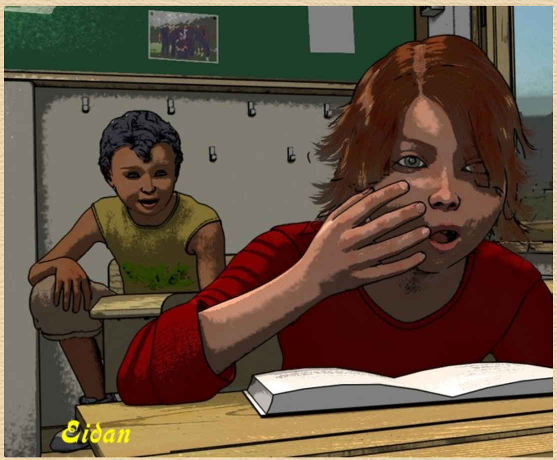
HOMEWORK



Chapter 1 Part 1

It was a hard trip home that noon. On his way to home from Franklin, Davy felt like his heart and feet were heavier, and all because of his own mouth.

It was his mouth in the first place that created the worst possible scenario for his social aspirations. He was the artifex of his own cage, and now he had an impossible task to perform, and two unnavoidable consequences that pursued him and get closer to him as the sun faded into the horizon. Like some terrible punishing emperor teasing him from the heights with a grin on his face, waiting the upcoming show; a disarmed gladiator in middle of the colloseum against two of the scariest curses that a kid without many friends can get in a public school: have to sit with one of the most unpopular classmates in all Franklin, and face the wrath of his overzealous friends.

How can this be so bad, someone might ask? For a nice guy like Davy, it shouldn't be in principle. He was friendly enough to befriend most of the other kids, fair (justo) enough and good looking enough to befriend girls. Davy's primary obstacule was an issue of... credibility.

His woundrous tales about tree-climbing (partially true due of his physical condition) were good enough to call the attention of most of his classmates, in the beginning at least. But when combined with tales of ufo sightings, castle building, runaways, beast hunting and other epic impossibilities, most of those who had a true interest in his friendship started to look at him as a strange guy, and with the help of the time, boredom and a nasty dose of kid's cruelty, outrightly a “weirdo”. Girl's whispers and boy's jokes came sharper and more often every day as the empty times in school's curricular planning allowed them to grow and multiply.

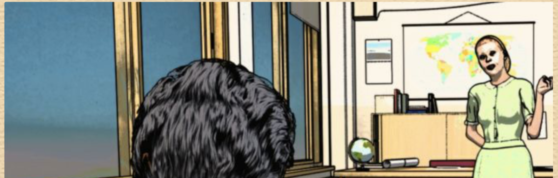
Davy didn't miss a single stone for kicking on his way home . A soft autumn breeze made his road a little more fun, with hundreds of leaves dropping everywhere. He wondered how many he'd have to clean up from his neat treehouse, and if there would be enough of them to make a comfy nest to lay on for a while. And there he would think more clearly onto getting out of his raw deal. After dinner, at least.

-Darned math!

It was not the math per se that was the cause of his grief. He felt fairly square with it, except with the last part of it: if he didn't know about math, geometry and stuff, his treehouse would be on ruins by that time, and the pride and joy of Davy was his civilian craftsmanship. He had just cause to be proud of every one of his creations. More theoretical content, however, was a nuisance. Why did he need the darned algebra, anyways? Surely his loving mom, or dad, would be really glad to help him if he mentioned some parent-student exercises, although the exercises were meant to be done in class, requesting help to his teacher and for his eyes only; but why look like an idiot in front of his class when he could do the best exercises with mom or dad... and take the credit, of course.

-Stupid teacher!

Mrs. Swanbeck was a unusually a nice teacher for being in charge of a math class. Having reached 35, she still upheld some of the ideals which make a good teacher loved a respected among her students. She truly worried about each and everyone of the numerous students in her charge, making her class a little detrimental in the whole picture of things, due to her individual and human concerns. Now Davy was drinking the bitter side of all that sweetness. Why did he have to worry about the dummys? Why spend the nice guys' time with stupid dead weight? Because she was... stupid, of course!



