

Books In The Attic- Episode 1

Part 1

Ever since the early stages of my life, my father has always had a massive influence on my life. From playing games with me in the backyard, to teaching me lessons about life and the meaning of it, my dad has always been number one in my life and in my heart. He's the smartest man I know. He just knows what to say at any time. When I was younger, I was always scared of the dark. One day when I was up late because of my night terrors my dad burst in the room wearing a clown face. It scared me so bad that I fell right off my bed. But I learned on that day that the only true monsters in this world are made up to scare people. My dad was always teaching me lessons the hard way like that. If I turn into half the man he is today, I will still be proud of myself. A lot of people love to watch their superheroes. They can fly, transform and have superhuman strength, but what does that all mean really? Does a man in a comic book really reflect the person you are today? Can he come out and speak to you personally? I didn't think so. That's why my dad is my hero. Sure, he doesn't have an action packed life or a bunch of fantastic powers, but he loves me and shows me how to live life to the fullest. And really, is that not the definition of a hero?

"Thank you Zach, that was an inspirational report on 'Your Hero'."

I took my seat in the classroom next to a bookcase at the back of the class and resumed my drawing of my teacher as an ogre I had started prior to my presentation. After several minutes of a girl explaining to us just how her cat could be her hero, the bell rang and ended a suffering worse than anything I had ever experienced in my entire life.

"Don't forget class, I want that report on my desk by Monday! Have a nice weekend."

As I made my way out into the hallway, a rather large individual bumped into my shoulder and fell onto the ground with a thump. I had the right mind to make a scene. I was going to yell at this person. Why was he running in the halls anyways? I would tear him a new one. But upon looking at the ground to see who the poor fellow was, I noticed that it was one of my best friends Martin.

Martin was a tall statured kid with light brown curly hair. He was the type of kid who looked like a shut-in, but he was quite the opposite. He wore glasses and had a serious case of acne that he swears is genetic. He was truly the ugly duckling of our little group. That's why it astounded us that he was also the womanizer of us all. If there's anything that Martin doesn't lack, it's the moves with the ladies. It was unbelievable to watch. He would approach any woman he wanted and within 5 minutes, he would have them all to himself. Martin was a one of kind guy. He was always up to something, which is why it didn't surprise me at all that he was the one running through the halls as fast as he was. I offered him a hand to help him up.

"What's the rush Marty?" I asked.

"You haven't heard? The cafeteria is giving away the last of the tater-tots!"

He got up and ran away as fast as he could. I should have known that Martin was after food, it's all he ever thinks about. Like I said, Martin was a one of kind guy.

I made my way to my locker and put my things away as I always did. I glanced up and down at the contents of my locker. No matter how organized I said I was going to be at the start of the year, my locker always ended up looking like a tornado had gone through it. Suddenly, from behind, two hands came over my eyes and blinded me. I didn't even see it coming.

"Guess who?" said the fragile-voiced culprit.

I turned around to take a look at who was playing these childish games. And who else was standing there but Alexis. She shot me a chipper little smile.

"It's me!" she said very enthusiastically.

Alexis is the nicest person I know hands down. She's so sweet and has a smile that would kill, if looks could. Her long black hair, brown eyes and perfect complexion are only matched by her stout five foot three body. We've been friends since pre-school. That's why when it comes to the personal matters, I always go to Alexis for help. She understands me better than even the best of my friends and I cherish her friendship more than almost anything in the world. She's like my father in a lot of ways. She's always there for me and she always knows how to cheer me up when I'm down. But me favorite thing about Alexis is the way she's always trying to turn my mistakes into life lessons rather than just laughing them off like everyone else. For example, I always double check to make sure my shoes are tied properly ever since I was 6 and fell in a puddle. Alexis was there to help me up and she tied my shoe nice and tight for me. She said "Always make sure they are double knotted, like this" she showed me how to tie them tight and I've haven't tripped on them since.

