

Sliced Apple

By Aurelie Jones

Adapted from The Glass Coffin

Jake stumbled over his own feet, distracted by Adam just a few lockers down from where Jake stood. His cheeks flushed pink with embarrassment as he yanked open his locker and buried his face inside in hopes of vanishing. He was graduating next week, so was Adam. Yet Jake still hadn't been able to pluck up the courage to ask him out. Jake wasn't brave enough, especially not in high school. To ask out a boy? Here? No. He couldn't.

He scrambled to grab one of his books from his locker before closing it a bit too sharply, creating a noise and more attention. Jake turned quickly to leave his locker behind, eyes down, and walked . . . directly into Adam. They collided, both crumbled to the linoleum flooring, with Jake landing on top. Face to face, their eyes met and Jake blushed to the core of his soul. He clumsily scrambled to his feet, and then held out his hand, a quivering hand, to Adam.

Adam smiled at Jake, took his hand and allowed Jake to help him stand up.

"I am really sorry, I was in my head . . . it was totally my fault," Jake blustered.

"All good man . . . Don't worry about it," Adam reassured Jake, patting him on the shoulder before continuing down the hallway.

Jake shuddered, shooting a glance at his shoulder feeling as if he had been burnt. The sound of the bell ringing barely penetrated his mind, but managed to stir him from his day dreams. He went off to his last class, excited to be done with this terrible place. He had come to terms with his being gay about one year ago, but the only people who knew were his parents and his best friend Angela. Thankfully they both accepted this news without batting an eye, but Jake knew of many students in this school who would have a heart attack if he openly admitted it. Let alone acted on it.

The moment he graduates – he will be free. He won't have to worry so much about what others think. Any terrible people he may run into, he can just turn and walk away. He won't be forced to be around those kinds of people, every day, like he was while being in high school.

This day just flew by, with Jake continuing to daydream about Adam. Before he left the school he slipped into the boy's restroom to wash his hands. He used his damp hands to sweep back his ruffled black hair; long enough to be in his line of sight but not to obstruct it.

He was a bit on the pale side but not overtly so, his skin was clear, with not a touch of makeup. The most striking feature were his deep blue eyes, the same color as his mothers. He had gotten many compliments about his eyes; many girls had chased him over the past four years. He had only gone out with two girls during that entire time; and those relationships did not last long.

Jake bowed his head, shaking it slowly as he chuckled. Getting lost in memories he hadn't noticed two of the four stalls open, and two older boys in his class emerging.

"Hey Jakey, getting ready for your date?" one of the boys taunted, while the other just sneered at him.

Jake turned around to face the two. The one that had spoken was Logan, an eighteen-year-old soccer player, who had been held back because of some failed classes. And his friend, Matt, who didn't even try. He just hung around the school to kill time. Both had a good few inches on Jake, as well as having a more robust build than Jake's slender form.

"I don't know what you guys are talking about, but I have get to work," Jake said, making his way towards the exit. But Matt blocked the way, still sneering.

“Oh yeah? You aren’t eager to go meet up with Adam?” Matt asked, taking a threatening step towards Jake who in turn backed away.

“No. I work at the auto parts store, you know this...” Jake replied with a false calmness, as he felt his ears growing hot. Making matters worse, he recalled their earlier interaction and could feel the heat radiate to his face.

“Well, Logan saw you two cuddling in the school hallway earlier,” Matt said.

Jake tensed up, he didn’t know if they would risk doing anything on the last day of school. But Jake did know that Matt had gotten in trouble in the past over fighting on school grounds. Just when the two were getting a bit too close for comfort, the door to the bathroom opened.

“What’s going on in here?” Mr. Haspells, the gym teacher, stood in the doorway glaring at all three boys. “You know what I don’t care, just get the hell out.” He stood aside and watched as Matt and Logan left begrudgingly, leaving only Jake. “What’re you doing? I said out.”

Jake looked at Mr. Haspells before also leaving the bathroom behind. His stomach churned in his abdomen, his heart raced in his chest. How badly that could have gone, he wasn’t sure, but he was glad that he didn’t find out. Jake wasted no time getting to his car and locking the doors behind him, peeling out of the parking lot with a screech.

After twenty minutes, Jake arrived at his job. He parked the car and changed his shirt before climbing out, and headed inside. He waved to one of his coworkers, Emil, who was behind the counter before disappearing into the back of the auto parts store. He clocked in, and then grabbed two boxes and began restocking the shelves. Time always flew by when he worked, it was one of the things that he appreciated from his job, something that let his mind wander.