-Darn that “Jan the Insane” freakin dork!

Every good public educational institution has to receive a share of non-standard students in its halls who cause wreck and havoc on the general scheme of things. One of them is Jan Novak, his new homework partner. Because that the way Davy wanted it? Not at all. Rumor had it he supposedly ate his dog or something like that, thus was freaking insane, and his parents sent him to the nuthouse for one month, then got him back, if such a thing could be believed; and now he had to be seen with him doing homework. Nice! Just when he tries to get popular, now he has to befriend Hannibal Lecter's little son. He wasn't complaining about their right to be there or anywhere, but, why *him*? And to tell him what? He's always looking through windows, abscent minded of everyone and everything, talks no one and no one talks to him. He takes some notes when he wants and thats all! Boring. He would prefer helping Ricardo Jorge, but he was on another class, and often missed school. Too often.

And yet he hadn't thought about his great black beast… his double headed black beast.

His home surprised him in his thoughts when arrived. No one seemed to be around, since the final work on the harvest were taking a lot of mom and dad's time, and they would arrive almost at nightfall. So he headed in, read the cheerful note from his mom's about dinner, time of arrival and loving him, emptied his backpack, took his dinner inside and headed right away to his fortress. A new weekend was starting, and he would meet Ricardo and Keith at noon as agreed; unusually, Keith's mom and stepfather were on some kind of “business trip”, so he was available on weekends. Ricardo's parents didn'g give a darn about him so long he didn't get them in trouble with the law, and allowed him to stay at Davy's for the night[1]; in short, it promised to be a good fun sleepover. Everything was fine with his dad after the serious talk they had not too long ago.

With great pleasure he noticed a great quantity of perfectly dried leaves on his treehouse, so going to work, he started to throw them in to make a soft soil and a neat surprise for his friends. He was really hoping to break the habitual solitude of his place. He knew enough about Keith to consider him a good friend, even if he was temperamental and, sometimes, sad. Regarding Ricardo, he really wanted to know him more. Despite being an ex-student of Franklin's, he rarely he saw him there, so he really didn't have the chance to talk and get to know him better. From what he heard, Ricardo Jorge went to school “late barely, or never” so his performance was precarious at best. He really would like a buddy at school, and maybe if he got some help, they both could be much better off.

After a few minutes of work, his lair was finished, and viewing the comfy surface, he decided to run a trial test.

-Why not! Anyway I haven't eaten dinner.

While eating, the memory the yesterday's events, came to mind, when his problems started. He remembered to get a new algebra's assignment from his “loving” teacher (yuck, by the way) and play dumb with dad about completing it. Usually, Mr. Caulfield was really aware of the wonderful creativeness of his children, but the work in the fields had been intense that week. Davy knew it and played it to his advantage, and got a nice and perfect piece of homework done with the help of his dad. Everything was going real smooth. He just had to wait to harvest his reputation.

-Hey Caulfield! -some classmate asked at next day- do you got n°43?

-Sure -he answered, with prideful joy. - It was kinda easy anyway.

-What? Are you serious? -they asked skeptically- That thing was way over our level! No one ever even looked at it!

-Here, have a look - Davy said, showing him his homework.

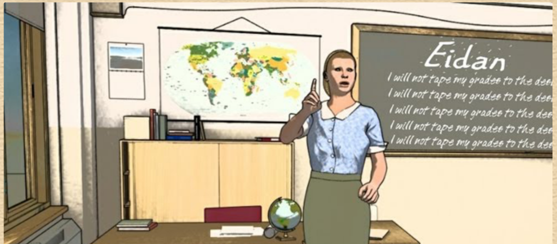
Actually, he had a *vague* notion of his dad trying to explain how to do the exercise right, to him. Mr. Caulfield thought, due to the fact he worked a lot with algebra himself, that his son would have understood him to some degree, and didnt pay a lot of attention to his sons age and the difficulty of the exercise. Davy just nodded all the time.

