

CHAPTER 7

"I just want to know your name," said Marvin, pondering whether or not that statement was normal.

It surely didn't *feel* normal for him to care what her name was (another pun that I did not intend for), but that was different. Normal for him was not normal for other people. Marvin acknowledged this, and it was a constant goal to keep himself ordinary, and to not come off as a lunatic.

Maybe it was too late, in this case.

Marvin was sitting on a chair pulled up next to a small table. On the other side of this table was Care, facing the opposite direction.

Care was a little distracted. This was to be expected, for the most part: the light had been flickering on and off for the past ten minutes, the chair was wobbly enough that she could have fell to the floor at any moment, and to top it all off, she was alone in a school library with a unpleasant stranger who happened to possess an abnormally large forehead.

"Hey," Marvin said, again trying to obtain Care's attention. "Please answer me."

The room was quiet. Looking around took that feeling away; no matter where you were standing you were surrounded by books, all of them shouting at you. You could feel the love in this room; they weren't angry shouts, they were actually very peaceful ones. The library was eager and happy. It hadn't seen a child in years, and now it was back in business.

Marvin could feel the shouts. They were coming from inside of *him* as well.

Care continued to sit in her pitiful position. Her confusion served to completely prevent her from getting up, from even attempting to escape again.

Yes, again.

Earlier that day, she had been sitting in a classroom, tied to a chair, waiting to wake up. But this didn't feel like a tunnel to her; it still didn't. Maybe it was a different kind of tunnel.

She was later taken out of the room by this same man, pulled through a hallway, carried through a couple of other rooms, and placed on the chair she was now sitting on.

The motivation for resisting was non-existent. Gone. Nowhere. It took way too much energy, was completely and utterly useless, and only made things more difficult in the long run. Not that Care actually thought this through - she didn't at all. She was just confused and distracted.

Marvin needed a new strategy. Simply asking this girl to talk to him wasn't going to make it happen.

He stood up, pushing his chair in, and started to walk toward Care's chair, faking a smile similar to the one he had on before. It could have fooled me, honestly.

"Girl!" he began, laying his hand on her shoulder. "Talk to me."

Care's response was almost falling off the chair in surprise. She landed on her feet, but the chair tipped over and a leg broke off (it was probably going to happen anyway). She stood defensively, staring at Marvin, keeping at a safe distance.

"Now, I'm not going to hurt you," he said, after first thinking about his reply. He felt like he was doing a good job being normal so far.

Care didn't move.

"I just want you to tell me your name, sweetie," Marvin said. He felt like taking the "sweetie" part back, thinking it was a bit too much. "Please. Just your name."

She still stood there, looking at him. Nothing happened for the next full minute. It was torturous.

The clock began ticking. Care looked at it, surprised that it hadn't been working for the last ten minutes and now it just suddenly started ticking loudly. The library clock tended to do that, as Marvin knew very well by now. He didn't bother saying anything about it though, as Care quickly looked back at him and forgot about it.

"Care," she said, softly.

The room was silent, and even the books quit shouting.

Marvin felt like jumping for joy, but he remember that he was trying to be normal. But this was getting more and more difficult for him. He didn't have a whole lot of experience with normal people, after all. Maybe he was exposed to them during his childhood, but as of lately, he hadn't spoken to many people at all.

This was bad, though. A lot of happiness was being built up here, so much that Marvin couldn't quite bear it.

It distracted him so much that he forgot exactly what she said.

"Cara?" he asked.

It was quiet. Care stared at him.

"C-Care." she repeated.

Marvin was so excited by this that he forgot to listen for the second time. He felt the need to punch himself in the face.

"Caren?" he asked, a little guilty for asking again.

"Care," she replied.

"Carina!"

"No, Care."

"Carla. Yeah?"

Care gave up. She sat on the floor, still very distracted. The light kept flickering.

"Yes," she said.

"Carine, then?" Marvin asked. "Cool. Man, this is great."

He could barely control his excitement. This is what Marvin has wanted for a very, very long time - and he finally obtained it. It wasn't very difficult, either.

The next task would be to find some activities. He wasn't sure what to do right away, but he knew that there must have been something.

"Wait just a second," Marvin said. "I'm going to be right back. Read a book or something."

He skipped over to the door, filled with glee and eagerness, and left the room. The clock continued to tick, and the light continued to flicker on and off.