"I was just getting ready to head out for lunch and I was wodering if you wanted to join me." she inquired.

"Sure thing!" I replied.

We went out for pizza that day at the place not too far from school. I enjoyed walking with Alexis just the two of us. We always talked about hypothetical scenarios that in real life would never happen, but that in our minds, are all too real. When we got to the pizza shop, we opened the door to see a familiar face.

"Hey Zach, isn't that your dad?" Alexis pointed out.

I looked up at the front counter and sure enough standing there waiting in line was my father. He looked over at me and Alexis in the doorway and smiled. He approached the both of us and waved at Alexis with the chipper grin he always waved at Alexis with.

"Hey son! I was going to swing by the school and surprise you with pizza, but it looks like

you beat me to it."

"I guess I did! What did you get me?" I said jokingly.

"Nothing special, just pepperoni, and whatever Alexis is getting."

"Oh no Mr. Lloyd, I'll get my own." Alexis begrudgingly replied.

"Nonsense, I insist. Pepperoni for you too then?"

"Yes please, that's my favorite." she said a little embarrassed.

We all sat down to eat inside the pizza shop. Although when it comes to my dad, sitting down to eat isn't enough. He has to always tell some kind of crazy story. Dinner and a show if you will. Last time, he told a story about how he and the President had a drink together at the White House. This time, he told us that he saved the world from disaster at the hands of international criminals. His stories are some of the most ridiculous I've ever heard in my life, but I still wouldn't trade them for anything.

Me and Alexis walked the long way back to school. We hadn't really had the chance to talk just the two of us in a really long time. We talked about pretty much everything. She talked a lot about her trip coming up. She had won an international contest and was on her way to Washington in a couple of days to speak in front of congress about ways to change the economy for the better. Alexis was a very smart girl and I never doubted that, but this was a big deal for anybody. After all, she was just a girl from a small town and she was going to represent all of us in front of some of the most important people in the country. I was proud of her, I really was, but at the same time I was a little worried. If she lets it get to her head, she won't be the same person and without Alexis around to help me, I don't know what I'd do. It would be like losing my dad,

I wouldn't be able to go on...

Part 2

After school that afternoon Aaron a.k.a my identical twin brother from another mother, asked if I wanted to walk home with him. I agreed. No matter how cold it was, I always enjoyed a walk from time to time. Aaron was exactly like me. We just understand each other on every level. It's a little weird actually. Sometimes my dad says that we're too much alike, even in looks. We have the same short blonde hair and blue green eyes. We're both around the same height, we have the same scar on our arms, we even have the same birthday for crying out loud. It's appropriate that we live right beside each other too. I live on one side of Filch St. he lives on the other. Like me and Alexis, me and Aaron have an unspoken bond. We fully understand who one another are. We might as well share a brain. One thing that I know for sure, is that if me and Aaron are alone together, something bad is always going to happen.

The walk from the school isn't that long. It would have originally taken us about about 20 minutes to get home on a cold day like it was. It took 40 that day. We ran into Carl and his gang of bafoons. The greasy haired boy with the mutton chops called himself Tofur, he was always been trailed by his tubby friend Max. No matter where Tofur went, Max was right behind him. When Carl decided to become the popular football player jock, he ditched our group of friends and took those two idiots under his wing. We never forgave Carl for what he did to us and he reminded us who was the stronger being by hitting our faces every now and again. He stood outside in the parking lot and waited for us. Aaron wrote a nasty message and stuck it in his locker. He was waiting for us in the parking lot after school.

"I bet you guys think you're tough!" said Carl.

"I bet you guys think you're smart!" Aaron screamed back.

"Aaron opened up his backpack and pulled out his slingshot and a pop. He shook the pop and inserted it into the holder on his slingshot.

"Watch this buddy" he said as he shot me a wink.

