

WHEN IT MATTERS

By Eggplant

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Jenny is a seventeen year old who thinks she's a girl with boring aspects and personality. She passes her time by observing her two best friends Russ and Maya who she feels are interesting and special individuals. Not believing she really matters in this

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Chapter 1 - Chapter 1: Wake Up Call	2
Chapter 2 - Chapter 2: Mind Reading Wish	7
Chapter 3 - Chapter 3: The Magic Of Words	13
Chapter 4 - Finding a hobby	15
Chapter 5 - Chapter 4: Finding a hobby	28
Chapter 6 - When it matters, correct: ch. 1 - 5	30
Chapter 7 - Chapter 6: Theory of a player	72
Chapter 8 - Chapter 7: Girlfriends	77
Chapter 9 - Chapter 8: The key towards flawless	84
Chapter 10 - Chapter 8b: The Key to flawless	103
Chapter 11 - Chapter 9: Calling names	117

1 - Chapter 1: Wake Up Call

Chapter 1.

This story isn't about me. This story is about my little brother. This story is about my brother and my mother, about my father, my friends and all the other people around me whether they are alive or dead. But it's not about me, for I'm simply not that important. But I will tell you about all the people around me, so that maybe I'll find a part in that story in which I matter. In which it matters that I was there, that I had opened my mouth or just stood there silently. But I don't think I'm special in any way. I might even be more boring than the average dull person with it's dull life. My brother for example is addicted to videogames, my mother is obsessed with the latest gossips, while my father screams his lounges out in front of the telly when football is on and my friend takes pleasure in hurting herself, and another won't stop adoring himself. But I.. there's nothing you could wake me up for in the middle of the night. Nothing I find pleasure in, and I most definetly do not like the way I look or who I am. I am just not all that. I'm less. Let's start with today. When my mother woke me up from another dreamless night and when she asked what I wanted to have for breakfast, I answered: ``Bread with cheese." Like I did every morning and yet she kept asking me over and over and I'd never came up with another answer. Even when I felt like having cornflakes, or toast, the same response would come out over my lips: bread and cheese. Though it didn't matter, she had already made me something else. It was never bread with cheese. She would make me the breakfast of what some famous star would eat also. Every day I ate the meal of some other moviestar and while I would eat, she would tell me all about this person. Then, every time she made a pause, I would automatically nod my head at the `Isn't that cool?' punchline of my mother (my mouth was stuffed with whatever that moviestar ate, this time buttered toast, which gave me an excuse not to respond). She used the time I used to drink the tasteless water out of the glass in front of me to call my brother for the fourth time, who then came down five minutes later with tired eyes after trying out his new video game the night before. Yet as soon as his eyes caught me sitting there, he would place his flatt butt on the chair next to me and tell me, with no breathpauses, how cool that game was. When it was time to leave, he would have yet to eat his food but mom just put it in a sack and gave it him to eat on the way and then she'd tell us, while she shoved us out of the house, about a famous lazy bum who was just like us, so there

was still hope for us to become famous and make lots of money.

Even though I knew all the gossips and knew about all the latest videogames, but I never had a subject to talk about with my friends. I guess it didn't even matter. Their mouths stood never still anyway, so my silence was misunderstood as being interested.

After thirty minutes of another inforound about Spazz, the coolest bunny on earth who could flap its ears and so gain a zillion points, we arrived at school. My little brother would, as soon as he spotted his friends, give an hyper salute like a comichero whose name I've forgotten and they'd all respond in the same way. They would do the coolest moves copied from either the telly or a videogame and other students would stop and stare at them, while I was still dragging my heavy bag pack out of the bus.

I stepped towards the schoolbuilding and sat down outside with my back against the wall. I watched my feet as students passed me by, paying no attention to me since I've been doing this ever since I had entered school, which was three years ago. I waited and waited untill a little voice informed me that my friends had arrived.

There came the punch line: „I wish to die. I never had such a lousy morning."

„Oh, don't be sad. Look at me! Don't you feel all better now?"

I looked up. This was my cue. „Hey guys."

„Why am I referred to as a guy? I'm looking manly again, aren't I? I must be the ugliest girl in the world, I have no feminity whatsoever.

How cruel of you to remind me." And she let out a sob. I guess I screwed up my one line, like I had been doing for the last three years.

„Oh, don't worry! No one will look at you anyway when I'm walking next to you! I'll capture all their gazes with my perfection and flashy smile! Do not worry, do not worry!" my guyfriend Russ cheered.

They were different and in a way (although sometimes in a negative way) they stood out. I felt like the fifth wheel. There was nothing special about me. I didn't wish to die, although there wasn't much to live for either. And the confidence Russ had, was something I could only desire to have, but never own. He loved himself, Maya hated herself, and I didn't really care about myself. Russ pulled me up by my arm, and let his rest on my shoulders.

„You know, yesterday my uncle came, that one from Spain, and he said I grew very handsome.

Ha ha, I guess I did, didn't I! Don't

you think so too?!" I said nothing, just nodded my head.

„You're handsome and I'm ugly. The world is cruel." Maya complained.

„Sure is! Ha ha ha!"

Maya seemed worse than other days so I tried to care and asked softly: „What has happened this morning then?"

„NOW YOU ASK?! I SAID IT LIKE ALREADY TEN MINUTES AGO AND NOW YOU ASK! NEVER MIND ALREADY!"

I never would dare to scream like that, especially in public. Or to brag like Russ. I just nodded my head from time to time. Maya always looked depressed but once you got to know her, she still was able to smile a lot. I guess

she didn't fully hate herself, more a love-hate relationship with a little more hate than love. But today there was something wrong, but I didn't dare to ask again so I let it drop.

„Oeh oeh oeh! Since we are in such good moods today, can I copy someone's homework?" „Go the hell Russ." Maya said quickly and rushed off to her locker. Russ paid it no attention and turned his face to me.

„Jenn?" I nodded. It was okay. It had plenty of time to do my homework, while he was busy all day taking care of his looks, so I guess it was only reasonable to let him copy mine with his stuffed schedule. I stared at his right arm (his left was still on my shoulders). He was very muscled. No, not very. Just about right. Since Russ always noticed when people looked at him, he immediately responded to my stare.

„I'm looking good huh! All that work-out really pays off, really does! I've done a bit extra yesterday. The key to all this isn't just training though. The most important factor is food." He talked about his diet all the way to the classroom. And the information load switched from the calory-table to Napoleon. Napoleon, that little guy, seemed so weak, but did such great things. Why couldn't I do something like that?

Was it because I was female? Much history was about males. But some were about females, so it shouldn't be impossible, but I did nothing historical in my seventeen years alive. I started to hope that I might have done something amazing when I was still in my mother uterus. That way no one would have known I had done something great because they couldn't see me. Even though I was worth to be put in history books, I would have stayed unnoticed. But I soon enough came to my senses that that may be a bit farfetched, though not entirely impossible. I could have been a wonderembryo. It could have been so.

Maya poked me in the back (she sat behind me in class). The bell had rung. The lessonbook I had hardly even glanced at was put back in my bag and I got up to follow Maya to the next lesson.

„In India they still burn people alive. More precisely women. I wonder how it feels to be burned like that. I bet I'd get burnt if I lived there."

Maya swore. „I want to try it."

She looked at me, while I was looking straight forward. „You'll help right?"

I nodded. I was just glad she had lightened up a bit.

„Great. But let's not tell Russ. He always freaks out when the skin gets damaged, that stupid overreacting weirdo. Who the hell does he think he is anyway? Miss Universe? Sheesh! And who is he to decide what we do to *our* bodies." We had arrived at the next class, English. I nodded my head again and got to my seat. „That weirdo." She mumbled a last time and the time for me to stare out the window had begun.

English was too easy to mind paying attention. I guess you could call me smart. But since I never studied all I got on my report card were C+'s.

I never felt like studying, though I didn't mind making my homework. I had all classes with Maya, while Russ was in another. If

everything went right we would graduate at the end of this year and each go our separate ways. Russ told us he would always stay our friend

even after we had graduated, putting Maya in a bad mood because his presence really annoyed her.

But I, on the other hand, didn't believe him. He was always so cheerful and even though he was so full of himself, he got along with others pretty well. The only ones who hated him on this school were Maya and the ex-boyfriends of whom their ex-girlfriends had been stolen by the charms of this irresistible gigolo. I guess that makes him hated by quite a lot. And I can't say I blame them for it, since he doesn't mind kissing girls who are already taken (and surely he'll go even further with them than just kissing, but I'm not sure if I want to know so I won't ask).

All by all, as soon as he leaves this school and starts on the next, he'll forget about us as soon as a pretty girl makes her move on him (which, I'm sure, will be before first period has even started). He'll make plenty of friends and never contact the old ones anymore. He'll forget everyone and especially me. I mean, what is there to remember me by? I wish there was something about me that would cling onto his brain, making him remember me. Even if I would just cross his mind only once after we have lost contact, it would mean he noticed me, that I made an impression on him even if it was a tiny one.

He probably only hangs out with me because I'm like the only girl left that doesn't have or had a crush on him and he feels like making me fall for him before he leaves. I'm the last obstacle in the way of his victory. But I know that that's exactly what made Maya hate him. She, too, fell for his trap once and regrets it dearly now. I don't know if she still likes him despite it all, but he really played a dirty trick on her. It was two years ago.

One thing you must know about Maya; when she has something in mind, she'll do or say it right away. You might not think it of her, but as soon as she falls in love (although it doesn't happen that often) she'll confess just as soon, and sudden, as she'll pull out the hairs of the one that insulted her.

She confessed to Russ and they decided to go on a date. I immediately felt something was wrong, but I just smiled when Maya informed me about what had happened because she seemed happy.

When she arrived at the cinema they had agreed to meet that Friday night, Russ already stood there waiting, making out with some ultra-blond bimbo on high heels to 'kill the time'. I'm not kidding. Maya told me, that when she came up to him and demanded an explanation, he simply said he got there too early but then got bored waiting just like that girl who was waiting for *her* date to arrive, and they started making out to kill the time.

„But," he added, „now that you are here, let's enjoy ourselves!" That wasn't too smart of him. She kicked him in the crotch and left.

She came straight to my house and told me everything, without dropping a tear. We watched a movie together instead and she asked if she could spend the night and I, as always, nodded my head. Later she went into the bathroom and called for me to bring her a razor. The blood flew so beautifully that even if I had wanted to say something, I wouldn't have been able to do so. We cleaned up and went to bed like nothing had happened.

The Monday after, Russ came up to us, acting like Friday had never happened (or wasn't

important enough to recall) but the friendship between him and Maya was obviously over. Yet, I was still both of their friends so they bumped into each other a lot. For some unknown reason they refused to give me up in order to avoid one another. So they kept playing their silly cat-and-mouse game and I was stuck between. It didn't bother me. It was their fight, not mine. But I must admit, I found it interesting that one boy could make a girl do such a beautiful thing as showing her friend how human blood flows. It might have been a dirty and mean thing what Russ had done, but the consequences were amazing. I suddenly began to laugh as the teacher was explaining the past forms of irregular verbs. A relief had come over me. There was something I liked, and I only realised it now, staring out the window from classroom 47b.

2 - Chapter 2: Mind Reading Wish

Chapter 2

Maya has violin lessons every Wednesday and for that reason it has become the day I most frequently spent my after-school-hours alone with Russ.

„Now, we can finally *enjoy* our time together without that suicidal freak." He would utter relieved while throwing his head in his neck, sighing at the sky.

I don't know if it made me a bad friend, I guess it did, but I never said anything against it. I'd just look away.

Focus my attention on something else. Stare at cars passing by, couples smooching while walking hand-in-hand

on the sidewalks, notice the dogpee on the lamp poles and the poop in the gutters, only halfly paying attention to

what Russ was laughing about and wondering if he would ever make Maya bleed again. Probably not.

Today Russ suggested to go shopping. He needed a new jacket. As always, he rested his leftarm on my shoulders

as we were walking towards the shopping centre. He was laughing and talking, Wednesdays more enthusiastic than

on other days, must have been due to Maya absence, and most likely it was all talk about himself. I don't know for

sure, because, like I said, I only paid little attention anymore. Just an occasional nod was sufficient most of the time.

„Don't you think so too, Jenn?" and I nodded, but this time instead of continuing with his self-adoring it seemed this

time he was talking about something else, because he was silent and looked at me. Just looked. As I turned my face

to see his expression, I saw a frown. A deep gaze that attempted to read my mind, or so it looked.

Finally his lips

parted: „You weren't listening were you?"

Stunned. I was stunned. Since when did he notice something or someone else beside himself?

I stared him in the eyes, then looked up at his forehead. „Wrimpels." I spoke.

„What?"

„Frowning gives you... wrinkles... Right?" I didn't really care, but I wanted to cover up my exposal as quick as

possible. And it worked. He even appeared to be shocked for a moment for forgetting it. His arm left my shoulders

and soon two manly, perfectly manicured and babybottom-soft hands massaged the once frowning flesh. Nice safe,

if I may say so myself and I continued watching cars and couples and lamp poles and gutters. Not too long after, his

arm rested on my shoulders again and he was gaily talking away.

„Oh we're here, this is the store I want to browse through. It's said to have real cool clothing, so let's see if there's

something worthy for my beautiful body." He laughed excitedly and pushed me inside.

It wasn't that crowded, but there were more people I'd liked to be there.

„Oeh, maybe this. Oh and what about this? Mmm, no this is just rubbish. Ugh awful! Ah! Splendid!"