It was eleven pm before he finally clocked out; luckily, he wasn't closing tonight. His car was the only one parked in the lot, since Emil always walked to work. Jake crossed the parking lot. It was a very quiet night, which only made Jake more tense and apprehensive after his difficult day at school. He reached his car; the click of the door unlocking was music to his ears. Just as he reached to open the door, a sack was thrust over his head.

Jake's hand turned, jabbing the sharp end of his key backwards, hopefully into the assailant. But he missed, and the person elbowed his wrist sharply causing Jake to drop the keys. The sack was pulled tighter around his face, constricting his ability to breathe. He could feel the person behind him was larger than he was, and he had an idea of who it was, but he couldn't be certain. Why would they do this?

His train of thought was interrupted as he was hit on the head and blacked out.

###

Jake woke up with a throbbing headache. He tried to sit up but bumped his head against something. He rubbed his eyes before fully focusing on what he had smacked his head on. It looked like plastic. He could see the starry night sky, but it was weirdly bordered. Long parallel lines on either side of his vision. Something new came into focus. Matt, standing a bit away, with a shovel in his hand.

It was at that moment that Jake felt his stomach plummet. This crazy dude was going to bury him alive! Jake felt the panic rising in his throat, the need to run, the need for air. He tried to twist and move inside of this plastic coffin but there was only about two feet of extra space surrounding him. He began to pound the portion of plastic directly in front of his face, and shouted. "You crazy asshole! You can't do this to me!"

“I can do whatever I want. Freak,” Matt responded. He ended his comment with emphasis as he tossed a shovel’s worth of dirt onto the coffin. The dirt scattered, the noise of it hitting the top echoed in Jake’s head. He was unable to take his eyes off of this maniac who was about to kill him. From the quick glance it appeared that he was only three feet down into the ground. And soon, the entire coffin was covered in earth. The silence was deafening, he shifted a bit, trying his best to conserve his air, forcing himself not to think about how much air he had.

The sound of something clattering against the inside of the coffin made him freeze. Out of the corner of his eyes he saw light, just the smallest hint of light. He slowly lowered his hand towards the source, and realized with shock that Matt hadn’t taken Jake’s phone; his phone that was nearly fully charged. His heart fluttered with excitement, he couldn’t believe his luck.

Jake brought the phone up to his face, illuminating his increasingly pale skin and demonstrating how truly dark it was buried beneath the dirt. He swiped through his contacts, his heart a bit calmer now that he knew he had a way out. He mentally went through the possibilities envisioning the various outcomes and reactions of his different potential rescuers. He didn’t want the police, no, they might ask questions he would not want to answer. If he told his best friend she might call the US Military, FBI, and CIA on his ass. Jake shuddered, no no, he couldn’t have that.

Finally, he came across a contact J. Adam. Jake’s heart fluttered, but for a more exciting reason. He remembered a party he attended a couple of months ago, everyone ended up exchanging contact numbers and Jake managed to get Adam’s but he never used it. At least until now.

*“Hey, Adam. Its Jake. ☺”* Jake sent the text, his thumbs dancing in front of the screen.

He inhaled sharply when he saw the typing bubble appear until.

*“Jake hey, what’s up?”* Adam replied.

*“This is going to sound super strange, but I kinda need your help. Could you come to my location? And bring a shovel,”* Jake asked, then he proceeded to activate his location so that it would send it to Adam in real time. The bubble reappeared, the response seemed to take forever before Adam finally responded.

*“Okay, see ya soon.”*

Time ticked by, Jake played some old version of snake on his phone until it buzzed.

*“Okay, I’m here. But I don’t see you.”*

*“Look around, if you see a pile of disturbed dirt then once you do, start digging.”*

*“Jake, what the hell is going on?”*

*“Please, Adam.”*

With no immediate response, Jake could only hope that Adam was doing as he asked. He feared Adam may just leave, with no explanation as to what was happening. But after ten minutes of Jake worrying, he began to hear something. Metallic like, he turned on his phone’s flash light and aimed it up. Seeing the hint of dirt shifting, another ten minutes and the shovel hit the hard plastic.

The shovel scrapped along the coffin, as if to clear it off. At which point Jake began waving his phone, strobing the single light in hopes of getting Adam’s attention. A light shined

down on him, blinding him so he couldn't see the holder, but he could only hope it was Adam. The shovel suddenly hit the coffin again, near his feet. He aimed his light towards the noise to see Adam standing on the coffin, and shoveling a space between the coffin and the wall of this shallow grave.

