

Category Two {aged 15 -17}

The Red Scarf

by Flynn Thompson

“Come on, just a letter.” Anne asked, sweeping her golden locks behind her ears.

Jake pondered this, teasing her with his cheeky smile. Anne stared into Jake’s piercing blue eyes, her own caramel brown eyes begging for just a hint.

“Okay, okay,” Jake said breaking the silence. He began again in an official tone “If you must know the first letter is... Drum roll please.” Anne chuckled as she drummed her hands on her thigh. “E.” Jake curtly declared when Anne had finished the drum roll.

Anne’s face went from filled with anticipation to one full of confusion. Her brows furrowed and her lips pushed out, the way they always did when she was baffled. She carefully considered the idea, her expression changing every few seconds. Admitting defeat she declared, “E. No one’s name starts with E.”

“Think harder.” Jake said excitedly, eager for her to find out for herself.

After repeating the letter E to herself a few times realisation dawned on her face. “Evan.” A curt nod from Jake was all the confirmation she needed. “Wait. Evan. As in captain of the football team Evan” Another one of Jake’s famous grins spread across his face. “I was as surprised as you, but over the last few weeks I started picking up on a few things, then I found this.” He pulled a scrunched up piece of paper from the pocket of his uniform trousers and handed it to Anne.

“Well this looks like enough proof.” Anne handed the paper back with a sly, sarcastic, wink.

The two sat in silence, taking in the view of the brick buildings that made up Crawley Public College. They could see the whole complex from their vantage point on the roof of the gymnasium, the only place they could secretly hang out after school hours, as the boys and girls dorms were located at opposite ends of the campus and mingling at night was forbidden.

After a few minutes had passed the conversation picked up again. The topic changing every now and then, from Anne’s parents to Jake complaining about his teachers until they sat in silence again. Jake peacefully pulled at the grass that grew on the roof and Anne stared up at the moon. They would often do this, only ever having been caught once, for which they received a solid three weeks of detention.

Time ticked on and it was closing in on midnight when Jake finally checked the watch he carried on his wrist. It had been a present from his parents before he left for boarding school. Every time he looked at the watch he remembered their faces that day, relief that he was finally gone. The feeling had been mutual.

“Well it’s getting late and I’ve got places to be and people to see.” As Jake said this he seductively bit his lip, which caused Anne to erupt into a fit of laughter.

“Don’t get in too much trouble.” She called after him as he began to descend the ladder.

She often stayed up on the roof long after Jake left, for reasons unbeknown to him. He glance back one more time, deep in thought his best friend continued to stare at the moon, sitting on the roof with her legs crossed she almost looked as though she were praying.

The dry, autumn, grass crunched beneath Jake’s feet as he jumped off the third last step of the ladder attached to the side of the gymnasium. He stared off around the large brick buildings, sticking to the shadows in order to avoid any unwanted attention from students or teachers that might also be out at this time. It only took him a few minutes total until he was standing outside the open window of his dormitory. He carefully climbed through, a practice he was all too familiar with, and silently arrived back inside. Crossing the small room to his bedside table he contemplated turning on the lights, deciding that they would be too bright he retrieved his matches from the drawer and lit the candle he kept next to them.

The dim yellow light that it cast was enough for him to see his reflection in the mirror. His blue school shirt and black uniform pants went surprisingly well with his olive toned skin. His chocolate brown hair and ocean blue eyes, emphasised by the glasses he wore, his most prominent facial features, worked together with his other features to present a defined, handsome, front. Deciding that a change of clothing was essential before he went out again he opened the cupboard on the wall opposite the mirror and started riffling through his clothes. Having selected his best clothes he hastily changed and stood in front of the mirror again. Examining himself again he adjusted a few aspects

of his outfit until he stood before himself with his blue ripped jeans, the ends of which he had rolled up so that his white pattern socks were visible. The mustard yellow and dark blue shoes he wore matched the blue and cream long sleeve he had pulled on and too top it all off he wore a red scarf for decoration. Watching himself in the mirror he removed his watch, freeing himself from his parents, allowing him to be himself. With a last glance back at the mirror Jake rushed to the window and climbed out for the second time that night.