As Russ went through the pieces of clothing, judging them, intensely feeling if the fabric was nice, label them as either

`disgusting' or `fabulous', I just watched the whole scene. I might not always have my thoughts with what's happening,

but never did I get distracted when Russ was going at it in a store. It was funny, amusing. Sometimes you could see

him occasionally tiptoeing out of pleasure. Russ went up, down, up, down, up, squealing, the perfect outfit right before

his eyes. As he went into a changing-cabinet I was wondering; was this something you could wake me up for in the

middle of the night? It was amusing indeed, but I doubted the answer.

After showing outfit one, two and three in store A, then outfit four and five in store B, and finally outfit six in store C,

we decided, well Russ decided, to take a rest at a café. He treated me on a diet-coke and a loaf with cheese, he

himself took water and a salad.

When we were near to finishing our lunch a friend or acquaintance, or anyway somebody who knew Russ, came over

to us. A Brunette who must have spent all morning squeezing herself in her little sister's miniskirt and tanktop.

„Hey Russ, what's up?" She glanced over to me, smiling a weird smile, „She your girl?"

„No," Russ smiled back, „she's a friend of mine, a friend from school."

„Oh I see," she said still glancing at me, „Have you heard of that party this Fridaynight? It's going to be lots of fun, are you going?"

„Yeah, I heard of it! Billy's parents are gone on a holiday right? Unsupervised house-crashing, wouldn't want to miss it!"

He laughed a cool person's laugh.

The girl giggled: „You want to go with me sweetie? My friends aren't going and it'd be lame to show up alone, you know."

She smiled, giggled, flashed her teeth, flicked her hair and pulled her skit a bit more up. Behind her I saw some men staring

with fascination at the revealing of even more skin. It wouldn't surprise me if there was already a panties-shot.

She was a weird girl, or so I thought, but even stranger was Russ. No word of bragging, no sign of self-adoring, just cool

guy behaviour. Like all those guys who are, I don't know, keen on parties and seducing `chicks' and comparing sizes in

the schoolshowers and stuff like that. Is he only so obsessed with himself when he was with Maya and me? That would

explain why he is so popular. I mean, I always found it a bit funny that someone so stuck up about himself would be so

popular, but this would explain it.

I sipped from my last bit of coke and listened to the one-on-one conversation. I felt like an outsider, it was as if I wasn't even there, sitting at that same table, discovering a whole new side of Russ which I wasn't sure of if I was happy to have found out or not.

Maybe he, I thought, is in fact very insecure about his looks and for that reason hangs out with outcasts like Maya and me, so he can brag and make himself feel better. But what did he have to feel insecure about? He was dropdead gorgeous!

Or was it, to make him not seem too available? If he were to always hang out with the popular kids at school, the pretty girls would be spending all day talking to him and hanging over him, and since he sat with us at lunchbreak, no girl would come over, because they didn't want to be spotted together with Maya and me, so he would have a bit of rest. I don't know how many explanations had crossed my mind by the time their conversation finally finished and Russ turned my

direction again. It appeared all this time I had been sucking on an empty glass. He laughed, I put the glass away, he rose from his chair, I followed, his arm was around my shoulders again and we walked out of the café to head to store D, E and F.

When I got home, I waited until Maya's practice would be over and she had gotten a chance to get home herself. Then I phoned her, to ask if she knew.

She didn't and added: „Only shows how two-faced he is!"

Maya told about her violin-lessons and about a difficult song called the Devil's Snare that she aspired to play someday and I caught myself nodding. What was wrong with me, had I become an automatic?

„Ah uh yes!" I added quickly.

Two-faced Russ, depressed Maya and nothing-special Jenny. Yes, my feelings today were because the people around me were interesting, but would Russ at home tell stories about me? Or call his friends to tell about me, like I just did about him? I wanted a change! But... I'm just me. I doubt if anything will happen. Maybe if I called Maya, maybe she would understand?

But I immediately shook my head to rid the thought. She would say something like: ``You are worried about irrelevant stuff like that while I'm stuck in hell?!" It was no use talking to her about stuff like that, certainly not.

I dragged myself to my room and started on my homework. History, English and Math.

I had just finished History when mom called everyone to come down for dinner. The first one to sit at the table was myself, then my father after turning the television a bit louder so he could hear the sports results being announced and finally my brother rushed down after the third calling.

I chucked down the Brad Pitt dinner, and observed my near to choking little brother who could eat with such a pace that it almost was inhuman. My father, on the other hand, was slow, forgetting to chew whenever the voice on the

radio said something interesting, which, apparently, was all the time. When he finally stuck his fork in his mouth and managed to chew a recordbreaking two times, he would scream out a ``Nooo! Those idiots! How could they lose!" and all that was first *in* his mouth, flew out again. All over the table, little pieces of stake with garlic-sauce, it was revolting and I was used to it. Since it was my brother's turn to do the dishes, the one with their hands in the soap, after everyone had finished eating, was me.

Michael has rushed off to his videogame. Understandable, because he challenged himself to reach level 12 today and he was only at level 5 and more than half a day had passed already.

When I was almost done, Russ called. With my hands still soaked I accepted the phone from my mother.

„Hey."

„Hey, what are you doing?"

„Finishing up on the dishes."

„Isn't Wednesday your brother's turn?"

„Yeah."

He laughed: „Little doormat."

„I guess" He was right that I just let people step over me, but I didn't really care, so I never thought it as troublesome. He laughed again.

„Will you come to watch a video at my place when you're done?"

I paused for a second. „If I'm coming over, whose homework are you going to copy then tomorrow? I haven't finished mine yet."

He laughed. „It's alright. So are you coming?" I stopped myself from nodding and said that I was fine with it.

„Good. Want me to pick you up?"

„I'll walk."

„Then I'll meet you halfway."

„Is... Maya coming?"

He laughed: „No way. My home is no place for freaks."

„Don't..." say that. Don't say that. Why couldn't I say it? It wasn't like he would make her beautiful ever again.

„Don't what?" But I hung up, put on my jacket and started walking. He didn't meet me halfway like he said he would and as I

stood in front of his house, I looked up to his window, turned around and went to Maya's instead. He wasn't going to make Maya

do beautiful things anymore and after we all have graduated he'll forget about us. Besides he didn't keep his word when saying he'd

meet me halfway, and people who break their promises don't really care about you anyway. I wanted to change and I was going to

try to break it to Maya carefully, if there were any negative responses I would give up right away and change the subject.

Torture-techniques from the Middle-Ages always did well with her.

She was surprised to see me but didn't ask questions, she just let me in and guided me to her room.

Then she went down to fetch us

a drink and sat down right across me. Her room was decorated in a darkish way: purple and black walls,

a black bed with dark purple
and blue sheets and an even darker purple carpet. All the other furniture was black too. Her parents
thought it to be a `fase in growing up'
and just let her decorate it anyway she wanted, even when it screamed drepression. The only cd's she
had were all depressing, dark
music and her parents never frowned once. Maybe she was begging for attention and her parents just
don't give her any. They were rich
and enjoying life and expected their daughter did the same, with her `experimental' behaviour.

„Want me to put up some music?"
„Do you think I should change?" Honestly, it was the most subtle I could do. I'm not so good with words.
„What?"
„Don't I... Don't I ever bore you?"
She stared at me. I guess when all you can talk about is your own misery; you lose your words when
someone else fesses up about *their*
worries. „You don't bore me." She finally said.
„But I never... I'm not... I don't have anything... interesting..." I tried.
„Oh, like I'm something special! Ha! Did you come here to talk about `you being boring' and then later
switching it to your real purpose
of coming here? To tell me *I'm boring?!'*"
There she went, she really was a person like no one else. „I don't think you're boring."
„Oh you don't think I'm boring huh, yeah right."
„I think you're special."
„...special?" She looked at me with disbelief, blinking her eyes. „What?"
„I think you're special, so I never thought of you as boring."
„Why would you... Why would you say...?" and then, suddenly, I saw something I never saw before.
Tears and a smile she was trying
hard to hide, but couldn't. Maya was often depressed but she never cried. Well I never saw her doing so,
but now she did.
„I can't explain it, I just think you are...that's all."
She didn't try to hide it anymore, and smiled freely now making more and more tears come out to roll
over her white cheeks, putting some
colour on them. She leant forward and let her head fall on my shoulder. She kissed it and then buried
her tears where the kiss had landed.
I felt my shoulder getting soaked. I placed my hands awkwardly on her back, patted a little.
„Thank you..." she whispered. I didn't understand. The only thing I knew was that we weren't going to
talk about my need of change.
When the soundless crying finally stopped, she still kept her head lying on my shoulders, panting a little
heavier than normal, sometimes
inhaling in such a way as if she wanted to suck in life which was apparently somewhere stuck on my
T-shirt.
„Are you staying over tonight?" she asked making me feel her warm breath in my neck, her lips tremble
relaxed against my thin clothes.
„Sure, why not."
I called home, got the okay, and was forced to sleep in the same bed as Maya. She wouldn't have me
sleep anywhere else. The entire night
she clung onto my body, sometimes pecking my cheek, neck or shoulder, and whispering a `thank you',
until she fell asleep with her arms

never losing grip around my waist, and I just kept patting her back from time to time, managing to fall in sleep as well after approximately two hours.

The next morning her eyes were swollen and she refused to go downstairs for breakfast, so I went down to get her a cold wet towel for her eyes and to bring the breakfast from the table to her room.

We ate silently, but it wasn't awkward, because Maya seemed... relaxed, maybe even a little bit happy and ease.

„Maybe, I should buy some other cd's." Her voice kindly breaking the silence.

I nodded, deliberately this time, to not make a noise and to be able hear the sentence float through the room a couple of minutes more.

3 - Chapter 3: The Magic Of Words

Chapter 3.

At school it was different than usual.

As I spoke my standard-greeting: „Hey guys." Maya didn't get upset and Russ wasn't his overily cheerful self. I figured

they met on their way over here and argued like they always did, but that this time Maya had won the argument. It had

happened before, but not often, since most of the time Maya was in too bad a mood to care to win.

But today Maya even winked at me: „Hey Jenny."

And Russ: „You know, since yesterday was cancelled, I figure I can copy your homework again?"

I nodded. That.. will, maybe, never change.

Maya hooked her arm into mine: „I don't know why you allow that bastard to copy your homework."

„What's your problem? She likes me, that's all! Right Jenn? You don't mind right?"

Suddenly, they were both staring at me, with a look that demanded an answer.

„Tell that asshole that you don't want him copying your homework or I'll throw myself off a bridge."

„Tell that dog to mind her own business or I'll throw her off a bridge!"

Either way, it seemed interesting to me.

„Well?"

„Oh don't push it, Princess." Maya sneered.

„Shut the hell up! Jenn, answer, tell her you love letting me copy your homework, because we're buddies."

They were weird today. „Like, the truth?" I finally asked.

„Well... yah!" Russ seemed a little irritated. That's a first. I couldn't help myself staring at him for a bit, amazed. Such a

new side of him once again. How many sides of him did he have anyway? It would be fun if they were endless.

Maya moved our linked arms towards me, pushing me aside a little to grasp my attention, because I was obviously drifting

off. „I'd like to know the reason too, the reason why you let him. You like him more than me?"

Her grip loosened a bit,

her eyes started to show her usual sadness again. Not totally, but it was coming.

„Oh, well. It's not that I like him better, or that I... dislike him," I hesitated a moment before I continued, „it's just that,

you know, he's good-looking."

Maya screamed a 'what!', Russ laughed victoriously.

„You've got to be kidding me Jenny! You're that much of a shallow girl?!"

„Oh hush! You just don't have any respect for the human beauty! How special and wonderful it is! Ha, but how could you

know anyway?! You're ugly as hell!"

As Russ kept on laughing, I pressed my lips against Maya's ear and whispered: „Guys like Russ need all the time of the world to look good. He needs the entire day to make himself look pretty, it's what makes him confident. How can I not let him copy my homework? He wouldn't have time to smudge his face with crèmes and stuff. You know, to do his daily facial."

She laughed out loud and for the first time in those three years they both walked into the school happy.

No.

For the first time in three years, we all walked into the school happy.

That's probably why, at lunch, for the first time ever, I dared to suggest to do something after school, together, with the three of us.

„Hell no!"

Well, it was worth a try.

