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David Hershel Johnson

by Laci Turner

Boom-boom. Boom-boom. Boom-boom.

My heart is about to explode. David Hershel Johnson just winked at me. Twice. I wonder if he's trying to use some kind of boy code to send me a message or was the sun in his eyes and he was just squinting. I choose code and try to decipher. Is a wink good, bad, playful, an implication of an overwhelming secret between us, or is it normal? My heart is racing, but I look calm. I am lost in thought. . . I remind myself that focusing too much on this could cause another panic attack. I attempt to divert my attention to something less monumental than the unclear winks I just received from the hunk that is David Hershel Johnson. I think about last night and our time together. I wonder if it is like that every time... my thoughts start to wander and my heart begins to beat fast again. I remind myself to try and control my thoughts. Hold on to something strong – breathe.

I'm sitting on the top row of bleachers, pretending to read the new *Twilight* book. Currently, Bella is swooning over Edward and Jacob and debating whether or not she deserves either of their fantastic bodies and relentless protection. *Ugh*. My friends ask about Edward and his relationship with Bella. I'm ahead in the book, as usual, and they're excited to know what's happening between the lovers, but I don't have much to say.

I CANNOT FOCUS on some melodramatic love story about two teenagers when I have my own one playing out! If only they knew, they would understand how trivial this book is to me. Instead, I try to focus on the warmth of the metal bleachers under my rump and the almost picturesque appearance our town has from up here. I can see nearly all the way down Main

Street. The shops are colorful and pristine just like they were in the fifties when Molton, Ohio was a home to the Ford Factory. Now, long abandoned by the automotive giant, Main Street is really all that's special. Everyone left long ago. Feeling Christie's gaze at my obviously disturbed demeanor, I attempt to focus back on the one thing that brought my life joy and excitement, but disgusted by the false sense of happiness teenage love brings to those who look for it, I put the book down and yawn, pretending that I am just bored with it rather than repulsed by the lies it is filled with.

Astonished, my friend Christie blurts out "Why'd you stop?! Did Edward die?! Did Bella give birth?! What happened?!" Before I can even stammer out a word, she's on to asking if any of her predictions came true.

When we first bought our copies, she had emphatically declared after reading the first chapter of the book that, "Bella is going to end up with Edward!" She is notorious for making these type of predictions, and she doesn't just save her prophecies for novels: she makes new declarations every day.

I remember when I met Christie in eighth grade home room. She had sat beside me with her strawberry-blonde hair all curled up, in that Taylor Swift kind of way. She had been one of the prettiest girls I had ever met. Her skin was like a porcelain doll's – light, fair and unblemished. She was wearing a white linen dress that showed off her already round assets. I instantly envied her body and said a prayer to God for my own to look like that one day. I quietly sat in my chair and hoped no one would notice I was new. I hated being the new kid, and this was my third time. Christie obviously had not "predicted" me to be terrified of strangers because she made it a point to introduce herself and declare that "We're going to be the best of friends!" Her enthusiasm was contagious, and for some reason, I had known she was right. Four years

later, we are still nearly conjoined twins. I usually never feel more comfortable when I'm with someone than I do when I'm with Christie. Today, however, is a different story.

When Christie and I met in eighth grade, I was skinny with awkwardly long limbs and big eyes. I couldn't have been flatter nor my clothes radiate any more second hand than they already did. She was the complete opposite of me. She exuded confidence, walked like a model, and had the body and face to pull it off. All the boys were interested in Christie and would send her flowers and chocolates for Valentine's Day, write her notes, and call her up after school. *I was so jealous of her.* Not much had changed since eighth grade except that Christie had filled out even more, and I had finally formed some semblance of breasts but not near the ones I had prayed so diligently for. Christie had predicted during my sophomore year that I would soon develop blouse bunnies, and two months later, I had the skeeter bites I have now. At least, that's what the boys call them.

