**Love in Offbeat Situations**

*It was October 15th, 2005, and Levi just woke up from sleeping for nine and a half hours. He played video games with two of his four older sisters until two o’clock in the morning. Victoria, 17, and Olivia, 15, woke up at about eight o’clock in the morning to make breakfast. Evelyn Maeve, 5, was keeping Levi company. Their parents had to work. Louise, the oldest, a 25-year-old manager at a business in Crown Point, was working for only half of the day today and would come over at noon.*

*It was already 11:30 in the morning, and Levi woke up, took a shower, and put on some everyday clothes. When he was in the bathroom getting ready for the day, he looked in the mirror and saw a reflection of himself, an absolute mess. His dark brown hair was messy from sleeping for a long period of time. He had marks all over his arms from moving around too much on the couch while sleeping. Levi was recovering from strep, so he wasn’t quite himself yet.*

*When he came downstairs, the first thing he grabbed from the refrigerator was a glass of ice cold water. He lay back on the couch, where their cats, Duchess and Prussia, were waiting for him. The cats walked up to Levi, lay on his stomach, and purred. Levi decided to pet them while watching his favorite cartoons.*

*“Levi, we made our Italian skillet,” Olivia said as she walked into the living room.*

*“I’m not really that hungry,” Levi answered weakly.*

*“That’s unusual. You normally eat. A lot.”*

*“I know. But I feel sick to my stomach.”*

*“You should eat a little something, though. Do saltines work?”*

*“I’m okay with that.”*

*Olivia gave Levi a few saltines and a can of light soda, so that he could have something in his stomach. While watching TV, he thought very much about Mackenzie Burbanks, one of his good friends from school. Knowing each other since the age of eleven, Mackenzie is someone Levi has always been fond of. Her brown hair, brown eyes, and beautiful smile would always make Levi consider a relationship with her. He closed his eyes and imagined this relationship until he heard the front door open.*

*It was now 12:30 in the afternoon, and Louise arrived at her half siblings’ house from work. She brought some chocolate turtles from the local candy shop for them. Victoria, Olivia, and Evelyn Maeve ate their share of the candy, but Levi did not feel like eating much, since he still wasn’t feeling well. He continued to watch some stupid cartoons while the pain in his throat gradually worsened.*

*Thirty minutes later, he suddenly developed a horrible taste in his mouth, accompanied by a sore throat, cold sensation, and intense nausea.*

*“I think I have a draining abscess in the back of my throat,” he said, terrified.*

*“Okay. Let me call Mom and Dad,” Louise answered calmly, for she knew what she was doing.*

*Once Louise got off the phone with their mother after five minutes, she and Levi headed to the hospital. Victoria, Olivia, and Evelyn Maeve stayed home and hoped that things were going to be fine.*

*By the time Louise took her younger brother to the hospital, Levi started crying very hard. His throat hurt badly, and he still had the bad taste in his mouth. He felt very sick, and his head was pounding. He was then starting to feel very dizzy. Once the doctor called the two into the examining room, Levi felt a little relieved.*

*The doctor performed all of the possible procedures that every doctor would. He mainly checked Levi’s throat to make sure nothing was very serious. When the doctor could see Levi’s tonsils, it was obvious that there was a ruptured abscess on the side of his left tonsil. There was an abscess on his right tonsil as well, but the doctor did not want this one to also drain suddenly.*

*The doctor knew he had unpleasant news for both Louise and Levi. He asked Levi how many times he had strep in the past few months, to which Levi responded that he had strep at least twice every two months. This peritonsillar abscess was the fourth one he had had over the course of five months. The doctor said that Levi needed to have his tonsils taken out, and he needed them out soon.*

*Once Levi found out the news, he remained calm on the outside. However, on the inside, he was horribly nervous. Levi remained emotionless in his appearance. He found himself breathing more heavily. He could also feel his heart pounding hard against his chest. He wasn’t sure if he felt like crying or if he just didn’t want anyone to see his true emotions. He was scheduled for surgery in an hour and thirty minutes. This was plenty of time for their parents to arrive at the hospital before Levi’s tonsillectomy.*

*Once his parents arrived at the hospital with Levi’s favorite plush dinosaur, Levi clutched the toy. He pretended that it was Mackenzie, and he hugged it tightly so that he could get his mind off the obvious. Their parents also did whatever they could to calm Levi down before he had to go to the operating room. Once Levi’s name was called by a nurse, he could feel his heart rate skyrocket a second time. He and his parents went with the nurse to the prep room. This was where Levi had to have yet another physical examination, where the same possible procedures that a doctor or nurse would perform were actually performed. Levi was then taken to the operating room.*