-Whoa, man, youre a egghead! -then, taking a moment to reflect- "Wait, you got help, didn't ya?"

-Ha, with dad and mom on the fields? When? - he evaded skillfully – "Don't you believe me?"

"Not even a little...."

"What about..." someone else mercifully butted in.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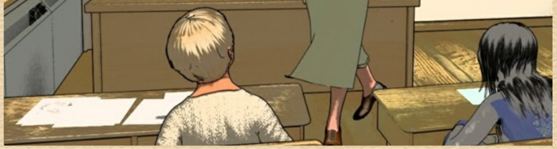


-Children! -called Mrs. Swanbeck- Pay attention! I'm going to go to everybody's seat and review the exercises we were working on in class, so stay put while I review and answer your partner's questions!

That was enough to break all the tongues loose in the room; so Mrs. Swanbeck, after a deep -sigh- started her work.
Meanwhile, a comitee was formed behind Davy, to speak about... exercise 43.

-Balogna! That thing was a dud, pal!

-I tell you, Davy got it done.

-C'mon, and you believed him, a baby like that?

-He showed it to me. It was done.

-Obviously -a girl stated – it wasnt his work!

-Maybe it was from the bear his dad hunted three weeks ago!

-HAHAAHAHAHAHA

Davy felt mortified. Now he started to feel some effects of the little stupid thing he had done, but it got worse. The only thing that distracted his ear from the general comments of disbelief and doubt about him ocurred when Mrs. Swanbeck reached Jan's place.

-Oh Jan! What am I gonna do with you? You haven't done anything! Not even the first ones we reviewed in class twice!

-I... -Jan uttered faintly, looking down his desk- I'm sorry... really... I... dunno... er...

-You know I will have to address your parents about this. Just tell me what we should do for you to work with us?
-I dunno... I'm just... not... you.

Mrs. Swanbeck just looked at him again, and and caressed his little head. It broke her heart when she learned from the school's councelor the stuff that happened to the kid in front on her, and the fact that she could not give him enough time, more than already she gave him, without getting him bullied more than already he was, or, eventually, beat up by his classmates, keep hurting her. She knew better.

-Dork...

-Jerk...

-Nuts...

-Retard...

-Hey shhh, here comes for Caulfield!

Holy cow! He didnt even think about his teacher's reaction when he sailed into the adventure of being popular using his dad's brain. Now it was too late to pull back. He felt like every second the floor got hotter than before, like a giant pot, cooking a little Davy...

-Okay Mr. Caulfield, lets see your work... mmm... yes,... ok... emmm...

While her pen passed over it, her expression denoted certain disconfort. Something didn't add up. Then Davy started to sweat. -Darn it, she knows!- was his first thought. -Look around Davy, just look around- and then he fixed his view on Jan Novak. He had a small and light complexion, his skin, although white on his face, carried a light tan on his back and neck; Blonde but more of a dark golden hair, form little and almost unperceptible curls around his ears. Brown eyes, denoted an expression of concern and, in a strange way, a calm and veiled wrath, like those old roman sculpted heads; and athough he was smaller than average, he was imposing enough for everybody to give him his space, despite the mocking and insults.

-He's no lamb- Davy mused.

-Excuse me?

-Oh, nothing Mrs. Swanbeck.

At last, and *only after a good amount of* scratching here and there, the revision was done. The spectators in the room looked expectantly.

-Well well, Mr. Caulfield -with a grin on her face- look like you have done an outstanding job, haven't you?

Everybody looked expectantly to Davy, like a pack of mangy wolves waiting for a goat to fall from the cliffs for a meal.

-Ehehe... yea, Mrs. Swanbeck, it's a real brainstorm with your teaching- he said, putting on angelically grateful face- and we all have learned a lot with you.

