

PRWC 8- "Something to Call My Own"

*"So tired of the straight line  
And everywhere you turn  
There's vultures and thieves at your back  
The storm keeps on twisting  
You keep on building the lies  
That you make up for all that you lack  
It don't make no difference  
Escaping one last time  
It's easier to believe  
In this sweet madness oh  
This glorious sadness that brings me to my knees"  
~ "Angel" Sarah McLachlan*

"So how was your date?" Mom asked.  
"Great! DJ is a great guy. I really like him." I said.  
"That's good. I'm glad you've found someone new." Mom said.  
"Me too. Anyway, how are my Wild Cats?"  
"Fine. Tiffany's mom is visiting in a few days."  
"What? Is she ok with it?"  
"She seems ok. I haven't noticed a change in her since she found out the news."  
"I think I'm gonna go talk to her anyway." I said.  
"Ok, see you later." Mom said.

I went to the lodge and found Tiffany working on homework.  
"Hey kid." I said sitting next to her.  
"Hey Har." She said looking up from her book.  
"Heard your mom is coming in. Are you ok with that?"  
"Of course. I'm so excited! I miss my parents." She said brightly.  
"Ok...well if something about it does bother you...well you can come talk to me."  
She nodded. "I know Har, but really, I'm happy about this."  
"OK...well I'll let you get back to work..." I said getting up. I went to make sure the kitchen had been cleaned up then I checked on all the Wild Cats. Everyone was fine so I went to do my own homework and ended up running into Josh on the way to my room.

"Hey you." I said.  
"Hey Har. How was your date?" he asked.  
"Very nice, thanks. Hey, you don't have a problem with me seeing your cousin do you?" I asked.  
"Of course not."  
"Ok, I didn't think so. Anyway what have you been up to?"  
"I went on a date myself."  
"Oh? With who?" I asked quicker than I should have.  
"This girl I met. Her name is Marissa and she's an awesome girl. I like her a lot."  
He said.

"I'm so happy for you. Anyway I need to get to my homework...see ya?"

"See ya." Josh said.

I went on to my room and as I sat down I noticed a weird feeling of jealousy I couldn't quite explain.

Tiffany

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So I probably should have told Harley how I was really feeling, but she would just put me under watch and make me start eating and that wouldn't help me lose the weight I needed to lose.

After I finished my homework I went to my room and pulled the razor I had hidden. It felt so good to cut. It was a pain I could control. No one made me do it, no one made me hurt. I did this to myself, it was my pain and I owned it. I watched as blood dripped down my arm again. I cut more, and more...and more. I couldn't stop, it just felt so good to have something I could control in my life. I finally made myself stop. I could control that too. I could stop the pain. I washed off my arm and put my jacket back on. That's when April came in. She went to her bunk to get something and then looked at me.

"It's burning up in here. What's with the jacket?" she asked.

"I'm cold." I said.

"Don't give me that shit. I'm not an idiot. Come here." She said grabbing my wrist.

"No! Stop!" I cried trying to pull away.

"No. Stay still." She commanded as she tried to take my jacket off of me. She ended up tearing the sleeve off, revealing my cut arm. "I knew it. You moron."

"Thanks." I said softly pulling away.

"Why would you do something so stupid?"

"It feels good ok?"

"Let me guess, you've been sneaking off and barfing again too?"

"Yes." I said softly.

"Does this have anything to do with your parents visiting?"

"You don't know what it's like to be a Jennings. My mother expects perfection. I have to be perfect or I'll embarrass her. Since I've gotten here I've gotten so fat. I had to do something."

"You are such an idiot. You're not fat. You're like a stick. And cutting...god...you really should talk to Harley about it. Stay here and I'll go get her." April said.

"You trust me to stay?"

"You don't have the guts to run." April said leaving me alone.

"Whatever." I said sitting on my bed. I knew Harley would be in anytime now and they would make me start eating. I'd gain weight and my mother would hate me. I couldn't let that happen. I grabbed my backpack, tossed in some clothes, left my Morpher on the bed and headed out the door. I knew they'd be after me soon so I took off running fast as I could. I had to stay one step ahead of them.