Adam made quick work of the grave, giving him space to stand in the dirt. Then he leaned over the coffin, running his hands along the edges until he found a way to lift the top off and freeing Jake. Adam tossed the top aside only to be suddenly embraced tightly by Jake. He just couldn't help it. And the air, ugh it tasted so good. Adam just wrapped his arms around Jake, cradling him tightly.

"It's okay, I got you," Adam reassured Jake, who was gently trembling. "Hey, let's get out of this place. Get something to eat, how does that sound?"

Jake merely nodded, they both climbed out of the shallow grave and started heading towards Adam's car. His shovel in one hand, his free arm wrapped around Jake, holding him tightly. Jake slid into the passenger's seat of Adam's Chevy Camero, silently appreciating the tan heated leather seats. Suddenly he became self-conscious as he realized that he was covered in dirt.

"Adam... ugh I'm so sorry, I'm getting the inside of your car all messed up..." Jake said.

"Don't worry about it, I'm dirty too," Adam replied. He flashed a toothy grin at Jake, causing him to blush. Thankfully the inside of the car wasn't bright enough for Adam to see his embarrassment. Adam pulled away from the park and began driving, the radio droning on quietly in the background. Jake became lost in thought, wondering if Matt meant to kill him or not. And if he did, what Jake was going to do about it?

###

Matt returned to the park ten minutes after Adam and Jake left, he went to the shallow grave and dropped the shovel. Shocked to see Jake gone, the grave empty along with the coffin. Panicking, he lifted the plastic coffin out of the dirt and carried it to his pickup truck, tossing it into the bed before speeding off. He smacked his hand against the steering wheel.

“STUPID! STUPID! STUPID! Why did I... fuck!” he shouted. Driving recklessly, he headed towards the small lake nearby. Screeching to a halt, he left the truck idling as he hopped out and grabbed the coffin. He carried it to the bank of the lake, opened it and dumped a good amount of sand and rocks into it before he shoved it into the water. He watched it sink into the dark liquid, as the clouds pulled away to reveal a half moon, which lit up the lake.

Matt stumbled away from the water, then climbed back into his truck and drove off. He was gripping the steering wheel with such force that his knuckles turned white. He could barely see through angry tears that welled up in his eyes. He was going to jail,.He was going to jail and Jake would get to be with the man of his dreams while Matt rotted away pinning after a man who would never want him.

Matt was so lost in thought, so upset, that he didn't see a huge pot hole in the road. It made his truck bounce harshly, the edges popped one of his tires and Matt lost control of the wheel. The truck turned sharply towards the left, before it flipped onto its side and slid into a tree. Matt bashed his head against the wheel just before the airbag deployed, worsening his head injury and knocking him out. The two tires farther from the ground still spinning, the lights on the truck were blinking, with its driver slumped in the front seat.

###

Adam and Jake pulled up to an IHOP, they both climbed out of the car and slowly wandered inside the 24-hour pancake restaurant. Since it was a little after one am, the inside was dead except for the stray person. The waitress quickly seated them, gave them their menus, not even batting an eye at their dirty appearance. After they both put in their order, Adam finally looked at Jake, expectantly.

“So... are we going to talk about why you were buried in the park?” he asked.

Jake frowned, running his fingers through his black hair, trying to make sure there wasn't any dirt or bugs.

“Jake,” Adam said, his tone displaying irritation.

“Yeah, I... don't know, I couldn't tell you... why,” Jake said. He could tell him, but he didn't know how Adam would react. “I think it was just... some prank or something.”

“Jake look at me,” Adam demanded. Jake complied but said nothing. Neither did Adam, because at that moment the waitress returned with their plates of hot food. Once they were alone again, Adam broke the silence.

“This wasn't a prank, this was deliberate. And seriously fucked up,” Adam said. He unwrapped a fork from the paper napkin and took a bite.

“I don't want to make a bigger deal out of this when I don't have to,” Jake said. He took out his own fork but just played with the food on his plate.

“Do you at least know why?” Adam asked.

“Yeah I know why...” Jake said. His brow furrowed into a frown, “or at least I have a pretty good idea...”

“Can you at least tell me that?” Adam asked. It wasn’t an unreasonable request, especially considering that he came all the way out to help him.

