily win!"

"Well, if you are going to score a goal in your stadium, you will absolutely need to start practicing."

"Okay!"

The boy started moving immediately.

"Hey! You cheated!"

He laughed and moved his chair faster. Robert followed him, running with low speed, clearly letting the boy win. They kept laughing till they reached the house.

"I won!" He exclaimed.

"I can't believe you beat me!" Robert yelled.

"I can't either!" Ed yelled excitedly. "Come on, let's find something to eat," he added with a calmer voice.

"If we are lucky enough, we will find Amy inside."

They kept walking towards the door.

"No, I don't think they returned home yet."

They entered the house, to find the ladies gathered in the living room.

"You are back!" Julia exclaimed.

"Mm-hmm, and we are starving," Edward replied immediately.

"I'll get you something to eat, follow me," she said, getting up excitedly, and heading to the kitchen. They followed her immediately. She got them some snacks, and then they returned to their room.

"I'm covered in sweat." Edward said.

"Yeah, me too."

"I think I'll have a shower."

"A shower?"

He smiled. "What? Why so amazed?"

"Oh, no, nothing. I just had something else in my mind."

"Share it."

"Well, we can swim." He said, drawing a smile on his lips.

Edward winced. "Swim?!"

"Yep."

"Really?!" He scoffed.

"Why not?"

"Because... the most important part in swimming is using your feet," he sneered.

"I can carry you, on my back."

"No!" He snapped.

"But... why? We are friends now, and this is what friends do to each others."

"Forget it."

Robert gazed at him for some moments. "Look kid, it is done, we are going to swim." He started moving towards him.

"No! Stay away from me!" He yelled angrily. Robert ignored him. He carried him out of his chair and dashed outside.



"I said... LET GO!"

"Sure, if you wanna fall," he said calmly.

"Robert, stop, NOW!"

"Sorry buddy, our next stop is the pool."

They reached the ground floor, and rapidly bypassed the ladies, who were already anxious because of Edward's loud yells.

"What is going on?" Grandma wondered anxiously.

"Nothing," Robert murmured, increasing his speed. He reached the main door in no time, before any of the ladies speaks again, and then dashed to the water immediately.

"At least let me wear my bathing suit!"

"You should have thought about this earlier."

The moment they reached the pool, he threw the kid into the water, and followed him immediately.

"Robert! I'm sinking!" He yelled fearfully.

"Yeah, I can see this," he said calmly.

"I'm gonna die!"

"Not if you hanged on my neck."

The desperate boy wrapped his arms around Robert's neck; this manage to keep him on the surface of the water.

"You are crazy!" He roared.

"Maybe, but you are a coward, that's for sure."

"I'm not a coward!"

"Yes you are."

"No, I'm NOT!"

"What is exactly going on here?" Julia hissed. They turned towards the voice, to find Julia, Marie, and Madison, frowning and staring at them.

Behind them, you can see Jennifer coming, carrying Ryan in her arms.

Edward gulped. "Nothing, we are just... swimming," he mumbled.

"Swimming?! Fully dressed?!" Julia snarled.

"Umm... we wanted to try something new," Robert mumbled.

"New?! The last time he has been in a swimming pool was three years ago, he can get Hypothermia!" She yelled.

"Hypo... what?" He whispered to Edward.

"Hypothermia. Briefly, your body temperature gets low and you start shaking, it may kill you as well."

“Cool, at least you aren’t shaking.”

Edward moved himself closer to Robert, making his chest touch Robert’s back.

“Okay, you are shaking.”

Edward chuckled.

“Get out... NOW!” She roared suddenly, making the two of them shudder.

“Okay, now I’m shaking as well.”

Edward laughed.

“Julia, I can see no harm,” Madison murmured kindly.

“Me neither. Actually, I think they are enjoying their time,” Marie added, calming Julia a lot, and easing her anger.

“I don’t...” she mumbled. Jennifer put her hand on Julia’s shoulder and kindly looked her in the eyes. “Julia, he is laughing,” she murmured. Julia kindly looked at the smiling Edward for some moments, and then sighed.

“Okay, you can stay. But at least remove your tops.”

“Yes!” The two boys cheered.

“Now!”

Robert removed his top, shoes, and socks, and then helped Ed do the same.

“Better now?” Robert wondered.

“Yes.”

“Thanks mom,” Ed said, smiling. She smiled back, and then the four ladies returned inside.

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*About twenty minutes later...*

“When they told me that you two are swimming, I couldn’t miss it.”

They turned towards the voice, to find grandpa, umm... on his shorts, standing near the pool, and ready to jump in.

The two amazed boys stared at him.

“Grand-pa?!” Robert wondered, mumbling.

“Can I join?”

“Of course!” Ed exclaimed.

Grandpa took a deep breathe, and then jumped into the water. He started to swim around.

“He is good!” Robert said, amazed, mouth agape, and following grandpa with his eyes.

“Of course I am, kid. You should have seen me when I was younger.”

Robert chuckled. “Yes, I should.”

Grandpa stopped swimming. “Okay, I’m tired.”

The two boys laughed. Grandpa went on, “However strong your arms are, they will never stay the same forever.”

Robert smiled. “I can’t argue about that.”

Grandpa swam slowly towards them. “Maybe we can just relax and chat.”

“Good idea!” Edward approved.

“Okay, if you say so.”

“Great,” grandpa said, and then started moving towards the edge of the pool. Robert followed him. They both leaned their backs on the sidewall of the pool, putting Ed between them. Ed put on arm around Robert’s shoulders, and the other around grandpa’s; this is how he managed to stay on the surface of the water.

Grandpa sighed. “I almost forgot this feeling.”

“Same here,” Ed agreed.

The silence dominated.

“Umm... Grandpa, as you are here now, there is something you must know, before... you know... helping me with Amy,” Robert mumbled, breaking the ice.

“I’m listening.”

“Ed, this is a secret,” he said, looking Edwards in the eyes.

“Sure.”

Robert took a deep breath, and then started to talk.

“Have you ever asked yourself how did I manage to survive all these years?”

“No. Why would I ask myself, when I have Mr. Johnson to ask?” Grandpa answered calmly.

“Umm... I need to know... what he told you exactly.”

“Simply, everything.”

“Everything?”

Grandpa confidently looked him in the eyes. “Everything,” he said it in a full mouth.

Robert squinted. "And you accepted to bring me to your house, and put me on the same floor with the cutest girls and best boys ever?"

"Yep."

"Grandpa, I was raised to be a criminal!" He hissed.

"But you ended up as a tough good person," grandpa said, keeping his calmness.

"You were raised to be a criminal?" Ed whispered.

"Yep, an incomparable gangster."

"Awesome!"

Robert laughed.

"Have you ever asked yourself how I managed to survive all these years?" Grandpa said, emphasizing on "I" and saying it in a full mouth.

Robert's eyes narrowed with confusion. "You?!"

"Yes."

"Umm... no."

"I was a homeless; just like you."

Robert's eyes widened in surprise. "Really?"

"Yep. But unlike you, I didn't fight, and surrendered to the criminal's life."

Robert squinted. Grandpa went on, "My rule was simple; steal a car. My colleges did the rest of the job."

"You were... a thief?!"

"Worse. I was a part of one of the local gangs that was ready to do anything for money."

"Anything?"

He squinted. "Anything."

"Umm... why don't you look surprised?" Robert wondered, looking at Ed.

"I heard the story before."

"I see."

"Only I, Ed, Susan... and Amy, know the truth of my past."

"What about mine?"

"Me and Susan, and now he does as well," grandpa said, peeking at Edward.

Edward smiled.

"I told Alice," Robert added.

“Good, she is your sister after all.”

“Yeah, and the most important is that she is absolutely gonna tell Amy,” Ed added.

“I know. Actually, I wish she does. I need Amy to know everything about me, if we are going to go any further.”

“Nice thinking,” Grandpa concurred.

“Okay, let’s return to your story.”

“Oh... sure. How did I manage to survive all these years? The answer is simple... Susan.”

Robert smiled. Grandpa went on, “One day, I stole a car, and was waiting outside a store, while the others were robbing it.”

Robert kept eagerly staring at him. Grandpa went on, “Suddenly... I don’t know what made me twist my neck and look at the other side of the street. This is when I saw her for the first time.”

He paused to catch a breath, and then went on, “She turned my life upside down. Do you know why?”

Robert shook her head.

“Her eyes,” he said it slowly and in a full mouth. Robert kept staring at him for some moments, and then his eyes widened.

“This is why you...”

“Warned you from looking in Amy’s eyes,” grandpa said, finishing what Robert has started.

Robert smiled and nodded. “I never noticed that they have the same eyes!”

“The same blue-gray eyes. And they enchanted you, just like what they did to me, more than forty years ago.”

“Forty years?! You have been together for more than forty years?!” He marveled.

“Yep. I’m the only man she knew in her life, and she is my only lady.”

“This is why Amy...”

“Wanted to do the same,” Grandpa finished what Robert has started again.

“Wow! I can’t even imagine how it feels. I mean... forty years?!”

Grandpa laughed. “Then what will you do when you know that our first kiss ever was after she said: I do... in our wedding party.”

Robert’s eyes widened again, as if he was watching something impossible. Grandpa went on, before Robert’s lips utter a word, “Although we were together for three years before getting married.”

“WHAT?!”

“Yep.”

“Three YEARS?!”

“Mm-hmm.”

"No physical contact?"

"No."

"What?! Nothing at all?!"

"Nothing at all."

Edward laughed. Robert ignored him and went on, "But... how? And... why?"

"She wanted to keep it this way, assuring me that it does worth the waiting. And when we finally became together, I thanked her everyday, after kissing her forehead to wake her up in the morning, for forcing me to do it."

Robert sighed, calmed a lot. "Umm... how... did it feel? I mean... your first night together."

Grandpa smiled. "A sip of pure cold clear water, from a unique sparkling crystal cup, after walking alone in a remote desert under the burning sun for many years."

Robert hardly swallowed; eyes widened, and mouth agape.

"I'm in!" He yelled suddenly, after silencing for some seconds.

Grandpa laughed. "Uh... finally I succeeded in convincing someone to do it!"

"What do you mean?"

"He is talking about his sons," Edward explained.

"What about them?"

"Well, we wanted to make them follow our footsteps, but we totally failed," Grandpa said.

"I see."

"After the death of his parents, Andy moved to live with me and Susan. And since that day, he became more than a son to me, and to his Aunt of course." He paused for a moment and then went on. "He was a shy kid; he waited till his prom night to have his first girl. And when he called and said that we shouldn't wait for him tonight, I easily figured out what he was up to."

"Was it Madison?"

"No. He met Madison three years later, in the college. She was his... umm... third or fourth girlfriend I guess."

"What about my dad?" Ed wondered.

"He was sixteen when he did it for the first time, on the backseats of my car."

Edward laughed.

"And more girlfriends came after this accident."

"What about the girls?"

Grandpa laughed. "Worse."

Robert laughed back. Grandpa went on, "They have this... hormones issue. Once they become teenagers, they turn into someone else."

"I always heard people saying this, but didn't have to deal with it by myself," Robert said.

"You will soon; Alice is fourteen now," Edward said, smiling.

Robert gasped in fear. "Oh!" He exclaimed. "What should I do?!"

"Nothing, Amy will take care of her," grandpa said.

Robert sighed with relief. Grandpa went on, "She was lucky enough to safely pass this critical stage."

"Good to hear you saying this."

"Yep."

"What about my dad?"

"You shouldn't have asked."

Robert laughed. "Right."

They silenced for a while.

"Okay boys, I've had enough of the water, and it turning cold actually."

"I think we should get out as well," Robert said.

"Yeah."

"Let's move then."

Grandpa started to move. He got out of the water, kneeled, and grabbed Edward's hands, helping him to get out. Robert followed them, after being sure that Ed came out. Grandpa dried himself with a towel and then went inside, but Ed and Robert preferred to lie and relax under the warm sunrays. They waited till their clothes became dry enough, and then headed back to the house. Robert carried Ed to the ground floor bathroom and brought him some dry clothes. Then, he headed to his room and changed. When done, he returned back to Ed and carried him to their room. He put him in his wheelchair, and then sat on the edge of his bed.

"What are we gonna do now?"

"I'm very tired; I need to sleep," Ed said.

"You can sleep at night."

"No, I can't stand; it has been a very long trip."

"As you wish."

"What are you going to do?"

"I don't know. Maybe I'll go meet the girls."

"Nice idea."

“Let’s pray that they are already done with the shopping part.”

Ed laughed. “Yeah.”

Robert got up. “Okay buddy, see you later then.”

“Bye.”

Robert left the room and headed downstairs. He took Alice’s number from Aunt Marie and called her. Then, he jumped in the Mustang™ and headed to the town mall. Well, it wasn’t a big one, but it was still big enough for a town like this. He searched for the girls for a while, before finally finding them at one of the stores, instructed by Alice.

They were standing still, waiting for him, with some bags on their hands.

“Oh no! They haven’t done shopping yet! Oh boy!” He screeched, whispering to himself. “Calm down, it is okay; there is no need to panic. I’ll just sit somewhere and wait for them to finish.”

Alice’s wandering eyes caught his sight. She lighted up and waved excitedly at him. The three other girls turned to look at him and smiled. Ana joined Alice in the waving.

Robert faked a smile and waved back at them.

“Okay, you have to move now. Remember, act as if you aren’t interested in her, not even a tiny bit.”

He sighed and steeled his courage, and then walked to them.

“You made it!” Alice said excitedly.

“Yeah.”

“We bought you something!” Ashley exclaimed.

Robert winced. “Really?”

The three girls grimaced. “Ashley!” Ana snapped.

Ashley gulped.

“You ruined the surprise!” Alice yelled.

“I am... sorry,” she mumbled fearfully. Amy overcame her anger and put her arm around Ashley’s shoulder, pulling her closer, protecting her from the two angry girls.

“Guys, calm down,” she hissed. Alice sniffed, and Ana sighed with anger.

Robert tried to ease the situation a little.

“So... what did you buy me?” He said with a smile.

“A shirt,” Ana answered, a little calmer.

“Cool!” He exclaimed.

“It was Am-” Alice talked.



Amy interrupted immediately. "Alice!" She snapped.

Alice hardly swallowed. "Umm... umm... I mean... it was..." she mumbled. Amy blushed, not diverting her eyes from Alice. Robert kept staring at the two of them.

"Yes! It was Am-anda's idea!" Alice said suddenly, saying the first part of the name as if she was going to say Amy, and the last part of the name as if she's said Amanda.

Robert squinted. "Am-anda?" He scoffed.

"Yeah," Alice concurred, smiling.

"She has a unique name!" Amy added, mumbling, her face was still red.

"Oh... really?!"

"Yeah!" The four girls said together.

"And who is Am-anda?" He asked, sneering.

Amy's eyes widened while immediately looking at Alice. "Who is Am-anda?"

"Who is Am-anda?!" Alice wondered back.

"Yes, who is Am-anda?!" Robert wondered.

"Am-anda, right, you wanna know who she is. I got it," Amy said.

"Yes, he wants to know who Am-anda is," Ana said.

"Yeah, he absolutely does," Alice added.

"So, who is she?" Amy asked Alice.

"Yes... this is a good question," Alice said.

"Guys, she is my friend," Ashley growled.

"Yeah! She is her friend!" Alice yelled excitedly.

Amy nodded. "Of course she is!"

"Ugh... how did we forget that?" Ana said, looking at Amy and Alice.

Robert sighed.

"Whatever," he said. "I see that you haven't done shopping yet," he added.

"We have just begun!" Alice yelled excitedly.

"Great, I'll wait for you somewhere."

"No!" Alice protested. "You are coming with us!" She added, frowned, and angry.

"No, I'm not!"

"Yes, you are! You are a boy, and I can absolutely use your opinion," she screeched.

"Alice, I think he has a point," Amy said calmly, hiding her upset.

Alice grimaced. "Fine, don't come. I'm gonna buy some inappropriate clothes; some revealing outfits. As you can see, I have a wonderful body!" She hissed, provoking him.

"They won't let you do this," he scoffed.

"She is free to buy whatever she wants," Ana said carelessly.

"Yes, she will look great," Ashley added.

The amazed Robert looked at Amy. She shrugged. "She is a beautiful girl with a perfect body, I can see no harm," she said calmly.

"Ugh," Robert grumbled.

Alice ignored him and looked at Amy. "Maybe I should try the VERY TINY dress we saw earlier. The one with the lace-up low cut back and keyhole Tie Front," she said, peeking at Robert and provoking him again.

Robert gasped, his eyes widened.

"Yeah! This one was amazing! It almost covers nothing!" Amy said, increasing Robert's tense.

*(Yeah! The girl is finally moving in the right direction! SHUT UP! I can't even imagine her in that dress! Oh my god!*

*Ha-ha! I can absolutely imagine her! You have no idea how hot she looks like!*

*SHUT UP MANIAC!*

"What are we waiting for?" Alice said, talking to Amy, and interrupting Robert's silence.

"Let's go!" Ana said. The girls started to move.

"Wait!" Robert yelled. "Fine... I'm coming," he hissed, grimaced.

"No, you don't have to," Alice said calmly.

"Yeah, who wants to go shopping with girls anyway?" Amy added, scoffing.

"I do. I enjoy shopping with girl," he growled.

"Okay then. Let's go!" Alice exclaimed, striding to Robert, and then walking him arm in arm.

They kept wandering around the place, jumping from one store to another, for more than an hour. Sometimes, Robert had to wait outside the store until the girls were done. And some other times, especially when it comes to Alice, they asked him to get in and give his opinion. The shopping didn't seem to be heading to its ending soon, and this made Robert stop suddenly.

"Guys, I'm tired," he grumbled.

The girls stopped and turned to him.

"You can't quit now!" Alice screeched.

"Alice, I'm really tired, I'll go sit somewhere and wait for you."

"But..."

"Hey, take your time, enjoy! I can wait for you forever."

Alice sighed, and then her lips slowly twisted into a small smile. "Okay."

"Great."

"But when we return home, I'll try everything I've bought on, and you will give me your opinion, deal?"

He glanced at the numerous bags on her hands. "Everything?"

"Mm-hmm," she answered confidently.

He smiled. "Okay, as long as you are gonna change in front of me."

She strongly punched him in the shoulder.

"Ouch!"

The girls laughed. "Okay, I got it; I'll stay outside till you change!" He yelled, giggling.

"Exactly," Alice said.

"Ok, go and enjoy."

She smiled. "Okay!"

The girls were about to move.

"Umm... I think... I'll stay as well," Amy mumbled suddenly.

Robert winced.

"No!" Alice protested.

"I'm done shopping, and he might get lost," Amy explained immediately.

Alice sighed. "Fine, but take good care of him."

Amy smiled. "Okay."

"See you later then," Ana said. The three girls walked away. Robert and Amy held their places, staring at each others.

*(What should I do?! The answer is simple; act carelessly. What?! Maybe this is the chance they talked about! Maybe she is opening the door for me now! I don't wanna ruin it! Or maybe she is just tired and wants to sit down and relax.*

*Umm... I think... you might be right. Of course I am! Idiot.)*

She chuckled. "What?"

"What?!"

"What are you looking at?"

"At you," he answered grudgingly.

She laughed. "Yes, this is clear."

"Sorry," he mumbled.

Amy ignored his blushing and went on, "So, what do you wanna do?"

"Sit down!" He yelled in a full mouth.

She giggled. "Okay."

She started to move, and he followed her immediately.

"I know a place here that... you might like," she said, glancing at him.

"Take us there then."

She chuckled. "What do you think I'm doing now?"

He laughed. "Yeah, sorry again."

*(Great! You are doing just great! You only need just more couple of minutes to lose her forever! I'm nervous and you aren't helping. Of course I'm not helping, and I will not help. I told you, if you are going to go for her, you'll be on your own. Then shut up and leave me alone! Idiot... idiot... idiot... SHUT UP!)*

"Robert?" Amy said, saving him from his thoughts.

"Yes?" He said with a flat voice.

She smiled. "What is wrong with you?"

"With me?"

"Yeah... you are kinda... lost."

"Oh, yeah, sorry. I just thought that I saw someone I know," he mumbled.

Her expression lightened with relief. "Okay."

"Are we there yet?"

"Yep. It is there; the fountain."

Robert looked at the direction she pointed, to find a medium sized fountain with some tables and seats surrounding it.

"Nice."

She chuckled. "I knew you will like it!" She said excitedly, walking him towards an empty table. They both sat down.

The silence returned.

*(Ignore... ignore... ignore... Avoid the eyes... avoid the eyes... Hey! Look! A hot girl with a mini skirt and tank top! You are doing great, keep yourself distracted. Oh no! She is looking at me! She is going to talk! Breathe... breathe... breathe.)*

“So?” She said, smiling.

Robert eyes widened. “Are you talking to me?”

She chuckled. “Of course I do!”

*(Okay, provoke her. What?! Provoke her. Talk about the hot girl you just saw. Oh! Yeah! Ugh, I can't believe I'm really helping you.)*

“Oh, sorry. I was captured by the prettiness of that hot girl,” he said, using his eyes to point at the girl behind Amy. Amy squinted and turned around. She looked at the barely dressed girl for some moments, and then turned to face Robert again.

She grimaced. “You like her?” She hissed.

“She is just... amazing,” he said calmly.

Her grim expression just got grimmer. “Can't you see her clothes?”

“Of course I can! Actually, they are the best thing about her.”

Amy sniffed. “I can't believe you love the revealing clothes,” she growled.

“Who don't?” He kept his calmness, increasing her anger. She sighed. He noticed how annoyed she was, and decided to go further.

“Actually, I believe that these clothes help showing the girl's prettiness and perfect body.”

She gasped, her eyes widened.

He went on, “Girls with hot outfits are absolutely my perfect type. I'll even force Alice to wear them, when she grows older.”

She didn't comment, but her angry face said it all.

*(Oh-yeah! She can be a moon, she can be a strong girl so you would like her, but she absolutely can't wear revealing clothes! Congratulations buddy! All what we need to do now is to wait and see what she is going to do.)*

Her grimaced face didn't change, and her angry eyes didn't divert from Robert. He kept following the hot girl with his eyes, while peeking at Amy from time to time.

“I think I'll go and talk to her.”

Amy winced, but then amazingly put herself together, hid her anger, and spoke calmly. “Go ahead.”

She surprised him. He turned to her. “Really?”

“Yes, why not?”

“Umm... umm... what if she rejected me?”

“No way, you are absolutely her favorite type.”

"HER favorite type?!" He wondered, saying 'her' in a full mouth.

"Yeah. You are handsome, she will like you," she said, calmly and carelessly.

Robert squinted. "Why do I get the feeling that you don't like handsome boys?"

She shrugged. "Not really, but they aren't my favorites."

*(What do we have here? I don't know! Keep going; let's see how this will end.)*

Robert frowned. "And your favorite type is?"

"A unique boy. Someone with a dream... or maybe a talent. Someone I can push forward and help as much as I can, being sure that together we will reach somewhere high... someday."

*(That's it; this is your answer. It is done; start searching for another girl.)*

Robert sighed. I've never seen him that sad before. Amy looked at him kindly, she softened.

"Why so sad?"

"Nothing... I just thought that..." He mumbled and then paused, although her eyes were begging him to keep going.

"Forget it," he said, diverting his eyes from her, and ending her hopeful waiting.

The silence dominated for a while.

"Umm... I lied... you know... about the revealing clothes," Robert mumbled suddenly, breaking the ice. Amy smiled with relief. He went on, "I was joking. I prefer the covered girls. I don't know; I get the feeling that they are more... umm... valuable. And actually they look prettier, for me at least."

She chuckled, but again didn't talk. She was totally enjoying every word that was being said. Robert looked at her for some moments, and then went on.

"So, you only like talented guys?"

She giggled. "Mm-hmm."

His face crumpled with sadness. "Who are your favorites? The singers, the writers, the actors?"

She laughed.

"Why are you laughing?"

"Robert, talent isn't only about being a singer or an actor. Being able to make the people around you happy is a talent. Being able to run a family is a talent. And being able to survive a dark past and stand bravely against everything is absolutely a talent."

His eyes widened with surprise, and when he fully grasped what she had said, a wide smile was drawn on his lips.

"Wait a moment, this makes me a talented person, right?" He said excitedly.

She smiled. "Yes, and a very talented one as well."

"Yes!" He exclaimed.

She laughed. "Why so happy?"

"Because I became sure that I may have a chance with the prettiest, cutest, most elegant girl I have ever met in my entire life."

*(No! What have I said! Oh-boy!)*

She blushed immediately and diverted her eyes from his. She did a tremendous effort to hide her smile from Robert, who wasn't less nervous and tense than her. Suddenly, she talked.

"I got to go... umm... I forgot to buy something."

She didn't wait for him to say anything; she hopped up and strode away. I followed her immediately, increasing my speed to bypass her and be able to see her face. And despite her speed, I managed to succeed. It only needed me a single glance at her glowing face to see how happy and flirted she was. She was too excited that she actually started to run, while totally failing to fight her continuous smile and force it to fade away. From my place I could easily see Robert's face. He was smiling, totally unbelieving what has just happened, while his eyes were following the runaway princess. I held my place at the same moment she took a sudden turn and vanished into thin air. I returned to the enthralled Robert.

He held his place motionlessly for a very long time, mouth agape, and lungs barely take breaths in. Actually, I wished I had followed the girl. Time passed very slowly...very, very slowly for me, but he didn't seem to be feeling its slow movement anyway. Suddenly, his phone rang and saved me. It was Alice, telling him that they were done, and asking him to meet them outside. And for my good luck, he finally moved and went out.

He met the girls and then headed to the car. He didn't talk very much, and neither did Amy. But they couldn't prevent themselves from looking at each others. Alice, the only one of the three girls who noticed what was going on, ignored what she was witnessing, and just kept smiling every time they peeked at each others. Some minutes later, the girls had an argument about whether they should have lunch in one of the local restaurants, or return home and eat with the rest of the family. Robert and Amy didn't participate in the argument, and it ended with the victory of Ana and Ashley. So, Robert drove them home.

After having lunch with the whole family, Robert whispered some words to Grandpa's ear. Then, he forced Edward to go upstairs with him, heading to their room. He locked the door, sat at the edge of his bed, and waited, nervously.

"Excuse me?" Edward said.

"What?"

"You said you need me, urgently. Can I know why?"

"You will. Grandpa will be here at any moment."

Edward gasped excitedly. "It is related to Amy, isn't it?"

Robert smiled, hardly. "Yes."

Edward dashed to him. "Come on, come on, I need to know!" He babbled.

"Edward! I'm already barely able to keep myself together, could you please shut up for a moment?! Grandpa will be here, and you will hear everything," he hissed.