Once again moving carefully through the shadows Jake made his way north, to the woods that were just past the football oval. Here he faced his biggest challenge, getting from one side of the oval to the other unnoticed. Moving through the school at night was hard enough, moving across this large open space proved even more difficult, especially as this was where students would come at night to smoke without getting caught. Just as he was about to set off he heard a familiar voice coming from the centre of the oval. Dropping to the ground he listened harder until he was sure that it was Janice McGregor and her boyfriend Tommy Strafford returning from the woods. Once they'd passed he carefully got back up, looked around to make sure there would be no other surprises, and then began the journey across the oval.

Arriving undetected on the other side of the oval Jake disappeared into the darkness of the woods. The cold nipped at the skin behind his ripped jeans, the cracking of sticks beneath his feet filled the eerie silence of the night. Arriving at the meeting place he leant against a tree, the dried up moss on its trunk cracking upon contact with his back. He took the time to make sure that his stance had a certain swagger about it. The thick canopy of trees blocked out most of the night sky and the light of the moon would only illuminate Jake's surroundings whenever a strong enough gust of wind rearranged the treetops.

Just as Jake was wondering if he should head back he heard the crunch of leaves coming towards him. A perfectly timed gust of wind allowed the moon light to illuminate the stunning face of Evan Archer as he walked into the clearing, his jawline slicing through the night like a knife through butter. He smiled kindly at Jake. Jake took the opportunity to thoroughly examine Evan as he approached. He wore black jeans, with an unzipped black leather jacket and a red and black checked shirt underneath it. His face was absolutely gorgeous, chiselled jawline, high cheekbones and dark black hair. Stopping a few metres away Evan awkwardly broke the silence. "Hi."

"Hey." Jake responded, all too familiar with this awkward setup. "Grab a seat." He gestured to a fallen tree trunk on the ground and the two sat.

"So... How long hav-... How did yo-... When did you discover, that you're, you know?"

"That I'm you know?" Jake asked.

Evan looked at him, silently begging him not to make him say it. "I'm only kidding," He laughed, lightly punching Evan's shoulder. "Year 8. How 'bout you?"

"Well, I'm not... you know." Evan answered. A response Jake had heard time and time again.

They sat next to each other in awkward silence for a few minutes until Evan swiftly turned to face Jake, grabbed his scarf, pulled him close and pressed his lips to Jake's. He pulled back after a few seconds. Jake stared into his eyes before lurching forward and pressing his lips back on Evan's. Evan kept tugging on Jake's scarf, trying to close whatever space there was left between them. Pulling away Jake joked that if Evan wanted the scarf that badly he could take it. The two laughed at this remark before they turned their attention back to each other.

All of a sudden a bright flashing illuminated their surrounds. The two

pushed each other away like a rotten piece of fruit. They listened closely to the footsteps of the unidentified photographer fleeing the scene. Once the noise had subsided Evan stood, pocketed Jake's red scarf and turned to walk away.

"Wait." Jake grabbed the sleeve of Evan's jacket, spun him around and pressed another kiss to his lips.

"I can't." He yelled, pushing Jake off of him.

Jake watched as Evan disappeared back into the darkness.

He stood there, alone, tears streaming down his face for what seemed like hours until he too finally turned and left. He no longer cared if he got caught or not, running across the oval without even a glance to see if the coast was clear. Once across he ran directly through the school until he arrived back at his dorm. He slammed the window shut once he was through it and collapsed onto his bed, sobbing into his pillow until he finally fell asleep.

When morning finally came Jake was woken by the hustle and bustle of the other students getting ready for school. His hand shot to his phone and onto social media as soon as he realised that last night's events hadn't been a dream. After checking all of his social media and

messages and finding nothing he realised that the secret photographer must have chosen not to post the picture. Slightly relieved he got up, still in last night's outfit, grabbed his bag of toiletries and made his way to the bathroom. He cautiously walked down the hall, praying that none of the other boys would say anything. He made it all the way without being confronted.

When he was ready for school and most of the other boys had left already left Jake headed down one of the corridors of the dormitory that he didn't often have to navigate. He stopped before room 164 and lightly knocked. No response. "Evan." He quietly whispered.

"Evan!" He tried again. "They don't know. Your secret is safe." Still no answer.

Slowly he began to open the door. Nothing could have prepared him for what he was about to see.

When the door was fully open, Jake peered in, only to see Evan hanging from the light fixture by the red scarf Jake had given him. Falling to his knees he let out an ugly cry, before crumpling up into a ball and sobbing into the carpet.