April

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I couldn't believe what Tiffany was doing, though I'd never admit it, seeing her arm scared the crap out of me. I got to Harley's room and banged on the door.

"What's wrong?" she asked as she opened the door.

"It's Tiffany, you need to talk to her now." I said running back to the dorm. Harley was right behind. We got back and she was gone. "NO!" I cried.

"April, what's wrong? What's going on?" Harley asked panicked.

"I found out Tiffany has been cutting again and purging because she is upset about her parents visit. I told her to stay here." I said.

"You left her alone after you knew all that?!" Harley cried.

"I...I'm sorry. I never thought she'd actually run!" I cried.

"Ok we need to let my parents know about this. You get to the lodge and round up the other Wild Cats. I'll find my mom and dad." She said.

"Ok." I nodded as I ran off to the lodge. Before I entered I slowed my pace. "Hey, morons, Harley wants us rounded up now." We all gathered in our normal area.

"What's the deal?" Chris asked.

"Princess decided to run off." I said disgusted, like I didn't care.

"Oh great, we gotta look for her now." Chris said.

"I know, I think we should let her try to make it on her own. She'll come back on her own. She can't make it out there." I said.

Harley

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I got to my parents' house and ran in.

"Guys! Tiffany ran." I called.

"What?" Dad asked running out of the bedroom with Mom.

"Tiffany ran. April found out she's been cutting and purging again so she ran." I said.

"How much of a head start does she have?" Mom asked.

"I'd say 15 minutes or so." I said.

"We can track her with her Morpher." Dad said.

"No, she left it behind on the bed." I said as the alarm on the computer went off.

"Perfect timing Arissa" I said.

"No...not now...ok we'll get a search party together, you take the Wild Cats and handle Arissa." Mom said.

"You got it." I said running back to the lodge. "Ok guys, Tiffany is missing but there's other trouble to deal with."

"Now?" April asked.

"Sorry, but now. Let's go Wild Cats." I said. We went to our safe spot to morph and then went to face Arissa and her Bots.

"Hello Rangers." Arissa said.

"Sorry Arissa, now is not a good time, can be maybe do this later?" I said.

"What's the matter? Can't fight without the Pink Ranger?" Arissa asked with a laugh.

Michelle

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After the Wild Cats were gone Hunter and I found Josh.

“Hey, Tiffany is missing, we need to form a search party. You think your dad would help?” Hunter asked.

“Of course. Let me call him.” Josh said running to the phone.

“I can’t believe we didn’t pick up on this sooner.” I said.

“I know...but Tiff always puts on a happy face. It’s hard to tell when she’s sincere” Hunter said.

“I’m worried...she’s not meant for life on the street.”

“I know sweetie, but we’ll find her.”

“I hope so.” I said as I saw Julia. “Jules! We need your help, Tiff is gone and we need to form a search party.”

“Where’s Harley and the other Wild Cats?” Julia asked.

“Um...already looking for her. Will you help?” I asked.

“Of course.” Julia said as Conner’s car pulled up. Conner and several other McKnights walked over. (Eric, Conner, and their families).

“What can we do?” Conner asked. I noticed Kira at his side.

“Thanks for coming. Ok we need search teams. Michelle, you take Josh, Noah, and Tally. Conner, you take DJ and Eric. Julia, Anna, and, Beth you’re with me.” Hunter said.

“What can I do? I want to help.” Kira said.

“Actually if you don’t mind we need someone to stay here to watch Felicity and in case Tiffany comes back on her own.” Hunter said.

“Ok, got it.” Kira said going to the house to get Felicity.

“Ok everyone, stay in contact, let’s move out.” I said.

We all headed in different directions and started the search.

“Tiffany!” I called.

“Tiff!” Josh called.

“How much ahead is she?” Tally asked.

“By now?About half an hour or so.” I said.

“You think she made it to town?” Noah asked.

“Maybe. I think that’s where Hunter was headed for.” I said.

Hunter

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“OK, it’s possible she went into town. We’ll start there first.” I said as my group piled in my Durango and we headed for town. We parked in a parking area and started to search on foot.