*Before he knew it, he had the laughing gas mask put over his face. He was told to breathe deeply. Levi focused on his breathing while also listening intently to the fast beep-beep’s of the heart monitor. He was very nervous at first, and then he thought about Mackenzie. She would be there in spirit, with her ear pressed firmly against his chest so that she could actually hear his strong heartbeat and the gentle whooshes of his breathing. She would tell him that she loved him and that he would make it through the surgery very well. This calmed him down a lot. He noticed that his heart rate slowed down a little, and he wasn’t breathing too hard. He was now in a state of peace.*

*“I love you, Mackenzie,” Levi thought before he fell asleep. When he was finally under the anesthetic, the surgeons started operating on his throat. Things were going well enough until one surgeon accidentally cut a sensitive spot right above Levi’s tonsils. This spot was so sensitive that the surgeons could not stop the bleeding for about five minutes.*

*“Oh no!” said one surgeon.*

*“We missed,” said another surgeon. “What do we do?”*

*“We will have to cauterize the wound. Cauterization wand?”*

*“Cauterization wand.”*

*The surgeons tried to use the cauterization wand, but the surgical instrument was not working for some reason. No one knew why they could not cauterize the second injury.*

*“Oh no! The wand isn’t working,” The second surgeon reacted.*

*“Shoot!” exclaimed the first surgeon.*

*“What are we going to do?!”*

*“Second best option. We will have to stitch the cut together.”*

*Once the spot was stitched together, the surgeons felt better about the whole situation. They believed that Levi was going to be in a lot of pain once he woke up, but he would be okay at least. Once his tonsils and adenoids were taken out, he was wheeled into the recovery room.*

*“Levi, wake up,” said a nurse.*

*Levi opened his eyes. His vision was blurry. He felt hot. His throat felt hot. He was incredibly thirsty. Above all, he wondered where his parents were. When he was able to return to his senses, he did not feel much different. His throat hurt even more now than it did before surgery. It felt like he had four cases of strep throat, all at once. His throat also felt very hot, as if a flame torch had been forced down. His parents then came into the room.*

*“Hey, Levi,” his dad said calmly.*

*Levi really did not feel like talking much.*

*“Worst. Day. Of. My. Life,” Levi muttered quietly.*

*A nurse then came into the room.*

*“Would you like cherry, orange, or grape?” Nurse Michaelson asked him in a motherly manner.*

*Levi pointed at the grape popsicle. The nurse gave the grape popsicle to Levi’s mom. His mom opened the wrapper, and then held the popsicle while Levi was slowly sucking on it.*

*Nurse Michaelson felt very sorry for Levi, based on the hearsay that she was given about the trouble the surgeons went through just to take out his tonsils. She, a big woman probably closing in on 60, always smiled sympathetically. She wanted so badly to make the atmosphere in the recovery room slightly more comfortable.*

*“How’s your throat, hon?” Levi’s mom asked while she held the popsicle up to Levi’s mouth.*

*Levi shook his head, meaning that it really hurt.*

*“One of the surgeons accidentally cut the area above where Levi’s tonsils used to be, and the surgeons could not control the bleeding. So, they had to stitch the cut in order to stop it,” the nurse explained with utmost compassion.*

*Levi let out a heavy sigh.*

*“So, that’s why it hurts so much?” Levi questioned softly.*

*The nurse slowly nodded.*

*“Would you like to see what your tonsils looked like?” Nurse Michaelson questioned Levi, who, in return, shrugged his shoulders.*

*He didn’t care that much about what his tonsils looked like. Nurse Michaelson brought in a small bag with two enormous blobs of tissue inside it. At first, Levi was pretty grossed out. He grew nauseated for about fifteen minutes, and then he did not think his tonsils really looked that bad.*

*“Can I keep my tonsils in a jar?” Levi questioned the nurse with a weak smile.*

*There were five seconds of silence, and then his parents and the nurse started laughing very hard. Levi couldn’t help but smile because he was proud that he made everyone around him laugh.*

*“I wish I could say yes, but if you did, your tonsils would decay, and they would smell horrible,” the nurse responded.*

*Levi shrugged his shoulders. He really could not stand the fact that he had a burning sensation in the back of his throat.*

*“Did someone force a burning muffin down my throat?”*

*“No.”*

*“Oh.”*

*“Your throat may feel hot because of the cauterization wand that the surgeons used.”*