When he released his grasp on the stretched out slingshot, the pop flew 30 feet in the air right at Carl and his gang. As soon as the the shaken pop hit the ground, it exploded everywhere letting loose a fury of sticky fizzy mess. It gave Aaron and I just enough timeto make our way out of there safely and lose them. We aughed all the way home. As much as we missed his company and who he was, the person that Carl became was ugly and if I was to reckon, I would say he would go to the extreme in order to get even.

As one can imagine, I got home that night later than usual. I walked in and made my way straight to the kitchen to grab a snack as I always did. On the counter I noticed a note.

" Zach,

Will be working late tonight, don't wait up. Dinner is in the fridge. Just heat it up whenever you're ready.

Love, Dad."

Great, another night to myself I thought. Normally I liked to be by myself. The quiet soothes my mind and I like having time to reflect on things that happen. But this was a Friday night and I would not spend another one alone. I would have all of my friends over for a movie. I couldn't call Aaron, he was still grounded for throwing firecrackers at the neighbor's dog. He was always causing trouble like that. I guess that was the one way we differed. Well that and the fact that Aaron is really good at sports. Not to say that I'm bad at them. Aaron is just always that much better. Every time that anything involves any kind of athleticism, Aaron's going to beat me at it. I do have one advantage over Aaron though, I was the smart one. Intellectually, Aaron was not all there. Again, he's not stupid or anything, I'm just that much better at it than he is.

I decided to invite Martin and Alexis over for a movie. The two of them are two of my best

friends in the entire world, but for whatever reason they would never get along with each other. They were always at each other's throats which is probably why watching Star Wars with them is never a good idea simply because of the Lando debate.

The Lando debate was a never ending feud between our group. It was a battle so intense that it sometimes caused people not to talk to each other for several days on end. It goes like this, me and Alexis believe that Lando Calrissian who is Han Solo's friend from Cloud City, was evil because he betrayed Han and turned him over to Darth Vader. Then when he saw a change in power, he switched sides at risk of losing. Aaron and Martin on the other hand believed the opposite. They think that Lando was trying to help them out all along and just took a longer path to do it. It didn't really matter who was right, but every time that we watched the movie together the argument would go something like this:

"He was just trying to protect his people. He had no other choice!" Martin would say.

"If he wanted to protect his people, he could have joined forces with Han and made a plan to save all of them and defeat Vader then and there." Alexis would rebuttal.

And so on and so on and so on until eventually I would come in and break things up. This time however, Martin was having none of it. He got so mad that it caused him to storm off in a heated rage.

"Have you ever seen Martin so mad?" I asked

"That just means he knows I'm right." Alexis said with a grin.

"Oh would you just drop it Alexis."

"I can't Zach! You side with me on this, I know you do." Alexis pleaded.

"Of course I do Alexis! I always do..."

I stopped. I looked at Alexis right in her gorgeous hazel eyes. She had a look that I had never seen her make before. It was tender, soft and inviting. I always had a feeling that Alexis wanted to be more than friends, but I never could bring myself to make a move. We had been friends for 11 years 4 months and 14 days after all. But who's counting right. But the way she looked at me in that moment made me quiver. I felt her moving closer and closer to my inner being. She understood me, knew me inside out, she already had a big spot in my heart but I still couldn't do anything more than just be friends with her no matter how much I wanted to do otherwise. Our friendship meant too much after all. I decided to let her down easy.

"Look Alexis, we need to talk.."

I heard the sound of the front door opening at that second. It was my dad coming home from work. He was a lawyer so he always had a briefcase and a suit with the tie undone when he came home.

"Hey sport, got off a little earlier than I expected. Oh! Hello again Alexis."

"Hello Mr. Llyod" she said nervously. "Zach, I should go. I have to start packing, I leave in the morning you know."

I did know that, but I didn't want her to leave. Not without having the chance to explain myself. Not without knowing how I felt. Not without knowing how she felt. It was too late though, as soon as my dad walked in the front door, she was gone.