“Tiff!” I called.

“Tiffany!” Anna called.

“You really think she’ll come if she hears?” Beth asked.

“What?” Anna asked.

“Well she doesn’t want to be found obviously.” Beth said.

“If you don’t have something positive to contribute then shut up.” Anna said.

“Don’t tell me to shut up. I’m just trying to help. I mean why would a kid run away anyway? You guys must have been real bad to her.” Beth said.

“You don’t know what you’re talking about.” Anna said.

“I’m just saying, normal kids don’t just run away from a place they like. She must have hated that school. It’s like a prison or something anyway isn’t it?” Beth said.

“Ok, I’m sorry Hunter but I can’t listen to this. You shut the hell up Miss Prep, Starlight is a safe haven. Without it some of those kids would be dead. Without schools like it I’d be in prison or worse. Do you know why Tiffany ran away, did you even bother to ask? Because she couldn’t handle the thought of her mother visiting. You know why? Because her mother is always on her about her weight. In order to please her mother Tiffany purges her food, to mask the pain she feels she cuts her own arm. Starlight and schools like it save kids. If you have a problem then go back to your perfect little world where cheerleaders rule and the popular girls always win because in this world there is no winning, there is no perfect, there’s just getting by and surviving day to day.” Julia said.

Beth stood there speechless.

“Bless you.” Anna said patting Julia on the shoulder.

“Now that we have that settled let’s get back to trying to find Tiff.” I said. I agreed with what Julia said and I’d tell her so later, for now I had to stay impartial and focus on finding Tiffany.

Harley

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“I’m getting really sick of you.” I said attacking Arissa.

“And I’m sick of you. I will have my revenge.”

“For what exactly?”

“Your mother killed mine and now you both will pay.”

“If your mother was anything like you we’re all better off.” I said holding up my staff to block her attack.

“You will pay for that.” Arissa said shooting a fire ball at me. It hit me in the stomach and sent me flying.

“Harley!” the Ranger called.

“Get up and fight Purple Ranger.” Arissa said standing over me.

“Can’t you just go away and leave me alone? Geez, I didn’t kill your mother.” I said.

“But your mother did.”

“Ok I get that...but why attack me?”

“The off spring of that woman doesn’t deserve to live.”

“So you’re after me because I’m my mother’s daughter?” I asked.

“Now you’re starting to get it.” Arissa said.

“How lame are you.” I said getting up, with the help of my staff. I charged Arissa with my staff at full power. After hitting her a few times she was forced to retreat, so were the Bots. “Nice work guys. Now Power Down! We need to find Tiffany.” I said taking the team to search.

Tiffany

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I had run for quite awhile, not knowing how much of a head start I had. After about 30 minutes I got tired of running. I was getting tired period. I needed a place to sleep but I was broke. I saw a place called Cyberspace. There was a pretty nice size ally in the back so I slumped next to the wall and curled in a ball. In the morning I'd find a way out of town. Maybe head for Mexico and start a new life. One that didn't include being a Jennings. No pressure to be perfect, no one to control me. That sounded so wonderful. I sat there and saw a tin can lid on the ground. It had jagged edges. I picked it up and began to cut again. This time there was no one to stop me. No fear of being caught. No need to clean the blood, and really no way even if I wanted to. I cut deeper this time than before, causing blood to ooze faster and faster. I watched as the blood droplets hit the ground. I was entranced by this sight when I heard a voice.

"Looks like you've hurt yourself. Come with me. I'll clean that up for you." A man said.

"No thank you. I'm fine right here." I said not looking up from the blood.

"No, you don't understand. That wasn't a request. It was a demand." He said grabbing my arm and pulling me up.

"What do you want?!" I screamed.

"You." He said pinning me to the wall and reaching his hands up my shirt.

"Let me go! Help!" I screamed as loud as I could. Someone heard and came out the back door of Cyberspace.

"I believe the girl said to let her go." A girl said coming out and grabbing the man by his shirt. She threw him against the wall and proceeded to kick his ass. He ran off in a panic. I was standing there in shock when the girl came over to me. "Hi, I'm Savannah. I run Cyberspace, would you like to come in and clean that arm up?"