"I can't wait!"

Suddenly, someone tried to open the locked door.

“Who is it?”

“It is me,” Grandpa said, whispering. Robert jumped out of his place and ran to the door. He unlocked it and let Grandpa in, and then locked the door behind.

“What happened?” Grandpa wondered excitedly. Edward moved his chair fast and joined them.

“You won’t believe what happened today!” Robert whispered, extremely excited.

Wait a moment! I have an idea! I repositioned myself to get a bird’s eye top view, to be able to see the girls’ room as well. And I wasn’t surprised to find Amy and Alice not less excited than the guys here.

“Come on! Amy... Talk!” Alice yelled.

Amy kept mumbling excitedly with some unrecognizable words.

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“What are you waiting for? SPEAK!” Grandpa roared.

Robert hardly swallowed. “She... I... said... so... I’m talented!”

Grandpa squinted. “What the hell?!”

\*\*\*\*\*

“He doesn’t love the revealing clothes?! Amy... this doesn’t mean he likes you!” Alice screeched, less excited.

“I know! But... when... umm...”

Alice chuckled, touching Amy’s shoulders. “Breathe... breathe...”

Amy started to follow her instructions. She kept breathing deeply, over and over again.

\*\*\*\*\*

“What?!” Grandpa wondered, growling.

Robert kept smiling excitedly at him.

“Buddy, you have many good sides, but believe me, being talented isn’t one of them,” Edward said, upset. Robert excitement didn’t ease.

“No, you don’t understand. She said I’m very talented!”

Edward and Grandpa looked at each others, shaking their head with sorrow, and pulling their eyebrows together in confusion.

\*\*\*\*\*

“Better now?” Alice said, while Amy was handing her an almost empty cup of water.

Amy nodded, a little calmer.

“So?” Alice said, calmly.



Amy swallowed. "He... I... yes... I said that... I love talented boys," she mumbled. She paused for a moment, grinned and then yelled excitedly,

"You should have seen his face when I said that!"

Alice chuckled.

\*\*\*\*\*

Grandpa's eyes widened, and Edward's bulged.

"She loves talented boys," Edward murmured.

"And she believes you are very talented," Grandpa added, stunned.

"And you told her that she is the prettiest, cutest, and most elegant girl you have ever met in your life," Edward said, not less surprised and excited than his grandpa.

Robert nodded excitedly.

The two of them grinned.

\*\*\*\*\*

"Oh! Oh my god!" Alice yelled excitedly. "He said that?!" She added, more excited.

"Yes!"

"And what did you do?"

"What did I do?"

"Yeah?"

"I ran away."

"Ran away?!"

Amy smiled. "This is the only thing I could do!" She sighed, flirted. "You don't know who it feels. The whole world was rotating fast around me. Actually, I'm glad I managed to stay on my feet."

Alice sighed.

\*\*\*\*\*

"Oh-yeah!" Grandpa cheered excitedly. He hugged Robert. "She blushed, grinned, and ran away! Yeah! Congratulations son!"

\*\*\*\*\*

"Oh my god! Oh my god! I can't believe you are in love!" Alice yelled.

Amy chuckled. Alice hugged her. They kept jumping and yelling excitedly.

And in the other room, it wasn't very different.

“What should I do now?”

“Ask her to go out with you,” Ed said immediately.

“Yep, but not so fast.”

“What do you mean?”

“You see her everyday. Start talking with her and get to know her better. The date will come, just don't rush it.”

Robert nodded, smiling.

\*\*\*\*\*

“What do you mean I should do nothing?” Amy said, annoyed.

“I mean you should do nothing... very simple.”

“But why?”

“He should ask you out.”

Amy sighed. “He will never do this!”

“He will, just give him some time.”

Amy sighed. Alice patted her cheek. “Trust me, he will,” she said kindly.

Amy lighted. “Okay.” She smiled.

“Oh my god! I can't believe it!” Alice yelled again.

“Me neither!” Amy said, not less excited than her.

\*\*\*\*\*

Time passed, hour after another, many things happened, but Amy or Robert, leaving their rooms, wasn't one of them. After a while, Robert took his laptop and headed to Ana's room. He knocked at the door.

“Yes?”

“Ana, it is Robert.”

“Come on in.”

He entered the room. Once he sat a foot on it, Ana, who was lying on her front on her bed, looked at him and smiled.

“You don't need permission every time you want to come to our room.”

He smiled, walking towards her. “Of course I do.”

“We usually lock the door before changing, so, you are free to get in, as long as the door isn't locked.”

He sat at the edge of her bed. "Okay."

She smiled.

"Where is Ashley?"

"With Aunt Julia, in the bathroom; they are having a bath."

"Should I leave?"

"No, just let them know that you are here."

"Okay." He was about to move, but she was faster than him.

"Wait, I'll do it."

"Okay."

She jumped out of the bed and dashed to the bathroom.

"Aunt Julia?"

"Yes Ana, are you going to join us?"

Ana chuckled. "No. I just wanted you to know that Robert is here."

"Oh... okay... our clothes are on the chair, near the door, bring them inside."

"Okay."

She grabbed the clothes, slightly opened the door, entered and spent some seconds inside, and then returned to Robert. She sat next to him on the edge of the bed.

"You don't want to see your Aunt getting out of the bath naked, do you?" She said, smiling.

He laughed. "No, this would be so embarrassing."

"Yep." She said and glanced at his laptop. "So, did you want anything?"

"Actually yes. I need your help in something."

She smiled. "Whatever you want."

"You will help me doing a search on something."

"Sure."

He opened the laptop and turned it on. The machine needed some time to boot.

"Here we go."

"Give it to me," she said. He handed her the laptop. She put it on her lap, resting it on her bare thighs, and started typing.

"So, what are we looking for exactly?"

“A place in England, called: The Theater of Dreams. It has another name... the Old... something... I can't remember.”

“It is okay, I'm already getting results now.” She paused, looking carefully at the screen. She talked after some moments. “Well... it looks like a... soccer stadium.”

“Exactly!” He exclaimed.

“Okay, let me see. Yes, The Old Trafford stadium, it was opened in February 1910, and...”

He interrupted. “1910?!”

“Mm-hmm, and its maximum capacity is 76212 spectators.”

“Wow, it is really huge!” he marveled, staring at the screen.

“Yep, it is the second largest stadium in UK after the new Wembley stadium, and it is the home ground for a team called...”

“Manchester United.”

“Exactly. It is also stated that a guy called Sir. Bobby Charlton was the one who gave it ‘The Theater of Dreams’ name.”

“Never heard of him.”

“Me neither. Wanna do some searching about him?”

“I don't think so; let's concentrate more on the stadium itself.”

She looked at him with a kind smile on her face. “I know that you could have done all of this by yourself.”

“Umm... maybe.”

“And you chose to come and share it with me.”

“Yep, because I enjoy being with you.”

She chuckled. “Or maybe because I'm smarter than you.”

“Yeah, a good reason as well.”

She laughed.

The bathroom door suddenly opened, Aunt Julia and Ashley came out, fully dressed. Once Ashley put an eye on Robert, she ran to him and jumped at him. He caught her, hugged her warmly, and then put her on his lap, putting his arm around her body, and using the palm of his hand to gently rub her arm.

“Hi Robert,” Julia said.

“Hi Aunt Julia.”

She smiled. “She loves you... She spent the whole bath time talking about you.”

Ashley shyly buried her face into Robert's chest. He smiled and hugged her tighter.

“She is more than a sister to me.”

"I have no doubt about that." She paused for a while and then went on, "Okay, I'll go now. Remember, you two have a school tomorrow," she said, looking at Ana.

"Don't worry Aunt Julia, we will sleep early."

"Okay, I'll go and check on Edward."

"Okay," Robert said.

She smiled and left the room.

"What are you doing?" Ashley wondered.

"We are doing a search on a soccer stadium in England," Ana said.

"Yeah, it is called the Theater of Dreams."

"Wow, it has a nice name! Kinda magical!"

Robert laughed. "Yes, it is."

"Wanna find more info? Or shall we check the pictures?" Ana wondered.

"The pictures!" Ashley exclaimed.

"Great Idea!"

"Okay, follow me," Ana said, getting up and sitting on the ground. She put the laptop on the ground and lay on her front. Ashley jumped and lay next to her, and Robert followed them, moving Ashley aside a little, and hunkering between the two lying girls. I moved to be just above Robert's shoulder. Ana started browsing the photos.

Their eyes widened in amazement.

"Wow, it is HUGE!" Ana marveled, saying 'huge' in a full mouth.

"Very huge," Robert said, keeping track with her enormous amazement.

Ashley sighed. "It is beautiful as well."

"Indeed," Robert concurred.

Ana brought more pictures, raising their amazement to its highest level. They kept browsing for some minutes, and then Ana diverted her eyes from the screen and moved herself to the sitting position, when she became sure that the pictures started to repeat themselves.

"What is this all about?" She wondered.

"Well, it is about Edward," Robert said.

"What about him?" Ashley wondered, anxious about her brother.

"He told me that his dream is to... umm... Look guys, this will be our secret, okay?"

They nodded immediately. Robert went on, "I want to do something for him. Something that makes him happy. But I just... don't know what it is."

Ana smiled kindly. "I see."

"I know exactly what we should do," Ashley said.

Robert grinned. "We?! This means you two are in?"

"Of course we are!" Ana said.

"Great! Ashley, what are you suggesting?"

"If he loves this place, then let's take him there."

Robert lightened, and so did Ana. "Nice thinking!" She said.

"There is a problem."

"The money," Ana said immediately.

"Exactly," Robert approved. Ashley sighed, upset.

Ana had an idea. "Hold on, I'll check how much does it cost to go to UK and book a tour or attend a game in the stadium."

"You are the best honey!" Robert exclaimed. She chuckled and started working immediately.

"Let me see."

"Any results?" Robert wondered.

"Hold on," she said, not diverting her eyes from the screen, still typing and browsing. Suddenly, she gasped. "Oh no!"

"What is wrong?" Robert wondered anxiously.

"This is a lot of cash!" She groaned.

"Let me see." He looked at the screen, and Ana did the same. Once he saw the prices, he was shocked, his eyes bulged.

"There is no way we will be able to collect it," Ana screeched.

"Yes," he sniffed.

"What are we gonna do now?"

"We will do anything, except quitting," he said confidently, overcoming his upset.

Ana grinned. "Now we are talking!"

Ashley chuckled. "Yeah! Nothing can beat us!"

"I found a job, and will start saving. You two will start gathering the money from the others. If we were lucky enough, we will be able to collect the cash."

"Yes SIR!" Ana exclaimed.

The door knocked and Alice entered immediately, interrupting them.

"Alice?" Ana wondered.

Alice looked at Robert. "Ed told me that you are here."

"Is something wrong?" He wondered, worried.

"No, nothing. I just wanted to talk to you, but you look kinda busy."

Ana smiled. "No, we are done. He just needed my help to collect data about something."

"Yes, the theater of dreams," Ashley added.

Alice frowned. "The theater of what?"

"Forget it, I'll tell you the whole story later," Ana said, getting up, and taking Ashley's hand, forcing her to get up as well. "We will start working on our mission," she said, looking at Robert.

"Okay," he said, smiling, carrying the laptop, and getting up.

"Bye," Ana said. Ashley waved at Robert and Alice, and Ana smiled at Alice on her way out. Alice smiled back and closed the door. She strode towards Robert, who sat on the edge of Ana's bed. She sat next to him.

"Alice, what is wrong?" Her grimed face forced him to ask again.

She smiled. "What? Am I allowed to talk to you only if there is something wrong?"

He smiled and sighed with relief. "No, of course not. You can come to me whenever you want."

"I know. That's why I came. I need a favor."

"Sure honey, anything you want."

"I want to slap you," she said calmly. He was shocked, his eyes narrowed.

"Slap me? Why? What have I done?"

She chuckled. "No, it is not this way." She paused and moved closer. "Look, I'm gonna beat a boy tomorrow, and wanted to test my strength," she added.

He looked at her for some moments, totally stunned, and then blasted laughing.

She laughed as well. "I'd have used Bill and Michael as my test subjects, but they have already tasted my anger once before, and it wasn't really a pleasant."

He laughed louder.

"Stop it!" She protested, giggling. He did a massive effort and stopped laughing after some moments.

"Why do you wanna beat him?"

"He is a bully! And I'm gonna teach him a lesson... a very bad lesson," She said. You can see the anger in her grimaced face, and feel it in every single word said slowly and in a full mouth.

"Hey, take it easy."

"No! He keeps threatening the little kids and making them cry. Last week, it was Ashley's turn."

Robert squinted immediately. "Our Ashley?"

"Yep. He took her bag and scattered its contents on the ground. She kept crying the whole day."

"He is mine!" He spat.

"No! I've been planning for this for too long!" She yelled angrily.

"You have seen what I have done to the bandits," he said, calmer. She sighed. He went on, "However strong you are, you won't be able to defeat him. Alice, he is a bully!"

She smiled, convinced. She looked at him for some moments.

"Okay. But promise that you'll teach him a lesson."

"I promise; the worst lesson he will ever have in his entire miserable life."

She chuckled and hugged him. "I love you."

He put his arm around her and hugged her tenderly.

"Edward is here now; I can't sleep in your room anymore," she murmured.

He laughed. "Yeah, for my good luck," he said, still hugging her.

She hit him in the chest. "Don't count on that; I'll figure something out," she said, confidently.

"I bet you will," he said, smiling.

They stayed like this for a while. Suddenly, Robert had an idea.

"Look, as you are here, I want to try something."

She moved away from his chest. "What is it?"

"Come on," he said, getting up. She followed immediately, having no clue of what he is up to. They stood in the middle of the room, in front of each others.

"So," she wondered.

"Look... umm... I faced a situation, embarrassing one actually, and wanted to check something."

"What are you talking about?"

"We will do something like what we have done near the lake, remember?"

She lightened. "Sure!"

"Okay, I'll be a handsome boy who saw you standing and was captured by your prettiness. So, he decided to talk to you."

"So, we don't know each others?"



“No. This is the first time we meet.”

She smiled. “Okay.”

“But you are an adult, okay?”

“Okay, 20 for example?”

“Great.”

“Okay!”

“Ready?”

“Mm-hmm.”

“Fine.”

He took some steps away, and then walked back towards her.

“Hi there,” he said, smiling.

“Hi,” she said, keeping her face solid, and her voice emotionless. This didn’t stop him. “It is a pretty morning, isn’t it?”

“Yep,” she said carelessly.

*(Try harder; she is a hard-to-get girl and you knowthis. Okay...)*

“Are you from around here?”

“Mm-hmm.”

“I’m not. I’ve just arrived.”

“Okay.”

*(What should I do? Keep going, every girl has a key that opens her door.)*

“Umm... I need a favor from you.”

“From me?” She scoffed.

“Yes. This town is beautiful, and I do need someone... you know... to show me around.”

“Oh... I see,” she said, smiling for the first time.

*(She smiled! Oh-no! I told you idiot, every girl has a key.)*

“So?”

“So, you want someone to show you around?”

“Exactly.”

She moved closer to him, and he did the same.

She looked him in the eyes. "Find yourself a tourist guide," she said every single word slowly, challengingly, and in a full mouth.

Robert squinted.

*(Ha-ha-ha! What are you laughing at, idiot? At you! No! I'm not defeated yet!)*

He overcame the tough answer, put himself together, and smiled. "Of course I could do this, but I have plans for you."

"For me, really?" She scoffed confidently, sneering.

"Yep."

"And they are?"

"A tour, only you and me, in my place."

She kept looking at him for some seconds, scrutinizing his evilly smiling face, and grasping the meaning of what he has just said.

Suddenly, she gasped, and her eyes widened... and she...

Oh! What a slap! Oh yeah! This is what I'm talking about!

"Ouch!" He yelled painfully.

"Oh! Oh my god! I'm so sorry! I didn't mean to..."

"No, no! It is okay! Actually I'm very happy and proud of you!" He exclaimed, touching her shoulders.

"What?!" She wondered, surprised. He excitedly kissed her forehead and hugged her tightly for some moments. He let go of her without giving the stunned girl a chance to hug back. He dashed to the door of the room. He stopped at a midpoint and returned to her. He hugged her again, tighter but shorter, and then strode out of the room. She followed him immediately, still very surprised.

"Hey! Wait! I want to show you what I've bought today!"

The moment he reached Amy's room, she was opening the door and getting out. She ran into him.

"Robert?!" She wondered, amazed by his excitement and smiling face.

"Hi Amy!" He said, bypassing her and heading to his room. She kept following him with her surprised eyes.

"Robert! You promised!" Alice hissed, coming out from Ana and Ashley's room.

He turned to her for a moment. "Okay, I'll be there in a moment."

"Fine."

He ran to his room, entered it, and closed the door behind. The stunned Amy stared at his door for some seconds, and then turned slowly to Alice.

"What have you done to him?" She wondered.

"Umm... I slapped him."

Amy winced. "What?!"

"I slapped him," she said with a flat voice, still shocked by his acts.

"Why?" She growled.

"It is a long story."

"And I'm all listening," Amy said, still angry, and her grimed expression didn't change. Alice walked to her, held her hand, and walked her inside the room.

\*\*\*\*\*

*Next morning...*

After the girls' long chat and the never-ending trying on done by Alice, the whole family had supper together. Nothing serious happened after that, except some chatting here and there. The long night passed and a new morning came. Ana awoke Robert as usual, and after finishing his shower and having his breakfast downstairs with the gathered family, he took the kids to their school. On their way, there was nothing available in Amy and Robert's hands except glancing and smiling at each others from time to time. What happened between them was still a secret. Actually, nothing happened between them yet. He didn't confess and she didn't say yes, but you can easily see that they are eagerly waiting for this moment.

They reached the school. Robert parked the car and waited for the kids to get out. Then, he did the same, surprising them all, except Alice, who was totally aware of what was going on.

"Let's go," he said.

"Are you coming with us?!" Ana wondered, surprised.

"Yep."

"Cool!" Bill exclaimed.

"You can meet our friends!" Amy said.

"Yeah! They are dying to see you!" Ashley added, not less excited than her.

Robert leaned in, closer to Alice. "You didn't tell her?!" He whispered, peeking at Amy.

"No, she would have stopped us," she whispered back.

He sighed.

“What are we waiting for?” Ana wondered excitedly.

“Let’s go,” Robert said, holding Alice’s hand, and walking her arm in arm. Amy, Ana, and Ashley followed. Bill and Michael were at the end of the row.

“Where is he?” He murmured, glancing around.

“Hold on,” she said. Her eyes were searching for her target. Suddenly, her eyes widened, and her hand firmly grabbed Robert’s arm.

“That’s him!” She exclaimed. Robert looked at the direction her eyes pointed to. He saw a huge well-built young man with very short brown hair and a tight shirt that hardly contained his enormous muscles.

Robert gulped, mouth agape. “The huge one?”

“Yep,” she said confidently, smiling.

“The one with the green T-shirt?”

“Mm-hmm.”

He glanced at her. “Umm... maybe we can negotiate with him.”

“What?!” She roared.

“Forget it,” he said immediately. “How old is he?”

“Eighteen.”

“Are you sure?”

“One hundred percent.”

He sighed, turned to her, put his hands on her shoulder, and looked her in the eyes. “Alice... it was an honor to have you as my sister.”

She laughed loudly.

“Goodbye princess.”

She couldn’t stop laughing. He turned around and walk hesitantly towards the huge boy. Amy and the rest of the kids reached Alice.

“Hey you,” He yelled, gaining the huge boy’s attention.

“Are you talking to me?” He scoffed.

“Yes Idiot, I’m talking to you,” he said confidently. The humming increased, and the argument started to gather everyone’s attention.

The huge boy walked slowly towards Robert. “Have you just called me... idiot?” He wondered, grimacing, still walking towards Robert. Three of his friends followed him.

“Alice, what is going on?” Amy wondered anxiously.

"Umm... I think I have done a huge mistake."

Amy gasped.

"Yes idiot, I have just called you idiot. Oops! To tell you that I have called you idiot, I had to call you idiot again."

"Are you crazy?!" He hissed.

"No," he said calmly.

"Then, you must be a suicidal person," he scoffed, his friends laughed.

"Not really, I just want to know which of your hands was the one used to tear my sister's bag apart."

He reached him, and stood in front of him, leaving a tiny distance between them. "Your sister?"

"Yep."

"Well, if she is hot, I'd gladly tear more than her bag," he scoffed again, his friends laughed louder. Everyone is gathered around them now, watching fearfully.

Robert kept his calmness. "She is six."

"Oh, so bad, don't you have any older sisters?"

"Which hand?" Robert said, barely able to hold back his anger anymore. The boy sneered at him for some moments, confidently looking him in the eyes.

"This on—"

Robert left the boy no chance to finish talking. Once he moved his right hand up, Robert performed a strange catch that ended with the boy kneeling immediately, screaming in pain.

"Apologize," Robert said calmly, ignoring his loud yells.

"I'm sorry!" The boy yelled immediately.

"Sorry, I can't hear you."

"I'm sorry!" He yelled louder.

"No, not yet."

"I AM SORRY!"

Robert let go of him. The boy hardly got up, and ran away immediately. It only needed a glance from Robert at the boy's stunned friends to make them follow their leader. The silence dominated for some moments of shock and amazement, before Bill breaks it with a loud yell.

"Yeah!"

The cheers followed immediately. Robert smiled, standing heroic, surrounded by the happy kids. Alice touched his shoulder, making him turn to face her. Amy and Ana were with her as well.

"I'm so proud of you!" She exclaimed, hugging him. He hugged back and smiled.

"This was amazing!" Ana yelled excitedly. She glanced around the crowds and then went on, "You made all of them happy!"

Robert smiled again. Alice moved away from his chest, still wrapping her arm around his back, and he was doing the same. He kept anxiously peeking at Amy, who said nothing, and didn't show either she was proud or annoyed of what he has done. Some moments later, he sighed in a deep relief when she smiled, after her pretty eyes have done wandering around the happy faces of the little kids who finally got their revenge.

"Well done," she murmured, still smiling.

He grinned, totally relieved. "Thanks."

The silence dominated for some moments, despite the surrounding kids' continuous laughs, cheers, and gossips.

"I'll go now."

"No! My friends are waiting for you!" Alice protested. She smiled and went on, "They think you are very handsome."

He chuckled. "I'll meet them later; I got to work, remember?"

She sighed, and so did Ana and Amy. "Okay," she said, upset.

He smiled and gently patted her cheek. "Come on! Cheer up! You are the great warrior's sister!"

She laughed. "Yeah!"

"From now on, we will be the most famous girls in the school," Ana said.

"Yes, because of you," Amy added, proudly.

He smiled. "Okay famous girls, go and enjoy your day." He started walking away immediately, ignoring their sad eyes, and giving them no chance to affect him and made him stay for any longer. While walking, he turned around and looked back at them.

"No one ever, however strong he is, can stop me."

He smiled, and they did the same. He turned back to find a light pole in front of him. He smacked into it and immediately fell to the ground. The girls laughed. He instantly got up and looked at them.

"I'm fine... I'm fine... Don't worry."

He turned again and walked away, glaring at the pole. I was going to follow him, but I heard Bill saying something that provoke my curiosity and forced me to stay. Bill, Michael, Ashley, a beautiful blonde girl, a girl with glasses and brown pony tail hair, and an average boy with curly brown hair were gathered together. They were surrounded by more kids, but those six seemed to be... umm... the leaders.

"What do you say now?" Bill wondered.

"He is absolutely the one," the blonde girl said.

"There is no doubt about it," the pony-tail girl concurred.

"Then, what are we gonna do?" Michael wondered.

"The princess must know," the third boy said.

Ashley frowned. "But how? They won't let us go to her, and they won't let her come to school either," she groaned.

"We will figure something out," Bill said confidently.

The blonde girl grinned. "Of course we will! We have him now!"

Michael expression lighted, just like the rest. "Right! He can release her!"

"Yeah!" They cheered.

"He loves me; I'll do the negotiations," Ashley said.

"Great!" The pony-tail girl exclaimed.

"Okay, we will do it after the school then," Michael said.

"Extremely perfect," Bill concurred.

"What about us? We want to help," the third boy said.

"Yes, she is our friend, just like you," the blonde girl added. The third girl nodded.

"All of us are in this together. Today's mission will be an exploration mission. Tomorrow we will draw the plan... together," Michael explained calmly.

"Yes!" They yelled eagerly.

"Time to go," the pony-tail girl said.

"Yes," Bill agreed.

"Let's move," the blonde girl ordered, and they followed her order immediately.

I didn't understand a world of what they have just said. This didn't really bother me, being sure that it is something related to Robert, and sooner or later they will reveal their secrets to him.

I flew to Mr. Adam's farm to find Robert there. I wasn't too late; it looked like he has just arrived. They talked for a while about the weekend, Mr. Adam checked his car, and then they started working.

\*\*\*\*\*

*Some hours passed...*

Robert left the Farm and returned home. He had a shower, changed his clothes, and then took Grandpa's car and headed to the school. On his way, while passing by Mandy's house, she saw him and waved at him. He pulled the car over, and once he did so, she walked to him. He got out.

"Hi, Mandy."

She smiled. "You remember my name."

He chuckled. "Of course I do; one doesn't meet a girl like you everyday."

The smile that was already on her face just got wider. "Thanks."

They silenced for some moments.

"So, where were you going?" She wondered.

"To the school; to bring my cousins home."

"Oh, great. Fancy paying your debt?" She said, smiling.

He chuckled. "With honor. What do you want?"

"Nothing huge, just a ride to the town."

"Oh... sure... you didn't need to ask."

She smiled. "Thanks."

"Come on, get in."

"Okay."

They got in the car, and then he drove to the town. He stopped by the library, following her order.

"Here we are," he said.

"Yep."

"Should I come to pick you up?"

"No... I mean thanks. Dad will do the rest of the job," she said, smiling.

He smiled back. "As you wish."

"Bye, and thanks again."

"You are welcome."

She smiled for the last time and then left the car. He waited till he made sure she entered the place and smiled at him again, and then he drove to the school, to find his cousins frowning and waiting for him.

"You are late," Amy groaned, getting in.

"Sorry," he said. She smiled, announcing her forgiveness. He smiled back and then looked at the backseats, checking that everyone got in.

"Everybody is on board?"

"Yep," Ana and Alice answered at the same time.

"Let's go," he said, pressing the gas.

During the journey, the girls didn't stop talking about the reactions of what Robert has done this morning, and how all the boys see him as a role model, and all the girls likes him. It didn't look like he really cared about all the compliments he was hearing, the only thing he was caring about was



Amy, and for his bad luck, she didn't say a lot.