To Christie's credit, her "prophecies" usually came true and she relished knowing they do. So when she assumed I had finished the final chapter and she could find out if her declaration was fulfilled, she jumped on the chance like a cheetah pounces on a helpless antelope. My already full eyes widened at the loud reaction to my seemingly disinterested yawn, but I tried to play it cool.

"I haven't finished it yet. I'm just tired of reading" I mumbled.

"What do you mean you're tired of reading? This is only the most monumental love story of our time! How could you be tired of the wonderful dream that is Edward?" I shrugged. She seems exasperated by my lack of response, as usual, and acting as my faithful companion, she quickly changes topics to David Hershel Johnson.

"So how'd it go with David last night?"

My calm heart is beating so loudly that I wonder if she can hear it. Boom-boom. Boom-boom. Boom-boom. Excited by the mention of the hunk that is David Hershel Johnson, the rest of the girls gasp, stop reading and look up to me with yearning eyes. David Hershel Johnson is *the* man on campus, and every girl at school wants him, especially these girls. They want to know the details. *The juicy details*. Terrified, I manage to whimper out, “We didn’t hang out last night. I wasn’t feeling well and decided to stay home.” Most of the girls look disappointed and open up their books, but Christie is shocked. She blurts out “You canceled on David Hershel Johnson? Are you crazy?!”

I give Christie the lost look of shame that she has become so accustomed to receiving from me. She is the only girl in our group that knows how private, shy, and uncontrollably terrified I am. My panic attacks started the year before, and Christie, being the in-tune girl she is, quickly learned when I had met my limit and what the “look” meant. This is one of those times. She knows this look and must know that I do not want to talk about the bronzed idol that is David Hershel Johnson. She suggests that we go ahead and head to the choir room. I’m relieved by this escape plan, nod slowly with relief and try to avoid David’s confusing eyes as I stumble down the bleachers after Christie’s graceful dissent.

As soon as we get out of range of David’s confusing gaze and the earshot of the vultures, uh... I mean girls, Christie grabs my arm and drags me, stumbling, under the bleachers. She has her serious face on. The one where I know that some intensive questioning is about to happen. When she gives this look, her forehead crinkles up like ripples on a lake, her eyebrows rise to what seems like her scalp, and her eyes widen in such a way that you are left defenseless against her barrage of questioning. I am defenseless against *her* look. Most people try and fight it but

always fail in their attempts to get past her extensive questioning. I gave up trying years ago. I know exactly what is coming and that I am utterly unprepared to explain what happened.

“Okay, babe,” she begins, “What happened last night? I know you didn’t stay home when you were supposed to hang out with David Hershel Johnson, especially not with every girl in town wanting the same acknowledgement. ”

“I don’t want to talk about it,” I attempt to sound firm and annoyed by her persistence. Why I even try to fight this, I don’t know. It’s Christie, she will always win. I will always lose. That’s how it works. I give in and recount the *juicy details* the vultures craved so desperately.

“Well...” I pause, take a deep breath to steady my heart, close my eyes so I don’t have to see that scowl anymore, and begin. “David picked me up around 8 from the corner like we planned. I wore that denim dress and the red heels like you said. He was really nice at first. We drove around and listened to music for a while and then he wanted to go to the lake. I know you said that’s where everyone who is anyone goes...” I pause, “but there wasn’t anyone there.”

“Ooh! Did y’all do it?!” Christie blurts out.

“Well... David said he had liked me for a long time and was too shy to say anything. When we got there, we sat on the rocks beside the south shore for a few minutes and then he leaned over to kiss me. *That* was fantastic.” I smile and reminisce about my first kiss.

“I could smell his hair. It smelled like a man’s would after a hard day of chopping cedar trees and his lips were *so* soft. I was surprised by how soft they were, but he likes to kiss hard, really hard. He bit my lip and dragged his teeth across the bottom one. I didn’t expect that. You never said he’d do that. Well... he wanted to go skinny dippin’ since it was dark. He started taking his clothes off before I could even say anything. Before I knew it, he was bare naked. I

mean, full monty naked. I didn't want to go in." I inhale deep; my heart is starting to beat fast again.

