**Daniel**

***Grevillea Short Stories***

Shrieks ricocheted against these grime slathered walls; I fearfully pull my sister closer to me. Gesturing her to silence herself, we cautiously retreat to the darkness of the sewer. The shrills are louder this time, they’re gaining; I can feel their ominous presence. In an attempt to camouflage ourselves, we scrub our skin and clothes in a sufficient amount of ambiguous substances.

Eyes closed, shaking involuntarily. In times like these I would usually pray, but I’ve seen horrific situations no fourteen year old boy should ever be exposed to, and I have come to the conclusion there is no god, there is no hope. My motive is to survive and protect my sister; she is what I am living for.

Repressing my heavy breathing I sight two glowing, yellow orbs flickering in the distance. I stare in confusion.

“S-Simon…” Issie whimpers.

Then the realisation slaps me in the face.

“Don’t…move…” I whisper frightfully.

The orbs settle directly ahead of us, maybe fifty metres. Then the glisten of sharp, white fangs appear in the dim light. Slowly I tug my sister to the corner, my eyes glued to it. As Issie hesitantly moves her shoe grazes against the ground a little too loudly and I hear the blood curdling screech I was dreading not to sound. My hand tightens around Issie’s arm and I forcefully bring her towards me. Like a bolt of lightning it shoots to the direction it heard us last, which is literally centimetres from where we are fearing for our lives.

Yellow beady eyes, no pupils, it’s blind. Blistered, putrid skin; highly sensitive to anything that comes into contact. Still semi white teeth, this is a recent morphing. Ears twitching to every tiny noise, waiting for us to slip up, waiting for us to give away our location. I feel for my pouch and carefully pull out soft drink can. 1-2-3…

“TSSS” the can opens.

I quickly splash its eyes with the liquid and almost immediately its face begins to hiss and burn. It collapses and I friskily pour the rest of the can onto the body.

“Quick! C’mon! We have to leave now!” I exclaim quietly.

I grab Issie’s hand and run down to the darker parts of the sewer. Eventually we come to a halt at an abandoned person’s make shift house I assume.

“Eat up, get some rest, we can’t stay for long.” I tell Issie, tossing her some stale biscuits I found from another makeshift home.

“Simon, I’m scared, that was too close…”

“It doesn’t matter how close it gets, we survived with minimal resource loss and no injury.”

“How many have we got left? We’ll need to head to the surface if we keep wasting our soft drinks on these attacks…”

“There’s two left, and you know we can’t, it’s hell up there, sticking to the sewers is our best bet, there’s not as many dwiggeries there.”

“They’ve developed wings, they’re adapting to different ecosystems, we’ve seen them dig too, and soon they’ll be swimming.”

All of a sudden the echo of a pipe. We go into a defensive formation, it can’t be a dwigger, they’d be screaming and wouldn’t come into these parts of the sewers. A sweat develops on my brow.

“AHHHHHH!” Out of nowhere, a boy, maybe a year or two younger than me, charges towards us with a sharp stick.

It startles me at first and he manages to cut me across my leg; however I restrain him from blowing any sort of harm to my sister.

“LET ME GO! LET ME GO!” He shouts. I muffle his groans with my hand, but he licks it. Naturally, I pull away in disgust.

“Shhh! Keep it down, who are you and what do you want?” I tighten the head lock.

“Please, I’m just hungry and I heard your chattering, I thought I could ambush you but…”

“Well you clearly thought wrong, what are you doing in the sewers you little brat?”

“Uh...” he squirms in discomfort, “you see, that is confidenti-aahh!” I tighten even more.

“Okay, okay! I am heading to a bunker in the sewer, my father set it up for us, yes, he was that kind of father before this apocalyptic chaos, and you have no right to call him crazy now because just look around you now.”

“A bunker?”

“Yes, a bunker, food, water, shelter, all secured and protected, I’m headed there to meet up with him.” He says so surely.

“Take us with you.” I said with no hesitation.

“Simon...” My sister nudges me, “how can we trust this guy, we hardly know him and he all of a sudden claims to have this bunker now?” Issie persists under her breath.

“Issie, what else can we do? Continue to scuttle around this filthy sewer searching for abandoned makeshift homes in hope for some stale food? We’re going to run out of soft drinks soon too; this will at least give us a motive.”

Issie hushes. “Okay, let’s do it.”

“HEY, HEY, HEY!” Exclaims the boy, “When did I ever give my consent to this?”

“You,” I stare deep into his eyes, stern faced, “do not have a choice.”

We confide to the shadows. Slowly following the boy under close supervision. Issie giggles as he stumbles over his own two feet and just proves to be all around clumsy. The wound on my leg has put me in agony but I refuse to show any sign of it. How this awkward geek managed to slash me, boggles my mind. He was dressed in a long sleeve plain grey jumper with baggy cargo pants and a broad brimmed hat that was knotted and secured under his chin. His skin was pale and I imagine would burn quite easily. He had greasy and oily straight thin brown hair and was an average height but kinda lanky.

“So what’s your name anyways?” Issie broke the silence.

There was a pause, “Daniel.” He says, “My name is Daniel.”

They began to converse, favourite colour, their pets, I really just disregarded it. I did hear that he was twelve, two years older than Issie and his father seemed to be an expert with dwiggeries. The outbreak of the disease is unknown and within three days ninety precent of all living organisms had been infected. Daniel said they are called dwiggeries because Professor Ron Dwigger created the first, what an idiot.

Issie seems to be bonding with Daniel. In my opinion, it seems pretty genuine. I’m beginning to trust him more, he offered me half a Tim-tam that was only about a week after the best before date.

“We’re nearly there!” Daniel said excitedly.

*“SCREEEEEEECHH!”*

“Oh dear…” I whisper.

“Get back!” I push them behind me.

We cling to the wall and withdraw to a corner.

“Is there another way?” I ask.

“No, the door is up ahead, we’re so close!” Daniel respond.

“Ok, we’ll just have to fight it.”

We begin to approach the dwigger; it’s seemingly a newly morphed one as well. Out of nowhere, Daniel pushes me aside.

“Dad?” He exclaims.

*“GWAAAAAHHKKAAA”*

“DANIEL! GET BACK!” I open the can and it fizzes into the charging vessel. Its face scrunches up and it hisses.

It falls to the ground and distinct humanly characteristics are more visible. I immediately identified it as being Daniel’s father, despite my knowledge of his physical appearance. Daniel breaks down. The one person he was living for lays dead, cold and disgusting on the sewer floors, meters away from the bunker he was meant to live a safe haven in with his father. I forcefully drag him to safety. Issie is trying to talk to him, he doesn’t want to respond.

Inside the bunker I see cans of soft drink, weaponry, food and water. I turn to Daniel, he’s a mess, and I see a cut that I gave him on his neck from the fight. Issie helps me by removing his jumper so it will be easier to clean up his neck wound. Then, the most unexpected happens. As more and more of his arms begin to become exposed, bite, scratch and teeth marks cover his skin. Black and blue and blistering; the doing of…Dwiggers.

“I guess you know now then…” He says calmly, head glaring down to the ground, I wield a knife to him.

“How long, how fresh are these marks? Why didn’t you tell us? Daniel, DANIEL!” He doesn’t respond, he just purses his lips, hunched back and head still glued to chest. “Daniel, this is the only option, if you morph you will just put us in danger, it’s better this way, I’d ask you to do the same to me.” I say, trying to be rational.

“You don’t understand, do you?” He begins, “these are weeks old. They’re all different bites.” He says, “Simon, I’m immune.”