Care was left sitting on the floor, still bewildered by this whole situation. She didn't feel safe leaving from her spot.

At times like this, Care's desire to explode only intensified. Every tick of the clock felt like her cue to do so. With no possible way to achieve such a thing, she felt helpless and weak. There was no escape.

She leaned over on the book shelf next to her, still sitting, trying to evaluate the situation. The floor was uncomfortable, as was anything else you could have possibly sat on in that school building. Looking up at the shelf, she proceeded to stare at the books - they were no longer shouting, only engaging in quiet chit-chat at this point. Maybe they were talking about the broken chair; how it had lived a long, satisfying life.

But maybe it didn't.

It was normal for her to feel alone. But, for the very first time, she really was. In every possible way. The books weren't actually talking - they weren't even alive.

Care completely understood and accepted the situation. The confusion was gone. She was not imagining any of it.

She stood up and took a look at her surroundings.

Obviously a library - not a very big one though. In fact, the school was very small in general. She recalled being pulled through a small hallway, which appeared to be the only hallway in the entire building. Only about six classrooms.

A hallway, six classrooms, and a library. She saw another door; it probably lead to a cafeteria or something similar.

Care couldn't help but wonder. Maybe this was some kind of factory of sadness. It had all the characteristics of one, not to mention it was doing a damn good job generating fear and misery. And even though it produced enough of it to potentially feed a city, only one person was actually receiving any.

Was that unfair to Care, or was it unfair to the city?

It was a good thing that, coincidentally, Care was on her way to creating the world's first factory of happiness. Experiencing the polar opposite was probably helpful to her.

Now, if only she could find that circular piece.

Rummaging through the drawers and closets felt like a childish thing. Marvin tried to make it feel childish. There were toys all over the place, just waiting to be found. And they *were* going to be found. There was no question.

He didn't *really* believe with complete confidence that there were toys in that school. But that was uncertainty. Marvin rejected uncertainty, at least for this brief moment. Would a child be uncertain? Somehow he didn't think so. His (fairly limited) experience with children lead him to this fact, though for the most part he wasn't completely ready to rely on his own knowledge.

This was his favorite classroom - second door to the right. There was no question about it, it was clearly a superior room. It had *two* closets, after all. The other rooms had but a single, lonely closet, and those closets were already full. Absolutely useless.

Actually, one of the closets in his favorite classroom was full as well. But that's the reason why having a second one was so important to him. He had an entire closet to himself - it was great. Though, oddly enough, he never quite figured out what to put in it.

This empty closet, however, was not entirely empty.

He opened the door, standing back just in case he was opening the full closet by mistake (he did that last time and nearly injured himself). Inside of the closet was a short rope and a flat, circular object. The rope seemed to have *some* toy-potential, and the circular object looked kind of like a frisbee. He grabbed them both and closed the closet door, storming out of the room soon after.

When he made it back to the library door, he stopped. Not because he was nervous, and definitely not because he was dreading anything - quite the opposite, he was in a fantastic mood and couldn't wait to have some fun. But he wanted to make a good impression, and his first idea was to work on his entrance.

Well, there was a rope and a frisbee here. The rope could possibly have been tied around the frisbee, combining both experiences into an entirely new and original one. Yes, Marvin liked that idea. But what would he do *then*?

Indeed. That idea felt like a dead end.

The rope didn't necessarily need to be used just yet. It was just a rope, after all. The frisbee, however, was useful. All he really needed to do was throw it.

Nice.

Marvin was happy with himself. He was determined to spread that happiness. At least one other person would be in a good mood by the end of the day.

Immediately Marvin pulled open the door and screamed at the top of his lungs:

"Catch!"

He then proceeded to throw the "frisbee", not actually paying attention to where it would end up going, but feeling pretty good about himself while doing so regardless. His smile almost completely wrapped around his head, while the rest of his face simply looked away and hoped that it would not be held responsible.

It was heavy, certainly unlike your typical frisbee. One of the reasons why Marvin was so proud was his ability to throw such a heavy thing a considerably far distance.

Care screamed, as she was directly in front of it by some strange coincidence.

It took just a little bit too long for her to respond, and the (quite rock hard) object unfortunately made direct contact with her face at incredible speeds. She flew back about a foot, and the frisbee fell to the floor.

Marvin stood there in awe, at first admiring the strength of his throwing arm, but then quickly began to panic as Care started to cry.