

The Blue Eyed Boy

By Kishina Toews

When he went missing, I learned his name. I learned the Blue Eyed Boy's name.

He had always been quiet, never spoke during class, unless spoken too. Never raised his hand, never caused a fuss, never yelled. He simply would just sit there. Waiting for life to move forward. Waiting for the bell to ring, and to leave into the hallways full of bustling teens, like they were bees in a hive.

His hair was blacker than the night's sky, and was kept perfectly in place. It was shaved on one side, and combed precisely to the other. Never a strand out of place.

His skin was pale, and looked similar to the painted glass of a porcelain doll. Like those you see in toy stores. So perfect, but so easy to shatter.

Although, it was truly his eyes that made him: The Blue Eyed Boy. They were the deepest of blues, the colour found only in the depths of the sea. The parts no one has ever seen, the parts that held stories of Atlantis and mermaids. The unexplored, and the dangerous.

I turn towards Clara with an eyebrow raised as Mr. Cooper explains the situation.

"He arrived at school two days ago, and didn't go home-" he starts. "so if you have any information on the boy, it will be very much appreciated if you decide to share it." Mr. Cooper explains, before returning back to the lesson.

What happened the Blue Eyed Boy? Did he get lost? That didn't seem likely... Maybe he didn't want to go home, or somebody took him? I didn't like the last idea. No, I really didn't like that idea. How would anybody ever find him? What would the kidnapper do to him?

I couldn't stop thinking about it. I was a bit ashamed to realise that I hadn't registered his name until today! He was much too quiet... It got him in trouble with some of the other kids, they called him many things. 'Freak' was by far their favorite.

I had nothing against the guy, he had never done anything wrong. But life isn't fair. You don't want to be different. You want to fit in, to blend in with the crowd. It's safer that way.

Grade eight isn't exactly the worst grade to be in. I mean, I'm fine. Clara's fine. But some of us don't get lucky. You've got Summer and Brad, who are at the top with their gang as the 'coolest' of the grade. They definitely didn't- don't like Blue Eyes. Then you have me and Clara, and everyone else. We're considered the in-between group. Everyone who's not at the top, nor at the bottom. Then you have a few kids who got unlucky, including our missing boy.

The bell rings, and I walk over to Mr. Cooper's desk.

"How can I help you, Brandon?" He asks.

"What's the missing boy's name, again?" I ask, and he sighs. So much for registering it quickly... My teacher looked exhausted. He has dark purple bruises under his eyes, and he slouching greatly. Has he been thinking about this as much as I have?

"Matthew Moore," he replies. I nod, thank him, and walk over to Clara.

"You're not going to look for him, are you?" she asks. I silently scold myself for being so predictable.

Clara doesn't like when I get wrapped up in other people's business. She says it's being nosy, and inconsiderate. Not if they're missing it's not. She had no reason this time!

Clara's dark brown, almost black, eyes glimmering with worry as she studies my expression. Her long black hair was kept in intricate little braids, and they fall just past her shoulders. Her dark skin shone in the light, and her red t-shirt exposes most of her neck. Her black jeans are tight, and have holes in the knees. She looks beautiful, as always.

“Why do you care?” I ask, and she frowns.

“Uh, because I’m your best friend! But don’t listen to me!” She exclaims, throwing her arms in the air. I laugh, and she glares.

“Dramatic, much?” I tease, and she punches my shoulder lightly.

“Maybe, but that’s not the point. You shouldn’t go after someone who doesn’t want to be found,” Clara whispers. She nibbles on her lip anxiously, and I place a hand on her shoulder. Maybe she would find a reason... But that wasn’t going to stop me, and she know it.

“Have you seen that guy? Do you remember when Brad and his buddies were pushing him around in the hallway the other day? He sat on the ground for a whole minute, before he could get back up. The police haven’t found him, the school hasn’t found him, and his parents haven’t found him. If we don’t look, we’ll be just like Summer and Brad.” I state, and her frown deepens.

“You’re absolutely right. You know I’ll be behind you if you do this, but I don’t want you to force him to come back if- when we find him.” Clara says, and I nod. Her lips curl into a small smile, and she hooks our arms.

“You’re in?” I ask, and she nods.