“It... I wasn’t going to say anything, not until I graduate. But I guess... it doesn’t really matter now, since we’re done with class...” Jake said. He took a deep breath, trying to gather his courage. “I’m gay,” Jake finally confessed. He looked up at Adam, fear in his eyes as different scenarios danced through his brain. Adam just looked at him, his own eyes quizzical.

“Please say something,” Jake pleaded.

“I... can’t say I’m surprised,” Adam finally responded.

Jake’s eyebrows shot up, he watched Adam take another large bite, clearly the boy was starving.

“I mean, only because... usually we know,” Adam continued. His green eyes focusing on Jake pointedly, a slight smile tugged at the corner of his mouth. Jake dropped his fork, it clattered to the floor a bit louder than it should have. The waitress noticed and wandered over to the table.

“Is everything alright sir?” she asked.

“Yeah... yeah, sorry. I didn’t mean to drop it,” Jake apologized. His face bright red as he tore his gaze from Adam to focus on the waitress.

“It’s fine sir, I will bring you a new one.” She left only to return a moment later with a clean set of utensils, then she picked up the one he dropped and disappeared into the back.

Jake returned his gaze to Adam, who had almost finished all his food. Jake took a large bite, not wanting to be the only one eating. He also didn't know what to say, he was so flustered at this point.

"Jake I've known for a while now, but I didn't want to out you," Adam said. He put down his fork and reached his hand across the table, placing it on top of Jake's free hand. Jake huffed quietly, his eyes darting between Adam's face and their holding hands.

"So... so.... You're gay too? And you know... I'm gay," Jake stated. His hand turned in Adam's, to hold it more securely.

"So, this is just a really strange first date," Adam said. Smiling at Jake.

Jake choked on a piece of his omelet, he kept coughing until he gulped down some water.

"A d-date? Adam that's..." Jake trailed off, it was his dream, to be on a date. To be with Adam, but this couldn't be happening.

"You like me don't you?" Adam asked, so boldly.

Jake just nodded slowly, he didn't trust his voice right now.

"Well, I like you too," Adam said quietly. Jake tightened his grip on Adam's hand, who responded in kind. Jake was quickly forgetting the earlier events of the night, his nightmare had turned into a dream, a dream he was living. Jake found himself getting lost in those green eyes just as an ambulance sped by the IHOP; it distracted them both and they let each other's hands go.

"Its... getting really late ... I'm usually home by 1:30," Jake said. After checking his phone, he quickly sent a text to his dad, telling him he would be a little late. That work kept him.

Adam just nodded, he waved to get the waitress's attention who came over immediately with the check and a "to go" container. After Adam paid, with much argument on Jake's side, and they packed up his food they climbed back into his car.

"I need one more favor from you, I'm sorry I'm asking for so much," Jake said.

"What is it?" Adam asked.

"I need you to drive me to my car, if I show up without it my parents will get suspicious," Jake said.

"Okay," Adam said. They pulled away from the IHOP and headed down the road towards the auto parts store. Jake's car was still there, his keys lying on the ground, at the sight of which, Jake sighed in relief. He got out, picked up his keys and got into his own car. He waved to Adam, expecting him to drive off, but Adam rolled down his window which prompted Jake to do the same.

"I'm going to escort you home, make sure you get there okay," Adam said. Then he rolled up his window before Jake could protest. Flustered by this entire night, Jake pulled away and drove home, acutely aware that Adam was on his tail. After twenty minutes Jake pulled into his driveway; the porch lights greeted him with warmth and safety. Jake got out and saw Adam park his car on the curb, the car idling while he walked up to Jake.

"Text me in the morning," Adam said. He didn't ask, he just told Jake. Jake just nodded, a wary smile on his face that quickly turned to shock when Adam leaned into and pressed his lips to Jake's. A quiet sigh left Jake, as he melted into the kiss. He could feel Adam's arms embrace him once more, but it wasn't comforting this time. It felt as if every part that touched Jake set his skin on fire, but as quickly as the kiss came, it stopped. Jake found himself leaning towards

Adam as he pulled away. Lust reflected in their eyes, both boys slightly out of breath as they slowly separated from each other.

“Night,” Adam said. The cutest evil smile was on his face as he returned to his car, leaving Jake standing on his porch with an ache in his throat. He swallowed with difficulty before begrudgingly heading inside his house.

The next morning, he was sitting at the table, eating his leftovers from IHOP when he got a text from Angela.