*Levi let out a heavy sigh. It was obvious that he really was not himself. On a normal day, he would never assume that anyone forced a burning muffin down his throat; much less would he have much interest in keeping his tonsils in a jar in his backpack.*

*“Je m’appelle Levi Cranston. J’habite a Valparaiso. Je suis americain. Je parle français.”*

*“Are you taking French right now?”*

*“Yes, sir. I love it.”*

*There were five seconds of silence. The nurse and Levi’s parents could not help but laugh. Levi let out another weak smile. He was completely out of it. The anesthesia was slowly wearing off. And then….*

*“I love you, Mackenzie!” Levi then blurted out with tears in his eyes.*

*“Awwww,” his mother answered sympathetically while moving closer to him to wipe his tears with some facial tissues.*

*She then put her hand on his chest to calm him down. Levi cried himself back to sleep. He and his parents stayed in the recovery room for another two hours.*

*Then, they went home.*

*Four days after the surgery, he still felt horrible. He got up to brush his teeth and put on clean clothes. His mom took a few days off to take care of him. She came into the living room where Levi was resting.*

*“Hey, sweetie. How do you feel?” his mom asked, and Levi shrugged his shoulders.*

*“My throat hurts. I feel like I was pushed out of a 64-story building. I’m hot. I’m tired. And I want a cold drink,” Levi answered plainly.*

*“Cold water sound good?”*

*“Sure.”*

*“Oh, and Mackenzie called about two hours ago. She was wondering if she could come over. She’s worried about you,” his mom said as she was walking to the refrigerator to get her son a glass of ice cold water.*

*Levi started thinking about Mackenzie again. After five minutes of some intense contemplating and pondering, he let out a weak smile.*

*“Can she come over?” he questioned.*

*“It’s up to you. How do you feel?” his mom answered with another question.*

*“I’m okay with that.”*

*Levi eventually called Mackenzie when he finally felt up to it, which was later that day. He dialed her number. Levi almost dialed the wrong number at first because he couldn’t remember Mackenzie’s number. However, after a few tries, Levi had the right number. And, after Mackenzie heard her phone go off, she answered it.*

*“Herro, Revi,” Mackenzie answered the phone rather humorously.*

*“Hey. Want to have a video game party?” Levi asked.*

*“Okay! Can I come over in about thirty minutes?”*

*“Okay!”*

*“All right. See ya!”*

*“Bye!”*

*After Levi got off the phone with Mackenzie, he went up to his bedroom. He searched for a specific ring that had a small plastic pink flower on it, which was a ring that Victoria didn’t want anymore. Levi then put the ring in a small jewelry box and hid it in a place where no one would find anything obvious. Mackenzie came to his house thirty minutes later. She knocked on the door. Levi answered it.*

*“Hey, Mackenzie,” Levi said with a weak tone in his voice.*

*“Hey. How are you feeling?” Mackenzie answered back.*

*“My throat hurts.”*

*“Oh well. I have some games that we could play today.”*

*“I’m cool with that.”*

*Levi and Mackenzie spent at least two hours playing video games. After the two kids finally quit playing them, Levi went up to his room, took the small jewelry box, and put it in his pocket. He went downstairs and lay back down on the sofa. He slowly moved the box in his hand.*

*“Hey, Mackenzie?” he questioned a little softly.*

*Levi could feel his heart banging against his chest. He was very nervous about this.*

*“Yes, Levi?” Mackenzie answered politely.*

*Levi took a deep breath as he took the box out of his pocket. Fifteen seconds later.*

*“Will you be my girlfriend?” Levi questioned as he opened the box with the ring.*

*“Are you serious?!”*

*“Very.”*

*“Yes!” Mackenzie answered as she grew speechless to the point where she started crying.*

*She reached over to where he was and hugged him tightly. It was pretty obvious that Levi was not feeling well. He started shivering, and Mackenzie put some blankets over him. She then decided to stay for another hour and watch some cartoons with him.*

*Levi’s mom came into the living room where Mackenzie and Levi were because she wanted to check on Levi. She had a conference call that she just finished. When Levi wrapped himself more tightly in his blankets, his mom looked at Mackenzie.*

*“Mackenzie, you should probably head home. Levi might have a fever.”*

*Afterwards, she checked her son’s temperature. He had a 100.8 degree fever. Mackenzie definitely needed to go home.*

*Before she left for home, she gave Levi another hug and kissed him on the cheek. Levi let out a heavy sigh and gave her a kiss on the cheek. Once Levi’s mom drove Mackenzie home, Levi fell into a blissful sleep for several hours.*