4 - Finding a hobby

```
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<b><i>Chapter 4.</i></b>
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<p style="text-indent: 0.00mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color:
White; ">
The exams were coming close. Only six weeks yet to go. No more homework, it was all self-study from
now on.
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<p style="text-indent: 0.00mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color:
White; ">
Both Maya and Russ planned to start studying a month beforehand which left them with two weeks of
absolute freedom after school and in weekends. So naturally I decided to do the same.
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During lunchbreak they sat down with their agenda's in front of us.

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<p style="text-indent: 0.00mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">

„Jenn, you're mine on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays!"

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„Uhm.."

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„And then between those boring days <i>we</i> will have <i>real</i> fun every Friday and Sunday, oh and Monday! You can sleep over every Sunday and then we'll walk to school together."

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<p style="text-indent: 0.00mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">

„Uhm.."

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„Yeah well, I will be lodging with Jenn then, ha! Agreed Jenn? This Saturday I'll be sleeping over at your place.”

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„Uhm.. well... I `m not sure...”

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„No freaking way! Over my dead body that a horny guy like you will be spending the night at Jenny's, she's way too innocent for you dirty hands! If you're sleeping over, then I am too!”

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„I don't...”

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<p style="text-indent: 0.00mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">

„What?! The Saturdays were mine! You'll sleep over in your own damn time!”

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The world had gone mad, at that very moment. Russ was openly fighting someone over a no one. No kidding, you should've heard the others.

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<p style="text-indent: 0.00mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">

„Why is Russ making such a fuss over that nobody? I mean, who the hell is that girl?“

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<p style="text-indent: 0.00mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">

„Isn't she in graduationyear?“

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<p style="text-indent: 0.00mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">

„For real? Then how come I never saw her in all these years?“

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<p style="text-indent: 0.00mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">

„Sure you've seen her! She's that girl that is always sitting in front of the school before first class starts.“

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<p style="text-indent: 0.00mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">

„Oh that weirdo!“ There was laughing and pointing, but Russ and Maya didn't seem to notice. They just kept on arguing. So I picked up my plate, threw the left-over in the bin and went to the bathroom. When I came back they were still at it.

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„You guys are acting a little funny.“ I finally said. They stopped their fight at once and looked my way.

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„What?“ Russ asked.

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„Uhm... you know, break is almost over. You guys haven't even touched your food yet.“

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„Yeah well..“ Maya muttered.

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With my head resting on my righthand, I stared at the ceiling waiting for them to finish their lunch they just now started on. They finished five minutes after the bell had rung. Maya and me went onto History-class while Russ headed for Mathematics.

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Maya wrote me several notes which I wouldn't reply to with a simple scribbling underneath the message, but when it was a yes or no question I'd just nod my head.

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<p style="text-indent: 0.00mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">

"Russ is so annoying."

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"..."

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"I mean, he thinks he's the world, that stuck-up fool."

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“...”

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“Why don't we hang out together from now on, just us?”

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I nodded.

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“Really?”

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I looked to my right, her eyes staring anticipating at me.

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“Friday, Sunday, Monday... right?” I whispered.

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“No I mean... always.” She started whispering too, spoken words replacing the written ones.

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I turned my gaze back to the blackboard where the teacher was writing out an entire overview about WO II and which country fought which country and who were allies, etcetera.

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“Jenny?”

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“I don't know... why you want to so much, but... I still want to hang out with Russ too... I think.”

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"What for! He's an @\$!" Maya said, shouting this time.
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"Maya! You'd better pay attention instead of screaming, you do want to graduate do you not?" The teacher sneered. But Maya ignored him totally, looking at me seemingly angry and hurt at the same time.
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<p style="text-indent: 0.00mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"He'll forget about us when we've graduated, so why not hang out until then?" I continued speaking in a whispering voice.
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<p style="text-indent: 0.00mm; text-align: left; line-height: 4.166667mm; color: Black; background-color: White; ">
"Damn right he'll forget us! As soon as he sees college-girls legs that are capable of spreading we're out of his mind forever, so why the hell hang out with him at all!"
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Good point. But... I liked observing the behaviour of both these people, always did, so why not stay close as long as they still want me around. Then I started thinking, would these people act the same around me as they would when they're alone, or with friends or family?
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“It’s Tuesday right?” I asked lost in thoughts.

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“Why are you changing the subject! We’re talking about something here!” Maya shouted on,

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“I thought you liked me! Why are you so mean!”

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“I do like you Maya. I meant what I said back then.” The bell rung, “but I need to be somewhere right now okay? I’ll see you tomorrow.”

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“Jenny! Where are you going?” She rushed after me. “I’m coming with.”

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Maya grabbed hold of my arm. "Where are we going?" she asked again.

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"To The Stargazer."

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"That astronomy store? Why?"

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"I want to buy a binocular."

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"A binocular? I think The Stargazer only has telescopes. I think it's better to check out that new nature-store. That one must have binoculars for bird watching and stuff. Do you want to go bird watching?"

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“Yeah, something like that.”

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“Cool. We'll both buy one! Is bird watching a hobby of yours for a long time already?”

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“No, but I think it will be an interesting one.”

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Maya smiled: “Yeah, we should buy a bird book along with it. It'll be our secret hobby.”

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Secret. Yes. But not ours, only mine.

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5 - Chapter 4: Finding a hobby

Chapter 4. The exams were coming close. Only six weeks yet to go. No more homework, it was all self-study from now on. Both Maya and Russ planned to start studying a month beforehand which left them with two weeks of absolute freedom after school and in weekends. So naturally I decided to do the same. During lunchbreak they sat down with their agendas in front of us. „Jenn, youre mine on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays!„,Uhm...„And then between those boring days we will have real fun every Friday and Sunday, oh and Monday! You can sleep over every Sunday and then well walk to school together...„Uhm...„Yeah well, I will be lodging with Jenn then, ha! Agreed Jenn? This Saturday Ill be sleeping over at your place...„Uhm.. well... I m not sure...„No freaking way! Over my dead body that a horny guy like you will be spending the night at Jennys, shes way too innocent for you dirty hands! If youre sleeping over, then I am too!„,I dont...„What?! The Saturdays were mine! Youll sleep over in your own damn time!The world had gone mad, at that very moment. Russ was openly fighting someone over a no one. No kidding, you shouldve heard the others. „Why is Russ making such a fuss over that nobody? I mean, who the hell is that girl?...„Isnt she in graduation year?...„For real? Then how come I never saw her in all these years?...„Sure youve seen her! Shes that girl that is always sitting in front of the school before first class starts...„Oh that weirdo! There was laughing and pointing, but Russ and Maya didnt seem to notice. They just kept on arguing. So I picked up my plate, threw the left-over in the bin and went to the bathroom. When I came back they were still at it...„You guys are acting a little funny. I finally said. They stopped their fight at once and looked my way...„What? Russ asked...„Uhm you know, break is almost over. You guys havent even touched your food yet...„Yeah well.. Maya muttered. With my head resting on my righthand, I stared at the ceiling waiting for them to finish their lunch they just now started on. They finished five minutes after the bell had rung. Maya and me went onto History-class while Russ headed for Mathematics. Maya wrote me several notes which I wouldnt reply to with a simple scribbling underneath the message, but when it was a yes or no question Id just nod my head. Russ is so annoying. I mean, he thinks hes the world, that stuck-up fool. Why dont we hang out together from now on, just us? I nodded. Really? I looked to my right, her eyes staring anticipating at me. Friday, Sunday, Monday right? I whispered. No I mean always. She started whispering too, spoken words replacing the written ones. I turned my gaze back to the blackboard where the teacher was writing out an entire overview about WO II and which country fought which country and who were allies, etcetera. Jenny? I dont know why you want to so much, but I still want to hang out with Russ too I think. What for! Hes an @\$\$! Maya said, shouting this time. Maya! Youd better pay attention instead of screaming, you do want to graduate do you not? The teacher sneered. But Maya ignored him totally, looking at me seemingly angry and hurt at the same time. Hell forget about us when weve graduated, so why not hang out until then? I continued speaking in a whispering voice. Damn right hell forget us! As soon as he sees college-girls legs that are capable of spreading were out of his mind forever, so why the hell hang out with him at all! Good point. But I liked observing the behaviour of both these people, always did, so why not stay close as long as they still want me around. Then I started thinking, would these people act the same around me as they would when theyre alone, or with friends or family? Its Tuesday right? I asked lost in thoughts. Why are you changing the subject! Were talking about something here! Maya shouted on, I thought you liked me! Why are you so mean! I do like you Maya. I meant what I said back then. The bell rung, but I need to be somewhere right now okay? Ill see you tomorrow. Jenny! Where are you going? She rushed after me. Im coming with. Maya grabbed hold of my arm. Where are we going? she asked again. To The Stargazer. That astronomy store? Why? I want to buy a binocular. A binocular? I think

The Stargazer only has telescopes. I think its better to check out that new nature-store. That one must have binoculars for bird watching and stuff. Do you want to go bird watching?Yeah, something like that.Cool. Well both buy one! Is bird watching a hobby of yours for a long time already?No, but I think it will be an interesting one.Maya smiled: Yeah, we should buy a bird book along with it. Itll be our secret hobby.Secret. Yes. But not ours, only mine. Maya stuck with me through the entire day. She had diner at my place and stayed over for the night, making me postpone my plans.

6 - When it matters, correct: ch. 1 - 5

When it matters...

Chapter 1: Wake-up call.

This story isn't about me. This story is about my little brother. This story is about my brother and my mother, about my father, my friends and all the other people around me whether they are alive or dead. But it's not about me, for I'm simply not that important. But I will tell you about all the people around me, so that maybe I'll find a part in that story in which I matter. In which it matters that I was there, that I had opened my mouth or just stood there silently.

But I don't think I'm special in any way. I might even be more boring than the average dull person with it's dull life. My brother for example is addicted to videogames, my mother is obsessed with the latest gossips, while my father screams his lounges out in front of the telly when football is on and my friend takes pleasure in hurting herself, and another won't stop adoring himself. But I.. there's nothing you could wake me up for in the middle of the night. Nothing I find pleasure in, and I most definitely do not like the way I look or who I am. I am just not all that. I'm less.

Let's start with today. When my mother woke me up from another dreamless night and when she asked what I wanted to have for breakfast, I answered: "Bread with cheese." Like I did every morning and yet she kept asking me over and over and I'd never come up with another answer. Even when I felt like having cornflakes, or toast, the same response would come out over my lips: bread and cheese. Though it didn't matter, she had already made me something else. It was never bread with cheese. She would make me the breakfast of what some famous star would eat also. Every day I ate the meal of some other moviestar and while I would eat, she would tell me all about this person. Then, every time she made a pause, I would automatically nod my head at the 'Isn't that cool?' **punchline** of my mother (my mouth was stuffed with whatever that moviestar ate, this time buttered toast, which gave me an excuse not to respond).

She used the time I used to drink the tasteless water out of the glass in front of me to call my brother for the fourth time, who then came down five minutes later with tired eyes after trying out his new video game the night before. Yet as soon as his eyes caught me sitting there, he would place his flatt butt on the chair next to me and tell me, with no breathpauses, how cool that game was. When it was time to leave, he would have yet to eat his food but mom just put it in a sack and gave it him to eat on the way and then she'd tell us, while she shoved us out of the house, about a famous lazy bum who was just like us, so there was still hope for us to become famous and make lots of money.