*“DUDE! Matt is in the hospital!”* Angela texted.

Jake felt his heart speed up just a bit, recalling the more unpleasant events of the night before.

*“What happened?”* Jake texted back.

*“He crashed his truck, over by the lake. They say he’s in critical condition!”* Angel replied.

*“Damn that’s... terrible...”* Jake texted.

*“I mean it is ... but feels kinda like karma got to him,”* Angela texted.

*“.....”* Jake texted.

*“What? What aren’t you saying? Do I have to come over there?”* Angela texted.

*“Wha! No, no, its cool don’t come over...”* Jake texted.

*“On my way,”* Angela texted.

*“Angela!”* Jake texted. But it was useless, he knew he wouldn’t be able to say anything to stop her.

Ten minutes later, his best friend walked into his house. Her brunette hair bouncing on her shoulders, she wore her usual style of leggings with skulls on them and a black tank top with matching combat boots. She sat her curvy self at his table and gave him a conspiratorial smile.

“Spill, Statmen,” she only used his last name when he was in trouble. Jake just shook his head and leaned back in his chair. He spilled everything that happened the night before, and once he finished, Angela was pacing back and forth in front of the table.

“I just can’t... even wrap my head around... this is a lot of information!” Angela huffed, not slowing down, “How could you not call me?! How could you not call the cops?!” she asked. That part clearly seemed to bother her the most. Jake just shrugged.

“I didn’t want to be a victim, okay? And I got out, and Matt... got his just desserts apparently,” Jake said with a frown.

Angela slammed her hands down on top of the table.

“That’s not good enough! Dammit Jake how could you let him just... get away with this?” Angela asked. But Jake felt like he wasn’t supposed to respond, though he felt his heart ache when he saw tears in her eyes. He stood up suddenly and embraced her tightly, to which she wrapped her arms around him and clung on.

“It is taking everything I have to not go and finish him off while he lies in that hospital bed...” Angela mumbled against Jake’s chest. He sighed, stroking the back of her head gently to calm her down.

“I am okay, so please don’t,” Jake said softly.

Angela made a face, but she begrudgingly agreed.

###

Jake walked across the stage, he shook hands with a seemingly endless line of people before finally officially graduating. He clutched the blank diploma in his hand, as he continuously exchanged glances with Adam throughout the ceremony. The moment it was over he made his way through the excited students, happy to be free of high school. Suddenly, arms wrapped around him from behind; he instinctively flinched away as the flashback to the night in the parking lot rushed to his head. But it was only Adam.

“Sorry! Hah... I thought you were someone else...” Jake said. Flustered. But Adam just pulled him back against him, face to face. Adam snaked his fingers through Jake’s black locks, and gripped tightly to hold him there as he kissed him quite passionately amidst the mass of people. Jake gasped against Adam’s mouth, but that only allowed Adam to slide his tongue against Jake’s.

In the back of Jake’s mind, he was aware of people staring, of onlookers gasping at this public display of affection. But Jake couldn’t care less, this felt far too good for him to care. Jake fully embraced the kiss, returning it with equal passion. After what felt like an eternity, they broke apart, but kept eye contact, both a bit out of breath. Out of the corner of Jake’s eyes he saw bandages and crutches. He turned to see Matt, wobbling towards Jake.

Adam immediately placed himself in front of Jake, his hand on Jake’s chest protectively. Angela flanked him on his left side, and they both glared at Matt.

“If you know what’s good for you, you’ll make yourself gone,” Angela snarled at Matt.

“Please, I just... want to apologize, I’ve made a lot of mistakes but this was the worst,” Matt said. Looking past Angela and Adam, trying to meet Jake’s gaze. Jake slowly pushed past the two who defended him. He stood there, defiant, waiting for a more in-depth explanation.

“I was jealous,” Matt continued, “You got to be with... you accepted who you are, and I couldn’t,” Matt said. He shook his head slowly. “There is nothing I can say that will make it up to you, nothing I can do, but I want to thank you... for... not turning me in, you gave me a second chance and I won’t waste it,” Matt said.

Jake just nodded, he didn’t have anything to say to him. Leaving it at that, Matt turned and wobbled away from them, soon getting swallowed up by the crowd. He felt Adam on his right side and Angela on his left.

“That was really mature... Jake, I would’ve just kicked out one of his crutches,” Angela stated bluntly.

Jake laughed warily before looking at the two most important people in his life right now.

“Let’s go celebrate.”