The last bell of the day rings. Clara and I walk back to our lockers, and pull on our winter coats. We begin walking outside, when I spot Summer and Brad by the front doors. Arguing.

“What if we caused this? What then, Brad?!” Summer yells, and Brad seems to shrink into the mustard coloured walls.

“I don’t know! I didn’t know he’d take off!” He shrieks, and I huff out a laugh. Clara elbows me in the ribs as we pass, and I turn my head to look at her.

“They deserve it, they were real jerks to Matthew.” I say, and she raises an eyebrow.

“Matthew?” She asks.

“Blue Eyes,” I reply, and she nods. I wonder how he’d feel about everyone knowing him as that. Blue Eyes.

We walk out of the building, and were met by the crisp winds of autumn. It feels nice, calming even. I let it play with my hair and sweep my face. The leaves of all the many trees have become hues of orange, red and yellow. It’s breathtaking.

“Where do we start?” I ask, as we stop to sit under an almost bare tree.

“Where would you hide if you were running from your parents?” Clara asks, and I shrug. “Come on! Make an effort here!” She exclaims, and I nod slowly.

“Somewhere where nobody would look,” I say.

“That’s a given,” Clara mutters, rolling her eyes.

“No, I mean like where nobody would REALLY look. Not in a classroom, but not far from somewhere I could eat or get water.” I say, and she nods.

“Like a shed?” She asks.

“No, it would get cold at night.” I state, and Clara looks around the area.

“Somewhere where you could get food, water, wouldn’t cost a lot, if anything.” She says, pondering. Hotels were too expensive, classrooms were too risky, and sheds were too cold.

“Maybe he’s hiding out at somebody’s house,” I suggest.

“Have you ever seen that guy with anybody? No,” Clara says.

“He might have friends,” I add trying to defend the boy.

“Yes, but he would have to talk to do that.” Clara replies, sarcasm thick in her voice. I sigh, but she has a valid point.

“You’re right, what about a family member?” I suggest, and she shakes her head.

“They would’ve returned him to his parents,” my friend counters. These were all good points, so where could this kid be?

If I was someone who didn't want to be found, I'd go somewhere like a cafe during the day. But where at night? I think for a while, before I come to my conclusion. Some place I knew well, like- school. I would go to the school at night!

"I think I might know where we can find him!" I exclaim. Clara stares at me, eyes wide. I explain everything. How he could go to a cafe or fast food place during the day, for food and water. He could go to the school at night, because of the warmth and the change room to shower.

"He's only been gone a few days, you think that's how he's been living? How would he figure that all out so fast?" Clara asks.

"Who would know how to hide better than someone who never comes to lunch, but can't leave the perimeter of the school? Matthew. There's no doubt that he must've planned this all ahead of time, no less." I say, and Clara sighs.

"You know it's kind of sad this all even happened," she whispers. I agree. I have Clara, and the track team. Who does Matthew have? What exactly did he do wrong to make everyone hate him? Was it his eyes? His hair? The fact that he's so quiet? I have no idea.

"It is horrible that it happened, but we're going to make it right. We meet here tonight, five o'clock right before the doors lock." I say, and Clara and I part ways.

Clara, as promised, meets me at the front doors of the school at five o'clock. I had no doubts. I pull the glass doors open, and we rush inside, fleeing into the girls' bathroom.

"Why couldn't we go into the boys'?" I ask, squirming slightly.

"Because if Matthew is here, he'll go there. Not in the girls'. Plus, yours smells." Clara explains, and I roll my eyes for what felt like the millionth time that day.

I had to tell my mom I was going to study at Clara's house. Hopefully we'll find Matthew soon. I don't want to be the next 'missing' kid if my parents find out I wasn't where I said I would be.

"What if he's not here?" I ask, and Clara quickly clamps a hand over my mouth. I raise my eyebrows in surprise.

"Listen," she hisses. Footsteps. I hear footsteps. I know for sure it's not the staff. I had seen Mr. P (the janitor) leave and shut off the lights, from a window in the girl's bathroom. She pulls her hand away, and we creep out of the bathroom. I spot the door of the boy's bathroom swing shut, catching sight of a bit of raven hair disappear inside. We carefully creep out of the bathroom, and across the hall.