-Oh, hehe, spare me Lord- with a hand onto her own chin and a smile everytime more wide and siniester- you do what you can; sooo, tell me Mr. Caulfield, do you feel happy with the way I'm teaching your lessons?

-Emmm... its okay, I guess – *Davy said feebly,* now outrightly scared- why do you ask?

-You see, in my career you sometimes find few kids with such dedication and compromise that you would think, its a shame they would keep all their joy for learning to their selves, dont you think?

-Y...y..yeah, it'a sh...

-I'm so grateful for your dedication and HONEST labor, that i have decided you will be sitting with Mr. Novak from now to help him with his homework.

Davy felt how his soul was being drained by the floor when the word “homework” ended resounding all over the room. *Then* the sepulchral silence was broken by a lower and disconforted voice of Mr. Novak saying: WHAT!?

-Exactly, Mr. Novak, with a little of effort from your part and the caring help of

Mr. Caulfield, we will show to all of your classmates that a helping hand its always available if you know the right people to ask for help, and remaining silent is never a good option to solve your problems.

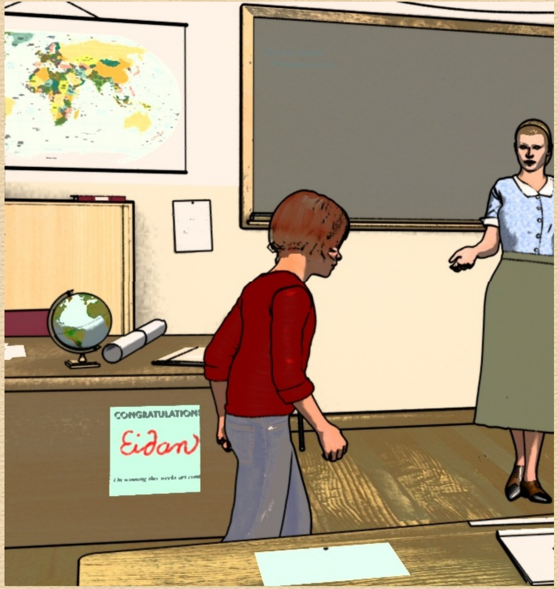
The crew was satiated with Davy's agony. He could have pissed himself right there and it would not make any difference. Their little faces brightened with the fire of Davy's burning popularity.

-Mrs. S..Sw..wanbeck... i... want to g.. go to the bathroom, to drink of... water, please?

-No problem Mr. Caulfield, go ahead. I'll talk to your other teachers to they dont bother you about the sitting places, and of course I'll send a nice positive comment in your class book and for your parents. You should be very proud!

-I should be very DEAD- almost would sum it up better Davy thought.

Never had an exit from the classroom had been so long and eternal. Every single face looked at him grinning so grotesquely than most of his classmates mouths *seemed to* almost doubled in size. The only one who was not looking at him, or grinning at all, was Jan... who looked at his desk with his two hands on his head; with an horrorific expression, without turning towards him.



Davy couldn't feel his feet. On the bathroom's faucet, grabbed with both hands and washed his face, but it wasn't enough. He moistened his long hair to feel any confort at all, but to no avail. He felt ashamed, insecure, mocked. Alone. He sat on a dark corner and hugged his own legs, then he cried like a baby.

Part 2

It wouldn't have helped to shed a few tears over such unpleasant memories in the safety of his home, over all those leaves. It wasn't a problem for him to express his feelings, but the concept of looking like a weakling or a sissy in front of the people who cared about him was something to be avoided at all costs. Not to mention his new friends. He would hide his concerns as long as necesary, to be a funny, hospitable and friendly guy; after all, who would like to go to the house of a crybaby? And living as far as he was from everyone else, a bad impression was something he was not willing to give. Never. In that aspect, he felt kinda jealous about Martin: being a smaller boy, knew he would give a darn about letting everybody knew when he missed his mom and dad. Shame he had to go somewhere else that day and, in any case, he doubted his parents wouyld let him stay the night so far away in another home. He felt the need to lay on his back and look at the ceiling of the treehouse.