Part 3

We had never seen this much snow so late in February. As it piled up over the weekend and into Monday, we knew that there would be a snow day in our future. As for most kids, snow day meant one of two things; either a long day of hot coco and video games, or a little bit of fun in the glistening white snow. We all met at Martin's house. He had a massive yard and not to mention two snowmobiles. We would hook snow boards onto the back of them and do flips off the ramps we had made ourselves in the piles of snow. Me, Aaron and Martin would play for hours on end and when the day turned to dusk we would go in for hot chocolate and movie marathons.

Aaron was hands down the best at snowboarding. He's the only one who could do any kind of trick. One time, he attempted to do a front flip and sure enough his face ended up right in a 4 foot snowbank that was "strategically" placed right on the other side of the ramp.

That day, like always we decided to drag out the snowmobile, our snowboard, some boots, hats, coats and other things to keep us warm as well as some mini marshmallows for our after activity snack.

"Jeez Zach, you're slower than a sloth on sleeping pills!" Aaron shouted up the stairs.

"Alright calm down! I'm coming! I yelled back.

I came down the stairs and Martin instantly began snickering to himself. I was never really one with what you would call an eye for fashion, but to me a bright purple and yellow snowsuit looked cool and different. Naturally, my friends thought otherwise.

"Zach, you look like something a unicorn crapped out." Aaron said on the floor practically in tears.

"Zach, I've seen rainbows less colourful than you." Martin added.

I gave them both a sarcastic laugh back and we were on our way.

Through my experiences, I can easily say that nothing feels better than a crisp, cold winter breeze smacking your face at 35 mph. Did I say nothing? I meant ANYTHING! I can't comprehend why we endured the frost bitten hands and crusty snot above our lips, but we did and we enjoyed it fully. We would come inside with more bruises than a two week old

apple, yet we always had the time of our lives. Aaron does a one-eighty and ends up on his butt and we all laugh together. Martin would speed up to give us more air on the jumps and I would look fantastic in my purple and yellow snowsuit... no matter what my friends thought.

We were outside for no more than two hours before we noticed some people standing on the back porch. It was Martin's mother with what looked to be like a policeman.

"What do you think is going on?" I asked Martin.

"Maybe he's with the fashion police and he's here to arrest you." Aaron said snickering again.

"Shut up Aaron! What if it's serious?" Martin scowled.

We all went over there and the policeman looked directly at me:

"Is your name Zachary Lloyd?" the policeman asked.

I needed no more than that. I could tell by the look in his eye and the way that he spoke that he was concerned. Something had gone terribly wrong...

Part 4

I was at the station for what felt like hours. They put me in a small, solitary room that left little to the imagination. Just a light grey room with a table and a handful of chairs. There were a billion questions stewing in my head. I was still completely unaware as to why I was here. I didn't know how long they would keep me or if they would even let me go. When the door creaked open, a very tall police officer crept through. He was at least six foot five and one hundred and thirty pounds. Following him was another policeman. He was bulkier. A lot bulkier in fact. At least 300 pounds of man struggled through the doorway and into the seat adjacent my own. When they both had a seat opposite me, the skinny police officer spoke first:

"Hey there son. My name is officer Neil. How are you today Zach?"

"I'm fine sir. If you don't mind me asking, why am I here?" I replied.

"Well son, I don't know how to put it exactly." he said with a low tone in his voice.

My heart sank immediately. I already knew something had gone wrong and the way that he said that only made my suspicions grow. Hearing him even hint at something like that made me a little sick. Officer Neil looked over at the heftier man who nodded back at Neil.

"Your father has been kidnapped.." he said very concerned.

"KIDNAPPED?! By who?" I inquired.

"We were hoping you could tell us. Does your father have any enemies to speak of, any at all?"

I couldn't think of anyone at that exact moment. I was frozen. I couldn't speak or even so much as motion to the policemen about my current state. In short, I was paralyzed by fear, sadness and rage. I sat and watched the two of them bicker at each other for no more than five minutes about the way to properly question me. After they agreed together that I was "emotionally distressed" and needed to be dealt with delicately.