"Got him now," I hiss. Clara tiptoes towards the door, and before I can say anything, she's banging as hard as she possibly can on the thing.

"Clara!" I exclaim, and she grins.

"He might as well know we're coming!" She says, and I facepalm. My best friend is ultimately the most fearless person I've ever met. I don't know if that's wonderful or horrible.

"You're crazy," I mutter. She smiles, knowing I have no intentions of hurting her. Teasing is a thing we did, we always have. Ever since third grade. Third grade, when there were no kids running away from home. Geez.

"Perhaps, but smarter than you." She whispers, and we quickly go silent when the sound of breaking glass hits our ears. Matthew. I push open the door, to see the bathroom window broken, and pushed out. Has he lost his mind?!

Clara takes a running start at the window, and jumps through, avoiding the broken glass. I'm frozen in place, mouth agape, before doing the same.

"I didn't know you knew how to be a ninja!" I exclaim, and she snickers.

“Yeah, well we have an escapee to catch,” she says. I nod, and we run after the boy. I see him turn down an alley, and sprint past garages and trash cans. Clara and I are quickly on his tail, thanks to all those weeks practicing with the track team. He trips, falling to the ground, and I pounce.

I grab him by the shoulders, and hold flat against the ground, while Clara stands over us.

“Matthew,” she says. Greeting him calmly. He looks far from it.

“Get off of me!” The boy screeches, but I hold him firmly in place.

“My name is Brandon, and this is Clara.” I say, and he shakes his head much too fast.

“I know who you are, now get off!” He yells, and I freeze. He knows who we are? How does he know? Why does he care? Why do I have so many questions?! I mentally facepalm, and return to the matter at hand.

“Listen, you’re gonna be okay. Just let us help you,” I say. He tries to push me off, with no success. I realize how small the boy is. His shoulders are small, while mine are broad. I have at least twenty pound on him, and he’s quite short. Maybe a bit taller than Clara, who is only five three.

“I can’t go back,” he whines. I roll my eyes, and he kicks me.

“Don’t be a-” I start.

“YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT IT’S LIKE!” Matthew screams, and my eyes grow wide. I feel a twinge of fear, and suck in a breath through my teeth. “You have no idea what it feels like to be attacked every time you walk down the halls. Not to mention that no one ever helps me! My mom would be better off without me, and my dad didn’t even want me! Leave me alone! I’m living on my own now! I CAN DO WHAT I WANT!” Matthew screams, and before I can say anything, Clara slaps him across the face. I slowly get up off the ground, but he continues to lay there, paralyzed.

“You should never say such things! Your mother loves you, and she’s been looking for you! Even the school is looking for you! The police!” She yells, her voice full of authority. At this, Matthew seems to shrink into the ground, and I’m suddenly back there with him... hugging him. He needs comfort right now, and I seem to be the only one willing to give it to him.

I feel his chest moving rapidly against mine, and I hold him tighter. He lets out a horrid sob, and I start running my fingers through his hair.

“I’m so sorry,” I whisper. Clara spoke the truth, but I’m not sure this guy can handle it. Especially after what he said about his dad.

“My Mom doesn’t want me,” he sobs, and I hush him.

“No, no. She’s your mother, and she loves you. Like Clara said,” I sooth. He holds onto me like I’m the only thing keeping him from slipping away into the endless darkness of sadness that surrounds his small figure.

“My dad doesn’t,” he sobs.

“He doesn’t matter anymore,” I whisper hushing him.

“Why do Summer and Brad hate me?” He asks quietly, and I sigh. I pull away, but keep a firm grip on his arms. He holds onto mine, tight.

“I don’t know, but they were worried too. Summer was afraid it had been her who had driven you away,” I explain.

“Yeah, she’s right to feel bad! But I doubt she really cares, all she wants is a good reputation.” Matthew says trying to sound confident, but only ends up crying harder. “I hate them,” he sobs. I pull his back into my arms, and squeeze.

“I know,” I whisper. Clara watches as I comfort the boy, as he cries. She sends me a sad smile, and slowly walks off. Standing by a fence a few meters away. She was never very good with crying. Her dad did enough of it when her mother died.