They reached the house. Amy, Ana, and Alice got out, but Ashley, Michael, and Bill didn't.

Amy squinted. "What are you waiting for?"

"Nothing, we need to talk to him," Bill answered.

Amy smiled. "Can't you talk inside?"

"No, it is urgent. We need him to go somewhere with us," Bill answered.

"He is absolutely tired and needs to rest," Amy said, peeking at Robert.

*(Oh, Great! She will start taking care of you as if you were just a little kid. He needs to eat, he needs to sleep. Robert, don't go out now, it is too late! Robert, brush your teeth before going to bed! Robert... Shut up!)*

"Amy, please! It will only take few minutes," Michael said.

"No, he eats and rests first, and then he will be all yours," she insisted. Robert was shocked, his eyes widened while glancing at Alice. She chuckled immediately.

*(This totally SUCKS! She cares about me, and if she enjoys feeling responsible of me, I'll just let her do it.*

*What?! You will let an 18 years old blonde girl control your acts?! NO!)*

"Amy, it is an emergency!" Ashley begged.

"It is done," she hissed, grimacing.

Robert looked at her. "Amy, it is okay. We won't be late," he said calmly.

She softened. "Robert... you..."

He interrupted, looking at her kindly. "I'm fine. Actually, I'm not even hungry yet."

She smiled, although it didn't look like she was really convinced.

"What is their story?" Ana whispered to Alice.

"They are in love," Alice said, smiling.

Ana gasped, her eyes widened in surprise. "Tell me everything!" She babbled.

"I will, but not now."

Ana sighed. Amy sighed as well.

"Okay, you can go," she murmured kindly. "But don't be late!" She added, louder, making it sound like an order.

He smiled. "Okay."

She smiled back.

"Let's go; I'm starving," Alice told her, holding her arm, and walking her towards the house.

"Bye," she said to Robert, fighting against Alice's grasp. Then she surrendered and headed to the house, glancing at him from time to time.

Finally, the three girls vanished inside.

*(See? It isn't about taking control of my acts; it is about taking care of me. With some kind words I can make her feel as if she is in charge, and at the same time be free to do whatever I want. The girl never aims to control you, even if her acts mistakenly looked this way, she only aims to take care of you. It is something they enjoy; it is something they were born with.*

*Shut up and see what those kids want from you.)*

Robert turned to the three kids in the backseats.

"What do you want?"

"We want your help," Ashley said immediately.

"My help?!"

"Yep, to save our friend," Bill said.

"The princess," Michael added.

Oh! Finally I'll figure out the whole princess story!

Robert kept his silence, just staring at them in mystification.

"They captured her and looked her up in the attic!" Ashley said in fright.

Robert gasped. "Oh my God! Who did this?!"

"Her evil Uncle and Aunt," Bill explained.

"Why would they do such a thing?"

"Because they are evil, and she is good," Ashley said.

"Umm... sorry guys... you are losing me," Robert mumbled.

Ashley sighed. "I'll explain everything to you, but we need to move now," she said.

"Okay, to where?"

"Just drive, I'll lead you," she replied.

Robert drove back to the town, following Ashley, Bill, and Michael's directions. They got lost for a couple of times, before finally reaching a small scary house. Robert stopped the car, and all of them got out. Robert's eyes widened in surprise while staring at the old creepy house. The house garden was as empty and dead as a desert, except for some weeds that grew randomly here and there. The first time you put an eyes on that house, you will never ever believe that there is anyone living inside. Actually, you will believe that it has been empty and abandoned for a very long time.

"Robert, let's move," Bill whispered. The stunned Robert looked at him, his eyes were still shocked. The kids started to walk hesitantly towards the outside dilapidated fence that barely surrounded the house. Robert followed them. They lurked around the corner and then hid behind the fence.

"There! This is her window!" Bill whispered. Robert looked at the window, no one was there.

"Why are we hiding?" Robert whispered.

"If they saw us, they will absolutely kill us," Ashley said.

"Or maybe they will torture us!" Michael added. Ashley gasped.

"Guys! Calm down! There is no such thing!" Robert said, calming them down.

"There is, and we need to save her before it is too late," Bill said.

Robert sighed. "What should we do now?"

"Wait till she looks out of the window and sees you," Michael said.

"And if she said you are really the knight, you will go and save her," Ashley added.

"Oh, really?" He scoffed.

"Yes," The three kids answered immediately.

"A knight?" He scoffed again.

"Yes," they answered again.

"Great."

*(Excuse me, what is going on here? Believe me, I have no idea.)*

They stayed there for some minutes.

"It is her!" Bill yelled, pointing excitedly at the window. All of them looked, to find a beautiful girl with long below-shoulder dirty-blonde hair and bright blue eyes standing at the window. First, she didn't notice their presence, but when the kids waved excitedly at her, she saw them and smiled. And yes, her smile was amazing. I believe Robert felt the same; he kept staring at her amazingly, mouth agape, and eyes bulging.

She noticed him. She looked him in the eyes and gave him a special smile. His lips twisted automatically forming a wide smile, while his stunned eyes didn't change.

"She is... beautiful," he mumbled, totally amazed. Bill held his hand and moved him down, hiding back behind the fence.

"So, will you help us?"

"Of course I will! Can't you see how beautiful she is? I'll fight the world for her!"

"Yeah!" They cheered loudly. The three of them moved up to look at the girl again; a scary lady popped up in front of them. They screamed and fell to the ground immediately.

"Robert, run!" Michael yelled fearfully. The three kids got up and ran away immediately, and it only took Robert another glance at the lady's crumpled face and gray messy frizzy hair, as well as the huge stick on her hand, to follow them. He stumbled but hardly managed to keep his balance till he reached the car. All of them jumped inside, and he drove away immediately.

"Oh my god I can't believe we survived!" Robert babbled.

"Me neither!" Bill agreed.

"Robert, drive faster!" Ashley begged, glancing backward.

"Ashley, calm down. They can't follow us now," Michael said kindly, putting his arm around her, and pulling her to his chest.

"What are we gonna do?" Bill screeched.

"We will go home, eat and relax. We aren't defeated yet, and we will never surrender until we release... that girl."

"Her name is Emily," Ashley murmured.

"Then we will never surrender until we release Emily."

No one said anything.

"So, who is with me?" He said, breaking the silence.

"Me!" The three of them yelled immediately.

"That's what I'm talking about!"

They continued their journey and reached the house in no time.

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"Oh, you are back!"

Amy, who was in Robert's room, chatting with Edward, said with a smile once Robert set a foot on the room.

Robert winced. "What are you doing here?" He said, offensively.

Amy blushed immediately. Her smile didn't fade away, but it totally failed to hide her surprise and embarrassment. "Wh-at?!" She mumbled.

Edward stared at him angrily. Robert noticed his mistake. He smiled, trying to ease the situation a little. "No... sorry... it came out very wrong.

I'm glad that you are here, of course I am. I'm just... surprised."

The girl's face lighted with relief. I could see her thumping heart slowing down. Robert strode and sat next to her on the edge of his bed.

"I'm really sorry; I didn't mean it," he murmured, looking her kindly in the eyes.

She smiled with satisfaction. "It's ok, I know that you meant nothing wrong."

He smiled and looked at her for some moments, she looked back. He noticed that the long silence and looking at each others started to embarrass the shy girl again. And once he saw her face turning red, he talked.

"So, what were you two doing?"

He successfully managed to ease her tense; she inhaled deeply. "Nothing, just chatting," she said with a steadier voice.

“About you,” Edward added. Amy looked at him immediately, embarrassed again.

“About me, really?” Robert said, talking to Amy who was too shy to look back at him. She kept peeking at him, unable to say anything. But she had to talk, noticing that he was waiting for her answer, and that Edward, who put her in this from the beginning, wasn’t going to save her.

“Yes... he is your roommate... I believed... you know... he would know more... about you,” she mumbled, blushing. Edward looked Robert in the eyes, you can easily see that he is asking him to step back and stop pressing her further on. This made him put his lips back together and shut his mouth just before uttering any more words.

“Robert, we talked about you, I can see nothing wrong. I and you talk about her all the time,” Edward said calmly, cleverly moving the tense from her to Robert. Amy lighted, excited, and turned to Robert immediately.

“Really? You talk about me all the time?” She wondered excitedly.

“Of course I do,” Robert said calmly, keeping track with Edward’s plan, after the wink that asked him to do so. Amy’s excited widened eyes begged him to say more, and this is exactly what he did. “I want to know everything about the girl I...” His voice choked. Edward’s lips kept moving, saying the word that Robert failed to say, trying to help him. Amy’s eyes were waiting eagerly, and when Robert’s mumbling didn’t give any sense, her lips decided to help.

“The girl you...?”

He gulped. “Yes, the girl I... I... I...”

Edward sighed, watching his friend’s failure. Suddenly, Robert talked, mumbling, “The girl... I... respect.”

The smile disappeared immediately, and her face crumpled with upset. She got up instantly and walked to the door. “The dinner will be ready at any moment. We will be waiting for your downstairs,” she said, trying to make her voice sound normal, but totally failing to hide her sadness, upset, and frustration. She went out and closed the door behind.

Before Edward says anything, Robert jumped out of his place and yelled loudly, blaming himself.

“You are just a stupid maniac pathetic jerk!”

I tried to tell him that Amy was still standing behind the door, but I failed. She opened the door and popped in again, grinning, and making him freeze on his place, shocked and embarrassed. “I forgot to tell you that Ana wanted to talk to you,” she said. Her face was glowing in happiness just like a pure full moon in a clear calm night. She escaped after completely failing to hide her happiness, leaving Robert stunned on his place. He looked at Edward.

“Well, at least she now knows that she is more than a ‘respectful’ girl to you,” Edward murmured.

Robert sighed. “I’ll go to Ana,” he grunted in frustration.

“Okay.”

Robert left the room and headed to Ana’s. He knocked at the door and entered, no one was inside. He headed downstairs and then outside; Jennifer told him that Ana and Alice were near the pool. He strode to his destination to find them relaxing and chatting.

“Here you are,” Ana said.

“Amy said you wanted me,” he groaned, walking to them, and sitting next to Alice. Ana’s expression darkened. “What is wrong?”

“What is wrong?” He repeated her question with a flat voice.

“Why so sad? What happened?” Ana wondered again, Alice wasn’t less anxious than her.

Robert sighed. “Nothing... I had a chance... to do something, but totally messed it up.”

“You are talking about Amy, aren’t you?” Ana said kindly, smiling.

Robert eyes widened in surprise, glancing at Alice, but talking to Ana. “You know?” He wondered.

“Yes, and I was planning not to talk to you again.”

“What?! Why?”

She got up from her place and stood in front of him. “Because we are friends. Actually I’m considering you one of my best friends. You should have told me,” she said, kindly, but blaming at the same time.

He smiled, hardly. She patted his cheek. Alice looked at them kindly and then put her arm around his shoulders. Ana glanced at her with a smile, and then looked at Robert and talked, “Don’t try to be alone, when having all of us around you.”

Alice cuddled him tighter, and Ana gently cupped his face in her hands.

“Okay?” She said.

He nodded, smiling. “I was going to tell you; you are my best friend. But... I found nothing to say. I didn’t even tell Amy that I love her yet.”

“I know, Alice told me everything; she is my best friend as well, just like you,” she said, glancing at Alice and smiling. Alice smiled back and caressed Ana’s hair. Ana moved closer to Robert and sat on his lap.

“So, why are you upset?”

He put his arm around her back and smiled, putting his other arm around Alice’s body and pulling her closer to him. “Upset?!” He scoffed. “How in the world would anyone be upset, while having two girls like you around?” He added. The two girls chuckled. Ana buried her face into Robert’s chest, and he hugged her tightly.

“I had a chance to declare my love and wasted it out of my stupidity. But I promise you that I won’t miss the next chance,” he murmured.

“And I promise you that I’ll help you to do this,” Ana said.

“Guys, I wish I could help, but I can’t. You know... I’m in a critical situation. I can’t betray her and give out her secrets,” Alice said.

“I understand,” he said.

“Great, now let’s go and have our dinner! The smell is so delicious!” She said excitedly.

“Great idea!” Robert exclaimed.

The three of them headed inside, and after a while, the whole family had dinner together.

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*Some hours later... Ana and Ashley's room...*

After finishing their dinner and resting for a while, Ana and Ashley started doing their homework. They asked Robert to join them, and after totally failing to convince Edward to come with him, he did. The three of them lay side by side on their front on Ana's bed and started doing their tasks. Robert did his best to help them.

"Robert, what are we going to do about Emily?" Ashley said suddenly, looking at Robert, and keeping her legs crossed and hanging on the air.

Robert sighed. "I don't know."

"Well, we need to do something."

"I know. Don't worry; we'll figure something out," Robert said calmly. Ana's eyes were watching them curiously. Robert noticed this and looked at her. "We are talking about her friend Emily; the girl her uncle and aunt locked up in the attic."

"I know."

Robert chuckled. "What?! You know everything, don't you?"

She giggled, and so did Ashley. Ashley was the one to talk, "Yes, she is super smart!"

Ana laughed louder.

"I can't argue about this," Robert said, smiling and looking at Ana.

She smiled back, and then ignored the compliments and took the conversation back to its initial subject. "I just can't believe that an Uncle and Aunt would do this to their only niece, especially when they don't have any kids."

"Weird, but weird things do happen," he said.

"Right," she concurred.

He looked back at Ashley. "Don't worry, we will try again tomorrow."

She smiled. "Okay."

"Maybe we should call the cops?" Ana suggested.

"Exactly. This is exactly what came to my mind. But first I'm gonna talk to them."

"No! They will kill you!" Ashley yelled fearfully. He smiled and put his arm around her. "Don't worry honey; your cousin is pretty tough."

She smiled and sighed with relief.

Robert looked at Ana. "How is our plan going?"

"You mean... Edward's plan?"

"Yep."

She shook her head with sorrow. "I told the boys and Amy and Alice as well, they all welcomed the idea, but all what we could get won't even be enough to take him to the airport. And there are more bad news to come."

“Go ahead; I love bad news.”

She chuckled. “Okay, we forgot that the tour itself needs cash, and a huge amount as well.”

“Oh, great,” he grunted.

“We aren’t going to give up, are we?” Ashley said with terrified eyes. Robert rubbed her back gently. “No honey, we won’t.”

“Why don’t we give the mission a code name? This will encourage us to keep going!” Ana said.

“Great idea!” Robert exclaimed.

“What about... the dreamers?” Ashley said.

“I don’t know; I don’t like it,” Robert said.

“Umm... Edward’s dream?” Ashley suggested again.

“Ashley... the name must be... umm... something... that...”

Ana interrupted Robert’s mumbling. “Theater of Dreams.”

He looked at her immediately, his eyes sparkling. Ashley was faster than him and talked, “I like it!”

Robert nodded, smiling.

“So be it. The Theater of Dreams mission,” Ana said. “And we will never ever give up until we accomplish it,” she added. She offered her hand to them, her palm facing the bed, and smiled. “Who is with me?”

Robert smiled and put his hand above hers immediately, and Ashley wasn’t slower than him. Ana grinned. “No backing down?” She said.

“Never,” Robert said confidently and challengingly.

“Ashley?”

“Over my dead body!”

She laughed. “Great!”

“Okay young ladies, enough talking. We have a homework to finish, don’t we?” Robert said. Ana smiled, and Ashley sighed in frustration.

“Right,” Ana said.

“Okay, and I’ll go to check on Edward; he has been alone for a very long time.”

“Great idea,” Ashley said.

“Okay girls, if you needed me, you know where to find me.”

“Okay,” Ana said.

He got up and walked out of the room, heading to his. He found Edward inside, alone and reading as usual.

“Hi buddy.”



Edward lighted. "Hey."

"No! You are reading again!" He growled, sitting on his bed.

"What else should I be doing? Playing tennis or something?" He scoffed. Robert expression lightened. "Well, this isn't actually a bad idea!"

"You are crazy!" He sneered.

"Well, maybe you can't play real tennis, but the video games can always do the trick."

"Forget it; video games are only for kids."

"Then you are unlucky to have a kid as your roommate."

"Robert, no."

"Edward, yes. Let's go," he said, pushing his chair.

"You are really a stubborn!" He hissed.

"Yes, being stubborn is one of my advantages."

"Ugh... great," he sniffed. Robert kept pushing him towards the door.

"Just... wait! I need to give you something!"

"Really? You think you are going to trick me this easy?" Robert said.

"No, I'll go with you! I swear I will!" Edward yelled, grim-faced.

Robert stopped. "Fine, what do you want to give me?"

Edward moved towards the nightstand and opened the upper drawer. He grabbed a beautiful red rose and moved back to Robert.

"Good, she is still alive," he said, handing the rose to the stunned Robert. "This is the first time ever I cut a flower from my garden." He paused, softened, and smiled. "But you deserve it."

"Wow, you do love me," Robert murmured, amazed.

"She is not for you idiot! She is for Amy!" He growled, scoffing.

"Oh!" He sighed. "I got it!"

"Go give her the rose and tell her something sweet, make her happy, and make sure not to ruin it this time."

Robert stared at him with wide stunned eyes. "You are... a real friend."

"Go. I know Amy; this will make her fly over the clouds for the rest of the week."

Robert laughed. "Yeah, she is very cute. Anything, however small it is, can easily make her happy."

"Okay smart boy, go, and make sure to use your smartness there."

He smiled. "Okay." He caressed his well-dressed hair. "Thanks buddy, I'll never forget this."

Edward looked him in the eyes. "Then make it unforgettable for her as well."

He smiled. "Don't worry about this," he said, winking.

Edward smiled. "Go."

Robert popped up and ran excitedly out of the room, heading to the girls room.

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"No! Of course you can't get in because I'm naked!" Alice roared.

Robert winced. "Umm... why are you naked?" He wondered innocently.

"Oh, what a stupid question! Because I have just come out of the shower, genius!" She scoffed, angrily. "No! I can't believe I've just answered your question! Forget everything I've said. Wipe it out of your brain. Here is your answer: It is none of your concern!" She added.

"Wow! You are really angry!" He murmured, amazed.

"Yes I AM! Because when you don't have your father and mother around to control your acts, everyone else steps in and tries to take their place. Alice, what are you doing? Alice, why are you naked?! Alice, open that door immediately! Doors aren't allowed to be locked in this house, especially the kids' doors! Alice, what are you doing in there exactly?! WHAT IN THE WORLD WOULD I BE DOING IN THERE, HUH? They don't either trust me or give me some space for my privacy. And this really sucks!"

He sighed, totally stunned. "Well, I trust you."

"Oh, really?" She scoffed. "What is the first thought that came to your mind when I told you that I'm alone, naked, in a locked room?" She added.

"Umm... I need to find a way to peep on you," he replied automatically.

She laughed loudly.

"Well, it is you who wanted the truth," he added.

"Are you serious?" She said. Her laugh garbled her voice.

"Of course not!"

She opened the door suddenly. He winced, called in fright, and jumped out of his place immediately. She laughed at him. He sighed with a deep relief when he noticed that she was fully dressed, wearing a nightgown.

"Alice! You scared me to death!" He yelled.

She kept laughing. "Sorry."

He sighed again, still mad. She patted his cheek. "I said I'm sorry; I didn't mean to scare you."

"It is okay," he muttered.

She smiled. "What scared you so much?"

"Well, for a moment I thought that you were still naked," he mumbled.

She laughed loudly again. "Sorry, you have to peep on me to see this happen."

He laughed. "I'll never do such a thing."

"I know; I was joking."

He smiled.

"So, did you want anything?"

"Yes, actually I was looking for Amy. But now I'm worried about you."

"About me?"

"Yep. Look Alice, you are at a very critical stage in your life, and they just don't want you to do something you will regret doing the rest of your life."

"I know exactly what you are talking about, but they still need to trust me more."

"Sure. This is why I'm giving you permission to do whatever you want without caring about anyone. Because I'm your older brother, and it is only me who is responsible of you. I'm the only one in this house whose word applies to you. And here is my word: You are free to do anything you want. Because I trust you, I believe you will never ever do anything stupid, and the most important is that I believe that you will let me know everything about you, because we are more than best friends... Okay?"

She grinned and nodded excitedly.

"You won't make me regret making this decision, will you?"

She shook her head.

"Great. From now on, if anyone tried to interrupt your privacy, you will give him a short answer; Robert knows what I'm doing. That's it, no more and no less, deal?"

She jumped at him and hugged him excitedly.

"I'll take this as a yes," he said.

She chuckled.

"Okay cute girl, go inside and continue whatever you were doing."

She smiled, moving away from his chest. "I was going to try something new."

"What is it?"

She smiled again. "Doing my homework naked!"

He laughed. She went on, "I don't know, I believed it will end faster this way, you know... less pressure."

His laugh got louder. "You are crazy!"

She laughed.

“Okay, try to prove this amazing theory and let me know the results.”

“Great!”

“But always remember to lock the door behind you.”

“Don’t worry about this.” She paused and then went on, “By the way, Amy is at the other side of the road; at the river bank.”

“Thanks.”

“Good luck,” she said, winking, and closing the door. He smiled and stared at the door for some moments. Then he dashed downstairs and strode across the living room, heading outside. He ran across the garden, the main gate, and the road. Amy was sitting on the ground, resting her back to a huge rock, and enjoying the beautiful scene and fresh air. He held his place for some moments, taking deep breathes, and steeling his courage. Finally, he deeply inhaled and then walked to her.

“Hi,” he murmured calmly, avoiding scaring her.

She looked at him and smiled. “Hey.”

“Can I join?”

“Of course!” She said excitedly, paused to force herself to return to the calm tone, and then went on, “I mean... sure.” She moved a little to give him some space. He walked hesitantly and sat next to her.

“It is a beautiful scene, isn’t it?” She said.

“Yeah, just amazing.”

She chuckled. They both silenced for some moments; a common thing when it comes to any conversation that has Robert in one of its sides. However, Robert was the one who broke the silence.

“Alice told me that you are here. She is in her room, doing a scientific experiment.”

“What?! Alice?! She hates science!”

He laughed.

She went on, “What is her experiment about?”

“Well, she is trying to prove that you can finish your homework faster... if you did it naked.”

She laughed loudly. He stepped back and left her some time to finish her laugh. And when this happened, she was the one to talk.

“She is crazy!”

“Yeah, but amazing.”

“Absolutely.” She paused and smiled, recalled something. “Last year, she did something even crazier.”

“Really? What did she do?”

“She jumped into the pool.”

He squinted. "So?"

"In a cold winter night... at 3 am... out of the window of our room."

"Oh!"

She chuckled. "She put a towel near the pool before sleeping. I had no idea why did she do this. I woke up in fright when I heard the loud collision between her and the water. I found her clothes under the window..." Her voice started to choke while she was trying to prevent her laugh. "I thought that she committed suicide!" Her laugh beat her and came out, forcing Robert to laugh as well.

Amy went on, "Less than a minute later, she strode through the door of the room, in her towel, totally excited, and grabbed her clothes from the ground. I was too stunned to utter a word while watching her running towards the bathroom, laughing, but freezing."

Robert's laugh didn't stop. Amy kept going, "She timed it right and managed to get out of the pool immediately and return to the room before anyone sees her. The men grabbed their guns and started searching for the thing that fell into the pool."

She paused to laugh again and then went on, with a choking voice. "The drops of the water in the hall and stairs led them to the upper floor, and then took them to our room."

"Oh!"

"Yeah, she was terrified, but I managed to deal with them."

"Great."

"Yes. She could have been punished forever if they knew what she's done. But it was me who punished her. I even threatened her that I'll never talk to her again if she did anything like this again."

"Well, the window isn't that high."

"I know. She also used to jump from higher stands in the swimming classes, when she was younger. I was just... mad at her... and started to yell as if I have lost my mind."

"I understand. It is good to do something crazy from time to time, but we need to make sure that we won't regret doing it later."

"Exactly. You could easily hurt yourself, and even die. I mean... what would have happened if the window was a little higher and the pool was a little shallower?"

"Oh! I don't even want to think about it."

"She could have hurt herself, badly. It could have even killed her."

"Right."

The silence dominated again.

This time, it was Amy who broke it.

"So, did you need anything? From me?"

"Yeah... well... actually... I brought you something," he mumbled.

She turned to face him, excitedly. "Really?"

"Yep."

"What is it?" She wondered.

"Guess."

She chuckled. "Okay." She paused for some moments and then yelled excitedly, "The new I-Pod!"

He laughed. She smiled. "I should try again, shouldn't I?"

"Yep."

"Okay... umm..." She paused again. "Tickets to Disney land!" She exclaimed.

"Amy!"

"Wrong... okay... I'll give it another try."

"Go ahead."

She silenced for a while, searching for something.

"A piece of jewelry!"

He shook his head, no.

"Then what is it?!"

*(Sorry pretty girl, he brought you a miserable red flower. Oh-boy! I can't wait to see her face when you showher your stupid gift!)*

Robert expression darkened and he hardly swallowed.

"What?" She wondered, smiling.

"Umm... you know that... the gift's value isn't really in its price, right?" He mumbled.

She laughed. "Robert, it is okay. You can give it to me," she said kindly.

He sighed. "Okay." He brought the rose from behind his back. "Here you are."

She gasped in excitement, her eyes widened, and her face shone with a smile, just like a beautiful sun that has just beat the gray clouds and faced the world again. "Oh my God! It's a RED ROSE!" She yelled excitedly.

*(She liked... it?!)*

"You... liked... it?!" He wondered, mumbling.

"She is amazing!" She paused, searching for words, put herself together, and then went on, "Roses are my favorites! And red roses are the favorites of my favorites!" She babbled.

"Great!" He yelled happily, in relief.

"Robert, this means a lot to me!"

“Really?!”

“Yeah! First, it is the first gift you give to me. Second, you cared to find out what my favorite flower is, and searched for it. And finally...” She paused. The stunned Robert didn’t comment. He kept staring at her, with his mouth agape, and his heart racing fast. Amy smiled, blushing. Her silence forced Robert to talk, “And... finally?”

“Umm... they say... you know... that red rose is... a symbol of... love,” she mumbled shyly. Robert’s wide eyes just got wider.

*(Remind me to give that boy a huge kiss when I see him again.)*

“Yes... actually... this is why I chose it,” he mumbled and looked her in the eyes. She hardly swallowed, unable to divert her eyes from his. He gulped and moved closer to her.

“Amy... I...”

What are you waiting for?! Come on, say it! This is your chance!

*(Say it, say it, say it! Love... L... O... V... E... See, very simple!)*

“I... I...”

Her eyes were staring at his shaking lips and begging them to utter the word. The beads of sweat started to drop out of her perfect skin, while her face was turning red again, rapidly.