After he dried his tears as best as he could, the bell rang for recess. He didn't even bother to go back to his classroom to grab something to eat from his backpack. He wasn't in the mood for food, so he sat on the lower end of a wide staircase leading up to the second floor of the Franklin facility: some storage rooms, a couple of bathrooms and the teacher's hall were there, so *going to* the upper floor wasn't allowed.

The giggling on the playground started to get his attention. For some reason, everyone who passed nearby glanced at him, whispering and murmuring. Even lower grade kids looked to him and giggled. Some of them looked at him openly mocking; others looked with curiosity, and a few with a glance of pity. At a distance he could see his classmates laughing, sending a glance every now and then in his direction. In another more secluded corner of the playground, he saw Jan; or a body what looked like him, anyways, because, as always, he looked as if were somewhere else, with his head was turned towards a big oak tree two blocks away; He was completely spellbound with it. *Davy felt like he* could almost see them sway the same way, which was a ridiculous observation, obviously because normal people and trees don't dance together, as if some people cared about how trees swayed.

But he noticed; having been watching the same oak tree himself, dreaming with climb to it, imaginating the great sights, the freedom, what kind of nests he would find up there, with everybody else beneath.

-At least he has a good taste in trees- he mused, almost unconciously.

The proximity of two identical boy silhouettes who got close to Jan and sat at his both sides interrupted his thoughts. Very short black hair, almost millitary style, pale skin as he could see from that distance, both with dark grey jogging suits. A little taller than average Davy's class mates, they obviously belonged to some upper grade. They didn't need any introducction for him, as he knew their reputations too well; and their presence only carried *problems* to who they decided to encounter...

Surprisingly for him, and despite the fact he'd expect a classical bullying episode with a way smaller victim, they seemed unnaturally friendly and well mannered with Jan. At first Jan was surprised to have them on both sides, but then, contrary to what Davy expected and knew about the lot, he looked at them relaxed and friendly. He saw them speak very fondly and even one of the twins put his hand on the shoulder of the smaller boy as if reassuring him about something. Then Jan's body language showed his concern and grief, and the twins listened to him as trying to understand better, or as if asking for more details. They were not yet fluent in the language, since they came from another country, but anyone who made fun about that fact just wound up learning a lesson about body language at the other end of their fists.

They didn't take money, nor lunches, nor did they bother anyone who didn't came close to them. He had to admit it. They weren't the kind of troublemakers who needs you to show how big and bad they were, or how many friends they supossedly have. They were a violent pair; rumor has it they had beat up a lot of people, but their main strength was their cunning. Never had taken a fight inside Franklin's. No adult had ever seen them saying a bad word, using bad manners or even throwing a piece of paper outside the basket. It didn't matter whether there were one, two, tree, five, ten, of you. Rich, or poor, unrelevant. If you crossed them, you'd -outside, when no one could hear you until it was too late, and now both of them were looking right at Davy's face glancing coldly.

The bell rang just in time, and Davy had to go back to his classroom. He shivered. His habits let him steer himself to the room. On the news board a piece of paper was stuck, with two stick-figures drawn on it by hand, one of them wearing some kind of hockey mask with a “J” and what seemed to be a chainsaw, cutting trough the half of the other which was a little longer, with a “D” on his head.

The teacher from the next class entered the classroom. This was their home room teacher, a somewhat elderly man that, after the customary greetings, stated:

-I have spoken to Mrs. Swanbeck about some changes in your seating, and I have found its a very good idea in order to give you a better chance to know eachother, so we'll make some changes to...

-OH C'MON!

-It's Not Fair!!

-Why?!

-Thank you, Caulfield, you dumbass!

The veteran teacher didn't allow himself to waver:

-Kaufmann, Hertz and Barrera, wait for me on principal's office! Caulfield had nothing to do with anything of this. I'm the one who decided it so the rest off you will cut it out or else! A fearful silence *fell over the class.*

-I'll give you a chance to change seats as you wish, except for Caulfield who already has an assigned spot. I'll be back shortly and dont try to cheat on me. I remember every one of your former spots.

