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Hi-Lo  
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## THROWN AWAY

by

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## CHAPTER ONE

### CAN'T TAKE IT

WEDNESDAY MORNING. English, period one. Ms. Gulliver talks to us about being successful in life. Boring.

She turns and writes on the whiteboard. I fling my English book out the window like a Frisbee.

Henry looks down and smiles. Somebody else laughs.

Ms. Gulliver turns around, her face red. "You're not little kids. This is the tenth grade. Whoever is doing it, quit playing around!"

It was fun throwing that book out the window. The look on Ms. Gulliver's face made it even better.

\* \* \*

CLASS ENDS. Henry and I walk down the hall. It's crowded with kids.

"Roy, why did you do that?" he asks.

"I don't know. It just happened."

"That book had your desk number on it."

The principal stops by carrying the book I threw. He walks toward Ms. Gulliver's classroom.

What was I thinking?

\* \* \*

HISTORY, PERIOD TWO. Mr. Rubio comes to the front of the classroom. "When you get your test, keep it face down until I say turn it over. You get thirty-five minutes."

He hands out the papers. I don't know the answer to the first question, so I guess C. I guess D on the next one.

The door opens. It's the principal. "Roy, come with me."

I follow him into the empty hallway. Dr. Vinson is an old guy with white hair. I've never seen him smile. He gives detention for everything.

"Why did you throw that book out the window?" he asks.

"What book?"

"The one you threw out of Ms. Gulliver's class."

"It wasn't me."

"Why did it have your desk number on it?"

"I don't know."

Dr. Vinson pulls out a detention slip, fills out the top part, and gives it to me. I write in my uncle's name and phone number.

"Please don't call," I say. "Please. I won't do it again."

"That's what you said last time."

"I promise. Please. I'll never do it again."

Dr. Vinson takes out his cell phone. "Hello, Mr. Newberry?...

This is Dr. Vinson from Edison High School. Roy has been

assigned to serve detention again... He threw a book out the window of his English class... I know you will... Thanks for speaking with me."

Dr. Vinson probably thinks he's smart for catching me. He doesn't know what Uncle Frank is going to do to me.

\* \* \*

FIVE O'CLOCK. Uncle Frank's truck pulls up outside our trailer. The wooden steps creak as he walks up. I know what's coming.

Uncle Frank steps inside. He's short like me. But he used to be a wrestler in high school, and he's strong. He smells like beer. A lot of beer.

"You know what to do," he says.

I pull out my chair from the kitchen table and turn it around. I don't let him see my face. I can't let him see me scared.

"How many?" I ask.

He takes off his belt and folds it in half. "I don't know yet."

I bend over and put my hands on the chair seat. It's going to

hurt. I brace myself.

Whack!

The pain shoots through me.

Whack!

The stinging goes down the back of my legs.

Whack!

I can't take another hit.

Whack!

The hitting goes on. I lose count.

"Get up," he finally says. "You're done."

He goes to the refrigerator, grabs a beer, and sits at the table.

The pain burns. It's the worst he's ever hit me.

I stagger to my room, close the door, and fall on the bed.

I can't take it anymore.

## CHAPTER TWO

### SINKING

THURSDAY MORNING. I walk to the kitchen. Uncle Frank leaves for work at five, so he's already gone. I'm glad I don't have to look at him.

Some of his empty beer bottles are on the kitchen table. The rest are lying around his chair in the living room. I don't see how he can drink so much.

I throw the bottles in the trash can and wipe up the beer on the floor.

Uncle Frank is never going to stop. He's going to keep getting drunk and keep hitting me.

It's bad now. But it was worse living with Mom. We had a trailer out in the desert. Her boyfriend hated me. He would slap me and call me trash.

All the fighting. All the drugs. They would lock me in my bedroom and cook meth in the kitchen.

I was only ten.

\* \* \*

TIME TO LEAVE. I knock on the door of Henry's trailer. He comes out right away. We put down our skateboards and go.