Even though I knew all the gossips and knew about all the latest videogames, but I never had a subject to talk about with my friends. I guess it didn't even matter. Their mouths stood never still anyway, so my silence was misunderstood as being interested. After thirty minutes of another inforound about Spazz, the coolest bunny on earth who could flap its ears and so gain a zillion points, we arrived at school. My little brother would, as soon as he spotted his friends, give an hyper salute like a comichero whose name I've forgotten and they'd all respond in the same way. They would do the coolest moves copied from either the telly or a videogame and other students would stop and stare at them, while I was still dragging my heavy **bag pack** out of the bus.

I stepped towards the schoolbuilding and sat down outside with my back against the wall. I watched my feet as students passed me by, paying no attention to me since I've been doing this ever since I had entered school, which was three years ago. I waited and waited until a little voice informed me that my

friends had arrived.

„I wish to die. I never had such a lousy morning.”

„Oh, don't be sad. Look at me! Don't you feel all better now?”

I looked up. This was my cue. „Hey guys.”

„Why am I referred to as a guy? I'm looking manly again, aren't I? I must be the ugliest girl in the world, I have no femininity whatsoever. How cruel of you to remind me.” And she let out a sob. I guess I screwed up my one line, like I had been doing for the last three years.

„Oh, don't worry! No one will look at you anyway when I'm walking next to you! I'll capture all their gazes with my perfection and flashy smile! Do not worry, do not worry!” my boyfriend Russ cheered.

They were different and in a way (although sometimes in a negative way) they stood out. I felt like the fifth wheel. There was nothing special about me. I didn't wish to die, although there wasn't much to live for either. And the confidence Russ had, was something I could only desire to have, but never own. He loved himself, Maya hated herself, and I didn't really care about myself. Russ pulled me up by my arm, and let his rest on my shoulders.

„You know, yesterday my uncle came, that one from Spain, and he said I grew up very handsome. Ha ha, I guess I did, didn't I! Don't you think so too?!" I said nothing, just nodded my head.

„You're handsome and I'm ugly. The world is cruel." Maya complained.

„Sure is! Ha ha ha!"

Maya seemed worse than other days so I tried to care and asked softly: „What has happened this morning then ?"

„NOW YOU ASK?! I SAID IT LIKE ALREADY TEN MINUTES AGO AND NOW YOU ASK! NEVER MIND ALREADY!"

I never would dare to scream like that, especially in public. Or to brag like Russ. I just nodded my head from time to time. Maya always looked depressed but once you got to know her, she still was able to smile a lot. I guess she didn't fully hate herself, more a love-hate relationship with a little more hate than love. But today there was something wrong, but I didn't dare to ask again so I let it drop.

„Oeh oeh oeh! Since we are in such good moods today, can I copy someone's homework?"

„Go the hell Russ.” Maya said quickly and rushed off to her locker. Russ paid it no attention and turned his face to me.

„Jenn?” I nodded. It was okay. It had plenty of time to do my homework, while he was busy all day taking care of his looks, so I guess it was only reasonable to let him copy mine with his stuffed schedule. I stared at his right arm (his left was still on my shoulders). He was very muscled. No, not very. Just about right. Since Russ always noticed when people looked at him, he immediately responded to my stare.

„I’m looking good huh! All that work-out really pays off, really does! I’ve done a bit extra yesterday. The key to all this isn’t just training though. The most important factor is food.” He talked about his perfectly balanced diet all the way to the classroom. And the information flood switched from the calorie-table to Napoleon. Napoleon, that little guy, seemed so weak, but did such great things. Why couldn’t I do something like that? Was it because I was female? Much history was about males. But some were about females, so it shouldn’t be impossible, but I did nothing historical in my seventeen years alive. I started to hope that I might have done something amazing when I was still in my mother uterus. That way no one would have known I had done something great because they couldn’t see me. Even though I was worth to be put in history books, I would have stayed unnoticed. But I soon enough came to my senses that that may be a bit farfetched, though not entirely impossible. I could have been a wonderembryo. It could have been so.

Maya poked me in the back (she sat behind me in class). The bell had rung. The lessonbook I had hardly even glanced at was put back in my bag and I got up to follow Maya to the next lesson.

„In India they still burn people alive. More precisely women. I wonder how it feels to be burned like that. I bet I’d get burnt if I lived there.” Maya swore. „I want to try it.”

She looked at me, while I was looking straight forward. „You’ll help right?”

I nodded. I was just glad she had lightened up a bit.

„Great. But let’s not tell Russ. He always freaks out when the skin gets damaged, that stupid overreacting weirdo. Who the hell does he think he is anyway? Miss Universe? Sheesh! And who is he to decide what we do to *our* bodies.” We had arrived at the next class, English. I nodded my head again and got to my seat. „That weirdo.” She mumbled a last time and the time for me to stare out the window had begun.

English was too easy to mind paying attention. I guess you could call me smart. But since I never studied all I got on my report card were C+’s, and an occasional B. I never felt like **studying, though I didn’t mind making my homework. I had all classes with Maya, while Russ was in another.** If everything went right we would graduate at the end of this year and each go our separate ways. Russ told us he would always stay our friend even after we had graduated, putting Maya in a bad mood because his presence really annoyed her.

But I, on the other hand, didn’t believe him. He was always so cheerful and even though he was so full of himself, he got along with others pretty well. The only ones who hated him on this school were Maya and the ex-boyfriends of whom their ex-girlfriends had been stolen by the charms of this irresistible gigolo. I guess that makes him hated by quite a lot. And I can’t say I blame them for it, since he doesn’t mind kissing girls who are already taken (and surely he’ll go even further with them than just kissing, but I’m not sure if I want to know so I won’t ask).

All by all, as soon as he leaves this school and starts on the next, he'll forget about us as soon as a pretty girl makes her move on him (which, I'm sure, will be before first period has even started). He'll make plenty of friends and never contact the old ones anymore. He'll forget everyone and especially me. I mean, what is there to remember me by? I wish there was something about me that would clung onto his brain, making him remember me. Even if I would just cross his mind only once after we have lost contact, it would mean he noticed me, that I made an impression on him even if it was a tiny one.

He probably only hangs out with me because I'm like the only girl left that doesn't have or had a crush on him and he feels like making me fall for him before he leaves. I'm the last obstacle in the way of his victory. But I know that that's exactly what made Maya hate him. She, too, fell for his trap once and regrets it dearly now. I don't know if she still likes him despite it all, but he really played a dirty trick on her. It was two years ago.

One thing you must know about Maya; when she has something in mind, she'll do or say it right away. You might not think it of her, but as soon as she falls in love (although it doesn't happen that often) she'll confess just as soon, and sudden, as she'll pull out the hairs of the one that insulted her.

She confessed to Russ and they decided to go on a date. I immediately felt something was wrong, but I just smiled when Maya informed me about what had happened because she seemed happy.

When she arrived at the cinema they had agreed to meet at that Fridaynight, Russ already stood there waiting, making out with some ultra-blond bimbo on high heels to 'kill the time'. I'm not kidding. Maya told me, that when she came up to him and demanded an explanation, he simply said he got there too early but then got bored waiting just like that girl who was waiting for *her* date to arrive, and they started making out to kill the time. „But,” he added, „now that you are here, let's enjoy ourselves!” That wasn't too smart of him. She kicked him in the crotch and left.

She came straight to my house and told me everything, without dropping a tear. We watched a movie together **instead** and she asked if she could spend the night and I, as always, nodded my head. Later she went into the bathroom and called for me to bring her a razor. The blood flew so beautifully that even if I had wanted to say something, I wouldn't have been able to do so. We cleaned up and went to bed like nothing had happened.

The Monday after, Russ came up to us, acting like Friday had never happened (or wasn't important enough to recall) but the friendship between him and Maya was obviously over. Yet, I was still both of their friends so they bumped into each other a lot. For some unknown reason they refused to give me up in order to avoid one another.

So they kept playing their silly cat-and-mouse game and I was stuck between. It didn't bother me. It was their fight, not mine. But I must admit, I found it interesting that one boy could make a girl do such a beautiful thing as showing her friend how human blood flows. It might have been a dirty and mean thing what Russ had done, but the consequences were amazing.

I suddenly began to laugh as the teacher was explaining the past forms of irregular verbs. A relief had come over me. There was something I liked, and I only realised it now, staring out the window from classroom 47b.

Chapter 2: Mind reading desire.

Maya has violin lessons every Wednesday and for that reason it has become the day I most frequently spent my after-school-hours alone with Russ.

„Now, we can finally *enjoy* our time together without that suicidal freak.” He would utter relieved while throwing his head in his neck, sighing at the sky.

I don't know if it made me a bad friend, I guess it did, but I never said anything against it. I'd just look away. Focus my attention on something else. Stare at cars passing by, couples smooching while walking hand-in-hand on the sidewalks, notice the dogpee on the lamp poles and the poop in the gutters, only halfly paying attention to what Russ was laughing about and wondering if he would ever make Maya bleed again. Probably not.

Today Russ suggested to go shopping. He needed a new jacket. As always, he rested his leftarm on my shoulders as we were walking towards the shopping centre. He was laughing and talking, Wednesdays more enthusiastic than on other days, must have been due to Maya absence, and most likely it was all talk about himself. I don't know for sure, because, like I said, I only paid little attention anymore. Just an occasional nod was sufficient most of the time.

„Don't you think so too, Jenn?” and I nodded, but this time instead of continuing with his self-adoring it seemed this time he was talking about something else, because he was silent and looked at me. Just looked. As I turned my face to see his expression, I saw a frown. A deep gaze that attempted to read my mind, or so it looked. Finally his lips parted: „You weren't listening were you?”

Stunned. I was stunned. Since when did he notice something or someone else beside himself?

I stared him in the eyes, then looked up at his forehead. „Wrimpels.” I spoke.

„What?“

„Frowning gives you... wrinkles... Right?“ I didn't really care, but I wanted to cover up my exposal as quick as possible. And it worked. He even appeared to be shocked for a moment for forgetting it. His arm left my shoulders and soon two manly, perfectly manicured and babybottom-soft hands massaged the once frowning flesh. Nice safe, if I may say so myself and I continued watching cars and couples and lamp poles and gutters. Not too long after, his arm rested on my shoulders again and he was gaily talking away.

„Oh we're here, this is the store I want to browse through. It's said to have real cool clothing, so let's see if there's something worthy of my beautiful body.“ He laughed excitedly and pushed me inside.

It wasn't that crowded, but there were more people I'd liked to be there.

„Oeh, maybe this. Oh and what about this? Mmm, no this is just rubbish. Ugh awful! Ah! Splendid!“

As Russ went through the pieces of clothing, judging them, intensely feeling if the fabric was nice, label them as either 'disgusting' or 'fabulous', I just watched the whole scene. I might not always have my thoughts with what's happening, but never did I get distracted when Russ was going at it in a store. It was funny, amusing. Sometimes you could see him **tiptoeing in place** out of pleasure. Russ went up, down, up, down, up, squealing for the perfect outfit was right before his eyes. As he went into a changing-cabinet I was wondering; was this something you could wake me up for in the middle of the night? It was amusing indeed, but I doubted the answer.

After showing outfit one, two and three in store A, then outfit four and five in store B, and finally outfit six in store C, we decided, well Russ decided, to take a rest at a café. He treated me on a diet-coke and a loaf with cheese, he himself took water and a salad.

When we were near to finishing our lunch a friend or acquaintance, or anyway somebody who knew Russ, came over to us. A Brunette who must have spent all morning squeezing herself in her little sister's miniskirt and tanktop.

„Hey Russ, what's up?” She glanced over to me, smiling a weird smile, „She your girl?”

„No,” Russ smiled back, „she's a friend of mine, a friend from school.”

„Oh I see,” she said still glancing at me, „Have you heard of that party this Fridaynight? It's going to be lots of fun, are you going?”

„Yeah, I heard of it! Billy's parents are gone on a holiday right? Unsupervised house-crashing, wouldn't want to miss it!” He laughed a cool person's laugh.

The girl giggled, her eyes finally focussing on Russ: „You want to go with me sweetie? My friends aren't

going and it'd be lame to show up alone, you know." She smiled, giggled, flashed her teeth, flicked her hair and pulled her skirt a bit more up. Behind her I saw some men staring with fascination at the revealing of even more skin. It wouldn't surprise me if there was already a panties-shot.

She was a weird girl, or so I thought, but even stranger was Russ. No word of bragging, no sign of self-adoring, just cool guy behaviour. Like all those guys who are, I don't know, keen on parties and seducing 'chicks' and comparing sizes in the schoolshowers and stuff like that. Is he only so obsessed with himself when he was with Maya and me? That would explain why he is so popular. I mean, I always found it a bit funny that someone so stuck up about himself would be so popular, but this would explain it.

I sipped from my last bit of coke and listened to the one-on-one conversation. I felt like an outsider, it was as if I wasn't even there, sitting at that same table, discovering a whole new side of Russ which I wasn't sure of if I was happy to have found out or not.

Maybe he, I thought, is in fact very insecure about his looks and for that reason hangs out with outcasts like Maya and me, so he can brag and make himself feel better. But what did he have to feel insecure about? He was dropdead gorgeous!

Or was it, to make him not seem too available? If he were to always hang out with the popular kids at school, the pretty girls would be spending all day talking to him and hanging over him, and since he sat with us at lunchbreak, no girl would come over, because they didn't want to be spotted together with Maya and me, so he would have a bit of rest.

I don't know how many explanations had crossed my mind by the time their conversation finally finished and Russ turned my direction again. It appeared all this time I had been sucking on an empty glass. He laughed, I put the glass away, he rose from his chair, I followed, his arm was around my shoulders again

and we walked out of the café to head to store D, E and F.

When I got home, I waited until Maya's practice would be over and she had gotten a chance to get home herself. Then I phoned her, to ask if she knew.

She didn't and added: „Only shows how two-faced he is!”

