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Second Hour

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A Friend in a Maze

The wind brushed my face. I open my eyes slowly to see that the window was left open. I could hear the people already heading to their jobs. I lay back down. Monday, The best day of the week. It is August 25th. It is the only day I don't have to work this week. Some people do have work today. I live in a place called Kroy Wen. It was New York a long time ago, but now it has changed. People may think that the future is amazing, but it really isn't. When you turn fourteen, then you have to apply for some job that you might hate. For jobs here in Kroy Wen, you have a strict schedule. You only have one day off every week. You have eight vacation days, and some holidays off too. It's pretty confusing if you haven't lived here for fourteen years.

I am planning to go to the Mrs. Sally's Bakery with Stella. Stella is my wishing star. Everyone has one. They are expected to help the person they are assigned to, like a therapist, yet not. One thing Stella helps me a lot with is school. I am not the best math student, but I surely am the best English student.

After I get up, I walk over to my closet and put on my everyday clothes: black leggings, a white shirt, and a blue jacket. I put an extra fluffy white jacket on to keep me from getting frostbite. I comb my blonde hair and brush my pearly white teeth. I walk outside and look at my house. It is beautiful. At least it used to be. It is a two floor house. It is baby blue with some white outlining of windows and shutters. I also have white stairs leading down to the black metal fence in front of my house.

I live in the heart of Kroy Wen. First, theres the heart of the city: The apartments, shops, and some government buildings. Then after is the play grounds and schools. Second, there are the communities of neighborhoods, museums, little campsites, and forest area. That's our whole structure. I stare closer at my house trying to look for one speck of dirt. I find none. I walk out of my locked fence and start heading out to the bakery.

The streets are crowded. Everyone rushes past me. I am almost as tall as some of the adults. I am pretty tall for a sixteen year old. Some people run, and some walk. The chilly air makes me shiver when I see the ice cream shop. As I walk

over to the bakery, I can see the coffee shop TV in the window. The building is brown and old. On the TV the news says that there has been a disappearance. I hope to find out who went missing, but I am needed by Stella at the bakery. The bakery is very bright. It has light colors, slim chairs, and little pastries. Outside there is a sign in cursive that says, Mrs. Sally's Bakery. The outside of the bakery is a bit worn, with a big window with little scratches. It is still very welcoming and smells like tulips.

Stella is there. She is ordering the usual: a cream doughnut and a chocolate sprinkles doughnut. She sits down at a little round table. I walk in, and I notice she is wearing the same outfit her boss assigned her yesterday, a pink dress with blue vine-like designs near the bottom. She has her brown hair up in a bun with her pink streaks swirling in the back. Her blue eyeshadow is sparkling like a moonlit night, and her red lipstick the same color as a deep red rose. Her blue eyes are dazzling. Her silver wings are down, and she is wearing white flat shoes.

I come across the room to the table. She walks over to me with the napkins. We sit down across from each other in front of the big window. She digs into the cream doughnut. She then starts to go on and on about how she should eat doughnuts everyday, but her manager might fire her if he figured out she had been eating them. I didn't really want to listen, but she is my friend, and she makes me laugh. Every so often I will say, 'Yes' or, 'Oh my,' when she speaks to make it sound right. She might just give me a look. The strange thing is, she sounds different as she is speaking to me. Something bothers me about her voice. She sounds like she is hiding something. Something very important.

I ask, "How is your day so far? Did that bird show up on your window again?" She shows a quizzical face, like she has no clue what I am talking about, even though I know she knows.

"Oh, yes. I saw the bird again. It had blue feathers now."

"Stella, I'm sorry, but it always had blue feathers."

"Oh, well, I meant purple."

I decide to go right on out and say it, "What are you hiding from me? You seem a bit jumpy."

"Oh, no I'm not jumpy," she said in a nervous voice and soon breaks eye contact with me. I give her a strange look. I'm pretty sure she thinks I can read her mind.

"The thing is, I would love to tell you, but it will hurt your feelings," she says while fiddling with what's left of the doughnut.

" You are worried about my feelings? I'm not a five year-old. Just tell me Stella." I say very impatiently. She looks frightened or like a cat without fur.

"Well, when I was walking past the coffee shop, a broadcast on TV it said that someone had disappeared. I'm sorry Delilah."

I quickly respond with, "Do I know who?"

"Micheal is missing," Stella says, then put her head down while shaking it. I lean my head back and feel my forehead. I start to feel dizzy. I try to eat a bit of my doughnut to make me feel better, but it makes me feel worse.