I pull away, and cup his face in my hands. I stare into his blue orbs, and wipe a few tears away with my thumb.

“I’m sorry,” he whispers.

“For what?” I ask.

“Crying, running away, all of it. I don’t even know why you came after me,” Matthew says, chuckling at the end.

“You don’t need to apologize, I get it. You were scared, and I’m honestly not sure why I came after you either. I care, that’s all you need to know.” I say, and he sobs. “What is it?!” I ask alarmed. This kid!

“Nothing, nobody’s ever said that to me, that’s all.” He whispers, and I bring him back into a hug.

“Now someone has,” I coo. I hold him tight, as he erupts into what seems like an endless sea of sobs. This would be a long night.

“Ready for today?” I ask, and Matthew simply nods. He had stayed at my house last night, my parents had been surprisingly understanding.

I roll up the sleeping bag we had laid on the floor for him, and smile.

“You think anyone will notice I was gone?” He asks, and I chuckle.

“No doubt in my mind,” I say.

We walk out of my room and head downstairs, to find my parents sitting at the kitchen table.

“You boys alright?” Dad asks, and I nod.

“Matthew, you’re always welcome here, but I need you to tell your mother you’re safe tonight.” My mom says, and the boy nods.

We take seats at the table, and Mom passes me a plate of eggs, doing the same for Matthew. We wolf down our food, grab our school bags, and start our walk to school.

“Brandon?” Matthew asks once we’re outside.

“Hmm?” I reply.

“Are you going to stick around at school?” He asks sheepishly, staring down at the pavement.

“Of course! Clara and I will stay by your side all day!” I exclaim, and he beams. I’ve never seen him look so happy. I guess I had mostly seen silence and crying before now... But it’s an improvement!

It takes us ten minutes to walk to school, and Clara waves at us by the front doors. We walk over, and she throws an arm around each of our shoulders.

“Morning, boys!” She exclaims, and I smile.

“Morning, C.” I say.

“Hey, Clara.” Matthew whispers, and she grins. He’s still shy, but he’ll wiggle out of his shell soon. Clara and I will make sure of that.

We walk into the school, and the halls are suddenly dead quiet. I spot Brad who’s staring dumbfounded at Matthew, and Summer rushes over.

“I’m so sorry, I’m so sorry.” She sobs, a tear escapes and rolls down her cheek. Not more crying!

“Don’t cry,” Matthew whispers, wiping it away.

“No, I was so horrible to you. I’m sorry if you felt scared, or sad, or angry, or anything -” she starts. Clara places a hand on her shoulder, and squeezes.

“Summer, calm yourself.” She whispers, and the girl nods. Summer sucks in a breath, and wipes her eyes.

"I'm sorry, Matthew." She says, a little less frantically.

"It's okay," he whispers.

"It's not, but thank you." She says, and Clara gives her shoulder one last squeeze before retracting her arm. Summer nods, and takes her leave.

"At least she apologized," I say.

"Yeah," Mathew whisper, a smile creeping across his face. "This is new! Summer apologized!" He exclaims, I laugh, and Clara smiles.

Suddenly loud footsteps echo through the hall, and we spin around. A woman with her black hair in a messy bun, and her glittering blue eyes filled with tears, runs towards us.

"MATTHEW!" She shrieks, and I smile, pushing my friend forwards. Friend. It fits, and it will stick.

The woman engulfs him in a hug, and tears run down her cheeks. The halls begin to empty as the bell rings, and Matthew holds his mother in a tight embrace.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry." He chants over and over.

"You never do that again!" She exclaims, pulling away to look him in the eyes.

Clara tugs at my sleeve, and we walk off to class.

We take our regular seats, and Mr. Cooper walks in, followed by Matthew. He takes a seat next to me, and Clara is on my other side. This is a change, but definitely a good one.

"Good morning class, as you can see we have Matthew back! Welcome back, son," Mr. Cooper says. Matthew nods, and Mr. Cooper turns his gaze towards Clara and I. "I'm glad you were brought back," he adds. Smart guy.

We have done it. Clara and I have brought Matthew back, and proved to him that someone cared. I know I won't forget this, and Clara won't either. The best part is, Matthew won't stop smiling.