“I... I...”

“I have to go and finish my homework,” She said suddenly, jumped out of her place, and ran towards the house, leaving Robert frozen on his place. I believe that the shy girl couldn’t stand the situation for any longer. Being sure that Robert will stay like this for a while, I followed her inside. She ran towards her room and then knocked at the door nervously, after failing to open it because it was locked from inside.

“Who is it?” Alice said.

“Alice! Open the door!” Amy growled.

“Just a moment... naked.”

“Come on!” She hissed.

“Coming.”

After some seconds, she opened the door, wearing the same nightgown. Amy strode angrily through the door, headed to her bed, and sat on it. Alice closed the door and looked at her anxiously. Amy didn’t give her a chance to ask.

“I’m the most stupid girl on the whole world!” She yelled.

“Oh...”

“And if there are any forms of life in any other worlds, and they had girls in there, then I’ll be the most stupid of them all as well!”

“Interesting,” she said calmly.

Amy sniffed. “Stupid, stupid, stupid, stupid... STUPID!”

Alice sighed. "Time to intervene," she murmured, talking to herself. She walked towards Amy and sat next to her, putting her arm around her shoulders. Amy put her face to her chest immediately, and Alice started rubbing her back gently.

"Love..." Alice murmured, sighing.

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*Robert's room... Some minutes later... Robert passing through the door, upset...*

"How did it go?" Edward wondered eagerly.

"I... don't know. It was going... just perfect... but suddenly..."

"What?"

"She ran away!"

"Oh!"

Robert sat on his bed, and dropped his head into his hands. Edward moved to him.

"Well, her room is in the next door," he said calmly. Robert looked at him. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that you can go and finish what you have started."

"No, I don't think this is a good idea," he mumbled.

"Buddy, it is now or never."

Robert looked him in the eyes, slowly grasping the meaning of his slow clear confident words. Edward nodded, reinforcing his position. Robert sighed.

"Okay."

"Yes!"

"I'll go now and tell her that I love her more than any other thing in the whole universe," he said, determinedly.

"Yeah!"

"I'll never back down."

"Never!"

"And it is up to her to say yes or no. I won't hold my feelings any more."



“Go get the girl!”

“Watch me!”

He got up and strode confidently towards her room. He knocked at the door.

“Amy, are you inside?” He asked. His voice was loud and steady.

“No, I’m not here!” She yelled. She gasped and winced the moment she figured out how stupid her answer was. She did her best to fix it, “I mean... yes... I’m here... but don’t get in,” she mumbled, and then paused searching for a reason for the prevention. She lighted and went on, “Because we are naked! Both of us! Totally naked!”

“This isn’t true,” he said confidently.

“No, it is not,” Alice concurred calmly. Amy turned to her immediately and glowered angrily. Alice shrugged.

“I just wanted to talk to you for a minute,” Robert said.

“You mean to her, right?” Amy said. She didn’t leave him any chance to say a word. “Alice, Robert wants to talk to you!”

“He means you!”

“I mean to you!”

“See? He means to you,” Amy said.

“No, he means to you,” Alice said.

“Yes, I mean to you.”

“You mean her, don’t you?” Amy said.

“Yes... I mean No... I mean to you.”

“SHUT UP!” Alice roared. The two of them shuddered. Alice opened the door angrily and pushed Amy to face Robert. She moved too fast that the stunned Amy couldn’t act.

“Here she is. But make it fast; she is a good runner,” Alice said calmly and then dashed inside, leaving Amy alone in front of him.

“Thanks honey.”

“You are welcome.”

He looked at the stunned Amy again. He was about to talk, but Alice popped out of the room again and interrupted him, smiling. “Excuse me,” she said, looking at him. She rapidly turned to face Amy. “Breathe,” she murmured. Amy exhaled in a deep relief after keeping that breath captured inside her lungs for too long.

Alice turned to Robert and smiled. “Okay, go on,” she said, leaving them, and returning inside.

“Amy, I love you.”

He said it calmly, confidently, and surprisingly. Amy gasped. She blushed, and her eyes widened in surprise. Although I wasn’t standing too close to her, I could easily see her body trembling. Suddenly, she closed the door in his face. She turned to face Alice, still totally shocked and

astounded. Alice strode to her, smiled, and touched her shoulder.

"Breathe," she murmured. Amy took fast consecutive breaths. "Good girl," Alice said kindly, rubbing her back. "You are doing great, keep it this way," she said, still rubbing her back. She partially opened the door, to find Robert frozen in his place.

She smiled. "Umm... can I have your shirt?"

He winced. "What?"

"Please, it's an emergency."

"Sure..."

He removed his shirt and handed it to Alice.

"Thanks. Okay, don't expect to get an answer now, but stay tuned for more updates! Bye!"

She closed the door in his face again.

"Ok-ay," he mumbled, stunned. He walked aimlessly down the hall. I entered the girls' room.

Umm... Alice put the shirt on the ground, just behind Amy.

"Okay, perfect."

She looked at the stunned Amy and smiled. "Amy, Robert has just told you that he loves you."

Amy gasped immediately. Alice smiled and nodded. She kept looking at Amy and nodding for a while, clearly waiting for something. Suddenly, Amy lost conscious and fell to the ground, accurately on Robert's shirt.

Alice sighed. "What took her so long?"

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Robert has just reached his room.

"How did it go?!" Edward exclaimed.

Robert looked at him, slowly. "I... said it," he mumbled.

"No way!"

"Yes, I said it!" His voice came out steadier and clearer.

"You said it!"

"Yes! I said it!" He yelled excitedly. "I said it!" He yelled louder, unbelieving what has just happened.

"Grandpa must know!"

"Yeah! And we... we... we must celebrate!" He babbled.

"We will, but not so fast," Ed said, calmer.

Robert's expression darkened. "Why?"

"You said it, but you still have to wait for her answer."

Robert sighed. "Right."

"And you still have to play video games with me as well, remember?" He said, smiling.

Robert grinned. "Right away, genius!" He kissed his forehead and dashed away immediately.

"Robert! You forgot me!"

"Oh! Sorry!"

He dashed back to him and pushed him downstairs. They started playing, and after about an hour, Bill and Michael joined them.

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*Some hours later... Robert's room... everyone is preparing to sleep...*

"I can't believe what happened today," Robert murmured, lying on his back on his bed, staring at the ceiling.

"Me neither. I thought you will never do it."

"Ugh, I can't wait to get the answer," he grunted in frustration.

"You will, just wait. And it will be the answer that all of us kept waiting for."

"Do you think so?" Robert said, looking at him.

"Absolutely. But don't expect the answer to be a jump at you accompanied by a huge kiss. Wait for something simpler."

"Simpler?"

"Yep, a smile from her, the first time she puts an eye on you tomorrow, will do the trick."

"I see."

"They are absolutely talking about you now, and she won't sleep till the morning, that's for sure."

Yes, he was absolutely on the right side. From my top view here I was easily watching the girls talking. Actually, they have been talking for too long, and if you asked me, they didn't seem to be heading to an ending, at least soon.

"I won't sleep either," Robert said, sighing.

Ed chuckled. "Yeah, I know how it feels."

Robert squinted and stared at him. "You know how it feels?"

"Umm... I mean... I heard people talking about it," Ed mumbled, tensed.

Robert smiled evilly. "You heard? Really?" He scoffed.

"Y—Yes."

Robert moved slowly to be on his side facing Ed. "What do we have here? A young lover?"

"Shut up and sleep," Ed growled.

"Not before you tell me everything."

"There is nothing to be told, so leave me alone."

"Sorry buddy, this won't happen."

Edward sighed, being totally sure that Robert will never give up.

"Fine..." he sniffed. "What do you wanna know?" He added, hissing.

"Who is she? How did you meet? Umm... look... everything," Robert babbled, enthralled.

"Well, her name is Emily. She..."

Robert interrupted, pulling his eyebrows together in alarm. "Emily?" He exclaimed.

Ed noticed Robert's surprise. He hardly moved himself to be on his side facing him. "Yes, Emily. What is wrong? Don't you like the name?"

"No... no... it is not this way," he mumbled.

"Then which way is it?"

"Umm... nothing... I just got confused for a moment."

"No, really. Why were you surprised?"

Robert hesitantly moved himself to the sitting position. "Does this girl, Emily, has a long brown silky hair?"

"Yes," Ed said, starting to pay attention to what Robert was saying.

"And blue eyes?"

"Exactly."

"Oh my God! It is her!"

"Robert, you started to scare me," Ed said, grimly.

Robert gulped. "Listen, today Bill, Michael, and Ashley asked me to go with them to a place, a house, a creepy house. They said that they have a friend... Emily... who is locked up in the attic by her Uncle and Aunt."

“What?!” Ed gasped in fear.

“Yes, I know it sounds crazy, but... I saw it with my eyes.”

“Why would they do this to her?” He hissed.

“I don’t know.”

“We have to save her!”

“Ed, calm down.”

“We have to save her!” He repeated it louder, slower, saying every word separately and in a full mouth, while staring at Robert, looking him directly in the eyes.

“Ed, we will save her. But first I need you to tell me everything you know about her.”

Ed sighed. “Everything I know about her?” He scoffed.

“Yes.”

“Sure. She is a girl, she is twelve, she is beautiful, and she is so cute that she makes you want to hug her every time you put an eye of her or hear her talking,” he said, groaning.

“That’s it?!”

“Yes, that’s it!” He hissed.

“I thought you...”

He interrupted him. “We only met once in the hospital, talked for a while, and then she disappeared. We never met again, and she absolutely must have forgotten that I even once existed,” he yelled angrily, and then sighed, lying back on his bed. Robert looked at him kindly.

“Look buddy, if you still remember her, then it is absolutely the same for her.”

“You can’t guarantee this.”

“Right, but there is something I can guarantee for you.”

Ed looked at him, waiting for him to keep going, and this is exactly what Robert did. “We will save her, for you.”

Edward sighed and stared at the ceiling, after keeping his eyes fixed on Robert for some moments.

“I promise,” Robert added. Suddenly, the door of the room opened, making the two of them shudder and jump out of their places. Ana burst in.

“ANA! YOU ALMOST KILLED US!” Robert roared.

Ana shuddered and blushed, but quickly overcame it and ran towards Robert. “Sorry, sorry, sorry,” she murmured, still running. Once she reached him, she grabbed his hand and pulled him out of his place, and then towards the door of the room.

“Ana?! What is wrong with you?!”

“I need to tell you something, urgently,” she murmured excitedly, pulling him through the door and closing the door behind. She looked at him,

her eyes sparkling.

“Ana?!”

Her smile got wider. “Maybe we can’t go to England, but we can bring it to us!” she murmured excitedly. Robert squinted, confused. Ana went on, more excited. “We can build our own stadium!”

Robert said nothing, still totally confused.

“Come on,” Ana said, pulling Robert across the hall and heading to her room. They entered the room, Ashley was eagerly waiting inside. Ana pulled Robert towards Ashley who was hunkering on the ground with a drawing sheet in front of her. Ana sat next to her, forcing Robert to automatically do the same.

“Look, this how a soccer pitch looks like,” she said, pointing at the soccer pitch drawn on the drawing sheet. Robert stared at it. Ana went on, “Lawn, some lines, and two goals, that’s it!”

Robert’s lips started to slowly form a smile, announcing that he almost grasped what she was up to.

Ashley smiled, totally enthralled. “We can do it,” she said, looking Robert in the eyes. Robert’s smile completed.

“We can build the stadium!” He said.

“Exactly!” Ana concurred.

“And then we can make Ed have his game and score his vital goal!” He added, more excited.

Ana nodded excitedly. “We will build the stadium. And with our huge family, forming two teams won’t be a problem. And the rest of us will be the crowds!” She added.

Robert lighted. “Girl! You are amazing!”

She chuckled.

He went on, “We will build a small pitch, and form two teams, maybe five against five or something, it doesn’t have to be eleven against eleven.”

“And it doesn’t have to be a ninety minutes game either,” Ana said, smiling.

“Right! Thirty minutes are more than enough!”

“And the other team will let Edward’s team win, and will let him score the winning goal,” Ana added. Robert grinned.

“Without giving him the feeling that they are actually forfeiting the game!” Ashley said, finishing what Ana has started.

“Perfect!” Robert exclaimed.

“If we worked on it every day after school, it will be ready by the next weekend, or even before,” Ana said.

Robert nodded. “Then we will start tomorrow, after the school.”

“Guys, we still need to find a place to build the stadium in,” Ashley said.

“Right,” Ana concurred.

Robert smiled. “This won’t be a problem. I know someone crazy who will absolutely know a perfect place.”

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"It is a great idea! And you absolutely came to the right person!"

Alice said, smiling and winking.

"This means that you know a place, doesn't it?"

She chuckled. "Of course I do!"

He kissed her forehead excitedly. "You are the best girl ever!"

She smiled. "I know," she said confidently.

"Okay pretty girl, get back inside and get some sleeping."

"Okay."

She was about to turn around and enter her room, but he grabbed her arm, stopping her, and forcing her to face him again.

"What now?"

"Umm..."

"Don't ask me about her because I'll tell you nothing. I think I already made my position clear to you earlier; I'll never ever give her secrets out."

He sighed in frustration.

"Umm... actually I was going to say good night," he mumbled.

"Right, for you too," she said, clearly wasn't tricked by his lie. She kissed his cheek and turned around. The door was closed in his face before

he says anything else. He sighed and returned to his room.

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*Next morning... the dining room...*

"Robert, calm down," Edward whispered.

"I can't. I'm trying... but..." Robert mumbled and paused to sigh. "She won't smile. She won't even notice my presence," he whispered, frustrated.

"She will, but first you need to stay alive till she shows up. And with how tense you are, you will absolutely give yourself a heart attack before this happens."

"You are right. You are absolutely right; I need to calm down." He started to breathe slowly. "Calm... calm... calm..."

"Here she is!"

"Oh! Really! Oh my God! I can't look... I can't look."

"Robert! Steel your courage! You need to look at her!"

"Okay... okay..." He took a deep breathe while Alice, followed by Amy, Ana, and then Ashley were descending the stairs. Amy's eyes were fixed at a certain target; Robert, after glancing around for some moments, clearly searching for him. Robert hardly swallowed, took a deep breathe, and then suddenly looked at her. Once her eyes caught his, they averted away immediately. Robert gulped and diverted his eyes for some moments. By the time she reached the ground floor, her eyes returned to look at him again, capturing his wandering-around eyes. This time, a strange connection was established between their eyes... a connection that seemed to be preventing them from diverting them away from each others, although they were clearly trying hard to do so. Amy held her place. Alice noticed this, stopped, and turned to face her. She didn't speak; I believe she didn't want to interrupt or ruin what Amy was being through. She just kept glancing at her and at the stunned Robert, and then smiled and looked at Ana, who was smiling as well.

It was like if the time has stopped, and so did everything else. Robert eyes were only seeing her, and hers were clearly blind to see anything but his begging eyes.

They stayed like this for a while.

And finally...

She smiled.

Robert, Edward, Alice, and Ana gasped at the same moment.

"YES!" Robert and Edward yelled loudly at the same moment, raising both of their arms high on the air in glory. All the voices silenced because of the sudden loud yell, and all the ignorant eyes of the gathered family members gazed at the two boys.

"Umm... it is okay...It was just a... umm... sudden rush of adrenaline," Ed mumbled.

"Yeah, right, adrenaline," Robert concurred, mumbling and stunned just like his cousin. There desperate words managed to ease the situation, and every thing returned normal again. Alice smiled at Amy and took her hand, walking her to the table. The four girls sat on their places, and everybody started eating. As I was expecting, neither Robert nor Amy ate anything. They didn't even touch their spoons. Staring and smiling at each others were all what they kept doing during the whole breakfast time. No one in the room noticed what was going on except Amy's father; Andy, and grandpa. Andy smiled and gently jogged Madison. And when she looked at him, he used his eyes to point at Amy and Robert. Once Madison put an eye on them, she gasped in excitement and her eyes widened in surprise. Her mouth excitedly whispered a single phrase: "Oh my God!"

The breakfast ended and everybody moved to start their day. After returning the great Mustang back to its owner after the weekend, Robert had to use Grandpa's old Jeep to do his everyday target; taking the kids to school. And as usual, the journey to the school didn't include any progressing in Amy-Robert's relationship, except some smiles and some ordinary talks.

After working hard as usual in Mr. Adam's farm, Robert returned to the school to bring the kids home. But this time, he didn't drive home; he drove to Emily's house.

"Why did you stop?" Amy wondered.

"Just a minute; we are going to visit a friend," he said.



“What friend?” Alice wondered, sharing Amy the confusion.

“We will tell you everything, but now we have to start moving,” Ana said.

Alice sighed, uncomfortable.

“Amy, can you drive?” Robert wondered.

“Me?!”

“Yes.”

“The first time I drove a car was when our Jeep exploded.”

“Well, you were actually good.”

She smiled. “Really?”

“Yes. All what you have to do is to gradually and slowly release the clutch after putting the car into the first gear, and press the gas slowly at the same time.”

“That’s it?”

“Yeah. The car will start moving, and when this happens, you press the gas more to accelerate.”

“Okay!” She said excitedly. “But, why do you need me to drive the car?” She said, returning to her ordinary calm tone.

“Well, I need you to drive the kids to safety, in case that I didn’t survive.”

Bill, Michael, and Ashley laughed. Alice squinted, and Amy’s eyes narrowed in fright.

“Didn’t... survive?!”

“It is a long story. Come on, take my place,” he said and got out of the car immediately, giving her no chance to argue. She angrily left the car.

“Not before you tell me what you meant by saying that you may not survive!” She hissed.

Alice sighed. “An adventurous man who absolutely picked the wrong girl,” she whispered, talking to herself.

“Amy, there is nothing to worry about. I was just kidding.” He looked at the kids who left the car as well. “Right guys?”

“No,” the three of them said simultaneously.

“See? No danger!” He said, looking back at Amy.

“Get back to the car,” she ordered calmly, griming. “All of you, now!”

“Amy, I have to do this. I need you to trust me,” he said, looking at her kindly. She stared at him for some moments and then sighed. “Okay, but I’m going with you.”

“Yes! Great! Now I can drive!” Alice exclaimed, jumping out of the car. “Please! Please! Please!”

“SHUT UP!” He yelled, sighed, and looked back at Amy. “Amy... I...”

"It is done. I go with you and she drives, or all of us return to the car and go home."

"Fine," he spat. He looked at Alice. "Alice, you will..."

"I know exactly what to do!" She yelled excitedly and ran to the driver's seat. She got in and tightly held the steering wheel. "You can trust me!"

Robert sighed.

"What is the plan?" Ana wondered.

"I'll go with Amy and try to distract the guards. The three of you will sneak in and head to the princess's window. You can use a stone or something to gain her attention."

"Then what?" Bill asked.

"I don't know. I thought that she will know what to do next."

Ana smiled. "She will."

"Great, let's move. Let's keep it fast and smooth."

"Yes commander," the three of them said.

"We'll meet here after the end of the mission. If anything happened, make sure to run for your lives."

"Okay."

"Get ready, and wait till they become completely distracted."

They nodded. Robert noticed Amy's wide eyes that have been staring at him for too long.

"What?" He said.

"What is exactly going on here?" She wondered calmly.

"You can return to the car if you want," he said, acting carelessly.

"No!" She yelled. "I'm coming with you," she added, calmer and more confident.

"That's my girl!" He said, smiling. She grinned, blushing.

"Let's go," he ordered, and the two of them walked towards the house's main door.

"It is... scary," she said.

"Don't worry, I'll protect you."

"Really?" She scoffed. "Actually I'm here to protect you," she added.

"Whatever you say, my lady."

She chuckled. "What is the plan?"

"Umm... improvising."

"Cool! My favorite type of plans!" She said excitedly, smiling.

"Same here."

They walked for some more moments, before reaching their target.

"Ready?" He said. She was about to talk, but the door suddenly opened and the scary Uncle popped up in front of them. Amy jumped out of her place and called in fright, and so did Robert.

"What do you want?" The scary guy growled.

Robert's eyes noticed that the scary Aunt was inside the house, sitting on the living room, with her back facing the door. He leaned in closer to Amy.

"Amy, I made a huge mistake; this lady saw my face last time," he whispered.

Amy gasped. "We are dead!" She whispered back, in a shaking voice.

"What do you want?!" He roared. They shuddered again.

"Umm... this wonderful... cute... sweet... amazing... beautiful girl here is my girlfriend. The only girl I loved in my entire life, and the one I hope to marry and continue the rest of my life with."

She gasped and looked at him, "Really?"

"Yes, I meant every single word I said."

She grinned and looked him in the eyes for some moments.

"Amy, I love you. I know that you are too shy to say it to me, but I badly need to know your answer. So, I'll give you my hand, and if yes is your answer, squeeze it... deal?"

She nodded shyly.

"Are you crazy?!" The ugly uncle growled.

"Could you please shut up for a moment? We are in a middle of something here."

The uncle pulled his eyebrows together in confusion. Robert looked Amy in the eyes and hesitantly offered his hand. She immediately held it and squeezed excitedly.

"Ouch!" Robert moaned.

"Oh! I'm sorry! I didn't mean to hurt you!"

"Oh my god! Oh my god! You said yes! YOU SAID YES!"

He looked at the uncle and yelled excitedly. "SHE SAID YES!" Robert, clearly losing his mind, hugged the ugly uncle. He pushed him away immediately.

"What the hell is this? Start talking before I force you to!" He roared loudly, making the two of them shudder again...

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"I think it is the perfect time to move," Bill said.

"Yeah," Michael concurred.

"Let's go guys," Ashley added. The three of them lurked in the shadows, around the corner, and then ran towards the west side of the house, where Emily's window lies.

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"Don't test my patience."

"No... no sir, we are not testing any thing. It is just... embarrassing," Robert mumbled.

"Is everything okay Christopher?" The Aunt wondered.

"Oh no! Robert, do something," Amy gasped in fear, whispering.

"Sir!" Robert yelled, gaining the guy's attention again. "Umm... we have been traveling for too long and have just reached the town now. Oh, what a wonderful town you have here, right Amy?"

Amy was staring at the guy's ugly face with widened eyes and agape mouth. She didn't answer him, she just gulped.

"Thanks honey! We always share the same opinions!" He looked back at the guy. "The problem sir is that this lovely creature badly needs to pee."

Amy gasped and looked at Robert. "How did you know?" She wondered, surprised.

Robert squinted, looking at Amy, and peeking at the guy. "Amy, I made it up," he whispered.

"I do need to pee; this happens to me when I'm in a critical situation, especially when it comes to losing my life," she whispered.

"Why are you whispering? What are you two hiding?" He roared.

"Umm, she is just too shy to ask you to let her use your bathroom."

"Please!" She begged.

"Ugh... great," the guy sniffed.

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"Michael, try harder!" Ashley groaned.

"Ashley, I'm doing my best! The window is too high; there is no way the stone will hit it."

"Then what are we gonna do? We are running out of time!" She screeched.

"Maybe we can just call out her name; my voice is loud enough," Bill suggested.

"Yes, and then they hear us and tear us apart," Ashley said.

Bill sighed in frustration. "Right."

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“Jade, lead this young lady to the bathroom,” Christopher said, pulling Amy inside.

“Robert, don’t leave without me!” She said in fright, whispering.

“Don’t worry, but please keep it fast,” he whispered back.

“Okay.”

Once the Aunt Jade got up and turned to face the door, Robert looked at the ground immediately, trying to keep his face away from her sight.

Jade walked till she reached Amy and Christopher, somewhere in the middle of the hall. She gently patted her cheek.

“You are... beautiful,” she murmured. Amy gulped. Jade stared at her angelic face for some moments. “The bathroom is there; the first door after the kitchen.” She said, pointing towards a certain direction.

“Thanks,” Amy said, and then walked towards the bathroom. Christopher returned outside and kept staring at Robert.

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“Maybe I should try!” Bill said.

“Bill, it is impossible,” Michael said.

“Why? My arm is stronger than yours, and I can throw the stone higher.”

“Oh, Really?” Michael scoffed.

“Absolutely.”

“Are you trying to say that you are stronger than me?”

“No, I’m not trying to say it; I already said it.” He challenged.

“How about a fight? You and me, now and here, and we’ll see who is the toughest.”

“I’m ready whenever you are!”

“Guys,” Ashley murmured.

“I’m gonna teach you an unforgettable lesson!” Michael growled.

“And I’m gonna make you regret messing with me,” Bill hissed.

“Guys!” Ashley yelled. The two of them looked at her. “We have no time for this!” She hissed. She grabbed a stone from the ground. “Take; try your luck,” she said, handing him the stone. Bill looked at the window, steeled his courage, and prepared to throw the rock.

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“You have no idea how grateful I am,” Amy said with relief, walking through the door, and heading to Robert.

“You are welcome,” Christopher grunted.

“Thanks Aunt Jade,” she said, looking above Christopher’s shoulder.

"You are welcome sweetie. If you are going to stay in the town for a while, make sure to pay me another visit. You remind me of someone I lost long time ago."

"I will," Amy said, smiling.

"And take your precautions with your boy; you don't want to end up pregnant at this young age."

Amy blushed. "No... we don't... you know..."

Christopher squinted. "You didn't touch her yet?!" He said, wondering offensively.

"No," Robert said.

He leaned in closer to Robert and whispered, "Why? Is something wrong with you?"

Robert chuckled. "No, no, it isn't this way. We just want to keep it till marriage."

Amy smiled, looking at Robert.

"Really? How pathetic."

"Don't listen to that old guy girl, keep it this way as long as you want, and give yourself something special."

"I will Aunt Jade," Amy said.

Suddenly, a loud collision occurred. I didn't need too long to figure out what has happened.

"What the hell was that?!" Christopher roared. Amy and Robert shook their head. Chris turned around to face Jade. "Jade, bring me the gun, NOW!"

"Oh-oh!" Robert gasped, and so did Amy.

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"You have to leave now!" Emily yelled in fright, looking out her broken window.

"She is right!" Ashley yelled.

"We will, but there is something you should know first," Bill said.

"Then start talking!"

"Robert, our cousin, he is not an ordinary human being."

"Yes, his muscles are stronger than a stone," Michael said.

"And he has some magical abilities," Ashley added.

"He took three bandits down with his bare hands."

"And defeated Tom, the Bully, in a blink of an eye," Bill finished what Michael has started.

"Using only two fingers!" Ashley added.

"He helped us to reach you and promised that he will save you," Michael added.

“He will keep trying to release you everyday after the school,” Bill said.

“KIDS! RUN NOW!” Robert yelled.

“Oh-NO!” Bill yelled and started running immediately towards Robert and Amy. Michael and Ashley followed him instantly.