"How? How did he go missing? When? Who took him? Why did they? What did they want? Where is he?" I don't care if I'm putting poor old Stella in a state of confusion. It's her fault. She was his Wishing Star too. She is supposed to know where he is at all times. I am watching her, waiting for an answer. Next thing I notice is that I'm finding myself walking over to the coffee shop. I barge in, take the remote, and rewind the broadcast. It says that Micheal is missing. It shows a picture of him and where he last was. It goes on about his job, where he lives, and other facts about him. Micheal is my best friend. My trustworthy, helpful, nice, creative, smart, and adventurous best friend. I see his picture, his blond-brown hair shifted to the side and his brown eyes staring out to infinity. He is smiling, however I am not. I want to know where he is. I need to know where he is.

It was his work day, so his boss called the police. They said that he didn't come in to work and for them to check if he was at his house. The boss didn't care if he was late, sick, or missing, he wanted Micheal working at all times. Micheal's job is making phones and electronics. He wasn't at his house. The only thing that was found were footprints and pajamas that belonging to Micheal. He seems to have gone into the forest. I do believe it too, there is always a news broadcast about every little thing, like a cat in a tree, or a girl who cant find where her favorite doll is. Thats the bad thing about Kroy Wen.

I think for a little while, just to process this all. Is it possible that the mysterious maze keeper took him and put him in the forest? That would be horrible. No one quite remembers when people first started going missing in the maze, or how they got in. I just got there when the maze keeper was. Same thing with the maze keeper, they don't have an idea of who he is, because no one would dare go in to try to find out. The keeper puts crazy terrible things in the maze. Things no one can explain. Mostly because if anyone ever got into the maze, they never

got out. If anyone tries to save you, you too could be trapped in there forever.

I walk back home. I don't look back, and I don't look at the sky. I know Stella is running for me or hovering above me. I test out something. If I stay in place, will she fly over me because she doesn't notice me? I stay in place and see her shadow on the ground, flying past me. I almost think she was a plane the way she makes her body as stiff as wood. Ha, she fell for it again. I take a shortcut through the park. I walk past a little boy. He looks like Micheal. Tears are running down my face. For some reason I walk towards him and hug him tightly. He starts screaming for his mom. I blush and say sorry to his mom. I run all the way home. I open the door and slam it shut. I log on to my computer and ask if it knows any details about Micheal and where he might have gone.

The computer does not know. I thank her anyway. What will I do? I can't do anything to save him, can I? I think for a second. I get the craziest idea, but it just might work. I get my big, brown camping bag. I stuff it with a jug of water, chips, chicken legs, condiments, a pan, a knife, and some matches. That will keep me hydrated and make my stomach full. I bring two pairs of clothing, including socks, hiking boots, and flip-flops. There, now I can stay cleanish. I bring a big tarp, rope, a pillow, sheets, a sleeping bag, and a flash light. I have the essentials. Now I get a tracking device, and I am ready to go. I go out to my hovercraft car and put the pack in the trunk.

I drive off to the forest. I take the pack on my shoulders. I am trying to stay positive and strong. I call Stella to take my hovercraft car. She immediately comes to my service and takes it for me. She drives off. She crashes into a couple of poles and then gets back on track. I can only hope she doesn't ruin it.

"Micheal," I think, "here I come," as I walk into the forest. Pine trees are covered in pine cones. The fall breeze makes me quiver, and the animals chattering makes me twitch. I am not meant for the wilderness. I never was. I look at myself. I brushed my hair and put on beautifully ugly clothes. This is not good for wilderness. I don't for a second stop thinking that I could die. I look straight ahead. Nothing is going to stop me. I grow tired, but keep on hiking. I am about halfway into the cressant-shaped forest.

I eventually fall to the ground. After a couple seconds, I fall again, to an underground space. I have fallen into a metal, tube-shaped ditch under some

fallen leaves. It becomes dark and then pitch black. i feel as if nothingness is everywhere. No forest anymore. Could this be a trap from the maze keeper? Wait, I think, there isn't weight on my back. My backpack is no longer on my back. I shake and I get goosebumps. I try to stand up, but I collapse. I hear a voice. A screen pops up on one of the sides of the tube ditch. There is a man. I can only make out a figure with a navy blue background.

It says, " Welcome. Welcome to my maze. I hope you find your way out. Wait, you will never escape. HAHahaha! My name is Kaptain, Kaptain the Maze Keeper, and I hope you have a... great stay."

Great. Now I can't go back. Light then burst in my eyes. It is blinding. What type of maze is this? No one knows what type, except for Kaptain. I can only hope this is the maze he put Micheal in too.

The light is finally off. I rest my eyes for a while. I get a chill as soon as I am out of the tube. It looks like a maze of giant hedges. It is remarkable. It is a dark green shade, and the sky is grayish. Some vines stand out of the hedges, but I can only see the outline of them due to the fog. I can barely see anything in front of me. I walk forward, to the fog, where I am sure my death will meet me. How will I survive? I left everything back in that forest. I run until I reach a wall. I hesitate, but then turn. I am already out of breath. Will I be trapped here forever? Will I not see Stella, my wishing star, Micheal, or my beautiful home in Kroy Wen ever again?

