

THE H PPENING

An Annual Easter Publication - "The Village Years"
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Today was one of those days that I might forget some of the moments, not quite remember each detail, might even wonder if it happened, so I'm writing it down. No doubt I will read this letter pretty much every day. The creases in this letter were from my hands, the words were my feelings, as best I can describe them, and if there are tears on the page it was from happiness. Please make sure this letter gets to my family.

Since I arrived in the Village I seemed to keep to myself for the most part. It wasn't that I don't like people, I do, but it was just harder for me to make friends. I was assigned a job in construction, building an addition to the factory. I like working with my hands and I swing a sledgehammer most of the day. I'll be 18 next month, which means I have been here almost two years. I had the afternoon off and had just completed a workout at *Rise Up Fitness*. I grabbed a protein shake, at *Whey2Go!*, and started jogging towards the factories. *(I've gotten really hooked on whey and dairy. I could drink protein shakes 8-10 times a day if I let myself. If I get tired and can't sleep, I reach for a protein drink. If I hurt myself by accident, it's whey that makes it feel better. The first thing I want when I wake up...you guessed it -whey. I do think it's a little weird that I like to put a blanket over my head and close my eyes when I drink it, though.)* It was a beautiful day, light blue skies and a slight breeze. The kind of temperature, that just wearing my tank top and sweats felt good. I reached the corner of Nature's Way and Lollipop Blvd when I began to see a crowd forming at the chocolate factory. A blonde headed girl, with her hair crimped and pulled back in a ponytail, was on the sidewalk praying. She looked up when I got next to her, so I asked if I could help her. She introduced herself as Canaan-0414 and asked me to follow her. As we walked, she told me that a brave young boy dove into the chocolate vat to save a little girl and they were having trouble getting them out. I could see that the pulley they constructed was connected to the conveyor belt of the candy machine. The other end of the rope was tied around the ankles of a different little boy lowering himself into the vat. There was not enough strength in the small motor to pull them to safety. The young boy inside the chocolate

didn't seem too troubled by the delay, as he was holding the little girl up and swallowing mouthfuls of chocolate like it was candy. I walked up to the rope and untied it from the conveyor and grabbed it with an overhand grip, I wasn't trying to impress anybody, but my triceps and biceps were pretty pumped at this point. I walked backwards as I pulled the three out of the vat. When the others got them to safety, the youngest boy came over to me, toweling off his six-pack, and introduced himself as Liam-0412. He scooped a finger full of chocolate out of his navel and said, "Hey *"Bear"*, you want some?" I said, *"No thanks, that stuff isn't healthy for you!"* Liam rolled his eyes, but shook my hand and was sincerely appreciative! It seems like the nickname might stick around here, 'cause that's how people are describing me. I kinda like it.

The three of us hung out the rest of today. There seems to be a closeness developing already. Canaan told me that I was an answer to her prayer. I've never been told that before and it feels good. In fact the feeling is so good that I can't get a smile off my face. Every time I think of the events of today I get this huge smile that fills my face. I believe it's God's way of reminding me that we are all created for a purpose and my smile has spurred a few people to ask me about it. As much as I enjoyed today, I enjoy sharing with others more of how their lives impact those around them. Be who you are, be happy and be available.

I can't wait to meet my family someday. According to the structure here, Canaan, Liam and I still have 14 years together before we begin to leave. They will be great years I'm confident! We committed to each other that we would pray for each of our families and trust God to place us where we need to be. As we reached for each other's hands, I prayed that Liam would be a leader, follow after God all the days of his life and his parents would be given rest when they need it, peace to know that God was in control and strength for each day. Liam prayed for Canaan that God would send an angel to watch over her, that she would learn from her mother the virtues of being a Godly wife and her self worth would be nurtured by moments spent with her dad. Canaan reached over to me and prophesied that my smile would draw people to me, my strength would move mountains and my love for others would change lives.

This all happened today, but I believe it will be with me forever. I never want to forget it.

Titus

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Aleksei Flickertail, *New Arrivals Guidance Counselor* in July of 2016