“Hold your places!” Christopher roared. Robert carried Ashley and Amy grabbed Bill and Michael’s hands. All of them ran towards the car.

“Stop I said!” He yelled, chasing them. They were faster than the old guy and reached the car. Robert opened the back door and threw Ashley inside, and then pushed Bill and Michael behind her. At the same time, Amy ran to the front door and jumped into the car. When he made sure that everyone was inside, he jumped inside in the back seats. Christopher almost reached them; he only needed some more seconds.

“Alice, DRIVE!” Robert yelled.

“I’m trying! I’m doing everything, but it just doesn’t move!” She yelled in frustration.

“NO! We are going to DIE!” Bill cried.

“Alice, try harder!” Michael begged.

“I’m doing my best!”

Christopher pointed the gun at them. “Get out!” He roared.

“Alice!” Robert yelled.

“It... won’t... move!” She roared.

“Alice! START THE ENGINE!” Amy roared manically.

“Oh! Yes!” Alice started the engine, put the car into the first gear, released the clutch and pressed the gas, strongly. The car blasted out, just a moment before Christopher reaches them.

“What should I do now?! What should I do?!” She yelled in frustration.

“YOU MAY WANT TO USE THE STEERING WHEEL!” Robert yelled.

“Oh! Great idea!”

Amy and the kids screamed loudly, and their continuous scream didn’t look like as if it was going to end soon.

“ALICE! THE TRUCK!” Amy Yelled.

She closed her eyes and steered right, avoiding the truck.

“ALICE! THE PEOPLE!” Robert cried.

She kept her eyes closed and steered left.

“OPEN YOUR EYES!” Amy roared. Alice opened her eyes to find a car in front of her. She steered right just in time and avoided it.

“STOP THE CAR!” Robert yelled.

"How?!"

"THE BRAKES!"

"Oh!"

She pressed the brake. The car squealed, and stopped, throwing all of them out of their places. Robert didn't waste any time thinking. He got out and opened the driver's door.

"Move to the back seats."

Alice hardly left the car. And once she was outside, she fainted and fell to the ground.

"ALICE!"

All of them cried fearfully.

Robert ran to her. "I need something... umm... WATER!"

"Yes! I have some!" Ana said, opening her bag, and getting a bottle of water out of it.

"Okay, pour some..."

Ana didn't wait for his instructions; she has already opened the bottle and poured all the water in it on Alice's face.

"On her face," Robert finished what he has started. Alice opened her eyes immediately.

"Am I dead?" She wondered with a weak voice.

"Stop right there! Punks!" Christopher roared, running towards them.

"I guess I'm not," Alice answered her own question.

"Let's move!" Bill yelled. Robert helped Alice to get back on her feet and pushed her into the back seats. He jumped into the driver's seat and smashed the gas pedal. The car took off on its full speed.

"You can't runaway from me! Stay away from me girl, do you hear me? Stay away from her!"

Christopher angry voice slowly faded away the more the car accelerated, till it totally vanished, and so did its source.

"I need to know what is going on here!" Amy hissed. "Why was he trying to kill us?" She added, keeping the same angry tone.

"We... we were trying to save our friend," Ana mumbled.

"Save her? From who? Her Uncle and Aunt? Who actually seemed good persons to me?" She scoffed.

"Y-Yes," Ana mumbled.

"Alice, are you alright?" Robert wondered, ignoring the two girls' argument.

"I think so. A little dizzy, but I guess I'll be fine," she mumbled.

"Honey, I'm so sorry that I put you through this. All of you; I'm sorry that I put you in danger."

"You better be!" Amy growled.



“Why do I get the feeling that we won’t be helping her anymore?” Bill wondered.

“Because you won’t be helping her anymore!” Amy answered, sneering.

“She is right,” Robert concurred.

“You can’t do this to us, or to her! You promised!” Ashley protested.

“Yes. I promised to help her, and this is exactly what I’m going to do. But I’m going to do it alone,” he said. Amy glared at him immediately. He spoke before she utters a word, “I’m going to do it, and I’m going to do it alone,” he emphasized on ‘Alone’ and said it in a full mouth. Amy sighed and turned away to look out of her window.

“We are together in this,” Ana screeched.

“Yes, we started it together, and we’ll finish it together,” Michael added.

“No. All of you will work on the stadium building, and I’ll take care of the girl.”

“What stadium?!” Bill wondered.

“We’ll talk about it later,” Ana said.

All the kids’ eyes stared at him, and all of the lips prepared to talk, but again he was faster. “It is an order,” he added, seriously. All of them sighed in frustration. The silence dominated in the rest of the journey, and the rest of the day as well.

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*Next day... After school... Raining...*

The silence that started yesterday, dominated again, just like it did in the morning journey. Robert glanced in the rearview mirror, and then peeked at Amy. He did it over and over again, trying to catch either her or the kids’ attention, but it changed nothing.

“Why is it still raining, although it is almost the summer?” Robert wondered, hesitantly, glancing at Amy. She noticed that he was talking to her, and took some seconds to decide whether to answer him or not. Finally, she talked, “This happens every year. I guess you picked the worst time in the year to return.” She kept her voice in a low monotone.

“I guess so,” he said.

“Guys, can’t we just let what happened yesterday go?” Alice said. No one answered her. She sighed. “Robert, where are we going now?” She wondered, changing the subject.

"Home I guess," he answered calmly.

"No! We have a stadium to build!" Ana protested.

"And a princess to save!" Ashley yelled.

"Ana, Ashley, it is raining," Alice said calmly.

"Who cares?" Ana scoffed.

"Ana, we will build it, but not today," Robert said.

"What about Emily? Are you going to her today?" Ashley said.

"Yes, immediately after I take you home."

"I have a suggestion," Bill said.

"Share it," Robert said.

"I think Grandpa will be a great help, considering the stadium building," he added.

"I think he is right. Grandpa will be a great addition to our team," Ana said.

"But he also may say no and end the dream before it even starts," Michael said.

Amy sighed. "I'll convince him," she said calmly.

"Great!" Ashley exclaimed.

"Okay, it is settled then," Robert said.

The silence returned again, and it stayed like this till they reached home. The kids opened the door, got out, and ran to the house immediately, under the heavy rain. Alice kissed Robert's cheek before following the kids. Amy hesitantly followed her, but suddenly stopped and turned to Robert.

"Take care," she murmured, acting carelessly.

"I will," he said, smiling.

"Umm... if you returned alive, just let me know," she said.

He chuckled. "Go, you will catch a cold," he said.

"Okay." She smiled and then turned around and ran towards the house.

*(Well, at least she smiled, this means that she is no longer mad at you. Yes, now I can keep going in my life.)*

Robert pressed the gas, and headed to Emily's house.

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The heavy rain and gray clouds made the scary house look scarier. Robert parked the car away from the house to avoid being seen by the crazy Uncle and Aunt and went out. He headed to the house, but this time directly towards the west side fence. He glanced around the empty street, and then climbed and jumped over the fence. He fell into a muddy lake, but rapidly got up and walked towards the girl's window. He stood still there, staring at it.

*(Now what genius? I have no idea. Oh, great.)*

“Robert...”

He shuddered and jumped out of his place in fright. He turned towards the voice and found Emily standing behind him.

“What are you doing here?” He wondered, growling.

“I should be asking you the same question,” she said with a smile.

“How did you... leave the attic?” He mumbled.

“The tree; I climbed down.”

“Oh.” He glanced at the huge tree at her window. This prevented him from seeing the girl getting closer. She held his hand. He shuddered and looked at her immediately. She surprised him with another smile, and then talked with her charming voice. “Let’s go, before they notice my absence.”

“Go? To where?”

“It doesn’t matter. Come on!” She pulled him out of the house, while glancing around in caution. Robert sighed with relief the moment he set a foot outside the creepy place.

“You have a car, don’t you?”

“Yeah, there.”

“Let’s go, quickly.”

They strode across the street.

“How did you know that I’m coming?”

“They told me that you will come for me everyday after the school. So, I thought I may make it easier for you if I managed to escape.”

They reached the car. Robert stopped.

“What is wrong? She wondered innocently, smiling.

“Listen girl, you...”

She interrupted him. “Emily; my name is Emily. So, you may want to say ‘Listen Emily’ instead,” she said calmly, hiding any sense of anger.

He smiled. “Listen Emily, you can’t trust someone who you don’t know. What if I didn’t come? You would have been standing there, alone, freezing under the rain, and regretting your bad luck.”

She took a step closer to him and smiled confidently. "I agree with you; you can't judge or trust someone you've just met. But you can easily do this with a single glance at the faces of those who already trust him. And in your case, those are my best friends. And when I saw Amy running away with you as well, any doubt inside me was killed immediately."

He stared at her for some seconds, totally shocked, stunned, and amazed at the same time. His lips twisted into a smile, and then he talked, "This explains why Edward loves you."

"What?" She wondered.

"Forget it. Let's runaway before they come for us."

"Okay." She ran to the car's front door.

"Wait!" He yelled, stopping her just before she opens it. He strode around the car and reached her. He opened the door for her.

"Princess..." He smiled.

She chuckled innocently. "Thanks," she said, biting her lower lip, and entering the car. Robert ran back to his seat and started the engine.

"To where?" He wondered.

"It doesn't matter; just drive, and let your feelings lead you."

He grinned. "Yes, majesty."

She chuckled, and he drove away.

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"We are lost!" She panicked.

"You said use your feelings."

She laughed. "It is my mistake then."

"What are we gonna do now?"

"Don't worry, getting lost isn't that bad," she said calmly.

He stopped the car and looked at her. "Why do I get the feeling that this isn't your first time?"

"Because it is not my first time." She smiled. He laughed. She went on, "But you are the first one to get lost with me."

“What an honor!”

She chuckled. “Yeah.”

“What now?”

“Well, you picked a perfect spot to stop; green trees, clear river, and summer rain.”

“What are you up to?”

“Get out and enjoy!”

“What?! Are you crazy?”

“Maybe.”

“You aren’t going out there!”

“Watch me.” She smiled, opened the door, and went out. She ran excitedly towards the river. And once she reached its bank, she smiled, closed her eyes, widely opened her arms, and faced the sky. Robert followed her immediately.

“Girl! I mean, Emily! Come back here!”

“I’m not going to miss this chance!”

He reached her.

“Listen to me; you will get sick, badly.”

She opened her eyes and looked at him. “Who cares? Some moments do worth it.” She smiled. “Come on, give it a try.”

“No!”

“Look, you are already wet, and you will absolutely get sick, so, at least be smart enough to take something out of it.”

*(You know, there is some sense in what she says.)*

Robert stared at her smiley face for some seconds, as if he was counting the drops of water that were sliding fast on her soft cheeks. Finally, he smiled.

“Okay, what should I do?”

She lighted. “Just open your arms, close your eyes, and face the sky.”

“Okay.”

He sighed and then did exactly as she asked him to do. She waited till he was done, and then looked back at the sky and closed her eyes. She waited for some moments and then talked again. “How does it feel?”

Robert grinned. “Un-believable!” He marveled in a full mouth. “Woo-ho! The wind is blowing inside my lungs!”

“Yeah! I know how it feels!”

They had to keep their voice loud to overcome the loud blowing wind.

“Come on! Give me all what you’ve got!” He yelled, talking to the sky. Emily chuckled. “Wanna take it to the next level?”

“Of course!”

“Let’s dance then!”

He opened his eyes and stared. Her eyes were already opened and looking at him. “Dance?!”

“Yes! This is the only thing I never did, because as you know, it needs a partner.”

“But... how would we dance if there is no music?”

“There is; it is you who can’t hear it.”

Her strong confident look forced him to agree, after some time of deep thinking.

“Okay.”

“Yes!” She exclaimed. “Come on,” she said, offering him her hand. He gently held it without any hesitation, and then they started slow dancing.

She was the leader, and he was the follower.

“You can absolutely do better than this!” She said, giggling.

“Believe me, I can’t.”

“And you are the man; you are supposed to be the leader.”

“Shut up and dance.”

She chuckled. “Still can’t hear the music?”

“Yes.”

“You will; just give yourself some time.”

“Okay.”

They kept dancing for a while. Emily tried every move she knows, but Robert easily ruined them all.

“Why are you looking at me like this?” He wondered.

“Come on! Make me swing! Move your rigid body!”

“I’m doing my best!”

“No, you are not.”

“And actually, if we stayed here for any longer, I’ll die. Emily, it is freezing!”

“Please! Just another minute!”

“No way!”

“Come on, you don’t get the honor to dance with the princess every day,” she said, smiling.

He chuckled. "Believe me; a frozen princess will be useless."

She laughed.

"Okay, I'll ask you a question, and if you got it right, I'll go with you, deal?"

He sighed. "Okay, but make it fast."

"Fine..." She paused for some moments and then went on, "When it rains, where does the sun go?"

He didn't need more than a single moment to say the answer. "Well, you know that although the sun appears close, it is actually very far away from us. So, the clouds are closer, and this..."

Her sneering eyes stopped him.

"Wrong, isn't it?"

"Totally."

"And?"

"And... what?"

"The correct answer is?"

"Hey, you aren't surrendering, are you?"

"Yes, I am."

"Come on! Give it another try!"

"Emily, we do need to go."

She sighed. "Okay, here is the answer..." She paused, turned, and looked at the gray clouds. "She hides."

"Hides?!"

She looked back at him. "Mm-hmm, because she is afraid of getting wet."

He laughed loudly. She chuckled. "What are you laughing at?"

"Nothing," he mumbled, struggling to put an end to his laugh.

"Do you know where it hides?" She wondered.

"No."

"In her secret place... her kingdom."

His laugh came to an end, and the girl's words totally enthralled him again. "What kingdom?"

"Kingdom of the Sun."

He stared at her for some moments, and then his expression lightened. "Oh! Now I got the whole princess story."

She smiled. "Exactly. She is the queen, and she has many princesses. I'm one of them."

"Amazing!"

"Yes!"

"I can already imagine you as a princess. With that golden hair, blue eyes, and charming smile, there is no doubt that you are the prettiest of them all. We just need to find you a beautiful white dress that matches the purity of your skin and simplicity of your perfect features."

She chuckled. "Pink..."

"What?!"

"A pink dress; I'll be wearing a pink dress."

He nodded. "Cool! It will perfectly match your lips!"

She laughed. "Yeah."

They silenced for some moments, looking at each others.

"Can we go now?"

She smiled. "Only if you promised that we will meet again," she murmured shyly.

"Are you crazy?! Meeting you was one of the best things that happened to me in my entire life!"

She laughed. "Thanks."

He offered her his hand. "Shall we go, princess?" He said with a smile.

"Yes." She gave him her hand. He walked her to the car, opened the door for her, made sure that she got in, and then jumped into his place.

"Now what? We are lost, remember?"

"Don't worry, just drive, we'll be good," she said calmly.

"Okay, you are the princess after all."

She chuckled. He drove the car, and after asking here and there, they successfully reached her house. She asked him to stop away from the house, and then got out.

"Remember, you promised me."

"Of course I did."

"Okay."

She held here place in front of the driver's window, looking him in the eyes, and biting her lips.

"What are you waiting for?"

"I don't know," she mumbled, blushing.



*(She is waiting for her new friend, who is actually stupid, very stupid, and already proved this many times before, to give her a goodbye kiss or a hug or whatever friends do to each other. Oh! I embarrassed her! Yep, and she will run away now.)*

“Take care,” she said, turned around, and ran to the house. Robert had no chance to say anything. He watched her disappearing, and then sighed.

“Bye princess,” he whispered and then drove away.

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The rain didn't seem to be heading towards an ending, actually it kept getting heavier and heavier. And by the time Robert returned home, the rain reached its peak. He parked the car and got out, walked slowly and carelessly under the torrential rain, and headed to the main door. He found Jack and Susan sitting together on the porch, cuddling, and holding hands. He ignored their privacy and decided to ruin their special moment by sitting next to them without even asking for permission. Grandpa frowned and scowled at him.

“Welcome,” he grunted.

Robert smiled, hardly. “Thanks.”

Grandpa's anger rose. “Well, as you can see, this is kinda a private moment. Or let me be more precise, it WAS kinda a private moment, before you ruin it,” he growled, saying ‘was’ in a full mouth.

“Oh... I am... so sorry,” Robert mumbled, embarrassed.

“The solution of this problem is very easy; you leave, and the moment shall return private again,” grandpa sneered.

“Jack!” Susan exclaimed. He turned to her, grimacing. “What?!” He spat. “Are you blind?! Can't you see how sad he is? And instead of helping him, you just push him away like this?!” She hissed.

Jack sighed and looked back at Robert. “What the hell do you want? And make it fast please.”

Robert hardly swallowed. “It is Amy; she is mad at me,” he groaned.

“Ugh... great,” Grandpa grumbled. “What have you done this time?” He added, keeping the same tone.

Robert deeply inhaled. “I don't know. Being reckless I guess is what driving her mad,” he said sadly.

“Look kid, that girl can't stay angry for more than a single minute. So, if you went to her now, you will find her already ready and waiting to forgive you. Just tell her some sweet words and it will be settled. It will even be as if nothing has happened from the beginning. Understood? Great... See you later then.”

Grandpa left him no chance to utter a word. Robert sighed, disappointed, and prepared to leave. But Susan had another opinion.

“How pathetic are you!” She screeched, talking to Jack.

“Why?! What have I done?”

“Can’t you see that this is not his problem? He already knows how to make her forgive him. But this is not the issue; he is scared of the idea that they might not be a perfect match.” She paused and glanced at Robert. “Right?” She added.

“Yeah,” he said in relief. “She is very decent. Umm... she is a wonderful almost perfect girl, and I’m a stupid reckless jerk!”

“No! You are not!” Susan protested. “She likes you! And this is more than enough to prove that you aren’t less wonderful than her.” Her kind words managed to calm him a little. She looked at him kindly and went on, “Just give yourself sometime to get to your new life. This won’t be easy, but she will always be here for you.” She smiled, and after looking in her deep gray eyes for some moments, he did the same.

“Thanks grandma.”

“You are more than welcome, grandson.”

“Great! Everyone is happy now and all the problems are solved,” Grandpa exclaimed. He leaned in closer to Robert and whispered to him, “Go to your girl, and leave me with mine.” He winked.

Robert smiled. “Deal.” He prepared to get up. “Okay guys, see you later.”

He left them and headed inside.

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“Where have you been? I was worried about you,” Ed hissed, the moment he put an eye on Robert. He squinted, noticing how miserable Robert looked liked. “What happened to you?” He added.

Robert dashed to him and kneeled in front of his wheelchair. He looked him in the eyes and talked, “I was with your girl,” he murmured, excitedly.

Ed gasped. “Emily?!” He exclaimed.

Robert nodded, keeping the same enthralled face, which matched Edward’s.

"How is she? Have you talked to her? Why did they imprison her?" He babbled. Robert stopped him. "Buddy, calm down." Ed sighed, and Robert went on, smiling, "She is more than fine. She escaped her prison and went out with me!"

"No way!"

"Yes! Man, she is just... amazing! Well, a little crazy, but... incomparable!"

"I told you!"

"We enjoyed our time, talked for a while, roamed around the town, and even danced under the rain!"

"Cool!"

"And guess what? She returned home with a huge smile on her perfect lips!"

Ed grinned. "I knew that you'll keep your word!"

"Not yet; we still have to release her from her evil Uncle and Aunt."

"Indeed."

Robert smiled and moved closer. "Guess what? I believe that you have a great chance with that girl!" He whispered.

Ed sighed in frustration. "Who would want to hang out with a paralyzed kid?" He grumbled sadly.

"She won't care about that! She is the kind of persons who see through people. And why are you talking as if you will stay like this forever? You are still young, and I believe that your body will be able to heal soon. You... you... can have a surgery or something. There must be a cure for your case."

"Don't get too excited; we have been trying for too long."

"Then we will keep trying and won't stop until we put you pack on your feet again."

Edward smiled, fixing his eyes on Robert's face.

"What?" Robert wondered.

"Why do you love me that much?"

"Well, you can say that I've never had a roommate, a cousin, a brother, or a friend before. And suddenly I met you, and you became all of these things to me. Also, I owe you my life."

Ed squinted. "What?"

"Yes, you gave me a new life; you gave me Amy."

Ed smiled. Robert went on, "And whatever I do for you, I'll never ever be able to pay my debt."

"Don't get too excited, you have to hear her saying it first."

"She did!"

"What?!"

“She did!”

“You are kidding, aren’t you?”

“No! I swear she did!”

“No, I can’t believe it!”

“I know! But she just... DID!”

“Outstanding!” Ed said, unable to believe.

“Yes!”

“Grandpa needs to know immediately, and we absolutely need to start the celebrations!”

“I’ll tell him, but first I need to make her forgive me.”

Ed grimaced. “What?!” He spat.

“It is a long story.”

“Robert, she has just said it yesterday, and the next day you made her angry?!” He hissed.

Robert gulped. “Actually, I made her angry the same day.”

“You are a JERK!” He roared.

“I know. Look, don’t worry, I can handle this.” He got up. “How do I look?”

Ed stared at him with widely opened shocked eyes. “Well, patched, dirty, wet, miserable, and pathetic. Perfect! You can go now!”

“Okay!”

He strode out of the room and ran to Amy’s. He knocked at the door.

“Girls, are you in there?”

“Mm-hmm,” Alice answered.

“Can I come in?”

“No!” The two girls yelled simultaneously.

“I should have figured this out from the beginning,” he whispered to himself, disappointed. “And this is because?” He said.

“Because I’m changing, and actually I’m in my undies now,” Alice said.

“Undies? So what? A few days ago you swam with me, wearing a bathing suit that actually covered less than what the undies do.”

She laughed, and so did Amy.

“What are you laughing at?”

“I... don’t know,” she mumbled, still laughing.

“Now, can you open the door and give me a chance to apologize to Amy?”

“Yes, after some moments; after I’m done putting my clothes on.”

This time, he was the one to laugh.

“Look, I know it is weird, but this is how it is. We are allowed to be seen in our bathing suits and not allowed to be seen in our undies. Why, although they are actually the same? Well, we will never know!” She laughed again and then went on after the end of the laugh, “Get in, I’m done.”

“Okay.”

He opened the door and entered; the two girls were sitting on Amy’s bed. Once they put an eye on him, they both were shocked.

“I wish I didn’t let you in,” Alice said.

“Yes, I know I look miserable, but I just couldn’t wait.”

Amy smiled. He looked at her.

“I’m sorry.”

He sighed in relief, as if a huge load was just removed off his chest.

“For?” She wondered calmly, making his eyes narrow in surprise.

“Umm... for putting all of you in danger I guess,” he said in a flat voice, after shutting up for a while. She got up from her place and walked confidently towards him, freezing him in his place by looking him in the eyes and leaving him no chance to divert his away. She reached him and stopped. She smiled and started to talk, “Ana told us everything, and actually, I’m proud of you.”

He lighted. “Really?”

“Yep, but I just want you to know that there is something wrong going on here.”

“What do you mean?”

“These guys really looked very friendly; I can’t believe that they would do such a thing to their only niece.”

“I know. A ring is missed, but I’m gonna find it.”

“Great, I just wanted to warn you.”

“By the way, the girl knows you.”

“Of course she does; she is one of Ashley, Bill, and Michael’s best friends. Actually, she is their best friend. We met from time to time in school, and I can say that she is absolutely one of the best girls I have ever met.”

“Same here,” Alice concurred.

“Any more info?”

“Well, a couple of weeks ago, she fainted in school, and since that day, she never showed up again.”

“Fainted?!”

“Yep.”

Robert gasped, his eyes widened. “Oh no! She is sick!”

Alice laughed. “How smart,” she scoffed.

“No, she is really sick. I mean... badly,” he mumbled, shocked and scared.

Amy grimed. “Robert, calm down,” she said kindly. “Do you know something that we don’t know?” She added, keeping the same tone.

“Ed said that he met her in the hospital, long time ago. And now you say that she fainted and then never showed up again. From my short experience with her I easily figured out that she is a very outgoing adventurous girl, this must be the reason why they grounded her; she is sick, and what she does make her case worse.”

“Well, I have to confess; you are smarter than you look like,” Alice said. Amy turned to her immediately. “Alice, we aren’t kidding; this is serious,” she growled. Her angry face and voice wiped the smile away from Alice’s face immediately.

Suddenly, Robert gasped in fright. “Oh my God! She is dying!”

“What?” Amy wondered fearfully.

“She said that she WILL be a princess in some sort of a... fantasy kingdom. This was her gentle way to say that she is going to die!”

Amy gasped, her eyes bulged. “Oh no! The kids would die if they knew this!”

“Especially Ashley! You can’t imagine how much she and the other kids love that girl. She is something like... their idol!” Alice panicked.

“That’s why she made the whole kingdom, princess, and the savior knight story! She couldn’t just tell them that she is gonna die!” Robert yelled.

“Savior knight?!” Alice wondered.

Amy’s eyes widened, totally shocked. “Oh no! It is you! You are the savior knight!”

“Exactly, for my bad luck, and hers as well.”

“Guys, I’m lost.” Alice said.

The two of them looked at her, and then Robert started to explain calmly. “Look, she told them that she will be captured by... some darkness forces or whatever, if her long awaited savior didn’t show up in time and save her. She knew that he will never show up, so, she would die quietly without hurting them, as they will be convinced that she didn’t actually die, she was just captured.”

Amy’s eyes widened, she has just remembered something. “Ashley told me something like that before. She also said that the sun would never leave one of her princesses captured, and when the rain is over, she will save her and take her to live in her kingdom. And when this happens, they can see her whenever they want, because she will always be playing happily, every morning, around the pretty face of the sun.”

“Wow,” Robert marveled.

Alice sighed. “I’m glad that I grew up.”

“Alice!” Amy hissed.

“What?! They didn’t really believe that, did they?” She scoffed.

"I believe that some of them did, and the others forced themselves to do the same, being unable to accept the fact that she will really pass away," Robert said.

"Great," she sniffed. "Now you are in a huge trouble," she added.

"I know," he said, frustrated.

"What are you going to do?" Amy wondered anxiously, looking at him kindly.

"I have no idea."

She smiled. "Don't worry, we are together in this. We'll never abandon you, right Alice?"

"Of course."

Robert smiled in relief. "Thanks."

"Now, go and talk to Ed; he absolutely knows something about her case."

Robert expression lightened. "Right." He paused for some moments and then went on, "Umm... there is something else."

"What is it?" Amy wondered. He looked at Alice. "I need you to teach me how to dance."

She squinted. "Dance?!"

"Yep."

"In such circumstances?!"