Maya told about her violin-lessons and about a difficult song called the Devil's Snare that she aspired to play someday and I caught myself nodding. What was wrong with me, had I become an automatic?

„Ah uh yes!” I added quickly.

Two-faced Russ, depressed Maya and nothing-special Jenny. Yes, my feelings today were because the people around me were interesting, but would Russ at home tell stories about me? Or call his friends to tell about me, like I just did about him? I wanted a change! But... I'm just me. I doubt if anything will happen. Maybe if I asked Maya, would she understand? But I immediately shook my head to rid the thought. She would say something like: “You are worried about irrelevant stuff like that while I'm stuck in hell?!” It was no use talking to her about stuff like that, certainly not.

I dragged myself to my room and started on my homework. History, English and Math.

I had just finished History when mom called everyone to come down for dinner. The first one to sit at the table was myself, then my father after turning the television a bit louder so he could hear the sports results being announced and finally my brother rushed down after the third call.

I chucked down the Brad Pitt dinner, and observed my near to choking little brother who could eat with such a pace that it almost was inhuman. My father, on the other hand, was slow, forgetting to chew whenever the voice on the radio said something interesting, which, apparently, was all the time. When he finally stuck his fork in his mouth and managed to chew a recordbreaking two times, he would scream out a "Nooo! Those idiots! How could they lose!" and all that was first *in* his mouth, flew out again. All over the table, little pieces of stake with garlic-sauce, it was revolting and I was used to it.

Since it was my brother's turn to do the dishes, the one with their hands in the soap, after everyone had finished eating, was me. **Michael** has rushed off to his videogame. Understandable, because he challenged himself to reach level 12 today and he was only at level 5 and more than half a day had passed already.

When I was almost done, Russ called. With my hands still soaked I accepted the phone from my mother.

„Hey.”

„Hey, what are you doing?”

„Finishing up on the dishes.”

„Isn't Wednesday your brother's turn?”

„Yeah.” Weird, remembering such a useless thing.

He laughed: „Little doormat.”

„I guess.” He was right that I just let people step over me, but I didn't really care, so I never thought it as troublesome. He laughed again.

„Will you come to watch a video at my place when you're done?”

I paused for a second. „If I'm coming over, whose homework are you going to copy then tomorrow? I haven't finished mine yet.”

He laughed. „It's alright. So are you coming?” I stopped myself from nodding and said that I was fine with it.

„Good. Want me to pick you up?”

„I’ll walk.”

„Then I’ll meet you halfway.”

„Is... Maya coming?”

He laughed: „No way. My home is no place for freaks.”

„Don’t...” say that. Don’t say that. Why couldn’t I say it? It wasn’t like he would make her beautiful ever again.

„Don’t what?” But I hung up, put on my jacket and started walking. He didn’t meet me halfway like he said he would and as I stood in front of his house, I looked up to his window, turned around and went to Maya’s instead. He wasn’t going to make Maya do beautiful things anymore and after we all have graduated he’ll forget about us. Besides he didn’t keep his word when saying he’d meet me halfway, and people who break their promises don’t really care about you anyway. I wanted to change and I was

going to try to break it to Maya carefully, if there were any negative responses I would give up right away and change the subject. Torture-techniques from the Middle-Ages always did well with her.

She was surprised to see me but didn't ask questions, she just let me in and guided me to her room. Then she went down to fetch us a drink and sat down right across me. Her room was decorated in a darkish way: purple and black walls, a black bed with dark purple and blue sheets and an even darker purple carpet. All the other furniture was black too. Her parents thought it to be a 'fase in growing up' and just let her decorate it anyway she wanted, even when it screamed depression. The only cd's she had were all depressing, dark music and her parents never frowned once. Maybe she was begging for attention and her parents just don't give her any. They were rich and enjoying life and expected their daughter did the same, with her 'experimental' behaviour.

„Want me to put up some music?“

„Do you think I should change?“ Honestly, it was the most subtle I could do. I'm not so good with words.

„What?“

„Don't I... Don't I ever bore you?“

She stared at me. I guess when all you can talk about is your own misery; you lose your words when someone else fesses up about *their* worries. „You don't bore me.“ She finally said.

„But I never... I'm not... I don't have anything... interesting...” I tried.

„Oh, like I'm something special! Ha! Did you come here to talk about 'you being boring' and then later switching it to your real purpose of coming here? To tell me *I'm boring?!'*”

There she went, she really was a person like no one else. „I don't think you're boring.”

„Oh you don't think I'm boring huh, yeah right.”

„I think you're special.”

„...special?” She looked at me with disbelief, blinking her eyes. „What?”

„I think you're special, so I never thought of you as boring.”

„Why would you... Why would you say...?“ and then, suddenly, I saw something I never saw before. Tears and a smile she was trying hard to hide, but couldn't. Maya was often depressed but she never cried. Well I never saw her doing so, but now she did.

„I can't explain it, I just think you are...that's all.“

She didn't try to hide it anymore, and smiled freely now making more and more tears come out to roll over her white cheeks, putting some colour on them. She leant forward and let her head fall on my shoulder. She kissed it and then buried her tears where the kiss had landed. I felt my shoulder getting soaked. I placed my hands awkwardly on her back, patted a little.

„Thank you...“ she whispered. I didn't understand. The only thing I knew was that we weren't going to talk about my need of change.

When the soundless crying finally stopped, she still kept her head lying on my shoulders, panting a little heavier than normal, sometimes inhaling in such a way as if she wanted to suck in life which was apparently somewhere stuck on my T-shirt.

„Are you staying over tonight?“ she asked making me feel her warm breath in my neck, her lips trembled relaxed against my thin clothes.

„Sure, why not.“

I called home, got the okay, and was forced to sleep in the same bed as Maya. She wouldn't have me sleep anywhere else. The entire night she clung onto my body, sometimes pecking my cheek, neck or shoulder, and whispering a 'thank you', until she fell asleep with her arms never losing grip around my waist, and I just kept patting her back from time to time, managing to fall in sleep as well after approximately two hours.

The next morning her eyes were swollen and she refused to go downstairs for breakfast, so I went down to get her a cold wet towel for her eyes and to bring the breakfast from the table to her room.

We ate silently, but it wasn't awkward, because Maya seemed... relaxed, maybe even a little bit happy and at ease.

„Maybe, I should buy some other cd's." Her voice kindly breaking the silence.

I nodded, deliberately this time, to not make a noise and to be able hear the sentence float through the room a couple of minutes more.

Chapter 3: The magic of words.

At school it was different than usual.

As I spoke my standard-greeting: „Hey guys.” Maya didn't get upset and Russ wasn't his overily cheerful self. I figured they met on their way over here and argued like they always did, but that this time Maya had won the argument. It had happened before, but not often, since most of the time Maya was in too bad a mood to care to win.

But today Maya even winked at me: „Hey Jenny.”

And Russ: „You know, since yesterday was cancelled, I figure I can copy your homework again?”

I nodded. That.. will, maybe, never change.

Maya hooked her arm into mine: „I don't know why you allow that bastard to copy your homework.”

„What's your problem? She likes me, that's all! Right Jenn? You don't mind right?”

Suddenly, they were both staring at me, with a look that demanded an answer.

„Tell that asshole that you don't want him copying your homework or I'll throw myself off a bridge.”

„Tell that dog to mind her own business or I'll throw her off a bridge!”

Either way, it seemed interesting to me.

„Well?”

„Oh don't push it, Princess.” Maya sneered.

„Shut the hell up! Jenn, answer, tell her you love letting me copy your homework, because we're buddies.”

They were weird today. „Like, the truth?” I finally asked.

„Well... yah!” Russ seemed a little irritated. That’s a first. I couldn’t help myself staring at him for a bit, amazed. Such a new side of him once again. How many sides of him did he have anyway? It would be fun if they were endless.

Maya moved our linked arms towards me, pushing me aside a little to grasp my attention, because I was obviously drifting off. „I’d like to know the reason too, the reason why you let him. You like him more than me?” Her grip loosened a bit, her eyes started to show her usual sadness again. Not totally, but it was coming.

„Oh, well. It’s not that I like him better, or that I... dislike him,” I hesitated a moment before I continued, „it’s just that, you know, he’s good-looking.”

Maya screamed a 'what!', Russ laughed victoriously.

„You’ve got to be kidding me Jenny! You’re that much of a shallow girl?!”

„Oh hush! You just don’t have any respect for the human beauty! How special and wonderful it is! Ha, but how could you know anyway?! You’re ugly as hell!”

As Russ kept on laughing, I pressed my lips against Maya's ear and whispered: „Guys like Russ need all the time of the world to look good. He needs the entire day to make himself look pretty, it's what makes him confident. How can I not let him copy my homework? He wouldn't have time to smudge his face with crèmes and stuff. You know, to do his daily facial.”

She laughed out loud and for the first time in those three years they both walked into the school happy.

No.

For the first time in three years, we *all* walked into the school happy.

That's probably why, at lunch, for the first time ever, I dared to suggest to do something after school, together, with the three of us.

„Hell no!”

Well, it was worth a try.

Chapter 4: Finding a hobby.

The exams were coming close. Only six weeks yet to go. No more homework, it was all self-study from now on.

Both Maya and Russ planned to start studying a month beforehand which left them with two weeks of absolute freedom after school and in weekends. So naturally I decided to do the same.

During lunchbreak they sat down with their agenda's in front of us.

„Jenn, you're mine on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays!”

„Uhm..”

„And then between those boring days we will have *real* fun every Friday and Sunday, oh and Monday!

You can sleep over every Sunday and then we'll walk to school together.”

„Uhm..”

„Yeah well, I will be lodging with Jenn then, ha! Agreed Jenn? This Saturday I'll be sleeping over at your place.”

„Uhm.. well... I 'm not sure...”

„No freaking way! Over my dead body that a horny guy like you will be spending the night at Jenny's, she's way too innocent for your dirty hands! If you're sleeping over, then I am too!”

„I don't...”

„What?! The Saturdays were mine! You'll sleep over in your own damn time!”

The world had gone mad, at that very moment. Russ was openly fighting someone over a no one. No kidding, you should've heard the others.

„Why is Russ making such a fuss over that nobody? I mean, who the hell is that girl?”

„Isn't she in graduation year?”

„For real? Then how come I never saw her in all these years?”

„Sure you've seen her! She's that girl that is always sitting in front of the school before first class starts.”

„Oh that weirdo!” There was laughing and pointing, but Russ and Maya didn't seem to notice. They just kept on arguing. So I picked up my plate, threw the left-overs in the bin and went to the bathroom. When I came back they were still at it.

„You guys are acting a little funny.” I finally said. They stopped their fight at once and looked my way.

„What?” Russ asked.

„Uhm... you know, break is almost over. You guys haven't even touched your food yet.”

„Yeah well..” Maya muttered.

With my head resting on my righthand, I stared at the ceiling waiting for them to finish their lunch they just now started on. They finished five minutes after the bell had rung. Maya and me went onto History-class while Russ headed for Mathematics.

Maya wrote me several notes which I wouldn't reply to with a simple scribbling underneath the message, but when it was a yes or no question I'd just nod my head.

“Russ is so annoying.”

“...”

“I mean, he thinks he's the world, that stuck-up fool.”

“...”

“Why don’t we hang out together from now on, just us?”

I nodded.

“Really?”

I looked to my right, her eyes staring anticipating at me.

“Friday, Sunday, Monday... right?” I whispered.

“No I mean... always.” She started whispering too, spoken words replacing the written ones.

I turned my gaze back to the blackboard where the teacher was writing out an entire overview about WO II and which country fought which country and who were allies, etcetera.

“Jenny?”

“I don’t know... why you want to so much, but... I still want to hang out with Russ too... I think.”

“What for! He’s an @\$!” Maya said, shouting this time.

“Maya! You’d better pay attention instead of screaming, you do want to graduate do you not?” The teacher sneered. But Maya ignored him totally, looking at me seemingly angry and hurt at the same time.

“He’ll forget about us when we’ve graduated, so why not hang out until then?” I continued speaking in a whispering voice.

“Damn right he’ll forget us! As soon as he sees college-girls legs that are capable of spreading we’re out of his mind forever, so why the hell hang out with him at all!”

Good point. But... I liked observing the behaviour of both these people, always did, so why not stay close as long as they still want me around. Then I started thinking, would these people act the same around me as they would when they’re alone, or with friends or family?

“It’s Tuesday right?” I asked lost in thoughts.

“Why are you changing the subject! We’re talking about something here!” Maya shouted on,

“I thought you liked me! Why are you so mean!”

“I do like you Maya. I meant what I said back then.” The bell rung, “but I need to be somewhere right now okay? I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Jenny! Where are you going?” She rushed after me. “I’m coming with.”

Maya grabbed hold of my arm. “Where are we going?” she asked again.

“To The Stargazer.”

“That astronomy store? Why?”

“I want to buy a binocular.”

“A binocular? I think The Stargazer only has telescopes. I think it’s better to check out that new nature-store. That one must have binoculars for bird watching and stuff. Do you want to go bird watching?”

“Yeah, something like that.”

“Cool. We’ll both buy one! Is bird watching a hobby of yours for a long time already?”

“No, but I think it will be an interesting one.”

Maya smiled: “Yeah, we should buy a bird book along with it. It’ll be our secret hobby.”

Secret. Yes. But not ours, only mine. Maya stuck with me through the entire day. She had diner at my place and stayed over for the night, making me postpone my plans.

Chapter 5: Birdwatching.

Did the unimaginable just happen? I, Jenny Buncley, had a hobby. I started immediately the next day. Which was Wednesday: the day I was 'scheduled' for some quality-Russ-time and the day Maya had her violin-lessons. Thinking I should start with something simple, I figured looking through the rehearsal room's window and observe Maya would be easiest. But since I was scheduled for other things, I wondered how I'd be able to do so.

Her rehearsal started at four 'o clock. Would I be able to shake Russ off by that time? Probably not, because they were already acting weirdly clingy lately.

But then I remembered the shopping incident. I was completely ignored the moment that pretty big-boobs-girl came to our table. So if we went somewhere where all those popular lipstick-faces would be, then I'd be able to sneak out for a little while. And a little while would be enough.

I wrote out a plan in a notebook, which I called Kaspar (German for 'a treasured secret', it couldn't be more appropriate), which I had bought along with the binoculars.