"No, thank you." I said turning to walk away.

"Come on, you can sleep on the sofa if you'd like." Savannah said.

I had to admit that a sofa sounded better than an ally. "OK, fine." I said following her in. She cleaned up my arm for me with a first aid kit then wrapped a bandage around it.

"OK, go ahead and go to sleep. You look like you need the rest." She said handing me a blanket. I curled up on the sofa and fell asleep very quickly.

Michelle

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I was still searching with my team when my cell rang.

"Hello?" I asked.

"Michelle? Hey it's Savannah. I think I have something at Cyberspace that belongs to you."

"You do?" I asked.

"Yeah, blonde girl in a pink shirt. Sound familiar?"

"Oh god...Tiffany! We'll be right there." I said hanging up. "Savannah found her. She has her at Cyberspace."

"Savannah has her?" Noah asked.

"Oh no, he's gonna start crushing again." Josh said.

“Noah has a crush on Savannah?” I asked. This was very bad.  
“Totally.” Josh said as we headed for my car to drive over.  
“I really don’t think you should ask her out or anything.” I said.  
“Why not?” Noah asked.  
“Because...she’s...she’s recently divorced. I don’t think she’s ready for a relationship yet.” I said.  
“Oh...that makes sense. I can wait a while.” Noah said.  
I sighed, someday this was gonna come bite me in the ass.

On the way to Cyberspace I called Harley, Conner, and Hunter. Harley and Hunter took their teams back to Cyberspace and Conner met us there. When I walked in to Cyberspace I saw two things that caught my attention. 1) Tiffany was peacefully sleeping on the sofa and 2) Conner and Savannah were sitting at the bar talking. The second one really hit me. I had to come clean with this someday.

“Hey, thanks for keeping her here.” I said sitting next to Conner.  
“No problem. I found her out back. She was getting attacked so I beat the guy up then brought her in here. Her arm is pretty cut up, it could get infected. I’d keep an eye on it.” Savannah said.  
“Ok, thanks. How did you know she was a Starlight Kid?” I asked.  
“Self mutilation, obvious emotional issues. If she wasn’t she should be.”  
I nodded. “Thanks again.” I said.  
“Want me to carry her to the car?” Conner asked.  
“If you could without waking her up that’d be nice.” I said.  
“Ok. I’ll get her back to the Academy.” Conner said.  
“Thanks.” I said. Conner went over and picked Tiffany up and took her to his car. I turned to Savannah. Everyone else had gone outside and we were alone. “Listen, I know I’m not your favorite person in the world but thanks for calling me...and thanks for not telling Harley anything.”  
“It’s your job to tell Harley. You’re her mother. I’d love to get to know her on a sisterly level but I’m not going to be the one to tell her your secret. I do have a favor though...please, I know I’ve asked before but who is my birth father?” Savannah asked.  
“I can’t tell you that Savannah, I know you’re curious but it’s for the best that you don’t know.” I said.  
“I will find out someday.”  
“How? It’s not in your birth records. I’m the only person alive who knows and I’m sorry but I can’t tell you. Not now. It’s been too long. He has a wife and other kids now. I can’t complicate his life by adding you to it.”  
“How could I actually think you’d help me? You’ve never done anything for me, why start now?” Savannah said. I knew she was mad.  
“I’m sorry...I really am.” I said turning and leaving. God, why did I do this to myself?

Tiffany

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When I woke up the next morning I was in the lodge and Harley was standing guard.

“How are you feeling?” she asked.

“Fine.” I said. I didn’t even have to ask how I got back. Savannah turned me over, I shouldn’t have trusted her.

“Good because there will be consequences for your running.” She said.

“What?” I asked.

“Shuns for a week, guarded of course.”

“Guarded by who?”

“Whom. Yours truly. Josh is taking over my Wild Cat duties so I can be with you every second of every day for the next week. Only exception is when you’re with a teacher and I’m in class. We’ll get to be good friends.” She said.

I sighed. What had I gotten myself into now?