

An Excerpt From

Until I Find Home

The Blazer Saga

"Jordan, you're a clone. You were made. I bought you like I bought this desk and that television. And like I bought the technology that created you."

Jordan Blankenship's last conversation with Darren Vollaire ran through his mind as he walked down the hallway towards Vollaire's office.

"No matter where you are, you are mine."

Those words bothered Jordan then, and they bothered him now. Over the past year and a half, he had learned to doubt everyone's motives.

He no longer cared about anyone else's motives. He would control his own destiny.

Vollaire stood as Jordan entered his spacious office and spread wide his arms. "Jordan. I knew it would not take long for you to come back to see me."

At that moment, Vollaire saw the suitcase in Jordan's hand. "What's this?" he asked, scoffing. "Did you bring some clothes to change in to? We weren't going to play outside today, were we?"

With no warning, Jordan flung the suitcase over Vollaire's head. The entrepreneur did not flinch. Even as it fell to the floor, the glass inside shattering, Vollaire made no sudden movements.

"I'm not your puppet, Vollaire."

"No, Jordan. You're not. You're my clone. Well, you're not my clone, but you're a clone. That I own. Which makes you my clone. I see how that statement could be rather confusing."

Jordan shook his head. "No. No, I'm not here to be treated like property. I'm here to terminate this relationship. I'm not your puppet, Vollaire. And I'm not your clone."

"Mr. Blankenship. It sounds like you're turning down my offer."

"Yes. I am turning down your offer."

"And the Gyogit?"

"It's covered," Jordan lied. "I've got everything under control."

"You're a liar," Vollaire said calmly. "You don't have anything under control."

"I'm not working for you, Mr. Vollaire. Keep your job."

Jordan turned around to open the office door and leave. It was locked.

"The job was a formality, Jordan. You have no free will in this matter."

"This is my life. I'll live it however I choose."

"And you'll throw it out the window in the process. Waste it. Completely and utterly waste it."

Jordan growled. Then, with a swift motion, he ripped the door off its hinges and hurled it directly at Vollaire.

Two feet from its target, it met an invisible barrier and clattered to the man's desk.

"Don't ever expect me to step in this office again."

"Where are you going Jordan?"

To live my life.

Jordan was down the hall and out the building in a matter of minutes.

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Darren Vollaire did not pursue Jordan. Only a matter of time separated this moment from the day that Jordan would return and submit himself to Vollaire's will.

Jordan's confidence vanished as he reached out to shake the hand of the woman conducting his interview. She had introduced herself as Melanie or Miranda, something that started with the letter M. He gripped her hand firmly.

She flinched slightly.

Jordan's muscles tensed as he released her hand, and he pulled back with awkward haste.

Why did I drink the serum before this interview? His mind raced rapidly, frantically. The mixture of nerves and a fresh dose of Gyogit hampered his ability to focus. I need this job so stinking badly, and here I am trying to break her hand. What's she going to say? 'My, what a strong grip you have there, Mr. Blankenship. Now pardon me while I go to the infirmary to see about the bones you just broke.' Oh crap!crap!crap! Why didn't I just go apply at McDonald's?

Giving no indication of serious injury, she led him down the hallway. "So, Jordan, over the phone you seemed extremely interested in this position for the inner city's boy home. Why do you think you would be a good candidate?"

"Well, Miranda, I think I'd be good...I mean, I'd love the opportunity...I was there once, you know. I've needed help most of my life, Miranda, and I'd love to give back. I really need to make...have the opportunity...I mean, show leadership. I think I can..."

Jordan looked up as they stopped in the hallway outside an open office door. He was slightly taken aback to see her looking at him with a perturbed expression. She ushered him into the office and directed him to take a seat.

It's the rambling, isn't it? The incomplete sentences. She thinks I'm an idiot. I'm presenting myself horribly. Why didn't I just...

Jordan noticed the nameplate on her desk.

Vanessa. Screwed that one up. Stink.

Vanessa sat behind her desk. "Okay, Jordan. I've looked over your resume, but I'd like for you to tell me about your work experience."

"I've had a few different jobs, working part-time during school and stuff. I was a shift manager at the pizza place in the mall for a little while." *Until I got caught smoking pot on duty and got fired.* "My first job was at Food Universe. Most recently I was assistant director for the homeless mission at Twin Oaks Fellowship Church."