-Pffft!

-Callaghan, to the principal's office with the other three, now!

-aww...

With the teacher and the the four “dissidents” gone, Davey started to grab his stuff.

-Psst, Caulfield!, don't let him bite you or you'll be eating your dog soon!

-Shut up! -answered with wavering voice- its just... something temporary!

-Hey, whats the matter- added another one- maybe you can go to see ufo's together!

-AHAHAAHAHA

-C'mon, the guy's insane but not *that* dumb! I guess if you make friends with him you'll make him dumb enought to...

-I'M NOT BEFRIENDING ANYTHING!!!

He was on the edge of breakpoint. Had enough from everything and everyone. The kids on class kept silence. Only a few realized the horrible thing that went out from Davy's mouth.

continued ....

Jan, on the other side of the room, closed his fists under the desk, in absolute silence.

The day went on without any other incidents. The switching was done without a problem, and Davy moved next to Jan. None of them was in the mood for small talk, but one was way more hurt than the other.

The last bell rang, and everyone was tired enough to hurry home. As the room grew empty, Davy started packing his stuff, then realized that Jan haven't made a single movement since he sat down. He kept his hands under the desk noticing the evening light glittering on his classmate's ussualy opaque desk. There was quite a puddle of tears he had made there. He felt it was not right to just leave things that way.

-Novak, I...

That made the little boy jump up like a spring, grab his bag and, with a very notorious flinch on his face, run towards the exit. Davy was too tired and unwilling to go in pursuit.

-What a jerk...

Next day, Davy expected the same level of teasing, but for some reason, beyond a couple of bad jokes and mean comments, there weren't any major issues. The thing was that Jan Novak had missed school that day, so he could sit with anyone he wished. Obviously the issue with thath kind of liberty is the few people willing to share it with you, which made the situation sort of like winning a ticket for a cruise in Bolivia or a swimming pool in the North Pole. Anyway, he was thankfully unnoticed by his classmates, who surely had found another situation or victim to take care off.

When he got out his math book, he couldn't avoid the thoughts. He still felt that Novak was a jerk, and the best thing to do was to ignore him, and everyone would be happy. But every time he glanced at his desk, he could see the dry borders that his tears left. He thought about how hard he had tried to make friends, share his talents and hospitality at home, and then, a terrible thought crossed his mind: that was *precisely* the same hospitality that he denied his neighbor! That was a breaktrough: How could he be a good friend to people like Martin, Keith or Ricardo if he behaved like that with someone who would see every day hour after hour!? And, then, remembered his own words: I'm not befriending anything... anything!? Jan was not a piece of wood, or a dog! He was insane, a jerk, and dumb, but he was a human being! And he practically spit in his face, in front of almost fourty witnesses, taking his humanity and shoving it in his face...

Davy couldn't breathe well. His throat knotted and remorse started to overcome him. Even if he don't like him, he would apologize. Even if Jan were the dumbest of all the beings, he could not forgive himself if he didnt make amends. Thought about his punishment, how he would suffer everytime he tried to make a friend knowing that he was a... liar. A liar to his own concept of friendship!

Unfortunately for him, his mind came up with an answer fast about the word “punishment”. What if Novak talked to his only two “friends”? They would kill him!!! With some luck they would be merciful and kill him quick, but he knew that “mercy” was hardly in their vocabulary... nor in their native language! They would hunt him, catch him and be done with, and probably no one would know ever the reason! Would they come during the day? At night? Today? Tomorrow? To who he would ask for help? His dad? He was too busy for messing with kids fighting, and probably his help would be somekind of “pull yourself together man!”.
Would he fight back himself? He hated fighting, and bullies but although he could defend himself if necesary, thre were two of them and just one of him. Besides,, they were experienced and he hardly remembered winning a serious fight, if he ever had one by the way! Could he ask Keith for help? He just would end sharing his grave...

