

Cornerburn High

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2008-2009 Winner – Winter Break Short Story Contest

“Well that’s just great,” I muttered sourly as I stood up and wiped the snow off the rear of my patched, worn-out jeans. This was just how I needed to start out the New Year, going to school soaking wet after slipping on a patch of ice.

“Honestly, Bethy, you are the clumsiest person I know,” sighed my older sister Kelsey, half-laughing as she picked my wet history book up from the snow bank where it had fallen. Yeah, on top of everything else I got stuck with the name Bethy Brown. God it sounds like the name you would give a cow or worse, a hillbilly. I couldn’t even have one of the normal variations of Elizabeth like Eliza or Liz, no I had to have Bethy all because of my straight “A”, cheer captain sister. Bethy had started out as a family name when Kelsey couldn’t pronounce her “z’s” correctly and as luck would have it, I had her exact same teachers all through elementary school where the name spread like wildfire and stuck like gum to the bottom of a leather boot.

“Would you get in the car?” called my perfect sister who had already started the ignition. “We’re going to be late.”

I got into the car without complaint and in five minutes we were at my least favorite place in the world, Cornerburn High, only in a town as small as Cornerburn Wisconsin would have a school named after it. I scanned the school and saw the typical groups; jocks and Goth kids in separate corners, the theatre club rehearsing for their next play while the chess team talked strategy excitedly. There was something out of the ordinary though, the cheerleaders and

almost every other girl was surrounding my best friend, Alex James, a girl with very curly ebony hair and a handsome boy with dark brown eyes and whose hair was so messy it looked deliberate that looked vaguely familiar though I wasn't certain I hadn't seen him before.

I got out of the car, shoved a few cheerleaders out of the way, and finally reached Alex and the good-looking boy. “What’s going on?” I asked looking around at the group of non-claustrophobic girls.

Alex jabbed a thumb over her shoulder at the boy. “Remember how I said that my cousin was moving here?” She pulled the boy’s shirt so that he was now facing me. “Nathan, Bethy: Bethy, Nathan.”

I nodded curtly but Nathan stuck out his hand as if expecting me to shake it, he clearly didn't understand how things worked around here. I shook it anyway.

I remembered where I had seen the boy before, on the cover of his latest CD. Nathan James was the best-selling artist of the year who had an annoying fan base that seemed to consist of every girl on the planet besides Alex and me, and, according to Alex, he was the most arrogant person alive.

The bell rang, but no one seemed to notice. I grabbed Alex’s arm and pulled her through the crowd. Nathan didn't follow. “Should we get your cousin?” I asked half-heartedly.

Alex looked back at the large mob; Nathan was already talking to three other girls. “I don't think he'll get lonely,” she laughed. “Come on; let's go before Miss Brunsworth gives us a month's worth of detention.”

“I wouldn’t put it past her even if it is the first day after break.” The second bell rang and we darted into the building up a flight of stairs and into Miss Brunsworth’s American history class.

“Brown, James, why are you late?” asked the sharp voice of Miss Brunsworth who never seemed to realize that students had lives outside of school.

“Does a massive crowd blocking the door count as an excuse?” I asked knowing full-well I was going to pay for it.

“No Brown; it doesn’t. One week of detention for both of you.”

“Yes Miss Brunsworth,” we chanted in unison as we took our usual seats at the back of the class and Miss Brunsworth began a very boring lesson about the Gettysburg address that would have been interesting if any other person, or monkey, was teaching it. She couldn’t have been teaching ten minutes when the cause of the blockage entered the room, waving to someone obscured by the door.

“Sorry I’m late,” he said as he took an empty seat next to Alex. “I couldn’t seem to get out of the crowd.”

“Oh that’s perfectly alright James,” said Brunsworth in an uncharacteristically high-pitch voice. “I completely understand.”

“You have got to be kidding me,” I muttered to Alex when Brunsworth had begun her lesson again.

“You’ll get use to it,” she replied glumly and slumped in her seat for the rest of the lesson.

The rest of the day continued in the same manner, sadly I had Nathan in every single one of my classes and of course he was late to every single one without penalty. I couldn’t wait for my favorite part of the day; lunch.

I stood in the, what seemed like the never ending, lunch line, craning my neck in order to get a glimpse of the barely edible food they were serving us, it didn’t look appetizing. The line wasn’t moving and I began tapping my foot in frustration when a brown-haired boy surrounded by the usual gaggle of girls cut to the front.

“Oi!” I called at him when he looked around I gave him a look that I hoped showed how much I wanted him gone as I yelled, “Get at the back of the line like the rest of us!”

“Oh no, he doesn’t have to do that,” said the graying lunch-lady sweetly right before she whispered, “My daughter absolutely loves you.”

“No, she’s right,” said Nathan who then got out of the line and made a bowing gesture to one of the chest-geeks behind him, offering his spot, the boy looked stunned and tripped as he moved forward.

The line was still moving at a snail pace but I eventually got through it and began to walk toward Alex’s and my usual table when I heard the clinking of high-heels on the linoleum floor. I instinctively looked around and let out a small groan as I saw the manicured, dyed-blonde hair, Barbie doll figure of Gemma Money walking towards me closely followed by her two identical, brainless cronies.

“I should have known it would be Bethy Brown who would be rude to anyone important,” she said as she and her clones stopped in front of me, all three placing a French-manicured hand on their hips.

“Yeah, because taking advantage of the people here who think of him as an idol isn’t rude at all. I’m not going to let some egotistical, hard-headed idiot treat like I’m some second class citizen because I don’t have a top ten CD selling out at the pharmacy. This school can only handle one large ego anyway and you’ve already filled that position to the limit.”

I knew I shouldn’t have said the last part but I couldn’t resist. Gemma had tortured my life since kindergarten when she had stolen my best crayons that my parents couldn’t afford to replace and from then on had made it incredibly plain that my family was not as wealthy as hers.

The next thing I knew, my shirt was sopping wet and my mashed potatoes were in it. “Look everyone!” called the she-devil laughing as she pointed at the tray she had pushed into my chest. “Bethy still hasn’t learned how to use a fork; she should really get out of that barn she lives in.”

I heard laughs from behind me and felt someone hold my hand back when I had filled it with potatoes ready to fling at Gemma, I figured it was Alex and was surprised to see Nathan handing me the gray sweat-shirt he had been wearing earlier. I took it and put it on muttering a barely audible, “Thanks,” as I did so.

“No problem,” he replied as Alex hurried to us. Nathan turned to her and continued in an abnormally loud voice, “You were right Lexi; the girls here are Godzilla in disguise.” Gemma

gave a deep scowl as more laughs echoed throughout the cafeteria and stormed out, her posse right behind her.

Nathan then lowered his voice as he said, “I’m going to the library; no one will think to look for me behind a bookshelf.” Alex nodded as he began walking. He turned around when he reached the door and gave me a broad grin.

Yes, Cornerburn High had gotten a new celebrity, but maybe he wasn’t all that bad, I always had had a thing for brown eyes.