Vanessa smiled. "Yes. I see you listed Tom Zachary as a reference. Mary and I are good friends."

Thomas Zachary was Jordan's best - and only - reference.

"Yeah. Tom's a great guy."

"A great guy and a great leader. What he's done over the past couple of years has been amazing."

Jordan hesitated. *Really? What is she talking about?*

Vanessa continued. "According to your resume, you left the mission nearly two years ago. Have you been employed since then?"

Jordan knew this question would be asked, but he had never quite figured out what to say. "I took some time off for myself," he answered slowly. "I needed time...to reconnect. With my family."

"Why do you seek employment now?"

Because it's me, my Gram, and two young girls, and money doesn't grow on trees.

"It's just time. You know. To focus. Again. On my career."

"What kinds of things have you done over the past two years?"

Jordan almost spat out the truth. *I sought out my true identity. I discovered I was a clone. I fought a man who claimed to be my brother and nearly lost my life on multiple occasions.*

"I just, you know, reconnected with my family."

Vanessa watched him closely for several moments, and then she continued her questioning.

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Although the lengthy drive frustrated him, Jordan loved the peaceful nature of the farm house he lived in with his grandmother. Though it had a Twin Oaks address, it took about thirty minutes to drive from the house to the more populated part of the town.

Jordan arrived home to find Frog sitting calmly in the living room. Her legs were folded Indian-style as she stared at a half-filled glass of grape juice sitting on the coffee table. Some cartoon about a cat played on the television as background noise. Watching her, Jordan observed that, occasionally, Frog would mutter something inaudible under her breath. Then she would return to silence and continue observing the glass.

Since she paid him no attention, Jordan walked past her and into the kitchen where he found Dawn Rassond sitting at the bar, drinking a soda and staring into space. For lack of a better term, Dawn was his niece.

"You should take lessons from Frog," Jordan said jokingly. "Her beverage choice is a little healthier."

Dawn's gaze returned to reality as she gave Jordan a smirk. "You don't understand kids, do you?"

"I would think I do," Jordan said in quick defense. "I mean, it's been a while since I've been there, but I think I can still relate." At that moment, Jordan realized the scrumptious smell that filled the kitchen. Two cooling racks filled with chocolate chip cookies lined the counter next to the stove.

"Wow. This must've really wore Gram out."

He met Dawn's gaze and saw a twinge of disappointment. "I made the cookies," she said.

I just insulted her, didn't I? "Wow. Did your mom teach you how to bake these?"

"Um. No. I don't think Mom could cook a pop-tart. Gram taught me."

"Wow. Gram never taught me how to make cookies."

"Jordan. You said wow three sentences in a row. That's really weird."

"Oh. Sorry. I just kind of...you know...say stuff. Like wow."

"Anyway, Gram told me you were unteachable in the kitchen."

"Yeah, yeah. Like she would know. I can make some pretty amazing meals."

"Like what?"

"Homemade pizza. Seriously. I can make an awesome homemade pizza."

Dawn pressed her lips together. "Okay."

"You don't believe me. You doubt my pizza-making skills. I'll have to prove it to you."

"That's not necessary."

"Tonight. Tonight we have homemade pizza."

Jordan opened the fridge and remembered something very important. Not having a paycheck made buying groceries difficult. With Dawn unable to see his face, he closed his eyes tight in frustration and tried to remember what the balances were on the credit cards.

"I've thought about calling Mom," Dawn said quietly. "Maybe she can send us some money."

"No. No, don't have her do that."

"Okay."

"Do you want to watch Frog while I go to the store?"

"Not really."

Slightly surprised at the honesty, Jordan decided to respect her wishes. He would just take Frog with him. Stepping into the living room, he opened his mouth to invite Frog to the store.

Walking in, he heard her quiet words.

“Do it. Don't do it.”

Then she nodded her head and said slightly louder, “Do it.” Reaching over, she grabbed the glass of juice.

Jordan had to smile. When Frog first came to Gram's house, she would not touch any types of juice. He was proud to see she had cleared one major hurdle.

Except she did not drink the juice.

She held the glass high and slowly tipped it over so that the dark juice splashed onto the beige carpet.

Looking up, she met Jordan's bewildered eyes. “Do it.”

Jordan stared at the girl in amazement and took several deep breaths as he practiced maintaining self-control.