"When I told him no, he got mad, *really* mad. He said that 'no girl wears a dress like that if they weren't going to put out.' He grabbed my arm, pulled me against his chest, and started kissing me again. I tried to pull away; I didn't like it this time; he was hurting my arms... I tried to kiss him again like you told me to because I thought he'd like it, but he wanted more. He sat on the ground and pulled me down on top of him and I could feel his one eyed snake against my hoo-ha. When I jumped and tried to get off, I guess he thought I was horsing around like you said guys liked, but neither of us were laughing so I'm not sure. He rolled to the side and flipped me on my back. He grabbed my panties and ripped them off. I told him I wasn't ready, but he was.

"And then I felt it. I felt *him* inside me." Tears start to leak out of my cringed eyes

"I cried out in pain, it hurt. It hurt so bad - like I was tearing into two pieces. I know you said it would be a little uncomfortable, but I didn't expect *that*. I told him to stop. I told him that it hurt, but he said I was just playing hard to get and he kept going. I closed my eyes to try and calm down and picture myself somewhere else with someone else, but I started hyperventilating. I couldn't breathe; my heart was pounding so hard. I tried to push his chest off of mine, but he grabbed my wrists and pinned them to the ground. I started having a panic attack and started crying. I couldn't control myself.

"When he was done there was blood everywhere *down there*. He was disgusted and told me, 'You gotta wash that shit off if you're going to ride in my car.' So I washed off in the lake, found the remains of my panties, and tied them back on. On the ride home, he told me that next

time would be better now that I didn't have my cherry. He said that next time, I wouldn't just lay there, but I'd be on top." I start to sob.

"I don't understand, Christie. It didn't feel *anything* like you said it would. I thought it would feel good and that we would do all the *other stuff* you said people at the lake did. I just thought when someone finally parked their pink Cadillac down my side street that it would be as easy as parallel parking, but it felt more like a tractor trailer had hit me.

"I don't understand what I did wrong. I tried to do everything you said. I wore the dress. I wore the shoes. I curled my hair like you showed me. I did my makeup. And I kissed like you told me to." I take a deep breath, wipe the tears from my face, and find the courage to open my eyes again now that I have recounted the awkward encounter of me and David Hershel Johnson - football star, rough kisser and even rougher lover.

Christie takes a deep sigh, puts her hands on her hip like she always does when relaying her all-knowing advice. "I don't know why you didn't just get in the lake! *Maybe* he would have done all that other stuff with you first. Some guys just like it rough. I'm sure next time with him will be even better! It's David Hershel Johnson for crying out loud! Any girl at school would give it to him anywhere and any way he wants. Be happy that he chose *you*. And next time, if there is next times with him . . . don't have a panic attack. Just relax, take a deep breath, and enjoy it." She kisses me on the cheek, hugs me hard, and says that she's so excited that, "You voted your hymen off the island."

I tell Christie that she's probably right, that I'm not feeling well, and I'm going to walk home. I wonder if Christie is right and next time will be better. Am I simply over thinking it? She is usually so good at giving advice and always knows what's going to happen. I feel like I lost, as usual. This feeling is something I should be used to by now, but Christie and her

overwhelmingly confident response to my awkward encounter just adds to my confusion. I wonder how the person, whom I trust more than anyone, can have an opinion and understanding so much greater and different than mine. I guess it's just experience.

As I stroll down the achingly hot sidewalk and contemplate the advice Christie just gave me, I hear the familiar rumble of a '69 Camaro SS - David's car. He pulls close to the sidewalk and hollers for me. I stop in mid stride, peer into the side window, and make sure I'm not dreaming. I look around to make sure there's no one else around he could be talking to. There isn't. I am the only girl making the long trek across town by foot, and there sits David Hershel Johnson, in the driver seat, speaking to me, in *public*. He coolly says, "I'm heading up to the lake. Want to *come*?" and gives that ever confusing wink of his. I remind myself of Christie's never failing advice, take a deep breath like my doctor said to do, and get in.