A new café had opened not so many weeks ago, it was called 'Whipping', a mighty stupid name if you asked me, but apparently when you entered the place you'd get a stamp shaped like a whip on your hand, and SM-looking girls and males stood in cages whipping their whip against one another or something. It was the coolest place to be, so 'awesome' that even I hadn't missed out on the information. That says a lot, because ninety-nine point nine percent of the gossip and stories passed me by, simply because Maya never talks about such things, she's not interested, and Russ only talks about his looks, the praises he's got for looking good and how many times he scored on a night out because he looked "just so damn good!"

Anyway, Whipping only had the SM-theme at the evening of course, and was for the eighteen-years-and-older people. The youngsters not fulfilling that description would hang out there during the midday, just to taste the awesomeness for even a little bit. And praise the Lord, but Russ and most of the girls from his class were still seventeen, and yes, me too. Though I was precisely thirty-two days older than him.

So in the end it came down to me having exactly two hours to convince Russ to go to that place with me, sneak out, run three blocks to the rehearsal room, scribble things down in Kaspar, run three block back so that I will have returned before Russ noticed I ever was gone.

As soon as the schoolbell rung, at half past one, the plan rehearsed inside my head. Maya grabbed me by the arm saying one last "Don't be too nice to the asshole, and keep your guard up!" then she let loose and went home for lunch and prepare for her music-lessons.

Not even a minute after Maya had gone out of my sight, Russ was already walking on my other side.

"I know exactly what I want to do today," he smiled.

I looked up to him, letting my eyes ask the question.

“The park.”

Once again my eyes did the talking.

“Well they say there’s going to be a band performing there. A good one. You like music, right?”

A shrug, a nod and we were on our way.

It’s was really crowded at the park. Many teenagers. Also many of the popular kids, not excluding the lipstick-faces. It seemed this was going to be easier than I thought. Getting separated from Russ in this crowd, it was bound to happen, without looking it to be on purpose at all.

“How long will this band be playing?” I asked Russ, standing tip toe, bending my mouth towards his ear in order to **overvoice** the racket of the band which had already started playing. He also turned his head towards me, his cheek caressing mine, his hair tickling the left side of my forehead. I turned a little towards him, glancing at his face. With his eyes closed he smiled, his lips almost touching my jaw.

“A couple of hours. You don’t want to be here?”

“No, I do. Just wondering, because if it lasts until after dinnertime, then I need to call home.”

“I think five ‘o clock.”

“Then it’s okay.” While talking he had placed his hand on my back, very lightly pressing me towards him. I came down standing flat on my feet again. By a simple twist I got out of his embrace and moved towards the stage. Weird guy, very weird.

With him getting behind, we already lost track of each other for the first time since being there.

We ended up losing one another in the crowd three times, before I finally made my leave ten minutes before four. Maya attended her music lessons always ten times minutes beforehand. So I waited until then before I left, that way making sure she wouldn’t spot me while running towards the rehearsal room.

Exhausted but excited I arrived at the building. Sneaking through the bushes on the backside of the place as quietly as I could, though it was kind of useless because I could already hear them playing so

no way they would hear the sound of rustling leaves and breaking twigs, I found a spot with clear sight on the hall. I was looking in from the side, a direction no one would look, since all eyes needed to be on the conductor all the time (yes, it was a group-rehearsal).

It didn't take me long to find Maya. The only black haired girl with a violin.

When I saw her sitting there, she looked... so beautiful. Her eyes looking straight towards the conductor's handmovements. But she didn't have that hard look in her eyes, neither that sadness that always seemed to be present. She looked at ease. She looked relaxed, like nothing was on her mind. Nothing but the music. I couldn't describe the exact expression, but it was beautiful. It was a Maya I had never seen before. A Maya that was happy. Not happy as in: laughing, joking and so on. But happy as if she liked life, because she could play that violin. It made me feel weirdly jealous, a little sad, but most of all very excited. So that was the Maya when I wasn't around, or at least one of the Mayas. What kind of person would she be at home, when I wasn't around. I could imagine her laying on her bed listening to depressing music all day long, but then again, I was also wrong about how she would be like with the violin. I thought that she, I don't know, would look very serious. And people who look very serious always look a bit grumpy. But not a trace of that was to be found on her. Only relaxed happiness.

I lost myself in the music, but even more in fascination about Maya's expressions, her way of playing. I lost myself so badly, that only just after half an hour I realised that Russ was still wondering around in the park supposedly *with* me. I figured he would have grouped up with some lipsticks a long while ago, but nevertheless, I needed to be there when the crowd would start thinning out and it would become clear that I wasn't there at all.

I ran back as fast as my legs could carry me. I mixed myself in the crowd and Russ found me not too long after that.

“Where were you? I looked everywhere!” He said agitated, “I even asked people to look out for you, but you weren’t there.”

Alright, so my cover was blown. It had become obvious that I hadn’t been around, so denying it wouldn’t do me any good. A bad liar only digs graves for himself (a good one digs them for another).

“Oh. I went looking for a café to go to the toilet, I needed to take a dump,” I calmly replied, “a big one.”

Russ stared at me and then let loose an explosion of laughter. For ten minutes he didn’t seem able to stop. After the big earthquake of a “HAHAHAHAHA” there were still aftershocks full of giggles.

“Well are you relieved now?” He asked wiping the tears from his eyes.

“You have no idea.”

And another explosion followed. Shorter than the last, but still.

“Next time, tell me though. You had me worried.” The familiar right arm went around my shoulders and

we listened out the rest of the performance, standing like that. But I couldn't keep my attention on the band at all. I only thought of Maya.

When everyone had cleared the park, we still stuck around, sitting in the grass, which was now more polluted than ever with cans and candy-wrappings.

"How did you like the band?" Russ asked smiling.

"They were good," I guessed.

"Yeah they were. Totally awesome," he laughed squeezing his eyes together. "Maybe I should try playing the guitar too."

"Or the violin," I suggested, not really paying attention.

"What?"

"Hmm?"

“You think I should try playing the violin? How did you come with that idea?”

“Oh, Maya plays the violin.”

The until then never ending smile, disappeared like sudden lightning on a clear day. He looked away from me.

“Maya called me last night. Said you liked her more than me. That you said she was special to you. So that I shouldn't expect much of today. But... how about me Jenny?”

I stared at him. My mind still distracted by the image of Maya playing the violin. Her expressions grabbed hold of my thoughts again. What an extra-ordinary side of her it was. So at ease, so different from the usual. Not the gloominess, the depression, anger, neither in need of anyone's attention.

“Don't you like boys?” He wasn't looking at me as he asked the question, but he was studying the grass, plucking out ever grass-stalk that was longer than the rest.

“Sorry, what did you say?”

“I asked, if you only like girls?”

Surprised by the question, not really understanding what he meant with it, I answered: “Of course not.”

He lay down with his back in the grass, going with his hand behind his back, grabbing and throwing aside a can that apparently had been underneath him.

“Good.” He sighed deeply. Relief? Weird guy.

As soon as I came home, I went up to my room and wrote everything that I had seen today. Maya's beautiful composure and Russ' weird questions and actions.

“Jenny, time for diner,” my mother called me, standing on the bottom of the stairs.

As she served potato-quiche on my plate, she cheered happily: “Did you know Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt had a baby recently? The lady gave birth to it in Africa. Any paparazzi that came close got arrested, and they rented of the entire nearby beach, so no one could sneak-a-peak. Isn't it so over the top? Great isn't it! If you work hard you can also prohibit people to go on the beach when you are giving birth to a beautiful child whom another famous star has graced you with. The baby is called Shiloh Nouvel,

but her, yes 'her', it's a girl, but her full name is..."

She went on and on, and when she was done, Micheal screamed he wanted the new Zelda game to finally be put on the market, but he got hushed by my father. His team was losing.

"I like watching birds." No one paid attention, but I felt a great satisfaction. Now I was officially part of this family.

Chapter 6: Theory of a player..

To be continued..

7 - Chapter 6: Theory of a player

Chapter 6: Theory of a player..

Thursday: Russ-time again. The night before, after scribbling a few final things down in my notebook, I was thinking about what could be interesting to investigate about Russ. Then I thought back about my theory. It matched perfectly with his weird behaviour yesterday, his remembering unimportant and stupid stuff related to me (like with the dishes; and him always treating me to a loaf with cheese, which I could never get my hands on at breakfast; or why I was the only person he'd lay his arm on their shoulders; etc.). The exams were only a few weeks away, and I was still the only girl uncrushed. Time was running out, he needed to be more aggressive to establish his 'all-girls-dated'-mission.

I decided to experiment on him a little. First experiment would be all about confirming. Confirming it was indeed his intention to make me fall for him. But how?

During all my classes that day I was only brainstorming. How would one make sure such were a guy intentions? Leaning in for a kiss perhaps? But I didn't want to kiss him. One's first kiss should be special right? Not for the sake of an experiment.

And after so long not having shown any sign of interest (did I?), it would be weird to suddenly move in for a smooch. So... flirting? How the hell is that done? I also heard somewhere that if a guy wants you bad, he'll go to any extend for you. So... if you got a flat tire on your bike some miles away, would that

mean he'd cycle all the way over there to give you a ride back home?

But why would I cycle some place far, I never had a reason to.

Maybe I should just wait for him to give more obvious signals.

I decided to just see how today would go and if the opportunity happened to open up, I would try to stimulate the process a little for more convincing proof. Though I didn't real know how to stimulate something. But one always fails when one doesn't even try.

After school we did our usual walk. Russ seemed to have nothing planned, thus we were walking towards the shopping mall. The usual leftarm was lying at the usual spot on my shoulders, while Russ was talking his usual chatter and I was as usual looking around. A couple passed us by, walking in, more or less, the same manner, except that the girl was pressing herself lovingly against her boyfriend's body.

There was a plan.

And so I moved closer towards Russ, wrapped my arms around his waist, resting my head half on his chest, half on his shoulder. It was as uncomfortable as hell. How could this be a cosy way of walking, it was darn annoying! My head was forced to move along with the movements of his chest and because we were walking, his chest went slightly up and down. My head, following this movement, got sick of it.

Just a little bit more, I told my head, just bear with it a little bit longer.

As I was off thinking how not cool this way of walking was, I suddenly noticed that it was peculiarly silent. Russ wasn't talking anymore. Huh?

As I tried looking up without moving my head too much (I didn't want him to notice that I was trying to find out his expression), I saw a very... weird looking Russ. His eyes were wide open, his mouth was nothing but a straight line. It looked like he was about to break into a nervous sweat, and he did. Not so much on his face, as on his hands. With his face stuck to the same expression, looking straight forward, seemingly afraid to look down, he swallowed hard, and then slowly, awkwardly moved his arm down to my back, his hand on my arm, pressing me just a little bit closer. He swallowed another time and I could feel his hand getting sweaty, sticky against the sleeve of my shirt.

Well, that either confirmed my theory, or he was just in shock by my change of behaviour. Anyway, I had enough of this pose and let go. Surprised, he immediately released me.

He cleared his throat, swallowed, and cleared it again. He turned his gaze to the right, looking away from me. I observed the line of his chin (even in this $\frac{3}{4}$ perspective his face looked good, did he not have a bad angle?) and then went back to gazing at street gutters and crowds and cars passing by. Though, not for long this time, for suddenly I felt someone shyly grabbing my fingers, loosely, with their own fingers. I turned my focus back on Russ, who was still looking away from me, but his head wasn't turned enough, and his hair was not long enough, to hide the red of his cheeks.

Okay, that definitely confirmed it, but now what? Just keep on walking like this? Only lovers walked like this, unless you're two girls. But Russ was no girl, so this was definitely a sight of a couple walking.

"I need to take a dump." I figured this was an always possible excuse, good for multiple use.

I let go of his hand (not that I was really holding it) and walked back, not looking back at the person I left behind.

When I arrived at home, it took me a while before I could scribble anything down. I began to doubt if it really was an 'all-girls-dated'-mission he wanted to fulfill. Would one blush like that, when one's not serious about the other party? I must admit, finding out how far he would go, what whole new sides of him he would show if I would still carry out these experiments, it caught my interest quite a bit. But I didn't feel anything love-like towards him. I admired him, I liked being his friend, just as I liked being Maya's friend. I knew they would never leave my mind, I would remember them always. But did I have that guarantee? Would they always remember me?

I learned a long time ago that other people, no matter how close, will find it easy to completely abandon me out of their life. If I wanted a permanent place in their lives, then I needed to do something unforgettable. Something drastic.

My pencil hit the paper and wouldn't let go until late at night, long after the snoring of my father filled the house. When I was younger I made a song on that snoring-sound. Sometimes when the night became darker than black, I would sing it and cry, not able to fall asleep because I wished too hard I would. And since the snoring never stopped until morning came, I could sing it until my throat hurt from the mixture of tears and unstoppable singing. But tonight, the night didn't seem dark at all.

8 - Chapter 7: Girlfriends

Chapter 7: Girlfriends.

To do something is easy. You can grab a pencil and draw, a pen and write, a book and read, a vase and throw, a car and drive, a cake and eat, a boy and kiss, and you can think of an experiment and carry it out. But the chances that what will come out is the wanted result, that's difficult. Especially when one is still inexperienced with things it wants to do or does. My experiment turned out to be everything except flawless. Hinting that all the girls at school were pulling a dirty face to me and that even Maya had been put into a mood worse than ever before, you might feel coming what's happened.

Yesterday I didn't really take into account that a time and place can make a huge difference about the outcome of the experiment. Not that there should have been a more romantic (or not at all) atmosphere, but we were near to the shopping centre in our own town. So several people of our school saw our 'couples'-walk and told everybody else. And now Several People are looking at me like they want to throw up and Everybody Else is staring me hard trying to imagine the scene. The few that managed to create a somewhat believable picture can be easily pointed out from those Everybody Else, because after a long hard stare they start retching, one or two even ran towards the toilets.