He was about to talk, but Amy was faster. "It is for her, isn't it?" She said kindly. Robert nodded, putting a small smile on his lips. Amy smiled. "She will help you; we all will. Go take a shower and rest for a while. We have to finish our homework, and then we will teach you tonight, after the meeting."

"The meeting?"

"Yes, she convinced grandpa to help us building the stadium, and he called for a secret meeting tonight in Ana and Ashley's room to discuss it," Alice said.

"Great!" Robert exclaimed.

"Now go," Amy said calmly, with eyes full of love and kindness. Robert smiled grudgingly, and then nodded once. He did a huge effort to release his eyes from hers, and then did a huger effort to leave the room. Before stepping out, he peeked at Alice. "Try to solve the bikinis-undies puzzle and let me know if you find the answer."

She chuckled. "Okay."

He smiled at the two girls and left the room.

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“Ed, we need to talk,” Robert said grimly, once he entered the room.

Ed squinted. “What is wrong? Did she reject you?” He wondered anxiously.

“No, we are good. I was actually talking about Emily.”

“What about her?”

“I think that there is something wrong with her,” he mumbled, clearly trying to choose the right words that won’t be so harsh to Ed, in case that he didn’t know that fact. However, Ed didn’t seem very surprised.

“I know,” he murmured sadly.

“I believe she is dying!”

Ed glared at him. “No she is not!” He yelled. Robert kept his calmness and moved closer to him.

“Then what is wrong with her? She is sick, isn’t she?”

Ed sighed and moved his eyes to the ground. “Yes, she is.”

Robert kneeled. “How bad?”

Ed eyes returned to Robert again. “Very,” he murmured sadly. “But she still has a chance. We can still save her,” he added, louder.

“Of course we can, and we will. But I need to know everything first.”

Ed gulped. “She needs a new heart.”

Robert squinted. “Why?”

“What a stupid question! Because there is something wrong with her heart,” he scoffed.

“I see.”

“But this doesn’t give them the right to imprison her and prevent her from having a normal life!” He protested angrily.

“No, it doesn’t,” Robert said calmly, clearly trying to ease Ed’s anger. Ed sighed again and diverted his eyes to the ground for the second time.

Robert gently touched Ed’s chin and moved his face up to be able to look in his eyes again. He smiled and talked kindly, “Many kids are born with heart issues, and most of them recover.”



“Yes, they give them new hearts. But you need to be lucky and strong enough to survive till they reach your name.”

“Name?!”

“Yes, in the list that contains infinite number of other kids who has the same case as yours.”

“Well, she looked strong enough for me.”

“She is done.”

Robert squinted. “What are you talking about?”

“She already had her chance; they already found her a new heart.”

“What happened?”

“She refused to take it.”

“What?!” He roared.

“And now she will have to wait again, but this time it could take forever before her name appears on the list again.”

“This is not real, isn’t it? She seemed smart enough not to make such a stupid decision!” He hissed.

“I can’t answer this; as I said before we only talked once.”

“Why would anyone want to die? I just... don’t understand.”

“Maybe you can ask her.”

“Yes, this is exactly what I’m gonna do,” he said determinedly.

Edward smiled. “She enchanted you, didn’t she?” He said calmly.

Robert sighed. “You have no idea.”

He chuckled. “I have. I already experienced it before, remember?”

“Yeah, and I absolutely can’t blame you for loving her.”

“You promised to save her,” he said seriously.

“Well, I don’t remember whether I already promised or not, but now I promise. I’ll do my best to keep this girl alive... for you, for her family, and the most important... for me.”

“And I trust you to do the right thing.”

Robert smiled.

“Now go and clean up.”

“Okay.”

“And then, if you want of course, you can take me downstairs to watch the rain together,” he asked, shyly and mumbling.

“Of course!”

He lighted. “Great! I’ll be waiting for you.”

“And I will be here before you even notice my absence.”

Ed chuckled. Robert smiled, grabbed a towel and some clean clothes, and left the room.

*Some hours later... Ana and Ashley’s room... The meeting...*

Everybody, including grandpa himself, hunkered on the ground, forming a circle. The only one who was missing was Robert, who showed up some moments later.

“You are late,” grandpa said calmly.

“As usual,” Alice added, sneering.

“Sorry,” Robert murmured, sitting next to Ashley who smiled once he entered the room and moved a little to give him some space.

“Okay Ana, we can start now,” grandpa said, glancing at Ana, who seemed to be the leader of the meeting. She grabbed a black coloring pen and started to draw on the white sheet that centered the circle.

“Okay. For those who don’t know, the pitch has a rectangular shape like this.” She started to draw. “The two goals are put on each sides, here and there,” she added, pointing at the two sides of the pitch. “This is called the six yard box, and there is another one around the other goal of course. This line here is the half-way line, and this is the center circle.” She paused and stared at the sheet for a while. “Umm... something is missing... Hold on,” she said, got up for a moment and headed to her bed, grabbed the laptop, and returned to her place in the circle. She looked at the screen for a moment, and then went on, “Yes, the penalty area; here and there.” She drew two bigger boxes around each of the six yard boxes.

Robert squinted. “Isn’t that my laptop?!” He wondered, stunned.

“Mm-hmm,” Ana answered calmly.

“What is it doing here?”

Ana smiled and used her eyes to point at Alice. Robert looked at her, and she grinned immediately. “Using my rights, remember?” She murmured.

He sighed.

“You aren’t mad, are you?” Ana wondered.

“No, not even a tiny bit. By the way, feel free to use it whenever you want; you are more than a sister to me, and this makes her rights yours as well,” he said calmly, finishing it with a smile.

Ana lighted, widely smiling. “Thanks!” She exclaimed.

“Hmm, can we keep going please?” Grandpa grunted.

“Yes... sure... Umm... the pitch is covered with lawn.”

Alice interrupted. “This won’t be a problem; the whole place there is covered with lawn.”

“Great! Now all what we need is some white paint to draw the lines, and wood to construct the two goals.”

“Everything is available,” grandpa said calmly.

“Don’t forget the rain problem,” Amy said.

“Yes, it will ruin everything if it rained during the drawing-the-lines process,” Bill added.

“Don’t worry; it is expected not to rain tomorrow, and this will be our chance,” Ana explained.

“Great!” Michael exclaimed, expressing the relief they all felt.

“Guys, but it is expected to rain in the next days, and this includes the weekend,” Alice said, upset.

“Oh no! It will ruin the game!” Ashley screeched.

“No it won’t; we can play under the rain, can’t we? Actually it will add more fun. And don’t forget that this is not a real game; it is something like... a simulation,” grandpa explained.

“He is right!” Robert said.

“Okay, now the two teams,” Ana said.

“Me, Michael, dad, Uncle Kevin, and Robert; this is our team!” Bill said.

Alice sneered. “Oh really?” She scoffed.

“Yeah!” Michael concurred excitedly.

“And the other team?” Alice wondered, still scoffing.

“You, Amy, Ana, Uncle Steven, and Ed. And as Ed won’t be able to play on his own with that wheelchair, Uncle Andy can push him,” Bill explained. Robert laughed, mocking, and Alice grimaced. “This is supposed to be the winning team, remember?”

“Yes.”

“And... does it look like a winning team by any mean to you?”

“No,” he said calmly.

“Then how is the world will it win?” She hissed.

“Well, it won’t,” he said calmly and then glared at her. “We are gonna be the winners honey. Of course you can still win, but only in your dreams!”

“Yeah!” Michael yelled excitedly. Alice squinted and stared confidently at Bill, making him gulp.

“Listen little boy, you have just messed with the very wrong girl.” She paused for a moment and leaned closer. “Prepare to face the consequences,” she murmured, saying it slowly and in a full mouth. Bill hardly swallowed.

“You take Steven and Robert joins their team,” grandpa said.

“Yes!” Ashley exclaimed, Amy grinned and looked at Robert who was already smiling, Ana cheered, and Alice smiled with relief. “Fair enough,” she said.

"If you say so," Bill muttered.

"And if Andy didn't show up; being busy as usual, I'll take his place," grandpa added.

"Perfect!" Amy exclaimed.

"The ladies will be the audiences, and Susan will be the referee," he added.

"Oh-boy!" Michael grunted.

"The end of the meeting," grandpa said. "But before we go, I'd like to inform you that I'll take care of the money required to take Ed to his dream stadium, and I assure you that the tickets to UK and to the tour will be in our hands by this weekend."

All of them cheered, unbelieving what they have just heard. Amy hugged grandpa tightly and so did Alice and Ana. Grandpa hugged back, looking at the excited Robert at the same time.

"Robert, you will take them to school in the morning and then bring the car home. Then I'm afraid that you will have to find a way to go to your work, as I'll keep the car and pick them up when the school ends. I'll put all the required materials and equipments in the car, and we will go to the stadium location. You find a way to meet us there."

"There is no need for this; he has another mission," Ana said, smiling and looking at Robert.

"Yes, the princess!" Ashley exclaimed.

"Whatever. Just bring the car home before going to your work."

"Okay."

"Great, let's move then," grandpa ordered.

"Umm..." Alice stopped them. "Won't it be a good idea if we draw some kind of... a sign? With the name of the stadium on it?"

"Brilliant!" Robert concurred.

"We can do this!" Ana yelled excitedly. "Me and Ashley!" She added.

"Yes!" Ashley exclaimed.

"Fine, as long as it doesn't affect your homework," grandpa said.

"Don't worry grandpa; I promise it won't."

"Okay." He paused and glanced around. "Anyone left with any thing more to say?" Grandpa said. Everybody shook their head, no.

"Great, then we will meet tomorrow after the school. Goodnight everybody," he added, and walked away immediately, while hearing the kids greeting back. Everybody returned to their rooms, and put an end to the day by lying on their beds and closing their eyes.

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## ***A New Morning: The battle...***

"You forgot to teach me how to dance yesterday."

Robert said, glancing at Alice through the rearview mirror. Her words reminded her of the promise she has broken, and this made her grimace and close her eyes firmly, biting her lower lip.

"Sorry," she mumbled quietly in a flat voice. She opened one of her eyes and looked hesitantly at Robert, scrutinizing his expression. And when she noticed that his face was nothing more than being normal, she smiled and opened the other eye.

"I'll do it today, I promise," she said; her voice was steadier.

Robert nodded, stopping the car in front of the school.

"Remember to return the car home to grandpa," Ana said, preparing to get out.

"Don't worry," Robert answered, turning to her and smiling kindly. She smiled back, and got out. The others followed her immediately. Amy stayed in the car for a while.

"I shouldn't be worry about you, should I?" Amy wondered.

Robert looked at her kindly. "Of course you should. I worry about you every moment you aren't here with me."

She smiled. "Really?" She asked happily.

Robert smiled back. "Yes, I just get the feeling that... my heart is being taken away from me... and this..."

A hand knocking gently at his shoulder interrupted him, and made him turn towards the driver's window. He found Alice there, looking at him and smiling.

"Hi, I'm still here," she said.

He squinted. "Can't you see that we are in the middle of something here?" He growled, whispering, and avoiding being heard by Amy.

Alice smiled. "I just wanted to kiss you," she said, and then put a fast kiss on his cheek before he even notice. "Bye," she said with a smile, turned around, and strode away, just to reveal that Ana was there as well. Robert's narrowed eyes stared at her.

She smiled. "Nothing, I just wanted to kiss you as well," she said, and then put a kiss on the same cheek Alice used, a little longer than hers. She smiled and followed her older cousin.

Robert turned back to Amy, removed the grim expression, and put a warm smile on his face. However, this was useless; the girl was already preparing to leave.

"See you later then," she said, smiling, and getting out of the car. Robert eyes widened while watching his soul moving away from him, and his shocked lips failed to utter a word. All what he could do was following her with his stunned eyes, and enjoying her smile and face for the last time, when she turned around and waved goodbye at him while on her way inside.

He waited until all of them vanished inside, sighed deeply, and drove away.

A slight modification was added to his ordinary routine when he returned home first to give the car to grandpa, and then walked all the way to Mr. Adams farm. By the time he reached his destination, he was totally exhausted, but this didn't prevent him from working as hard as he used to do everyday, after apologizing for Mr. Adam for being late.

After the end of work, Robert turned Mr. Adams offer to work overtime in order to get the job done faster, saying that he has something urgent that he needs to take care of.

He left the place and headed to Emily's house. Although it wasn't raining today, the skies were still gray, very gray, warning everybody that the rain can start pouring again at any moment. Robert did exactly the same as what he has done the other day, and found Emily waiting at the same spot.

"Hi!" She exclaimed, too excited to see him.

He smiled. "Hi."

She ran to him. "Let's move quickly before any of them sees us!" She said, conspiratorially.

"Okay," he said, letting go of himself while being pulled fast out of the place. She held her place, surprised, after running across the street.

"Where is your car?!" She wondered.

"Well, it is my grandpa's car, not mine. And it is with him today."

She sighed in frustration. "What are we gonna do now?" She screeched, upset.

"Come on," he said, taking her hand gently, and walking her away from the house. They kept walking for a while, till the house became out of their sights. He stopped.

She frowned. "You picked the worst place to stop," she grumbled.

He ignored her anger. "Emily, we need to talk."

She squinted, driven by his serious expression and voice. "What is wrong?" She asked anxiously.

"Are you dying?"

The sudden question shocked the girl, making her eyes widen in surprise. She stared at him for a while, looking him in the eyes, and then I believe that she figured out that lying won't be the best escape from such a critical situation. She decided to tell the truth.

"Yes... I am," She said, making you feel her pain in every word uttered by her perfect lips.

Robert kneeled and touched her shoulder gently, not diverting his eyes from hers. "Why didn't you tell me?" His voice kept track with the kindness of his eyes.

She sighed. "I was afraid that... you would just... walk away," she mumbled, murmuring.

"What?!" He exclaimed. "Listen Emily, since the moment I saw you, you captured my heart, and made me decide to consider you as a little sister, just like Alice, Ana, and Ashley."

She grinned, her expression lightened a lot. "Really?"

He cupped her pure face in his hands and smiled. "Yes. You are an amazing girl. I swear that I would hang out with you the whole day and won't get bored for even a single moment."

She chuckled innocently. He went on, "And it isn't only me; it is your friends as well. You have no idea how much they love and respect you, and

you also have no idea how much they are worried about you, and how far they are ready to go to be with you again.”

Her smile vanished gradually. “I know... but... I had to runaway; I couldn’t afford hurting them that bad... when I... die.”

“You don’t have to die!” He hissed. “Why in the world do you want to die? You still have a long life to live and enjoy!” He added, keeping the same offensive loud tone.

“I don’t want to die!” She protested.

“Then why did you waste your chance to have a new heart?” He roared. She gasped, shocked to see that he knew that piece of information as well.

She sighed, overcoming her surprise. “I... had my reasons,” she mumbled.

Robert took a deep breath, trying to return back to the calm tone, and succeeding in doing this after breathing over and over again for some moments.

“As your older brother, can I hear these reasons?” He wondered calmly, patting her cheek gently with the back of his hand.

She smiled and nodded, after looking in his full-of-caring eyes for some moments. He kept looking at her, using his eyes to encourage her to start talking, which she did after hardly swallowing.

“There were many other kids out there who deserved it more than me.”

“What?! Are you crazy?!” He roared, grimacing.

“No, I AM NOT!” She roared back, glaring at him angrily and confidently.

“Of course you are! Every one of them would have his chance one day, and believe me, he will be smart enough not to ruin it.”

“Are you saying that I’m stupid?” She hissed.

“Clearly,” he said it slowly and in a full mouth.

“That’s it; I’m done here,” she spat, turned around, and started walking away. He immediately used his strong hands to firmly hold her shoulders, preventing her from going any further.

“Emily, wait.”

She turned to him, acting as if she did it by her own choice, although she was clearly forced to do it because of his strong grasps.

“What?” She sniffed.

He sighed. “Look... I’m sorry. I didn’t mean it,” he said calmly. His kind voice and look managed to ease her anger a lot.

“It is okay; I know you didn’t,” she murmured.

“Emily, you do deserve it. Think about all the good things you will do in your life. Think about your friends, your family. Think about... me.”

She chuckled. “You?!”

“Well, I know that it may sound strange, considering that we have already met, but I do care about you a lot. As if you were my little daughter or something. I kinda feel responsible for you, especially after I noticed that your parents aren’t around.”

She sneered. "Your little daughter?" She scoffed.

"Yes. You kept me awake the whole night yesterday, just thinking about you."

"How old are you?"

"Twenty."

She chuckled again. "This means that I was born when you were only eight!"

He squinted. "Umm... I didn't think about it this way."

She laughed. "I suggest we better stick to the brother-sister relationship."

He smiled. "Yes, more reasonable at least."

"Indeed," she concurred.

"Great! Shall we start searching for a new heart for you now?"

"No."

He frowned. "Why?" He spat.

"Because even if I deserve it, according to your point of view of course, I already missed my chance. Now I have to wait until it is my turn again."

"I think I can keep you alive until this happens," he said, smiling.

She smiled back. "What are you gonna do? Lock me up in the attic as they did?"

"Well, actually it wasn't a bad thinking. But I'll learn from their mistake and make sure to board up all the windows."

She laughed loudly. "You better do."

They silenced for some moments.

"So, are we settled now?" He said.

"No."

"Hey, come on!"

"There is another problem."

"What is it?"

"Look. I love many people, and every one of them lives in a part inside my heart. If you gave me a new one, I'll have to start over again, from the beginning."

He pulled his eyebrows together in confusion. "What are you talking about?"

"I'll have to love all of them again from the beginning, and this includes you as well."

He giggled once he figured out what she was talking about.



“No! It isn’t this way!” He exclaimed and then paused to return to the calm tone. “Look, it is our brains that control the love-hate process, and they are also responsible for keeping the good memories of those who we love. The heart is just a pump of life; a machine that pumps blood to the rest of the body. That’s it; no more and no less.”

She stared at him, totally unconvinced. “Do you really believe this?” She scoffed.

“Of course I do! It is a pure science!”

“Sorry, not for me.”

“You are kidding, aren’t you?”

“Does it look like I’m kidding to you?”

“This is the problem; it doesn’t.”

“Good. Solve this issue, and I promise you to take the first heart they give to me.”

He sighed.

“Are we going to hang out together? Or should I return to my miserable room and lock myself in there?”

He sighed again. “Where do you wanna go?”

“I’m hungry! It has been like ages since the last time I ate anything outside the house.”

“Great. And I know a good restaurant,” he said, still upset.

“Amazing! Then what are we waiting for?!”

Her enormous excitement forced him to smile. “After you, princess.”

She chuckled, grabbed his hand, and walked arm-in-arm with him. He took her to the McDowell’s restaurant; the place where he and Alice had there amazing meal some days ago. The girl enjoyed every single moment, and then he took her home after roaming around the town for a while. The girl returned home, and the most important part was that she returned happy... again.

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“Prepare to die!” Amy yelled.

“No! I’m still young! I don’t want to die!” Alice begged.

“It is your fate! And it is already decided!”

“Please! I’ll do anything to keep my life!”

Robert was shocked with his eyes widely opened, while listening through the door of the girls’ room.

“Sorry, it is not up to me to decide; I’m just an executor,” Amy said calmly.

“No!” She screamed.

"Guy! Is everything okay in there?" He wondered anxiously. The two girls shuddered because of his sudden yell.

"Robert, is that you?" Alice wondered

"Yes."

"Come on in!" Amy exclaimed.

"Umm... no... thank you... I'm fine," he mumbled. The two girls laughed. Suddenly, the door opened, and Alice pulled him inside and closed the door. Once his eyes caught Amy's sight, they widened in a huge surprise. The girl was wearing a black cloak that covered all of her body, including her hair, leaving only her face visible. She was holding a huge knife on her hand. Robert was frozen on his place.

"Hi," she said, smiling.

His eyes narrowed while staring at the massive knife. Amy noticed this.

"Oh... sorry," she said, moving the knife away from his sight, and hiding it behind her back. She ended the move with a wide smile.

"Did you need anything?" Alice said. Robert hardly moved his surprised eyes away from Amy, and then looked at Alice. She had to pull him from his arm and repeat her question to be able to overcome his shock and gain his attention.

"No... I just... wanted to know... what took you so long?" He mumbled, peeking at Amy.

"Well, building the stadium is clearly harder than we thought." She paused and smiled. "But don't worry; it is almost done!"

He smiled, finally. "I knew that I can trust you; all of you."

She smiled back and gave him a short hug.

"Umm... what actually was going on here?"

"She was trying to kill me!" Alice yelled seriously.

Amy gasped. "No! We were just playing!" She said, mumbling. Her voice sounded defensive.

Robert smiled in relief. "Okay... continue then. I'll go and rest for a while. But take care; it's a huge knife."

"Don't worry; it's fake," Amy beamed.

Robert sighed in relief. "Okay, catch you later then."

"Okay," Alice said. "I'll finish my homework and then you can have your dancing lesson," she added.

"Great!"

"Robert, the dinner will be ready soon; I suggest you don't sleep now," Amy said.

"Don't worry about that; I already had my dinner, earlier... with Emily," he said.

She lighted. "Really? You met her again? How is she doing?"

"She is doing great."

"Is she really dying?" Alice wondered.

Robert's face crumples with sadness. "Yes," he muttered. "But I believe that she still has a chance," he added with a steadier louder voice, erasing the girl's sad expressions, and lighting their faces with some rays of hope.

"What is wrong with her?" Amy wondered.

"She needs a new heart."

Alice gasped. "Oh!"

"How would we help her with this?" Amy asked, disappointed.

Robert sighed. "I don't... know." He moved his eyes to the ground. Amy sighed and took a step towards him, but Alice was faster than her and touched his shoulder first. He looked at her smiley face, and she looked him in the eyes kindly.

"You will figure something out, you always do. I trust you."

He smiled. Her smile grew wider, and then she ended it with a big hug. He rubbed her back gently, while looking over her shoulder at the smiling Amy. She stayed inside his chest for a while, and then moved away, keeping the smile on her face, and keeping herself close to him, clearly waiting for the kiss that was put shortly after on her forehead.

"Okay girls, enjoy... umm... whatever you were doing."

They laughed.

"Bye," he said, and walked to the door. They greeted him back. He passed through the door and headed to his room.

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"Buddy, she is a hopeless case," Robert grumbled in frustration while throwing his body on his bed and lying on his back.

Ed looked at him seriously. "What do you mean?"

Robert looked at him. "She believes that the heart is really responsible for loving and hating, and that it holds inside the memories of the people we love. So, if we got her a new heart, she will have to start over, because all these memories will be lost."

Ed frowned. "What are you going to do about this?" He screeched.

"I have no idea," he said, and then looked back at the ceiling.

Ed stared at him for some moments. "You aren't giving up, are you?"

Robert sighed, avoiding the kid's strong gaze.

"Robert, you promised!"

"I know, but... what can I do? What she is asking for is just... impossible!"

"Leave it to me; I'll take care of the heart issue."

"Oh, really? And what will you do exactly? Maybe you will establish some sort of network connection between her and the donator, and update her memories to his heart?" He scoffed.

Ed smiled. "Well, sort of."

"Ugh... great, now he's completely lost his mind."

Ed ignored his sneering. "Look, all what I need you to do is to convince her to take the heart, that's it."

"But you will have to take care of that condition; the memory part."

"Don't worry about that; I'll take care of it."

"Great! Now I can tell you: Congratulations, mission accomplished!" He said excitedly, moving to the sitting position and facing Ed.

Ed squinted. "What do you mean?"

"I already had her word. She will accept the next heart they offer her, if I took care of the memories issue."

"You mean that..."

He interrupted. "She is ready and waiting." Robert smiled.

Ed expression lightened and a huge smile was drawn on his face. "Buddy! You are amazing!" He paused for some moments. "Umm... could you move closer so I can hug you?" He added calmly.

Robert laughed. "Sure."

He got up and kneeled in front of Ed. He hugged him tightly, and stayed like this for some seconds. Ed moved away from his chest, announcing the end of the hug.

"Thanks my friend; I'll owe you forever."

"You are welcome, and you will owe me nothing; you two deserve it."

Ed smiled.

"So, what are we going to do now? We still have the whole day!" Robert said.

"The river bank! It isn't raining today, and this is our chance!"

"Yeah!"

"Let's roll!"

Robert laughed and started pushing the wheelchair.

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"Step on my feet one more time, ONE... MORE... TIME, and it will be the last time you use your sweet feet to step on anything. Am I making myself clear here?"

Robert hardly swallowed. "I think so," he mumbled.

“Good.”

“Alice, take it easy!” Amy said kindly.

Alice glowered at her. “Amy, please,” she said calmly.

Amy sighed. “Fine, I’ll shut up.”

“Now, your hand on my waist.”

“Okay.”

“THE OTHER HAND!” She shouted.

“Okay... okay... I’m sorry.”

She sighed. “Let’s start over,” she said calmly, overcoming her anger.

“Okay,” he said, putting his hand on her waist; the right hand this time.

“Great. Now follow my footsteps.”

“No problems.”

“And watch for your feet!” She added, threatening.

“Got it.”

They started their dance, and this time was a way better than their past tries.

“You are doing great. That’s it; smooth and slow.”

His expression lightened while getting the feeling that he started to master it.

“Robert, let go of yourself! Enjoy!” She said excitedly, looking him in the eyes.

He smiled. “Yeah! Enjoy! Why not?!”

“Take the lead.”

“The lead?”

“Yep. You step, and I follow.”

“Do I have to—”

She interrupted, grimacing. “Take the lead!” She roared.

“Okay,” he said immediately.

She stopped, and he was the one who started to move.

“Amazing, you are better than what I’ve expected.”

“Thanks.”

“And guess what? If we used some music, it will absolutely be better,” She scoffed.

“No... no music.”

“As you wish.”

Their movements became smoother and faster, in a better word; harmonic.

Alice relaxed and put her arms around his neck, hanged there, and moved to his chest. He moved his other hand and put it on her waist as well.

“This is better.” he said.

“Yes, too warm and close.”

“Guys, you two look amazing! A professional dancers!” Amy said excitedly.

Alice chuckled. “He is a fast learner.”

“Yeah, and you are an amazing teacher.”

“Thanks.”

They stayed like this for a while.

“So, that’s it? No more moves to learn?”

“Of course not! But it is always better to use your imagination.”

“Imagination?”

“Yep. Let go of yourself and start swinging. Whatever you do, your partner will follow.”

“Oh, I see... improvising.”

“Exactly.”

“Guys, I hate to interrupt, but... you know... school... bed... sleep...” Amy said.

Alice moved away from Robert’s chest. “Right.”

“Okay girls, bed time then,” Robert said.

“Yes, sadly,” Alice sniffed.

“We are gonna finish the stadium tomorrow!” Amy said, excited.