The sunrays were fading quick on the fields, and the hour of his meeting with Jorge and Keith got closer. A beautiful red tone dominated the sky, and the few clouds high up were a very good omen for the closing night. Despite all his thoughts, he could be sure there was a little place of safety there, with his leaves and ceiling and provisions. So he relaxed and closed his eyes.

A heavy shadow blocked the sun from entering his treehouse for just a second. He opened his eyes, looking towards the entrance, but saw nothing, so he stepped out. Maybe it was a bird or one of his pals playing tricks. While still in the tree but outside of the treehouse, he *started to get the feeling that* something was wrong.

-Zdravstvuyte , svinina!

He turned to see a skinny boy, a palm taller than him, with a glance cold and unexpressive, cat-like brow, grey eyes. Black pants, black sleeveless shirt. His head dressed a black knit cap, and he was filthy with mud and dust. His face had some dirt, but allowed to see it all his expressions, or the lack of it.There was no doubt anymore; they were here for him.

With the speed of despair climbed down the tree on a run for it attempt, only to be caught by the other twin in ground and tossed violently on the ground.

-Hey what is the hurry, Devi!,- said the one over the tree- afraid of talking with us?
-Maybe he has a date – the one on the ground added- and he's late.
-Of course he has a date! With trouble!

On a single jump the one on the trees dropped in the ground. Davy was stunned, with his back on the floor. The one who toppled him was dressed with camo shorts and a green sleeveless hoodie. He was an exact copy of the other guy, but had a grimace of obvioius disgust and hated for the poor kid. For Davy. Then he sat at his side.

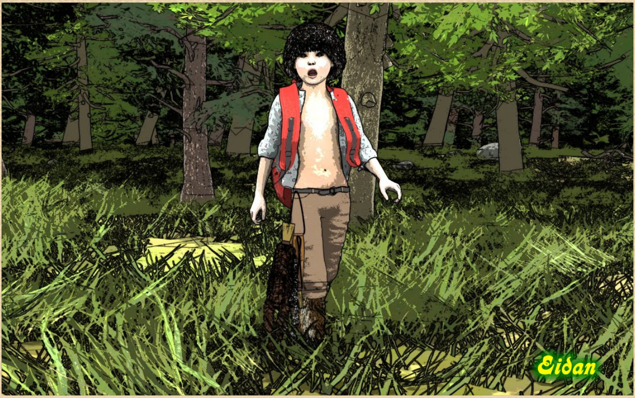
-Are you scared, bad guy?- asked the hooded one, with a very curious accent.
-Yes! -he answered quickly -but I'm no bad guy!
-Fignya! You are a bad one! And a liar!
-You make our little friend cry, so, you are a fiend. - the expressionless one pronounced, without an accent at all. - You deserve this an' more.
Before Davy could do anything about it, received a swift kick on his left thigh. His perpetrator didn't even show the effort on his face.

-Eek!
-You do not feel so cruel now, right Satanu? Inferred the hooded one, and gave a nasty punch on his right ribs. Unlike his brother, the joy of hurting other people was very patent on his face.
-Agh! - Davy's sight started to cloud with tears. But looking at the road saw a little figue heading at full speed to them, almost breathless

-STOP IT! ARE YOU NUTS!?

Was a strange voice. Was not Keith, since he has a very distinctive voice, and usually rides his bycicle everywhere, and this one goes on feet. Maybe was Ricky, but wasn't sure at all. All that mattered was that *someone* had distracted them. He tried to stand and run, but that kick was meant to prevent it, paralyzing his whole leg. He wanted to cry, but he was breathless from the punch. He wouldn't move anywere for some time. He did all what he could do: he closed his eyes and curled.

-Why are you beating up on him!?
-You should know better why are we beating this b&^$%, Jan! -Answered the one with the hood.



Jan! Could it be even possible?