"I demand an explanation!" Maya shouted. "You and that perverted dirty womanizer! He's only playing with you!"

For the first time since my **three years** in high school, I was in the centre of attention.

Some lipsticks squealed a: "Yeah, you dog, don't think you're great or something! He probably just pitied your sorry @\$\$, because no way in the world something like you can ever get a boyfriend!"

The boys though seemed quite excited. I guess they wanted me to declare that Russ and me were officially dating so that they could comfort their broken hearted ex-girlfriends and get them back again.

Normally I would just say nothing and walk away. Well not 'normally', because normally something like this never happened to me. But it would fit my character to just shut up and walk away. Besides what did they know. I knew the truth and that was enough. But saying that Russ was indeed my boyfriend, would be kind of funny. I'd love to see the look on those stuck up bimbo faces.

I grabbed hold of Maya's hand, calmly replied: "We're dating," and then left the murderscene dragging Maya with me, for everybody stood dead still including a killing silence.

"You're insane! He's an asshole! Don't you remember what he did to me?!" Maya was slapping her free hand on mine, probably not for me to let go but to punish me,

"We're not dating," I finally confessed, "I just said it to see the look on their faces." In the distance we could hear the guys cheering and the girls crying loudly. Maya stopped slapping my hand.

“...” Maya thought, “They *did* look funny.” She giggled. “So you guys are really not dating?”

“No.”

“Then why... yesterday... did you two.. ”

“Secret.”

Maya was visibly unsatisfied with that answer: “Why can’t you tell me! I thought we were friends!”

“Do you still feel like being in school?”

“Don’t change the subject!”

And thus I dragged Maya out of the school and into the park. She kept on asking about the how and why’s, but once arrived at the pond in the park, she stopped asking, pulled a grumpy face and threw her

bread (that was meant for lunch) at the ducks. "Give me yours too!" She ordered.

I obeyed.

"Stupid Jenny." She then sat down beside me and laid her head against my shoulder, sobbed a little but then made no other noise than the sound of her breath, her chest softly going up and down therefore tapping my arm.

"I heard somewhere that if you sneeze with your eyes open, your eyes will pop out," she said suddenly, after a minute or ten, "that's why people are unable to keep their eyes open when they sneeze, no matter how hard they try." She released a sigh, that felt hot against my chin, since I had turned my face a little towards her when she had started speaking.

"I wish my eyes popped out," she continued, "then I wouldn't have to see this stupid world anymore. I'd listen to music all day long, lying in my bed, unable to go anywhere because I was blind."

Blind people still go to school though, special education, and they can go anywhere they want when accompanied by a dog or another person. I guess that way she'd never be alone and that might be good for her. Perhaps she should turn blind.

"Go catch that duck and rip out a feather," she whispered, "you owe it to me."

“There are some on the ground.”

“Dogs peed on them.”

“...Alright.” She lifted her head of my shoulder and picked out a duck with her eyes, I only needed to follow where the eyes were fixed on. She chose the fully white duck with a black beak. I took off my shoes and slowly entered the water, holding a few strands of grass as bait, I inched closer to the ducks. Unfortunately, they swam away every time I came within the range of two meters.

Change of tactics.

I went around the ducks this time until I was behind them (the water wasn't very deep, even in the centre you could still stand), then I chased them on shore. I ran out of the water, chased the duck and made a dive for it. It took me three hard falls on the grass to finally grab that duck. It flapped its wings like a Wildman, shaking off dozens of feathers though it was trying to shake *me* off. Finally, it bit my nose and I let go, due to the pain. The entire time Maya had been laughing, hard.

“Damn it,” I complained while rubbing my victim limb. “Well, take your pick.” I pointed at the fallen feathers, sitting on my butt, legs wide spread. She walked over and knelt down beside me, observing and judging each feather carefully.

Then she pointed at a long, uncrooked, undamaged, pure and bright white feather. Seeing she wasn't about to pick it up, I took the honours.

"Okay, now get me to sneeze."

"What?"

"Why else would I need a feather. Get me to sneeze, I'll try keeping my eyes open."

"You could just poke out your eyes, it's easier."

"WHERE'S THE BEAUTY IN THAT!"

I guess blindness by sneezing indeed sounded more special than blindness by eyepoking. Softly caressing the below side of her nose and her upperlip, she tried the open eyes sneezing a total of eleven times before she gave up. I was having quite fun with the tickling so for all I cared we could be doing this all day long, but it wasn't meant to be that way.

“What day is it?” I asked.

“Friday, why?”

“Oh, that’s us-time, so it’s alright.”

“Ha, this is way more fun than with those days you have to spend with Russ right? Walking stupidly glued to each other.”

“Yeah, that was real annoying.”

Maya got a weird smile on her face and tackled me. Not allowing me to get up, she once again positioned herself like she had done during that sleepover. Also, just like that day, she started to occasionally kiss my neck and shoulder again, sometimes a peck landed on my cheek. While she was busy doing all that, I looked up and named the shapes of the clouds passing by.

Tree, crocodile, icecream...

9 - Chapter 8: The key towards flawless

I dunno if this is going to be chapter 8 or chapter 8a, but I just felt like posting it already.

(Kaspar = notebook, rememberz)

Chapter 8: The key towards Flawless.

After I had dropped Maya off at her home and returned to mine, I went up to my room and let myself fall down on the bed.

I took **Kaspar** out of the drawer from my nightstand. I started wondering what I wanted to find out. What my goal would be. You can't really do much without a goal right? Was it just to find out about how they

live their lives, outside of mine? Then shouldn't I ask about their agenda? Where they would be at certain times and try to sneak a peek? But if I asked boldly face to face, wouldn't they ask me 'Why?'?

Maybe if I could just look into their schoolagenda, slip it out of their bag or something.

Maya would be easy, since we were in the same class. I might as well say that I want to scribble something down in it. I've seen girls from my class do it, and before they came down to the actual scribbling stuff, they'd always study the entire agenda. So there'd be nothing suspicious about it.

Would a similar tactic work on Russ?

Using the fact that he's got the blushing cheeks for me, to ask if I may scribble something down in his agenda?

This didn't seem as difficult as I first thought. Too bad tomorrow would be Saturday, so no school. Saturday was also the day I was scheduled to spend with Russ, even though we had nothing planned.

I decided to turn up at his doorstep early in the morning, then he would ask me in, not having had a chance to get dressed. This was needed, for as he would go upstairs to get ready, I'd have a chance to take a look around the house, and then before we would leave I'd ask for the agenda, when it would still be within reach. If I waited too long and he'd call to meet at a store or something, then no way he'd have his agenda with him. Yeah, this seemed a pretty good plan. I thought to have considered all aspects. Time, place, reason ("The end of the schoolyear is coming close, so a little doodle to

remember me by.” Or something in that direction.”), that are all the needed aspects right?

I got up at seven in the morning, got dressed, crammed down my breakfast and went on my way towards his home. I rang the doorbell a couple of time until finally someone opened the door.

“Do you know what time it is?”

shoot, it’s his father!

That I didn’t take into consideration: other people.

“Hello mister Shore, I’m sorry to disturb so early in the morning, but Russ and I had agreed to meet here.”

“At eight in the morning?”

“Yes sir.” I guess ‘I need to take a dump’ wouldn’t save me out of *this* situation.

“He’s upstairs sleeping. Usually he doesn’t wake up until nine, but if you say you agreed to meet, I guess you can go up and wake him. You’re that Jenny girl right? I guess he won’t mind.”

“Thank you sir.”

That was pretty easy.

Up the stairs, first door to my right. The room was dark, so he must still be sleeping. In the light of the hallway, I saw a lamp standing on his desk. I closed the door behind me as quietly as I could and moved into the direction where I had seen the lamp. I switched on the light, he didn’t wake up. I walked towards the bed and looked down.

He had a real cute sleeping face. His lips seemed so kissable.

Huh? What the hell? Never mind!

I rolled the desk chair to a place where I could see Russ best. His face, upperchest and leftarm above the blankets, laying on his side with his righthand under his face. With his leftarm he was clutching the blankets, sometimes he’d give off a little moan and his feet caressed themselves.

“Mmm.”

That had to be one sweet dream there.

“J..Jenn..”

Oh my god! That was... another unexpected aspect. Damn, how could a plan be flawless when such weird things could happen! Sigh! How many more aspects could there be. I got Kaspar out of the bag I carried around and noted it down:

New aspects to take into consideration when thinking up a plan:

[u]

- other people that might be there

- weird, unexpected things

[/ul]

Weird, unexpected things. UFO's crashing down? Or maybe...

[ul]

- Russ having a crush on me (expect sometimes weird behaviour: to be further investigated)

[/ul]

Perhaps I should ask someone about how guys get when in love. What behaviour is to be expected.

Maybe there is a book about it. Then a trip to the library would be sufficient. Might as well go today, since we've got nothing planned anyway. He can go look into cosmetic stuff and as he'll soon get swept away by the interesting information, I'll just update my knowledge about boys in love, which currently is none.

Time was passing away and Russ soundlessly made sure he got the best out of his beautysleep, I could just hear his hair scream: "We're becoming more and more beautiful oh glamorous one! Just sleep a while longer!" His pores must be breathing refreshing air, for the air in his room was amazingly fresh. Don't ask me how he pulled that off. But sitting here felt as if my entire body was cleansed from any pollution in nowadays's sky. I bet Russ could make lots of money setting up a yoga or meditation practise here. Or a spa. Or a spa that includes a yoga and or meditation possibility for those interested.

I wondered after how many lightflashes he would wake up and I started switching the desk lamp

on and off, spotlighted on his face. 1...2...3...4...5...6...7... I started curving in my notebook...8...9...10...11... his closed eyes started to twitch...12...13...14... his body began to toss and turn...15...16...17... he was getting more and more restless...18...19...he flew up, as if he had heard a bomb explode. Nineteen... huh... I wrote down a big nineteen down in Kaspar and doodled some clouds and flowers around it.

While doing so I said: "I guess I can pull the curtains open now? Freaking dark in here."

After the first 'I' he had already fallen out of bed from shock. He looked up in my direction laying, I must admit, in an incredibly cute way there on the floor.

"W..who?"

I switched the desklight on again, like I had done nineteen, no, twenty times already.

"J..Jenn?"

Yes, it is I.

“How?”

Your dad let me in.

“Why..?”

It's Saturday right?

“Huh?”

He was about to get up and, I guess, talk some more standing up, but that'd be such a waste.

Before I knew it a ‘Don’t.’ escaped me.

“Don't what?”

“Keep laying there.”

“...”

I walked over and sat down beside him, my butt next to his, my feet a couple inches away from his cheeks. Maybe he could see my nostrils from there. Is there such a thing as someone having beautiful nostrils? I bet he would know.

“Why?”

I wondered if my feet polluted his just refreshed pores. Couldn't have that happening, or else his sleep would have been for nothing. Thus I turned around and lay down next to him. I stared at the ceiling, he stared at me.

“How are your pores?” I asked and looked at him, seeing a very confused Russ. “I didn't clogg them up again, did I?” I moved my face a little closer to his so I could take a better look. How did a pore look like anyway? Was it a hole in your skin or something? If anything, it was probably too dark to see anything despite of the light from the desklamp.

“What are you talking about.”

“...”

“Stop looking.”

“...”

“My pores are fine.”

“...You sure?”

“Yes.”

“Hmm.” That’s a relief.

“...”

“ ... ”

We were both silent for a while. I don't know what he was thinking about, but I was still thinking of his pores.

“You... look pretty today.” He suddenly said, half whispering, half talking.

“I bet you've got better looking pores.”

“Enough with my pores!”

Okay, okay.

Russ turned over so that he was suddenly on top of me. Looking into my eyes like you see in movies. They don't just look into your eyes, they explore every corner of it. You see the eyes going: left, right, left, right, left, center, short pause. Then he leant down for the kiss.

Who would've thought my first (second, third and fourth) kiss would be stolen.

I gave it a sigh while kissing, and for some reason he felt encouraged by it because he became more passionate. His head performing the same movement his eyes had done: left, right, left, right...

When he finally got his lips off me, he pecked me on the cheek, neck, back on the lips. Could he not sense my 'no response'?

I jerked my head away.

"I need to take a dump."

"..."

"..."

“That again? You’re such a moodbreaker. Do really have such a bad **bowel** or are you making up excuses?”

“Think.”

And for a second he was thinking.

“You can’t go into my room like this, laying beside me looking so cute, and not expect me to do anything. I like you Jenny. I really do. You must have noticed last Thursday. Holding onto me like that, you like me too right?”

“We walk close to each other all the time. Just because I tried out another way of walking, doesn’t immediately mean I like you... in that kind of way.”

“But... You were enjoying our kiss too! Don’t deny it, you were sighing!”

Ooh, that certainly explains why he felt encouraged. Kaspar screamed at me: write it down, write it down, I’ve got enough blank pages!

“So... Can we kiss again?” He asked. “I really like the feel of your lips.” He grinned.

Kaspar: “GRAB THAT DAMN PEN!”

“Get dressed, I want to go to the library.” I responded.

He was stunned. “*You* want to go somewhere? Well, that’s a first! Love does change a person.” He laughed. “I’d love to go to the library with you and I’d love to hear more about your ‘wants’ too. We can go any place you like. I was always wondering whether or not it was boring you to follow me around to where *I* wanted to go, but you never said anything. I’m really glad. Really glad.”

“It was never boring...” What’s up with Maya and Russ always thinking that I don’t like spending time with them? Do I always look that bored? Well.. maybe... that could be true.

I wanted to add a “...there’s just this book I wanted to check out.” but for a moment I was stunned by Russ’ expression. He looked... touched. Smiling weirdly, smiling as if he just won the lottery and thus the load of an immense debt fell off his shoulders. He sighed, he laughed, he grinned, he kissed me more passionately than a while ago. Guess there was no helping this weirdo.

“Your finally expressing your wants, I want you to do that more and more, and I’ll do everything in my power to fulfil that wish of yours. Hoping someday I’ll become one of your wants.” He

whispered before he kicked me out of his room so he could get changed.

After a little while he came out of his room, his hair still in a mess.

“I need to go fix me up a little, but... it will take a while. I don't know if you want to come along into the bathroom or watch TV downstairs.”

My wants huh.

“Don't fix yourself up, I like your bedroom hair. And I want you to always keep your window unlocked and a ladder against the wall that's high enough to reach your window.”

“...” He laughed. “You're weird.”