“Great, but make sure to bring your coats; it is going to rain tomorrow.”

“Don’t worry.”

“I’m gonna go to Emily again; we are friends now,” he said, smiling.

Amy smiled back. “But take care.”

“I’ll be fine.”

He smiled and looked her in the eyes. She did the same, and they stayed like this for a while.

“Hmm... I'm here,” Alice said, ruining their special moment.

“Okay girls, good night.”

“For you to.”

He looked at Amy for the last time, kissed Alice, looked at Amy again, and then left the room.

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“Aunt Julia?! I'm so sorry, I didn't know that you are here.”

Robert mumbled once he opened the door of his room, to find Ed lying on his bed, and Aunt Julia sitting next to him, with her hand caressing his hair.

Ed hardly moved to the sitting position.

“Robert... umm... mom will stay here tonight,” Ed mumbled. Robert eyes widened in surprise. Aunt Julia noticed that and tried to ease the situation.

“I'm sorry Robert. We needs to... umm...”

“Discuss a personal matter,” Ed said what Aunt Julia failed to say.

“Yeah... sure... of course; I'll sleep downstairs then.”

“If you want, you can sleep with Stephen.”

“No, it's okay, don't worry about me; I'll be just fine.”

She smiled, and so did Edward.

“Okay guys, see you in the morning then.”

He smiled for the last time, left the room, and closed the door behind.

“Now what? Smart sensitive jerk?” He wondered, whispering to himself. “If we excluded Amy and Alice's room, we'll be left with two options; Bill and Michael's room, and Ana and Ashley's room. I'll vote for Ana and Ashley. Great! Let's move!”

After this whole crazy whispering-to-himself thing, he strode towards the girls room. He knocked at the door, and when didn't get an answer, he slowly opened the door and lurked inside; Ana and Ashley were sleeping peacefully, just like two beautiful angels.

After smiling for a while, amazed by how pretty and peaceful they looked like, he walked slowly and quietly to Ana's bed, kneeled on the ground, and started patting her cheek gently. Some moments later, the beautiful girl opened her eyes.

“Robert?” She wondered quietly.

“Yes honey,” he said, keeping track with her quietness.

“Is something wrong?” She asked anxiously. He tenderly kissed her forehead and then caressed her hair. “No sweetheart, everything is just

fine.”

She smiled. “You are not here to kiss me goodnight, are you?”

He chuckled. “No smart girl; I’m here because I need your permission to sleep here tonight.”

“Here?! Why?”

“Umm... Aunt Julia will stay with Ed tonight.”

“I see.”

He gently studied her perfect features with his warm fingertips. “So, can I stay?”

She smiled. “As long as you keep yourself away from my bed.”

He chuckled. “Maybe I’ll put Ashley on the ground and take her place!”

“No!”

He chuckled again. “I was kidding.”

“I know. Sleep next to her; she will like it.”

“Okay.”

She smiled. He put a long warm kiss on her forehead, before patting her cheek for the last time.

“Good night.”

She smiled. “You already ruined it.”

He chuckled. “Yeah, and I’m sorry about that.”

“It is okay; I was kidding. Good night.”

“For you too.”

He got up and headed to Ashley’s bed. He pushed her gently and climbed into the bed. She noticed his presence.

“Dad, is that you?” She murmured, lying somewhere between being conscious and unconscious. Robert lie next to her, put his arms around her small body, and pushed her gently to his chest.

“No sweetheart, it is Robert.”

“My cousin?” She wondered quietly, partially awake now.

Robert chuckled. “Do you know another Robert?”

She chuckled innocently, turned around, and buried her face into his chest. He hugged her tightly.

“Good night, princess.”

“Goodnight,” she whispered. He kept rubbing her back gently till she deeply slept again, and then closed his eyes, leaving me with the every night’s never-ending waiting.



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*Next day... Emily's house... Raining...*

"Emily! Where are you?"

Robert said, whispering, and glancing around, searching for Emily. She didn't appear.

"Emily, come on! We have no time for these games!"

Again he got no answer. He looked at the window, and then at the huge tree. He sighed and steeled his courage.

"If my little sister can do it, and if Emily can do it, then I absolutely can do it."

He took a deep breath, and then walked hesitantly towards the huge tree.

"Calm down; this is gonna be very easy."

He took another breath.

"Let's go."

He started to climb the tree. And Despite his struggling, he finally managed to reach its top.

"Emily... why didn't yo—"

He found Aunt Jade in front of his face. He called in fright, His eyes bulged and then he hardly swallowed. She kept glowering at him, waiting for an explanation I guess. However, he didn't leave her waiting for too long.

He smiled. "Umm... Hi... I need to go to the beach. Should I take the first turn? Or the second turn?"

Aunt Jade's angry eyes just got angrier.

Robert gulped. "The third turn, I got it," he mumbled. "See you later then!" He exclaimed and started climbing down immediately.

"Christopher! Stop him!" She yelled.

"Oh boy!"

He tried to increase his speed; but getting down is always harder than climbing up. Once he became close enough to the ground, he let go of himself and fell into a muddy pool.

"Ouch!" He yelled painfully. Well, I guess that he underestimated the distance left between him and the ground before deciding to fall.

Regardless, he put himself together and got up immediately, running towards the gate.

“Hold your place immediately!”

I'm afraid that Christopher was faster than him this time. He nailed his feet to the ground immediately.

“Turn around.”

He turned slowly, to find the gun's muzzle aimed at his head. He hardly swallowed.

“Come here.”

He obeyed instantly. The moment he reached him, Emily reached the ground floor and ran towards them.

“Uncle! No!” She yelled fearfully.

“Emily, get back inside,” he ordered angrily, not diverting neither his eyes nor his gun from Robert's head.

“Sir, there is absolutely a misunderstanding here.”

“Shut up!”

Robert gulped.

“Uncle, he is my friend!”

“Exactly.” He gazed at Robert. “She is only twelve... Perverted!”

Robert's eyes widened in surprise. “No... no, no, no; you got it totally wrong.”

“Shut up maniac!”

“Uncle, he is telling the truth! He is trying to help me!” She was too scared to even blink.

“Oh, really? And you believed him?” He scoffed.

“Uncle, he is trying to give me a new heart!” She hissed.

Christopher's expression lightened for a moment, and his eyes widened in surprise. But he rapidly overcame his shock and brought the grimace face back.

“Is this... true?” Aunt Jade, who was standing inside the house, mumbled, while walking towards them.

“Yes ma'am,” Robert said, hardly able to talk.

“Jade, don't...”

“Shut up!” She yelled, interrupting Christopher's already shaking voice. She looked kindly at Robert. “Why would you do this?” She mumbled calmly.

“Because he is my friend,” Emily was the one to answer.

Robert sighed. “Yes, this is true. Actually she became more than a friend to me. I consider her a sister, and I'll do what it takes to keep her alive.”

Aunt Jade smiled warmly.

“Don’t waste your time; she is gonna reject it as usual,” Christopher grunted.

“No Uncle, we have a deal,” She looked at Robert and smiled. “Don’t we?”

He smiled back. “Absolutely.”

“A deal? What kind of deals?” He scoffed.

“It doesn’t matter. What really matters now is that I convinced her to accept the next heart given to her. All what we need now is to find that heart.”

“Don’t forget the condition,” she said, smiling.

“Don’t worry; I’ll take care of that.”

“How would you do that? How would you find her a new heart?” Jade wondered.

“I have an Uncle who is a doctor; I believe he might be able to help.”

Jade’s expression lighted with hope.

“Can I go out with him now?” Emily growled.

“Emily, you know the rul—”

Jade interrupted him again. “Of course you can honey,” she murmured kindly.

Emily smiled, and so did Robert. “I promise to take care of her.”

“I have no doubt about that.”

“What’s your name kid?”

“Robert... Robert Wilson,” Emily answered excitedly.

“Are you one of the Wilson’s?” He wondered, surprised.

Robert lips moved to speak, but Emily was faster. “Yes he is; he is my friends’ cousin.”

“I never saw you before.”

Again Robert moved to talk, and again Emily was faster. “Yes, because he has just arrived.”

“Emily, I can talk, remember?”

She smiled. “Sorry.”

“Can we go now?” Robert wondered.

“No.”

“Christopher!” Jade snapped.

“Jade, it is heavily raining!”

Emily sighed in frustration watching Jade’s position weakening. Suddenly, Jade smiled.

“Well, maybe you can’t go out, but he can go... in.”

“In?!” Emily wondered.

“Yes, you have a wonderful room, remember?”

Emily’s face shone happily.

“And you can show him your amazing writings as well,” Jade added kindly.

“Yes!” She exclaimed happily.

“Sounds great!” Robert said.

“Uncle?” She begged.

“Ok-ay.” he mumbled.

“Yes!” She exclaimed again, grabbed Robert’s hand, and excitedly pulled him inside. With her speed, they only needed a moment to reach the stairs and vanish.

“But make sure to check on them from time to time,” Christopher said.

“Don’t worry; he is a good kid.”

“And she is a pretty girl as well,” he said, growling.

Jade sighed. “Okay, if this will make you feel comfortable.”

He looked her in the eyes.

“It will.”

He said. The two of them returned inside.

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*Next morning... The dining room... Raining heavily...*

"I have no idea why did you bring me down here. Robert, I always have my breakfast in my room!" Ed hissed.

"I told you, grandpa has something to say, and he wanted the whole family to be here and listen to him," Robert said.

"The whole family?! Robert, all the men are missing, except you."

"Umm... well... maybe he will talk to them later."

Ed sighed.

Everyone was down there now, except the men and the boys, sitting on the huge dining table. Grandpa glanced around to check if anyone was still missing, and then stood at the head of the table.

"Good mor—"

Amy interrupted him. "Grandpa, Ana is missing," she said.

"Oh... okay; we'll have to wait then."

He sat on his chair.

"Robert, what is going on exactly?" He whispered.

"Just wait and see."

"And why everybody is in their... umm... sports outfit?"

"Ed, be patient."

"Here she is!" Amy exclaimed. All the eyes moved to look at Ana who has just reached the ground floor. She blushed.

"Sorry," she murmured, running to her chair. She stopped by Robert for a moment.

"Everything is ready, and everyone knows exactly what his rule is," She whispered, smiling.

"Good girl," he said. She resumed her run to her chair after receiving a kiss on her cheek from him.

"Okay, being sure that Andy will never show up, I think we can start now."

None of them disagreed. Grandpa got up.

"All of you know that it has been a very tough season, and all of you also know that it isn't over yet."

Ed winced. "What?!" He whispered, looking at Robert.

"Shut up and listen."

"They are ahead of us, and they are stronger than us; those are two facts that have no doubt about them." He paused for a moment and then went on. "But, are we going to surrender?" He yelled.

"No!" They yelled excitedly and determinedly.

"Are we going to let them take the title we deserve?" He roared.

"No!" They yelled again.

"Then what are we gonna do? Huh? What are we gonna do? Let me tell you what we'll do... WE WILL FIGHT!"

"Yeah!" They cheered loudly.

"UNTIL THE LAST MOMENT!"

"Yeah!"

"We'll never surrender, back down, or give up... do you know why? DO YOU KNOW WHY? BECAUSE IT'S OUR TITLE!"

"Yeah!"

He strongly thumped the table with his strong fist, making all the voices silence.

"Ladies and gentlemen; let's go get our title," He said calmly.

"Yeah!"

They yelled excitedly while getting up and preparing to head outside. Ed was frozen on his place, eyes widely opened, and mouth agape.

"What are you waiting for?" Robert wondered.

Ed looked at him, still totally amazed. Robert smiled and started pushing him outside. The stunned kid didn't utter a word while getting in grandpa's car with the rest, and glancing at Stephen's car that had the other team inside; the men and the boys.

"Is everyone on board?" Grandpa wondered.

"Yes."

"Ashley?"

She sighed. "I'm here."

"Okay, let's go!"

Grandpa's car moved, followed by Stephen's car, and headed to the game's stadium.

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The cars reached the stadium and pulled over. Everyone started to get out.

Nothing serious happened during the journey, but some complains from the mothers because of the rainy weather. Grandpa convinced them,

using the fact that says that the Wilson's can't be beaten... or whatever.

Robert helped Ed to get out, and once his eyes caught a sight of the place, they bulged and widened in surprise.

"What?" He wondered, totally stunned.

Robert touched his shoulder gently.

"Welcome to your dream," he murmured, smiling. Ed looked at him, still totally unbelieving what he was seeing.

"My dream?" He wondered.

Amy touched his other shoulder, making him look at her. "Yes, your dream. We built it for you. So, get ready to complete it and lead us to the win."

A smile was drawn gradually on his lips, announcing that he understood all what this is all about.

"Thanks..." he murmured.

They smiled.

"Let's move!" Robert said excitedly, smiling at the already smiling Amy, and pushing the wheelchair into the pitch.

The guys' team has already left their car, brought the ball from the trunk, and took their places in front of the right-side goal. The ladies, with the referee, Grandma Susan, moved to the side line and used their umbrellas to protect them from the rain.

The rest of Edward's team followed Robert, Amy, and Edward into the muddy pitch. Ed noticed the sign prepared by Ana and Ashley, and the moment he read it, he yelled.

"Guys!"

All the eyes look at him.

"It is theatre... not theater."

Robert squinted. "What?!"

"It is *re* not *er*."

Their confusion didn't ease.

"The word Theater, it ends with *re* not *er*. It is an English stadium, why would they use an American word?"

Ashley gasped. "Oh no!"

Ed glanced at the disappointed faces for some moments, and then went on, "You know, it isn't really a big deal." He looked at Robert. "Just tell the camera man to avoid it and we'll be good." He smiled.

Robert grinned. "That's my boy!"

Ed chuckled, and all the girls sighed with relief.

The two teams took their places, preparing for the start of the game. I moved to get a top view in order to be able to hear the last moments'

talks of the two teams.

“Guys, you all know that this isn’t a real game, right?” Stephen said.

“Sure!” Bill said. All of them nodded.

“Great, let’s make Ed happy then.”

“Yeah!” Michael cheered. Stephen smiled, and ran towards the goal; I believe he is going to be the goalkeeper.

“I can’t run; I’ll be the goalkeeper,” grandpa said.

“Great, and I’ll be a defender,” Robert said.

“I’m the striker of course!” Alice yelled excitedly.

“Umm... actually, I need you with me in the backline.”

“No!” She groaned. “I used to be the best striker in my team!” She added.

“Alice, you are a strong girl; you can kick some butts,” he said, winking.

She smiled. “Okay!” She exclaimed.

“Ana and Amy, you will be the strikers.”

“No problems,” Amy said, and Ana approved by nodding once.

“What about me?” Ashley said sadly.

“And me?” Ed added.

“You two will be our substitutions; we don’t know how this game will progress, and we need some key players to be ready to join and change the course of the game at any moment.”

The two of them smiled. “Okay,” Ed said. Ashley walked with him to the side line.

“Ready?” Robert said. All of them nodded. “Let’s go.”

The players took their places and prepared to start the game.

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“We aren’t gonna let them beat us, are we?” Kevin said, whispering conspiratorially.

“Beat us?! What is wrong with you dad?” Michael scoffed.

“Yeah! That’s my boy!”

He looked at Tom and Bill who were standing with them in the circle. “What about you?”

“Bro, the word defeat was erased from our dictionary long time ago,” Tom said.

“Yeah!” Bill exclaimed.



“Great! Let’s go and teach those girls a bad lesson.”

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*A minute later... The game is about to start...*

Bill passed the ball to Michael, announcing the beginning of the game.

“Ana, go get it!” Robert yelled.

“Right away.”

She ran towards Michael, but the skilled boy easily passed her. She fell to the ground.

“No,” she grunted.

“Michael! I’m here!” Kevin yelled, running fast and bypassing Robert. Michael sent the ball high towards them, but Robert read the game and moved faster, blocking the ball before it reaches Kevin.

“Not so fast... Uncle,” he scoffed.

“Robert!” Amy called. He passed the ball to her immediately in the empty space behind Bill’s back.

“Run Amy! Run!” Alice yelled. Amy noticed that she can run all the way towards the goal. She gasped. “Okay, I can do this,” she whispered and ran fast.

“No!” Bill yelled, unable to reach the fast girl.

“Amy! Now!” Ana yelled.

“Now what?!” She wondered.

“KICK THE BALL!” Alice roared.

“Oh!”

She immediately kicked the ball towards the goal, but her ball missed the target.

She gasped and then sighed in frustration.

“Sorry,” she murmured.

“It is okay, return to your position,” Robert said.

“Okay!”

His kind words managed to ease her sadness. Stephen kicked the ball towards Bill, and he got it easily, as Amy wasn’t there yet to stop him.

“Bill, here!” Kevin yelled. Bill prepared to pass the ball to him, but Alice came from no where, slid brilliantly, and got the ball. Bill fell to the ground.

“Grandma!” He yelled.

“Play on,” she said calmly.

Alice sneered at him. “Sorry, fat boy.”

She amazingly got up in a blink of an eye and ran fast towards the goal.

“Yeah! That’s my girl!” Robert yelled excitedly. She chuckled.

Suddenly, she found Michael in front of her. Being sure that she won’t be able to pass the talented kid, she passed the ball to Ana and ran fast around the stunned boy. Ana returned the ball to her once she became sure that she passed Michael. Alice continued her journey towards the target.

“Oh boy!” Kevin yelled.

“Go girl, go!” Amy yelled.

“Dad!” Bill yelled fearfully.

The fast girl seemed to be heading towards scoring a certain goal, but Tom had another opinion.

He came from no where and stood in front of her. His paunch bulged, and she smacked into it and fell to the ground immediately.

Tom got the ball. “Goodbye, pretty girl.”

“Yes!” Bill and Michael exclaimed. Tom passed the ball to Michael.

“Go get us the first goal!”

“With pleasure,” the boy said confidently. Ana tried to stop him again, but again he passed her easily and headed directly towards the goal.

“Robert! Watch out!” Ed yelled fearfully. Robert ran fast and slid on the ground, trying to stop the fast kid. But Michael passed the ball in a nick of time to Kevin, making him face to face with the goal.

“No!” Amy screamed, and so did Ashley. Kevin ran fast.

“Kid, I’m warning you,” grandpa said, Kevin ignored him and kicked the ball.

The ball directly hit its target.

“Yeah!” Bill yelled, and so did the rest of the team. They ran to Kevin, and started the celebrations.

“Sorry kids,” grandpa murmured.

“It is okay, grandpa,” Robert said calmly. The girls walked desperately to him.

“Robert, they are serious!” Amy screeched.

“Yeah, I noticed.”

“We stand no chance against them,” Ana groaned.

“Of course we do!” Alice protested.

“She is right; we won’t give up.”

Amy sighed. “Okay.”

He clapped his hands, encouraging them.

“Come on! We aren’t defeated yet!”

“Yes!” Alice yelled. Amy smiled, and so did Ana.

Ana and Amy took the kickoff. Once she received the ball from Ana, Amy passed the ball to Alice, avoiding the fast running Michael. Bill dashed towards her.

“Oh, what do we have here?” She scoffed.

Bill gulped.

“A fat boy who is gonna receive a strong ball on his fleshy paunch if he didn’t move away right now.”

He squinted and stared at her determinedly, beating his fear.

She smiled. “A very wrong decision.”

Bill’s eyes bulged in fear while watching Alice preparing to kick the ball. He closed his eyes a moment before she unleashes the strong kick.

Alice smiled.

“Thanks,” she murmured, held her feet before touching the ball, and then ran fast, bypassing the closed-eyes stunned Bill.

“Move your fat butt and follow her now!” Kevin screamed. Bill opened his eyes to find Alice running fast towards the goal, with only Tom left on her way.

“Oh-oh!”

Tom dashed to her.

“Alice! Here!” Ana yelled. Alice passed the ball to her immediately.

Ana steeled her courage. “This is my chance,” she murmured, encouraging herself to go all the way towards the opened goal.

“Ana! Take care! Behind you!” Robert yelled. Ana glanced backward to find Michael running fast towards her.

“No!”

She ran as fast as she can towards the goal, but Michael was faster than her. He was absolutely going to stop her. Ana noticed that Amy was next to her, but Kevin blocked the way between the two girls before she decides to pass the ball to her.

I noticed that Alice did something strange; she untied her shoes. Suddenly, she ran fast towards Ana and her chaser.

“I’m coming Ana; just run faster,” she yelled. I was surprised by Alice’s speed; she is actually faster than Michael. And the moment she reached him, she stumbled on something and threw her body on the ground. She rolled fast on the muddy ground, heading directly towards Michaels feet. She smacked into him, and he fell immediately.

“Go Ana, go!” She yelled.

“Grandma! It is a free kick!” Michael roared.

“What? No! Look! My shoes were untied! It made me fall!” She protested innocently.

Robert chuckled. “Little devil,” he whispered to himself.

“Play on,” Susan said.

“Now Ana!” Amy screamed.

Ana kicked the ball immediately, and for my surprise, it was a strong kick.

The ball headed fast and accurately towards its target, announcing their first goal.

She gasped.

“Oh! I scored!” Ana murmured, totally stunned and amazed. All the audiences cheered, and so did her teammates who ran excitedly towards her.

“This is not fair!” Michael protested.

“Life was never fair honey,” Alice scoffed, sneering at him on her way to Ana.

“Okay guys, well done, all of you. But we still need to concentrate, okay?” Robert said. The excited girls nodded.

“Half time,” Susan said.

“What?!” Kevin wondered. “Too fast!” He yelled at her. Grandma glowered at him.

He gulped. “You are the ref, mom,” he mumbled.

The two teams headed outside to have a short rest.

“Well done everybody!” Ed exclaimed.

“You were amazing!” Ashley yelled, not less excited than her brother.

“And Alice, you may want to tie your shoes,” Ed said, winking.

She smiled. “Yep.”

Robert, Amy, and Ana threw themselves to the ground and sat there, trying to rest their exhausted bodies. Alice joined them. Ed moved to face them.

“Guys, the game isn’t over yet. We need to keep our concentration on its highest level, understood?”

“Yes!”

“And you two need to keep yourself ready; we’ll need you soon,” Robert said.

Ed smiled. “You can count on us!”

“Yeah!” Ashley exclaimed.

"Time," Susan yelled.

"Okay everybody, let's move," Robert said.

The two teams returned to the pitch, exchanging the goals. Ana and Amy took the kickoff of the second half.

As usual, Amy gave the ball to Alice; the key player of the team.

"Stop her now!" Kevin roared. Bill and Michael moved fast to execute. Alice waited till they became close enough, and then chipped the ball above their heads, aiming at Amy, who received it... hardly.

Robert ran fast, leaving his place on the backline, and trying to help Amy and Ana to get rid of Kevin and Tom.

"Amy! Next to you!"

She passed the ball to him immediately, before Tom manages to take it from her. Robert dashed towards the target, to find Kevin blocking his way.

"Now you pay for stealing my car, jerk."

"What?!"

Kevin left him no chance. He smacked into him, and the two of them fell to the ground immediately. The ball rolled slowly towards Tom.

"Grandma!" Amy yelled.

"Umm... play on," she mumbled.

"What?!" Robert growled.

"Sorry kid, I didn't see it."

Yes, she didn't, because she was actually looking at and talking to her daughters who were begging her to end the game fast because they were freezing.

"Great," Robert sniffed.

The ball was with Michael now, with no one around him but Alice. He ran fast towards the goal, and she chased him. And being faster, she managed to outrun him and block his way. At the same time, Robert, Amy, and Ana were running fast to defend their goal, noticing that Bill was alone in front of it. Michael noticed that as well, and decided to avoid facing the strong girl and kicked the ball to Bill.

"Go buddy!"

Bill nodded determinedly and ran towards the goal.

"This is not gonna happen!" Alice roared, and ran fast towards him.

"Oh-boy!"

"Bill, shoot!"

Bill obeyed Michael's yell immediately and kicked the ball a moment before Alice reaches him. The ball moved slowly towards the goal.

“Grandpa!” Alice yelled.

The old man moved towards the ball, and although it was slow, he was slower.

“Yeah!” Michael cheered.

“I did it!” Bill yelled. He ran towards his team’s members and started the celebrations.

“Grandpa! I can’t believe it!” Alice groaned.

“Sorry girl.”

“Robert, what are we gonna do?” Ana grunted in frustration.

“Don’t worry; I have a secret weapon,” he said, smiling evilly.

“A secret... what?!” Alice wondered.

“A secret weapon that will put the game into the balance again.”

The three girls stared.

“And this secret weapon... is?” Amy wondered.

“Ashley.”

“WHAT?!” The three of them yelled. Robert smiled and ignored their surprise. He looked at the sideline.

“Ashley, come here,” he called. She lighted, jumped out of her place immediately, and ran to him.

“Am I going to play?” She wondered excitedly.

“Yes,” he said, kneeling in front of her.

“Great!”

“Put first, I need you to hit me in the chest.”

She winced, and so did the rest of the girls.

“Why?”

“Just do it.”

She shrugged. “Okay.”

She hit him in the chest, as strong as she could.

“Ouch!”

She chuckled.

“Okay, this is good.”

“Robert, what is going on here exactly?” Amy wondered.

His lips twisted into an evil smile. "They want a tough game, and we're gonna give them one."

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"This can't be done! It is against the rules!" Kevin yelled.

"He is carrying her in his arms, and this doesn't make her a player," grandma said.

"Oh, really?" He scoffed.

"Yes. Now shut up before I sent you off."

He sniffed and shook his head.

"Ready Ashley?" Robert murmured.

"Yes," she said, smiling.

"Great."

Robert, carrying Ashley up in his arms, passed the ball to Alice. The two of them started running immediately. Bill tried to stop her, but she easily passed him.

"Michael, your girl," Kevin murmured.

"Yes, Dad."

Michael dashed towards her, and again she avoided facing him by sending the ball back to Robert. He received it easily. Kevin and Tom moved to stop him.

"Ready sweetheart?"

She chuckled. "Sure!"

Robert ran fast towards the two men.

"Are you crazy?" Kevin scoffed.

"You aren't going to pass through us; you can count on that," Tom added.

Robert ignored them and kept running.

"Now Ashley!" He yelled, the same moment he reached the two tough men.

"Okay!" She exclaimed.

"Ouch!"

This was Kevin, screaming painfully, after receiving a strong kick on his stomach from Ashley. And actually, it was Tom as well, screaming painfully too, after receiving a strong punch on his huge paunch. The two men fell back, opening the space between them for Robert to keep going

and head to the target.

“Mother!” Kevin roared.

“Play on,” she said calmly.

“Go Robert!” Amy yelled.