-Stop it! Please! I never asked you to do this!
-We do not need you to- answered the cold one, as calm as if talking about weather –All we need is to see you suffer. We will not allow it. Not again.
-But please, stop! He can't fend for himself... I... I have forgiven him.
-Pieces of s^& like this don't deserve forgiveness. They deserve suffer! When you will learn?! Replied the guy on the hood, visibily frustrated.

The twins looked each other, looked at Davy, then looked Jan. They headed to the little boy, and the “cold guy” hugged Jan, saying softly something on his own tongue. The other guy clinged to his brother, then both left towards the road.

-If you change your mind, let us know! - the hooded one said.
-Go home! I'll see ya later! - answered Jan.

Jan approached to the shrugged, sobbing and shivering Davy. He took him from his armpits, and tried to make him to sit on floor. He spoke at him soft and tenderly.

-Davy, you need to sit down now or you will not be able to stand up. I will help you, but you have to make the effort, ok?
-sob... ok...
In a maneuver that took a matter of seconds but felt like it took several minutes, Davy was sitting on the floor, and could see more details of Jan. He was dressed like a true professional hobo! His clothes, brown pants and a grey shirt looked like they were from ten or twenty years ago due to the holes, afficionate sewing and loose threads, and you could practically scrape pine gum and mud with a spoon from them. From his hip thre was another interesting detail: two dead rabbits hanging from his belt. But the most beautiful details were on his feet and his head: his shoes were hand made boots, beautifully made by the way, covered by rabbit fur until mid-calf. Also his head was covered by an old but refurbished ushanka. He looked ready for Halloween!

-I have to check your ribs; don't worry, I know what I'm doing. I promise!
Without losing more time, Jan removed Davy's right suspender and raised his shirt. A violet bruise marked the right spot where the punch had landed.

-I see... hold it right there.

He grabbed Davy's right arm and put it behind his neck, so he could rest it comfortably while he was working. His ushanka made his head sweaty, so he took it off; from one of the multiple pockets added to his belt, he grabbed an old and ugly little plastic jar and opened it. Davy was ready to jump away, or at least try, thinking it would be something like rabbit brains with living worms inside. But the smell of the content, a jelly-like mix, was actually quite floral and soothing. Jan used his index and middle finger on it and then softly started aplying the strange mix on the bruise.

-Ouch!
-Sorry, I'll finish quickly. I promise.

Jan started to rub the bruise softly, but firmly. The pain started to recede quite fast. But it was not the pain, nor tears, nor almost being killed, rather the fact to be practically hugging the only guy who he had ever really despised, that sent him into a state of shock. He was practically breathing down his neck, but moments ago he wouldn't have wanted him within a thousand miles! He cursed his existence moments ago, and now he couldn't avoid grabbing his arm and bringing his head towards Jan's golden dark hair! Jan was a filthy weirdo, wearing a belt of dead rabbits, was, probably insane, and was rubbing a wound with his hand that would make anyone with his five senses squeal like a pig, yet never had he felt so much peace in his whole life... he was blushing, but not from pain. Not anymore.

-Ok, I'm done. -Jan spoke softly, as if fearing to interrupt the moment, while putting on his dear ushanka again- Don't wash it until tomorrow. The color will stay for a week, but the swelling and the pain will go away by tomorrow morning.

Regarding your leg, you'll limp for a couple of days, but you'll live through that. - It was dark already. The boys couldn't see the color of their facevery well s very well. Davy couldn't see if Jan was blushed... but he could feel the heat from his face.

Carefully, the boys stood up off the floor, and Davy's arm dropped from Jan's shoulder. They looked at each other in the eyes, hearing their breath, their hearthbeat. At the last light of a dying sun, a distant bike could be heard far away, and getting closer.

-Hafta go.- Jan murmered in the same tone in which he apologized yesterday to Mrs. Swanbeck. He turned around and started walking fast towards the opposite road.
-Stay!- Davy spat out.
-No!.- replied Jan.
...

-Come back...- Davy asked.

-Not today. -answered Jan
...

-Tomorrow?- begged Davy

And then he saw two little stars far away on the road.

-Yes.