I caught myself laughing too, for it seemed our feelings were mutual in a way. Just not like how he'd like it.

He squealed and kissed me again.

“You laughed! So cute!”

He really didn't know how to stop, did he? But him getting excited and happy like that, just over me laughing... it was interesting? Would that work with Maya too? Or would she think I was making fun of her? All the while Kaspar was burning in my pocket, screaming, pounding his none-existing fists against my leg: C'MON! DON'T POSTPONE THIS ANY LONGER! WRITE DOWN IN ME!

An hour and half later, we were on our way to the library (“Just a small fix up!”). Though, not quite as expected, Russ kept standing beside me.

“Don't you want to look through some books?”

“Not really.”

“Not even ‘Cosmetic girl’?”

“Haha, no.”

Damn.

“Don’t you like it when someone’s looking over your shoulder when in a library?”

I looked up at him.

A smile formed on his face. “Okay then, I’ll go look at some stuff too then.”

He turned around, putting his hands in his side, studying the shelves full books as if he was thinking: “Where to start.”. Did he usually not go to libraries?

I walked over towards the helpdesk.

“Do you have books about boys in love. Non-fiction I mean.”

She gave me a hard stare, as if she was trying to get inside my head and find out why I wanted it, knowing it'd be rude to ask. To make it easier on her, I concentrated and teleported my thoughts to her: No, I'm not in love with a boy, but I'm doing some research for the sake of a couple experiments I unfortunately can't tell you much about.

She smiled. I guess the message was received successfully.

"As a matter of fact we do. It's not exclusively about boys in love, but about boys in general. There's a chapter about love in it though. The book is called 'Boys' by Marian Turner and James Fozak. It's over in that shelf." Her finger showed me the way.

"Thanks."

I grabbed the book, registered the **take out** with the librarian, casually hit it in a '**stoff**' back I had with me, and went over to Russ to tell him I was done. He smiled, we left.

"Where do you want to go now?"

I shrugged.

So we went shopping.

10 - Chapter 8b: The Key to flawless

** I hope the title is still appropriate... It was in the first (major) part at least... right?*

While Russ was browsing through the store, I took out Kaspar and started writing. But a previous note made me realise that I had gotten distracted from my real goal. My mind had been running wild and I forgot to ask for Russ' agenda. Damn it. Now what?

"What are you writing?" Russ asked as he sat down beside me on the soft orange couch in this yellow walls store.

I immediately closed the notebook.

“Oh nothing, just... writing down a things-to-do-list for the coming weeks.”

“Is that so.. “

“I haven't got much to do, what about you?”

“Me neither. I'm keeping all my days open for you. So when you get bored with Maya, feel free to pay me a visit.”

Well, aren't we cheesy today. At least I got my information.

I nodded and looked down to his shopping bags, which weren't many. He was quite picky.

“Yeah, this store is disappointing. Let’s go, I’m done here.”

But when we were scrolling through town, a man came up to us, turning all of his attention on Russ, not even giving me glance.

His hand went inside his suit-jacket and he took out a business card, displaying it on Russ’ hand.

“Whenever you have the time, let’s have a word.”

And gone he was.

Looking on the card, it turned out he was from a modelling agency.

“... This again...”

“Again?”

“It happens from time to time.”

“You never accepted one?”

“No. It such a pain.”

“Isn’t modelling all.. pretty clothes and stuff?”

“I like to pick out my own clothes. It’s not like I’ve got money trouble anyway. Besides, I’d rather be with you.” “..”

“It’s true.”

“..”

“What? You think I should take on that offer?”

Good question. Who knows, a whole new Russ might show up once again. That'd be interesting.
"Yes."

"..."

"..."

He stared at me, I stared at him.

"Alright. Then I will. But not often. It's still a pain, and let's not forget that the exams are coming up."

"I can help with that. Studying for exams I mean. So go and be pretty."

"Don't you mean handsome?"

No. He was more pretty, than handsome. I gave him a smile, he placed his arm on my shoulders, I watched the cars pass by. An unusually lot of red ones this time.

Russ walked me all the way home. I nodded him goodbye, but he followed me up to my doorstep.

“Something...wrong?”

“Nothing wrong, just two things forgotten.”

“...”

“One, my goodbye kiss.” He paused to smile. “Two, what time should I come back here?”

“Come back for...”

“Sleepover! Remember?”

Oh, right. I vaguely remember Maya and Russ quarrelling about that. I wonder if my mother would mind. I'm not too sure. I've never had someone over at my house. The rare times I had sleepovers it always been at the other one's home. The last couple of years it had always been with one and the same person.

"I'll ask mom."

"You haven't yet?! You mean you forgot! Jenn!"

I walked inside to find my mom in the kitchen, busy to prepare dinner.

"Ah, Jenny! This smells nice doesn't it? I read in Glamour Gossip that..."

"Mom." Sorry for the interruption mom, but I've got someone waiting outside.

"...Yes dear?"

“Can Russ sleepover?”

“Who?”

“A friend.”

“You have a friend besides that girl? What’s her name?”

“Maya.”

“So that’s a friend of yours? Or... your boyfriend?” Mom grinned.

“No, he’s a friend.”

“That’s a lie!” Russ called from behind the front door.

“Is that him?”

“Yeah.”

“Why did you never bring him over before then.”

“He’s phoned to here before, so you must have known about him right?.” Or something like that.

“From a phonecall now and then? You never mentioned him. Let alone that you talk about Maya much.”

“...” Where was the yes or no to my question.

“You should tell your mother more what’s going in your life. I just *love* lifestories. Like, did you know that Jennifer Lopez became famous because she appeared on the show ‘Yo! MTV Raps!’ as a dancer. Just her striking appearance and enthusiasm caught the people’s eye, and she slowly but certainly climbed to top from there. She’s real famous and successful now. She’s beautiful and very independent, a powerful woman. That’s why we named you after her. So that you’ll follow her strength and become a striking, independent, strong woman like her. You’ve already got her pretty looks.” She smiled and stroke my hair.

“...Mom...”

“Yes my dear?”

“Russ is still outside.”

“Ah right. Can he be trusted in one room with you? We don't have a free room and your little brother is having a sleepover here as well.”

“It's not a sleepover,” Micheal claimed, getting a drink from the fridge, “it's an all-night-mario-brother-videogame-marathon-party.”

Mom giggled a: “Pardon me.”

“SCOOOOOOORE! EAT DIRT SUCKERS!” Dad shouted from the livingroom.

"I can be trusted Misses Buncley! My mother taught me well." Russ announced proudly as he let himself into the house.

Mom looked at me, giving me a 'What do you think?'-look.

I nodded.

"Alright then," Mom cheered, "will you join us for dinner?"

"Sorry ma'am, my stuff is still at home, and I need to drop this off as well." Russ held up his shopping bags.

"They are... all yours?"

"Yes ma'am."

"What about Jenny's?"

“...” I said.

“She didn’t find anything she liked.” Russ filled in for me.

“Ah, okay then. We’ll be done with dinner around half past seven. So you’re free to come around that time.”

“Excellent. See you then Jenny.”

I looked over my shoulder and nodded him goodbye for the second time today.

“Go tidy up your room sweetie. Dinner is done in fifteen minutes.”

No sooner said than done. We finished at a quarter past seven. Looking outside of the window, because the clock was getting more and more boring, I saw Russ pacing up and down nervously and seemingly angry in front of my house looking at his watch over and over again.

“What are you smiling about?”

My dishwashing mother asked.

Smiling?

“Russ is here.”

“Already? He’s early. Well go let him in. I’m only doing the dishes anyway.”

So I did. I showed him around the house, pointed out where he was staying and where he could fresh himself up. We watched a movie in my room, we listened to music, he showed his catwalk-walk, he talked, I nodded, he talked some more, we laughed, he got overwhelmed, he kissed me, I told him to not do anything at night, he swore he wouldn’t.

I went to the bathroom first to get ready for bed, he went right after me, to you me in the bedroom an hour later. It was warm, so he lay down on top of his sleepingbag, wearing nothing but his three shades of blue coloured underwear.

“It seems he shaves everywhere,” I informed Kaspar, “though I don’t know about that *everywhere*.”

I turned off the light.

“Goodnight.” Russ said softly.

“ ‘night. “ I replied.

11 - Chapter 9: Calling names

Chapter 9: Calling names

When I woke up that morning, the window was open, the curtains only halfly closed, dancing on the entering breeze. The sunlight that crept in did it silently, softly and gently landing on face.

Opening my eyes with some reluctance, I saw a patiently waiting ceiling: Take your time, it's weekend anyway.

I turned my head to see if Russ was still sleeping, but he wasn't for he was sitting beside my bed. His chin resting on his crossed arms he had placed on my bedside. He was looking at me. There was a smile on his face.

“ ‘morning.”

“Hey Russ.” I rubbed the last pieces of the night out of the corners of my eyes.

“Did you sleep well.”

I nodded.

“I didn’t sleep much, your dad snores too loud. But I guess, I should thank him, because your sleeping face was just too cute. I wasn’t bored for even a second.”

Not bored looking at a sleeping face? Maybe I make a lot of facial expressions and sleep talk. Maybe I even sleepwalk, performing an entire play. Then I wouldn’t get bored of looking at a sleeping person as well, I think. Unless it’s a boring play like ‘The princess on the pea’. I never really liked that story.

“Do you to eat breakfast in bed?” He asked.

That’d be nice, so I nodded.

He got up, kissed my forehead and went downstairs. Huh... I guess he feels at home here or something, going down to make breakfast in someone else’s kitchen, unaccompanied by the one you are staying with.

Within a couple of seconds Russ already poked his head through the opened bedroom entrance.

“Uhm, your mom had already prepared something for us, so... here I am again.”

He walked in with two plates with something that included a lot of fruit, eggs, dry crackers, and a white sauce.

“How many calories is this?” He wondered.

Before accepting his offered plate, I stretched my limbs in bed and sat up.

“We can go and jog it off again.” I suggested.

“Okay.” A smile, flipping his head a bit to the side so that his bedroom-hair bounced a little.

“But not long. It’s Sunday.”

“So?”

“Sundays I’m spending with Maya right?”

“Like I said: so? Leave her be. She’s no fun.”

Right and I am. We chewed down our breakfast quietly. Russ finished sooner than I did (I can’t help it, I’m a slow eater) and took the opportunity to sit behind me, wrapping his arms around my waist.

“The way you eat is truly beautiful.”

Weirdo.

The doorbell rang, silence, steps could be heard on the stairs.

“Jenny! It’s a beautiful Sunday morning! Let’s go for a walk!” Maya said as she entered my room. Her neutral expression turned into a sour one as she saw Russ and me on the bed, me just having finished my plate. “What the hell are *you* doing here! It’s *Sunday*, so get lost!”

“Oh, don’t be jealous Miss Hothead, for it’s far too late for that. I spent the night here, and why couldn’t I, for Jenny and me have already kissed you see. *Many* times.” He pecked my cheek, then rubbed off his own kiss with his cheek. His arms pressing me harder against his body. Where did that come from? Not quite the opening line.

“YOU ASSHOLE! KEEP YOUR DIRTY LIPS OF HER CHEEKS!”

“Not only her cheeks I have dirtied, but her sweet lips also. So weep and go to hell.”

“YOU FREAKING WISH!”

Maya ran towards us, raising her hand, then, suddenly, falling down on her knees, slapping her hands against my cheeks, pulling my face towards her, kissing me. Her lips were way softer than Russ’, which I found strange, because I’m sure Russ uses lip salve and I doubt Maya would go through the trouble. I once heard her say that split, dry lips looked cool.

“YOU dog!” Russ jerked me away, so that I fell on the bed on my side, my plate landing on my pillow. When I turned my gaze towards the two other parties, I saw them both standing up. Yelling,

name-calling.

The world had gone mad.

As they kept on yelling, I sat quietly on the bed watching the scene. They were really going at it. After the name-calling, they started quizzing each other to see who knew me best and thus was a better friend.

Maya: "Did you know that Jenny got almost hit by a car when she was five?"

Russ: "Did you know she doesn't have a favourite colour, though green has a slight preference?"

"Her favourite bands are Mandy Moore, Guana Apes and System of a Down."

"She's had over fifteen different hairstyles in her life, all copied from celebrities like Angelina Jolie, Demi Moore, Sarah Michelle Gellar, Reese Witherspoon, Christiana Aguilera and Marilyn Monroe."

May I note that that was all my mother's doing and that I amazed by his memory. Russ once had suggested to look through each others photo-albums. I dragged all mine to his home and we had spent

the entire afternoon looking through them (and his of course. He was pretty at every age and incredibly cute when an infant). Remarkably enough Russ could figure out which hairdo was from what celebrity. Not all, but a lot.

“Speaking of which... Did you know her real name isn’t Jenny, but Mary? Named after Marilyn Monroe.”

Russ eyes enlarged, Maya gave off a glow of victory.

“Right Jenny?” She smiled satisfied..

The boy then looked at me with eyes that pleaded: Say it isn’t true.

I said nothing, just nodded.

“Why didn’t I know this! And how come a witch like *you* does?”

“That’s because this little witch is better friends with Jenny, than you are, that’s why. We tell each other stuff, like: secrets, stories, memories. So *you* go weep and go to hell.”

That wasn't really true though. I didn't tell much about my life, not out of my own initiative anyway, it was mostly Maya who was talking and I would comment or ask a question. Same with Russ.

But it happened during a sleepover at Maya's. When I was in the bathroom brushing my teeth, she had taken the opportunity to go through my stuff, including my wallet which held my passport. She then found out that my name wasn't Jenny but Mary Buncley. She asked me why and I explained.

"But her mother said... she was named after Jennifer Lopez."

"True, but later on. I mean, c'mon, use your brain idiot! JLO has been famous for several years but not seventeen! So how could she ever be called after that woman at birth. Her mother was a major fan of Marilyn Monroe back in the day for her beauty and success and the way she was adored by everyone and thus Jenny was called Mary, but then when JLO got famous, her mother nearly fell in love with that woman, for she was so independent and strong. Plus Marilyn Monroe was on drugs and speculated to be very unhappy, and that is not something you wish for your child, so she altered Jenny's name into the one she carries now."

Yeah, in that direction. My little brother Michael was called after Michael Jordon, but that was also an altered name for the name given to him at his birth was Gordon, as in Gordon Lightfoot, a singer whom mom was in love with when she was younger. My little brother's bedtime song was 'If you could read my mind' which mom sang for him every night as he was a baby. Apparently my bedtimesong had been 'Diamonds are a girl's best friend'.

But papa always thought that Gordon was too gay a name for a guy. So, for his birthday, mom gave papa the present of renaming his son, who then came up with Michael as in, like I said, Jordan.

They tried to get the new names through at the municipality house but the people there found 'We don't like the celebrities the names are referring too anymore.' not a good enough reason for an official name-change. So the rest of the family, the school and the doctor were simply informed about our new names and everyone started calling us Jenny and Michael up to where they even forgot we ever were called otherwise.

"Anyhow, get lost Russ. Jenny get dressed, it's *our* time now."

I really don't want to be forgotten by them, ever. They are just too weird, too much fun. There was only one week left for gathering information, perfecting the experiments, before studying for the exams started.

After the exams...

...I will make myself unforgettable to them.

Lover.. ..friend.. ..heartbreaker.. ..enemy.