Henry jumps the first curb like it's nothing.

When I try to do it, I almost fall. It's hard for me to move. I'm still sore from last night.

We stop at the red light on Neptune Street.

"How many times did he hit you?" Henry asks.

"I don't know. I don't want to talk about it."



\* \* \*

LUNCH. The detention room is crowded. I finish my sandwich.

The lady in charge brings me a blank detention sheet.

I write as fast as I can. It doesn't have to be good. I just have to make it sound like I'm sorry.

*Student Name: Roy Perkins*

*Detention Given by: Dr. Vinson*

*How I Can Improve in School*

*I know I can improve in School. I shouldn't have thrown that book out the window. Dr. Vinson caught me.*

*Ms. Gulliver is a nice Lady. I'm sorry for what I did. I don't know why I did it. It just happened.*

*School books cost a lot of Money. When I threw it out the window, it landed in mud. That made it Worse. Now I'm in here for three days.*

*My Uncle Frank works Construction. He's on a job now in*

*Gilmore. It's an hour drive. He had to buy a new Battery for his car. It's falling apart. I've been living with him for six years.*

*I'm supposed to write about how I will improve in School. My Grades aren't good right now. But I can bring them up. I just need to get Serious and quit playing around.*

*I keep messing up. I don't know why. I know I can get better.*

\* \* \*

AFTERNOON. Home from school. I go in the front door. I'm glad Uncle Frank isn't home yet.

I sit at the kitchen table, turn on the laptop, and get on School View. I have a B in PE. But I have NoPasses in English, Spanish, history, science, and math. Worst grades I've ever had.

I used to be good in school. But everything is falling apart now.

I'm glad Uncle Frank doesn't know about School View. Otherwise, he would hit me again today.

When my report card comes home in the mail next week,

that's when I'm really going to get it.

I look at the screen again. I'm sinking. I don't know what to do.

## CHAPTER THREE

### JUST SKATE

FRIDAY MORNING. English, period one. Ms. Gulliver smiles when I come through the door. I don't know why she's so nice to me after I threw her book out the window.

We're writing essays today. She kneels next to me at my desk.

"I read your detention paper," she says. "You did a good job."

"Thanks."

"I looked at your grades in School View last night. I know

you can bring them up. You just have to start doing the work."

I know she's right. But she has no idea of the beatings I get. That's why it's hard to think about school sometimes. Actually, that's why it's hard to think about school most of the time.

\* \* \*

HISTORY, PERIOD TWO. Mr. Rubio hands back the test papers from yesterday. Mine is another NoPass.

He comes to the front and taps his computer. A map of Europe shows on the screen.

"Today, we start on World War One," he says. "Read page 206. I will then call on you to answer some questions."

I begin reading. It's boring.

We ran out of laundry soap. I hope my clothes don't smell.

I remember third grade. My clothes were always dirty. The kids laughed at me. A kid named Jimmy called me Stinky. I socked him for saying it.

Mom came with me in her nice clothes the next morning to

see the principal. I still had on my smelly clothes.

I had to promise not to hit anybody again. I just wanted clean clothes.

Mr. Rubio looks at us. "Which countries fought in World War One?"

I keep my hand down. I don't want him to call on me.

"Roy, could you answer?" he asks.

"I don't know."

"When did the war start?"

"I don't know."

"When did the war end?"

"I don't know."

Somebody laughs.

"Roy, you should know this," Mr. Rubio says. "It's in the reading. You're a smart kid. You should be getting an A or a B in here."

I wish he would shut up. He has no right to talk about me in

front of the whole class like that.

\* \* \*

AFTER SCHOOL. I meet Henry by the C Building. We unlock our skateboards and go out the front gate.

We ride straight to the church and climb the fence to the parking lot. There's a big concrete area that doesn't have cracks in it. We skate, doing mostly kick-flips and Ollies.

My wheels are a little flat. But I know how to get some new ones.

The nice thing about skating, is that I don't have to think about anything.

Everything is good. No problems. Just skate.