Actually, he didn't need her words. He ran fast towards the goal, and once he became close enough, he shoot the ball. It was too strong and too fast that it left Stephen no chance to even move towards it.

“Yeah!” Alice exclaimed.

“We did it!” Ashley yelled excitedly.

Robert kissed her, put her on the ground, and then ran back to his teammates to celebrate their goal.

“You are amazing!” Ed yelled.

“Your turn now, buddy.”

He grinned. “Really?”

“Yep.”

“Come on, take my place; I'm tired,” Ana said.

He started to move towards them. “Okay.”

“But you will need someone to push you,” Amy said. Ed looked back at the sideline, and before he talks, his mother moved towards him.

“I'm ready!”

“Cool!”

“Okay, let's win this game!” Robert yelled.

“Yeah!” All of the cheered.

Bill and Michael took the kickoff. Michael took the ball and started his unstoppable run towards the goal.

“Ed, stay in front, and wait for the counter attack,” Robert yelled.

“Got it.”

“Alice, put an end to this fast kid's career,” Robert said.

She smiled. “Right away.”

She dashed towards Michael. He tried to pass her the same way he used against Ana, but the stubborn girl read it well and slide just in time, kicking the ball away from him.

“Good girl!” Robert exclaimed. But... their smiles vanished fast when they noticed that the ball was heading towards Kevin.



“Amy!”

“Okay!”

She ran fast, trying to reach the ball before Kevin does.

“I’ll get it!” She yelled determinedly.

“Only in your dreams!” He growled, sliding towards the ball.

“Oh!” Amy gasped, and then did the same.

He managed to reach the ball before her, but she didn’t give up, and successfully diverted his accurate pass away from its course towards Bill.

The ball rolled slowly in an empty space, before finally stopping because of the muddy ground.

Robert dashed towards it, and so did Tom. But this time, it was Robert who easily won the race.

“Robert!” Alice yelled, running towards the empty space behind Michael. Robert sent the ball to her. Michael didn’t stand still, watching the ball flying in the air and heading to its target. And instead, he ran fast towards Alice. The ball reached them. Alice jumped higher than Michael and used her head to kick the ball.

“Amy!” She yelled.

“It’s mine!” Amy yelled back.

“No!” Michael grunted, falling with Alice to the ground.

“Don’t worry son, Dad is still here!” Kevin yelled, chasing Amy towards the ball.

“Amy! Watch out!” Ed yelled fearfully.

The amazing Alice got up fast and ran into the space. “Amy! I’m here!”

Amy grinned. “It’s yours!”

She hardly touched the ball before Kevin does, sending it towards Alice, on the right hand side of the pitch, with no one left to stop her.

“Mom! Push now!” Ed said. Julia started pushing him into the penalty area.

“Alice! Cross it!” He yelled.

“Okay!”

She crossed the ball towards Ed, keeping it low so he would be able to reach it.

“Ed! Please!” She begged.

“No!” Kevin yelled.

“Jump Ed, JUMP!” Robert yelled.

The ball reached Ed. He used his hands to support him and initiate the jump, throwing himself towards the ball.

“Please!” Amy begged.

All the eyes bulged and stared eagerly at him.

His head barely managed to touch the ball, but it was enough to divert it towards the goal...

The ball rolled slowly on the ground...

From its decreasing speed, you can see that it was absolutely heading towards a certain stop...

And it did stop...

But after crossing the line...

Some moments of silence and unbelieving passed, before the crowds blasted, yelling, cheering, and screaming.

"I did it!" He murmured, totally stunned. He turned around and looked at his shocked teammates.

"I did it!" He yelled loudly. The amazed expressions on their faces disappeared slowly, leaving some space for the smiles that were being drawn on their lips.

"You... did... it!" Robert mumbled. He looked at Alice. "We did it!"

"We did it! We won!" Amy said, still unbelieving.

Alice screamed and ran to her. She jumped at her and hugged her excitedly, convincing the stunned girl that they did win. Robert ran towards the losing-their-minds girls. Ana ran to them, and so did the rest of the ladies, and then all of them ran to their hero; Edward.

"Game over," Susan said.

"No!" Kevin protested.

"Come on, leave the pitch for the victorious... losers," she added.

Kevin sniffed.

"I cant' believe it!" Ed exclaimed.

"Me neither!" Robert said, sharing him the enormous excitement.

Grandpa reached them... finally.

"We won the title!" He yelled. Amy, Alice, Ana, and Ashley ran and jumped at him.

"We won grandpa, we won!" Ana exclaimed.

"Oh my God! It is unbelievable!" Amy yelled.

"Yeah! What a feeling!" Grandpa said.

"Guys, we need to celebrate!" Julia yelled. Ed nodded.

"Yeah! We will sing and dance till the sunset!" Grandpa said excitedly.

"Yes!" The girls exclaimed.

“And... and... we... yes... we will go out tonight, all of us, and will have dinner together, in the most expensive restaurant in the town!” Grandpa added.

“Yeah!” All of them cheered.

“Let the party begin!” He yelled, and then started the dancing. Everyone followed, except Robert and Ed.

“I can’t believe we made all of them happy,” Ed murmured.

“You... made all of them happy.”

Ed looked at him and smiled. Robert went on, “Well, maybe they aren’t seventy thousands happy fans who will celebrate till the early morning, but they are your family, and the people who love you the most; and this is what really matters.”

Ed smiled again. “I know.” He paused for a moment and then went on, “I guess I need to find another dream then.”

Robert laughed. “I think so.”

“Hey! You two! Come here!” Grandpa yelled. Robert smiled.

“Right away grandpa!”

He smiled at Ed, and he smiled back. Then, the two of them joined the celebrations, which didn’t seem to be going to end soon.

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“Okay, now all what we need to do is to book two tickets to the stadium’s tour.”

Ana said, sitting on the edge of her bed with the laptop on her thighs, and surrounded by her cousins, her brother, Robert, and grandpa, about an hour after returning from the hilarious dinner.

“Can it be booked online as well?” Grandpa wondered.

“Yes, grandpa, from the club’s official website,” Ana explained.

He seemed very amazed. “There are no limits for the technology.”

She chuckled. “I guess so.”

“Are you there yet?” Robert wondered, away from being able to see the laptop’s screen.

“Just... give us a minute,” Alice said.

“Ana, here; visit the Old Trafford,” Amy said.

“Okay.”

They looked at the screen for some moments.

“Here!” Alice exclaimed suddenly, yelling directly to Ana’s ear. Ana shuddered and groaned, “Alice, I can see it.”

Alice noticed her anger. She caressed her hair gently. “Sorry.”

“It is okay,” Ana said, smiling, and then looked back at the screen. Some moments later, she looked at Robert.

“How many tickets?”

“Umm... two?”

Amy nodded. “I think so; Ed and Aunt Julia.”

“Yes, Uncle Stephen is a busy man; he won’t be able to go,” Alice added.

“Okay then, two tickets,” Robert said.

“Right away,” Ana said and looked back at the screen.

“Wow, it isn’t that expensive,” Amy murmured.

“Yes, it isn’t expensive at all,” Alice added.

Ana ignored them. “The tour date?”

“Well, they will spend five days in the UK, pick any day of them,” Robert said.

“Okay... umm... let me see...” She paused for a moment, looking at the screen. “Monday morning at 11 O’clock, okay?” She added.

“Perfect,” he concurred.

“Done.”

Amy glanced at the screen and then at Robert. “Now we need Aunt Julia to enter their details.”

“Exactly,” Ana agreed.

“She is with Ed; in your room,” Ashley said.

“I’ll go get her,” Bill said. “I’m coming with you,” Michael added. Robert got up faster than the two of them. “I’ll go; I want to see his face when I tell him that he will finally visit his real stadium.”

Bill and Michael sighed in frustration.

“Maybe all of us should go!” Alice exclaimed suddenly, breaking the moments of silence.

“Right!” Amy agreed.

“Yes! We were all together in this from the beginning, and we will end it together,” Ana said, not less excited than the two girls.

“Sounds great!” Robert approved, grinning.

Grandpa got up. "Let's go then."

All of them got up. But before they head outside, grandpa stopped them.

"Umm... before we go, I just want to say that I enjoyed every single moment of this." He paused for a moment, glancing at their faces. He smiled and went on, "You are the best grandsons one can ever dream of, and I'm so proud of you... all of you."

They smiled proudly.

Grandpa went on, "Always remember... the sun isn't the hugest star out there, but it is absolutely the greatest, because it has us around her. She gives us life, and we give her the value." He paused and looked at Robert. "Alone you can be good, or even great, but with the people you love around you... you can be unstoppable."

He smiled. Robert smiled back. Grandpa looked back at his grandsons.

"Let's make that kid happy," he murmured.

"Yes!" They cheered.

Grandpa went out, and all of them followed.

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"Come on in."

Julia, sitting on Ed's bed edge, murmured after hearing the knocks on the door. She smiled and pulled her eyebrows together in confusion the moment she saw all of them walking through the door.

"What?!" She murmured, still totally stunned. Ed, who was lying on his bed, hardly moved himself to the sitting position. His eyes widened with surprise while watching Robert walking closer to him.

"We have a surprise for you," Robert said, sitting on the edge of Ed's bed, and smiling.

"For me?!"

"Mm-hmm."

He smiled. "What did you do this time? Discovered an ancient magical portal and brought the real stadium to our back yard?"

Robert chuckled. "Well, not really. But we discovered a portal that can take you there."

Ed squinted. "What do you mean?"

Robert leaned in closer to him. His eyes sparkled while looking him in the eyes. He smiled, and started to murmur excitedly, "You are going to the real stadium!"

The smile disappeared slowly from Ed's pale face. "What are you talking about?"

Robert's face didn't change.

"We booked two tickets for you and Aunt Julia to England, got you a reservation for five days in one of the hotels in the city of Manchester, and just booked you two tickets to a tour in your famous stadium. All what is left to be done is entering your and Aunt Marie's info to complete the tour booking process."

Ed kept staring at him, unable to utter a word.

"Next month, Monday the fifth, 11 AM; this is when you will set a foot in your Theater of Dreams," Robert added, grinning.

"Robert... I'm dying," Ed murmured.

Robert smiley face didn't change.

"You mean... dying to go... right?"

Ed gulped. "No, I'm really dying. I lied to you."

The smile started to disappear slowly from Robert's face. The more he grasps from Ed's words, the faster his smile fades away.

"Lied... to me?" He mumbled.

"Yes. It wasn't a car accident that put me on a wheelchair."

Robert squinted, still totally stunned.

Ed went on, "I was born like this, and there is nothing we can do about it."

Robert looked him in the eyes for some seconds of silence, trying to give his tears a chance to well up in his eyes. But when you spend five years without a single tear being oozed out of your eyes, calling back your tears will be a sort of impossible.

Robert decided to talk after losing hope of his tears, and I wasn't surprised that his lips only managed to utter some lost desperate words.

"Why... didn't you tell me?" He mumbled, murmuring painfully.

Ed failed to find an answer.

Robert repeated his question, but this time with steadier, louder, and angrier voice. "Why didn't you tell me?"

Ed hardly swallowed. "I... I..."

"YOU WHAT?!" He roared. Ed shuddered immediately.

Robert went on, keeping the same angry loud tone, "You waited till you became my only and best friend to tell me that you are going to die?!"

Unlike Robert, the tears didn't need any effort to gather inside Ed's eyes, and inside his mother's eyes as well.

Robert suddenly got up and turned to the rest.

"Did you know this?" He wondered, glancing at their sad faces. Most of them moved their eyes to the ground. Amy was the only one who was brave enough to step in and face his anger. She took a step towards him and mumbled, "We... thought... that..."

“DID YOU KNOW THIS?!” He roared suddenly, interrupting her. She winced, and her body trembled in fear. And just like Ed, the tears only needed a moment to well up in her beautiful eyes.

“Robert... I...”

“You tricked me,” he murmured, looking her in the eyes. “All of you tricked me,” he added, moving his eyes between their faces.

He paused for a moment and then looked back at Amy.

“You... from all of them... how could you do this to me?” He murmured. You can feel the pain in every word he uttered, in his firing eyes, and in every single muscle of his grimaced face.

Amy gulped, the tears started to ooze out of her eyes.

“I swear that... I thought you...”

“Shut up,” he murmured, interrupting her.

“No, you have to believe m—”

“SHUT UP!” He roared again. And this time, she surrendered in front of his anger. He moved closer to her and went on, “I’ll never forgive you... never... do you hear me? NEVER!”

He looked at the rest of them.

“All of you, I’ll never forgive you for what you’ve done to me. And now I’ll have to watch another someone I love dying in front of my eyes.”

He glowered back at Amy. She gulped again once his angry scary tearless eyes caught hers.

“I hate you... from the deepest part in my heart.”

She gasped and her eyes widened in surprise and shock. Robert went on, ignoring her pouring tears and shaking body.

“I don’t want to see your face again... ever.”

The stunned girl’s face didn’t change. Robert left her standing and ran out of the room.

“Robert! Wait!” Alice yelled. Robert ignored her, and I followed him heading outside the house.

He strode desperately under the heavy rain.

I had no idea to where he was going, and I believe that he didn’t as well.

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*Almost midnight... The river bank...*

Robert finally returned home. But the one who returned isn’t the same one who left a few hours ago. The one who returned is the old Robert; the lost lonely man I always knew. He stared at the silent dark sad house for a while, and then decided to make a full use of the stopped rain, ignore the coldness of the blowing wind, and sit for a while on his favorite spot at the river bank in front of the house.

This time, there was nothing either amazing or beautiful in the scene. Actually, it turned to be one of the scariest views I have ever seen in my entire life. With the absence of the moon, there was nothing left there but the creepy thick gray clouds, the strong blowing cold wind, the emptiness everywhere around you, and the darkness lying infinitely in front of your eyes. Robert ignored all of this and decided to stay, and being his best friend, I had to stay with him.

*Some minutes later...*

"Hmm... excuse me, this is my favorite spot."

Robert turned immediately towards the voice, to find Amy standing near the rock, looking at him, and surprisingly smiling. He stared while watching the beautiful girl moving closer.

She sat next to him. "Watch out," she murmured.

"What?!"

"You are looking at my face!"

"Then?!"

"I clearly heard you saying: I don't want to see your face again! Ever!"

He hardly laughed. "Right," he said, moving his eyes to the ground. A moment later, he looked back at her and was about to talk.

She interrupted. "Oops! You did it again! Looked at my face!"

"Come on! You know that I didn't mean any word from what I have said earlier!"

"Yes, this is why I'm here, breaking all the rules of dignity, according to Alice."

He smiled while looking at her deep eyes that were full of kindness and compassion... and pain as well.

"I hurt you, didn't I?"

"Deeply inside. You didn't believe me, didn't listen to me, yelled at me, and made me cry till I ran out of tears."

Robert eyes widened in surprise and shock.

Amy went on, "Alice said that I should never ever talk to you again. She wanted me to stay in my room and wait for you to come and apologize."

"She has a point," he said, moving his eyes towards the dark horizon.

"Yes. But being sure that I picked the most stubborn kid in the whole world to fall in love with, I thought that I should help him a little."

His eyes looked at her smiley face again.

She went on, "So... come on... apologize, so I would forgive you."

The surprise left him spellbound.

She chuckled. "What are you waiting for?"

"That's... it?" He mumbled.



"Yes."

"After all what I have said to you?"

"Mm-hmm."

"But... how?"

"Because I know that you were shocked and desperate, and didn't mean anything from what you have said. And the most important, I love you... and the least thing I can do for you in such circumstances is being beside you."

She paused and leaned in closer to him. She looked him in the eyes and went on, "You didn't think that I'll leave you to suffer alone, did you?"

His lips automatically twisted into a smile.

She went on, murmuring confidently, and making her words sound like a fact, "There is something I need you to be sure of; while I'm around, you will never ever be alone again... ever."

His smile grew bigger.

"I should have believed him."

"What?!"

"Ed... I should have believed him when he said that you aren't an ordinary human being."

She laughed.

"Yes, I turn into a werewolf at the full moon nights."

This time, he was the one to laugh.

She looked at him kindly and went on, "Come on, let's go inside; it is freezing out here."

He didn't object and she didn't wait for his approval. She got up and he followed immediately. They walked together towards the dark house.

*A few minutes later... Robert's room...*

"I thought that you'll never return!"

Ed exclaimed once his eyes caught a vision of Robert entering the room. Julia was still there as well.

"Well, it takes more than a single argument to make me abandon my best friend."

Ed grinned. The big smile was barely able to light his pale face. Robert walked closer, glancing at Julia, and using his eyes to politely ask her to leave them alone for a while. The smart lady figured this out, and got up once he reached Ed's bed.

"I'll go and tell mom that you're back; your absence was driving her crazy."

Robert nodded.

"I'll also prepare the ground floor room for you. You can sleep there instead of sleeping in the girls' room."

"The ground floor room?"

"They prepared it for me when I became too sick to be able to walk, but I refused to stay in it."

"I see."

"Do you wanna know why?"

"No, because I'd have done the same. I'd have never abandoned my room."

"Exactly."

Robert smiled.

"Okay, I'll go now," Julia said.

"Thanks, mom," Ed said. Julia smiled and walked away.

Robert waited till she left and sat next to Ed. He started to talk.

"You are giving her your heart, aren't you?"

Ed sighed after looking Robert in the eyes for some moments.

"Yes..."

"Is there anything I can do?"

"No, you've already did your part. Uncle Andy helped us doing all the tests and preparations, and luckily they found out that we're a perfect match."

"Emily's family didn't seem to know anything about this."

"Yes. Uncle Andy got Emily's files from a friend of him. I begged him not to tell her family, because I believed that she'll reject my heart as well, and this would make them push on her."

"I see."

"But now they should know."

"Don't worry, I told them."

"You did?"

"Yep."

"Great." He paused for a moment. "I have to die in the hospital to give them a chance to take my heart."

The words stabbed Robert directly in the heart—I easily figured this out from the brutal shudder that shook his body, and the pain that immediately wiped the smile from his face. Ed noticed this and kindly looked him in the eyes.

"Robert, she'll have my heart. And this means that I won't really die, doesn't it?" He accompanied his calm voice by a smile.

Robert nodded after failing to force his lips to utter the words Ed wanted to hear.

"Tomorrow I'll act as if I'm dying. All of them will panic, but you won't. You'll take me to the hospital and call Uncle Andy to cover our backs. Then,

bring her to me."

"Emily?"

"Yes. I'll convince her to accept my heart."

Robert nodded desperately.

No more words were said while the two were looking each others in the eye. Ed's were full of grateful and thanking, and Robert's were full of pain and sadness.

Robert put an end to the silence.

"Is there... anything else... I can do to make you feel happy?" He mumbled painfully.

A big tear oozed out of Ed's eye.

"Yes." He paused to wipe the tear away. "Actually, there are a lot of things you can do for me."

Robert's eyes refused to obey the tears request they received from his wounded heart. This made his face stay solid and emotionless.

"Go ahead, ask for anything, and I promise I'll do my best to do it for you."

"I know you'll." He paused again after feeling the coldness of another tear on his other cheek. He wiped the tear away and put himself together.

"Listen, first, promise to take care of my parents and Emily. And make sure to bring her to them from time to time; this will help them a lot."

"I promise."

"Second... Amy..."

Robert interrupted. "You don't need to ask."

"I know. I just needed to be sure."

"Don't worry. I spent my life searching for her, and now as I found her, letting go isn't an available option."

Ed smiled.

"Okay. Finally, make sure to enjoy every single moment of your life with her. Make her smile as much as you can. And make sure to be wise.

Girls don't think the same way we do. We'll never ever be able to understand how their brains function, so the best method to make the boat keep sailing is to let them take the rudder from time to time."

Robert laughed.

"I wish I was as smart as you," he said.

Ed chuckled. "I wish that too."

"Come on! I'm not that stupid!"

"No, you aren't."

They both ran out of words for some moments.

"Anything else?"

"No. You can sleep now."

"Okay buddy, see you tomorrow," Robert said, getting up.

"Good night."

"For you too..."

Robert grabbed some clothes, the towel, and the laptop and went out of the room, heading to his new one. By the time he reached it, he found it clean and prepared for his arrival. He put his stuff away and lay on the bed. He closed his eyes, and waited for the horrible night to end.

## ***Epilogue: Theater of Dreams...***

*The hospital... In front of Ed's room...*

"Emily, I need you to be stronger than this."

Robert murmured, kneeling in front of Emily, touching her shoulders and looking her in the eyes.

She sighed.

"Hey, you are shaking!" He said kindly.

"I'm scared."

He gently patted her cheek.

"There is no reason to be scared."

"Of course there is! I'm going to meet someone who is dying!"

"Sweetheart, he wants to meet you. This will make him happy."

She sighed. He moved closer and murmured quietly, "This is his last wish." He smiled and went on, "Don't you want to draw a smile on his face for the last time?"

She swallowed, a little convinced.

"Okay, let's go," Robert murmured.

"But I need you to promise that you'll never leave me."

"I promise." He went on, "Can we go now?"

She bit her lower lip and nodded.

Robert smiled, got up, took her hand, and walked her inside.

Once Ed felt the door being opened, he hardly moved to the sitting position and looked at the door, smiling. Robert walked inside, followed by Emily, who was hardly putting a foot in front of the other, as if every step she was taking was going to be the last.

"Welcome," Ed said calmly, looking at Emily who was trying to hide behind Robert's back. Robert looked at her and smiled, encouraging her to step closer. She did after some moments.

Once she put an eye on Ed's face, her eyes widened in surprise and a smile was drawn on her face.

"It's you!" She murmured, totally stunned.

Ed's face glowed with happiness.

"You remember me!" He said, unbelieving.

She strode excitedly closer to the bed. "Of course I do!" His voice came out steadier.

Robert looked at Ed and winked.

The girl sat on the edge of the bed, keeping the beautiful smile on her face.

"I searched for you," she said shyly, blushing.

"Really?"

She was shy enough not to concur, so she just nodded.

A wide smile lighted Ed's pale face.

They looked at each other in the eye for some moments.

The tears sparkled inside the girl's wide eyes.

"You... are... dying?"

Ed sniffed, trying not to cry. "Yes, but you can keep me alive forever."

The tears decided to leave Emily's innocent eyes and slide gently on her cheeks, like the rain that fell on the pretty flowers, just to make them even prettier.

"I'd do anything for you," she murmured, crying.

The tears started to ooze out of Ed's eyes. He smiled. "Okay, here is my first request; stop crying!"

She chuckled innocently. "Okay." She tried to fight and keep the smile on her face for as long as she can. She succeeded, but the tears didn't stop.

Ed stretched his hand towards her face, before politely stopping it a moment before it lands on its destination.

"Can I?" He said shyly.

She smiled and bit her lips. "Yes..."

He gently patted her cheeks, wiping the tears away. The girl cried heavier, but immediately put herself together and overcame her tears. Ed returned his hand to its initial place, after wiping her tears for multiple times.

He hardly swallowed.

The sad silence dominated for some seconds.

The girl broke the silence.

"So, you want to give me your heart?"

He smiled. "No, because you already have it, since the first day we met."

The girl giggled and blushed immediately.

"Nice move, buddy," Robert shook his lips without uttering the words. Ed got them easily, looking above the girl's shoulder. He smiled.

Ed looked back at the girl.

"So, will you take it? Umm... this is the only way... we... can be together."

She nodded immediately.

"And don't worry; you won't lose the memories of those who you love."

She smiled. "And how is that possible, smart boy?"

He chuckled. "Remember the sun?"

"What about her?"

"Her kingdom..."

She chuckled. "Yeah, you are the only one who got the right answer."

"Right."

"So, what about it?"

He hardly leaned closer towards her.

"When it rains, the sun hides in her kingdom. But those who loves her, and I'm talking about green trees, the pretty flowers, the pure water, and the peaceful small birds, don't go with her. But guess what? When she returns, she finds them waiting for her, and they find her loves them more than ever."

"You mean that..."

He interrupted. "Yes, she doesn't actually hide in any kingdom; she hides inside the green trees that she gives life. She hides inside every pretty flower that danced every day with her light. She hides deep inside the clear water that happily reflected her face till the night. And finally, she hides in every beautiful song sung by the innocent birds that awaits her delightful sight."

She chuckled. "Oh, you are a poet as well."

He laughed. "I write... sometimes."

She continued her laugh.

He talked after her laugh ended. "You'll hide inside the hearts of those who loves you. And after receiving your new heart, you'll return to your sky

and lights their world again. You'll find them waiting for you, and they'll find you loving them more than ever."

She smiled. "And where will you hide?"

"Inside you..."

Her smile grew wider.

He went on, "I'll stay alive, as long as you are."

No one uttered any more words.

Her tears returned while watching him hardly hiding his pain.

"Come on..." she murmured, helping him to get back to the lying position. He didn't resist. She gently caressed his hair and smiled. "Close your eyes. And when you reopen them, the pain will be gone," she murmured kindly.

He hardly smiled. "Okay."

He closed his eyes.

A big tear fell off her cheek and rested on his; he smiled once he felt its coldness. More tears followed while the girl was moving closer and putting a long tender kiss on his forehead.

She whispered into his ear, "Someday we'll be together... I promise."

He grinned while his eyes were still closed.

Suddenly, a tear oozed out of Robert's eye. Totally shocked and surprised, he wiped it and started at his wet hand.

"I'm... crying," he whispered to himself, unbelieving what he was seeing.

*(Then I guess it's the time. For what? For me to leave. What?! Good bye my friend.)*

Robert glanced at Emily and Ed. She was kindly and gently caressing his hair and patting his cheeks while singing with her sweet and warm voice, trying to help him to sleep.

He decided to leave them alone and stepped out of the room to find the whole family gathered outside. Once she saw the tears on his face, Alice cried and ran towards him. She threw herself into his chest and he hugged her tightly. He walked her calmly towards the full seats in front of the room and sat on the ground. She buried her face into his chest and kept crying, and he cuddled her kindly. Ana strode to them and walked into her cousin's footsteps. Robert did to her the same he did to his sister. Amy hugged the crying Ashley and walked her towards Robert. She sat next to Alice, cuddling Ashley. Everyone returned to his seat, and those who didn't have one followed the kids and sat on the ground.

Crying and hugging each others they waited...

Soon a dream will end and another will be born. An actor who played his role perfectly will leave the theater, and another one will take his place. The audiences will cheer for the leaving one, but soon they will forget about him and enjoy the new one, till his time comes and his role ends.

That's what the life is all about. A huge theater where everyone plays a certain role. A huge theater that has no star of the show, because every single actor in it is a star of his own show.

This is what life really is... a huge theater where everyone fights for his dream, and whether he achieved it or not, the crowds will always

cheer...

*The End*

In the memory of the good friends we lost.