"Uhm, I'm still sitting right here.." I said, trying to interject.

They ignored me and continued to argue amongst themselves. A third police officer opened the door and signaled Neil over. He whispered few words into his ear and then closed the door tight again.

"Listen son, your uncle Steven is here. He's going to bring you home and take care of you. And don't worry Zach, we'll find your dad... I promise."

I hadn't seen uncle Steven in nearly a decade. I vaguely remember him coming to a couple of holiday events, like Christmas and Thanksgiving, but he just stopped going after some time. He had no kids of his own and last I heard was living in a shack outside of the main city. I bet the only reason he came out all this way was for a place to stay for a little while. I remember him being a short man with little hair on his head. He normally wore a worn out plaid shirt over a tattered and stained wife-beater. He was a mechanic in his younger days and I guess that means that the smell of grease has been permanently implanted in his skin. He never really smiled and had only 4 real teeth left. He was by definition a low life.

I got few hours of sleep that night. I was up thinking. Crying mostly. I tried running over scenarios in my mind of who would do such a drastic thing. My dad was a nice guy. He never cut people off when he was driving, he always said please and thank you and he never ever made a woman get the door for herself. In one quick motion, my life had gone from amazing to hell on earth and it was all because my idol was taken from it.

When I got home from school the following day, my uncle had already moved all the stuff from my bedroom into the attic.

"When I'm home, you spend your time up here." he said.

"You can't just do that, this is my house too!" I replied.

"Not anymore it isn't. This is my house now and you WILL show respect." he commanded.

And with that I went upstairs. I was never good at confrontation. The trap door for the attic was slightly hidden in the ceiling. It blended in with the color of the tiles and you could hardly see the handle to open it. But I had to admit, for not being lived in for fifteen years, the attic was in pretty good shape. It had few cobwebs and the smell was somewhat bearable. All my stuff was shuffled around as if it was just thrown up there carelessly. I shifted through all of the boxes trying to get my new room all ship shape when I came

across a box labeled "My life read between the lines". It was full of old pictures, art work, poems and how-to books all written by an author who went by L. Some of the works went all the way back to 1981 and were slightly torn in the corners. The titles were all a little bit strange. "How to be a Ninja", "When Love Blossoms" and "Where did My Shirt Go?" were just some of the books that caught my eye. And then there was the largest book in the pile. The one that would change my life forever. It was titled "Zachary" and was written April 15th 1997... the day of my birthday.

I wasted no time. I grabbed a seat on my bed and layed out flat with the book in my hand. I opened up the hard cover of the book and written on the first page was a poem by the hand of L.:

"Zachary comes from latin for memory.

Memory makes the world's best stories.

For this epic, memory is key.

It will take away all your worries."

Part 5

"When nothing else matters in this world, we turn to the light that guides us. For some that light may be the lord above, for others it may be an elder or your best friend. But just know, that when it really all comes down to it, we have to face the facts. No one is going to be there for you all the time. Not anyone in this world will tend to your every need. Not a single other individual in this room, in this school or in this city will go out of there way to help you all the time. The only person you can rely on is yourself. Only you can make you happy and the second you realize that, the second that you become dependant on no one, is when you can begin to find true happiness that comes from within. The last of our problems are behind us. We are all about to begin a new chapter in our lives. One that could change us forever. One that will be dangerous, exciting and for sure horrifying in its own right. I speak onto you, my fellow classmates, that you accept this fate as part of life and take full advantage of it. Because they say that this is the best time of our lives. And I'll be damned if I'm going to waste it."

"Once again Zach, very inspirational. You may take your seat."

Nothing could have prepared me for the events in my life that had happened over the last few days. Just like nothing could prepare me for the ones that were about to come. I reached into my my bag and pulled out the book titled Zachary. The cover crunched as I turned it. I decided that no more time would be wasted. With time to spare and a little bit of self convincing, I opened the first page and I began to read...