I try focus. I try to climb the vines on a hedge, but they are slippery. I jump up and grab a hold of one firmly, but it tries to swing me off. After my millionth attempt, I climb up without falling. I reach the top and tie my feet to the vines. I make sure the clump of vines are tight, so I am secure and can look out into the distance. I only see fog and dark blocks of hedge. I look over to my right and see a black figure, a monster like figure. I see the monster chasing something, a man. I know it is him. Under the boots of the man, the gravel goes, CRUNCH! CRUNCH! CRUNCH! and SCRATCHY SCRATCH! under the feet of the monster. I guess it is really quick to find Micheal in a maze. I thought it would take days. I didn't really need the pack after all.

I jump up. The vines let loose, and I sprint to the top of the hedges to get to where he is. The vines want to pull me in. Take me as prisoner perhaps, but I don't let them. As I run the wind whispers in my ears. The monster like figure is a hedge-dog. Literally a hedge in the shape of mutated dog. I look at it closer. It is not in the shape of a dog. More of a clump like thing now. Now it is a cat. A bird, now a snake, then an elephant, then a lion. A shapeshifter, it must be. Is that

what Micheal is afraid of? I better not ask. I jump down on top of the monster. I pull apart the vines until they are scrambled everywhere. It get's back in shape! I pull it apart again and scramble some ten feet away from each other. I take his arm and run for it.

"Delilah?" he says.

"Hey! I bet you didn't know I was here!"

"What are you doing?"

"Saving you!"

I hoist him up a hedge nearby, and I climb up after him. We make it up and run over the tops of the hedges. He falls into one. He is being sucked inside. The vine creature is still heading towards us. I don't know what to do. I hate the vicious, vigorous vines swaying very slightly. I see a long, loose, thick vine. I take it and give the end of the vine to Micheal. I go to the middle of the vine in front of the hedge-way I came through. I grip it and jump down to the ground. I land on my hands and knees. I see him flying on top of the hedge. He then jumps down and lands on his feet.

We run to where I was first dropped. There is nothing. The tube is not there. How will we get out? I see the creature it is about to attack Micheal. I run past him and tear it apart for the last time. It is over. Now how do we get back? He taps my shoulder, and I look behind me. He looks into my green, droopy, sad, teary eyes. He looks down and then up to me. I look down and to see a phone. His phone! I could call Stella to come here, and we will be saved. I call her and hold it up to my ear. I hear her and music in the background. She is screaming woohoo!

"Stella!"

"Oh, sorry, I'm at an awesome party! You should come here and jam out to the music! Woohoo!"

"Stella, I would love to come, but right now I need you to help me!"

"Awww Okay."

"Okay, I am in the forest. Actually not anymore, but I have Micheal. Go deep in the forest until you see my bag. Then just walk around there. You will fall into a tube like ditch. Don't do anything after that."

"Alrighty." She hangs up. Now we just wait. I sit down on the ground. Micheal draws pictures in the ground with a thick, hard vine, and I make a vine into a jumprope. I jump a couple times and decide that I am not much of a jump roping kind of girl. I am bored but more scared. It is taking Stella a long time. What if she

got lost. What is taking her so long? I flop down next to Micheal.

"How did you end up here?" I ask to get a conversation started.

"Long story short, I was sleep walking," he says.

"Ha ha ha! That's why you are here?"

"Yes, that's why."

"So what did you find out about this place?"

"Nothing much. Actually, now that you ask, I did."

"Well, what did you find out?"

"Kaptain is the controller of the maze. He has been trapping people here for over a century. He also gives different people different mazes from all over the world. No one knows why, but I think that he is just lonely. Luckily, we got the same maze."

"Wow, that's-"

I hear a humming noise, and I see Stella coming down the tube. I quickly grab everyone and jump in the tube. We escape. We are in the forest again. When I pick up my backpack, I notice the ground is like water, like quicksand and it is pulling me back. This is one of Kaptain's little schemes. I grab Michael's leg, and Micheal grabs Stella's. Stella screams and tries to flutter away. We break free. I smile and laugh. I look to Stella.

"Thanks, Stella!"

"Sure. Oh, about that party. I had a party at your house."

I stare at her. She threw a party. At my house. Without permission, and she probably made a mess.

I smile and give her a little shake of my head bent down.

"Oh, Stella, you will never know how much I missed you," I say even though I was only gone for barely one day.

I pick up my backpack that was left on the ground. I say goodbye to my friends and I walk home. The breeze makes me chilly once again, so I pull the backpack closer. I walk up to my doorstep, and then I am blocked by Stella. She quickly zooms in and cleans up the place and leaves. I am surprised to see the house is all clean. I bet every piece of junk is in the closets. I have a weird feeling

it is. However, she got it all cleaned up! I plop myself down on the couch and turn off the lights. I feel my eyes get droopy, so I fall asleep. I am glad I saved my friend. My very best friend.