

# We'll All Find Our Place

I think the world doesn't like me. My name is Jacob. I am a donkey. Well, I should probably mention I am a *stuffed* donkey.

About a week ago, I was with my best friend Sara. We were walking through the park with Sara's mom and her little sister when it happened. I was swinging along on her belt when I felt a sudden sensation that something was wrong. I looked up at Sara and then I saw my clip. She hadn't attached it right. It was slipping, little bit by little bit. I tried to swing into her leg to get her attention, but it didn't help. And then, to my horror, I saw the clip slip all the way off.

I felt my back on the cold cement and I watched Sara walking away. Right then I thought she didn't love me, but now I know it was just a mistake.

I've been lying here ever since, drenched by rain, watching people pass. But now, a little girl is stopping for me! She picks me up and cradles me in her arms and says, "Daddy, look at the beautiful little donkey!"

My heart leaps with joy. I haven't been hugged in what feels like an eternity.

"Oh, Daddy. Can we take him home? Pleeeaaassee."

"He's soaked. But we can put him in the dryer."

The little girl jumps up and down with excitement. She puts me under her rain jacket, nice and warm up against her chest.

Warmth hits my face and I open my eyes. I must have been asleep. I hear voices all around me, voices I don't recognize. Then, the little girl says, "Mommy guess what I found on our walk?"

"I don't know honey. What did you find on your walk?"

"I found a stuffed donkey lying on the sidewalk. He was wet and cold and I asked daddy if we could take him home and he said yes. We can put him in the dryer!" says the little girl.

"How sweet honey, I'll go put him in the dryer right now," says her mom.

The little girl's name is Julie. She's five years old and apparently loves stuffed donkeys.

Julie's mom carries me into a room at the back of the house. In the corner there are two big white machines with clear glass doors in the front. Julie skips in and says, "Mommy, how long will it be until he comes out? I want to give him a bath with my strawberry soap. "

"Honey, if you give him a bath once he's dry, we'll just have to put him in the dryer all over again."

"But I really want to give him a bath, Mommy. He smells."

"You can spray him with some of my perfume," Julie's mom says.

"Okay. Can I use your raspberry smelling one?" asks Julie.

"Yes. Now run along to the kitchen and make yourself a snack."

The next thing I know I'm being put into one of those giant machines. It's an empty gray stretch of metal no matter where I look. The walls curve upwards in an

unclimbable slope. This must be the dryer. Julie's mom closes the glass door, and now I'm trapped.

There is a cranking sound and the machinery below me begins to whirl. I am tossed around, bouncing and bouncing. And as soon as I get over that shock, I start to feel hot and sticky. And it's getting hotter by the second.

When I open my eyes I'm lying on a bed. I feel warm and dry. I don't know what happened. The next second my eyelids get heavy, and my world goes black again.

When my eyes open again it's dark but cozy and I know I'm not on the bed anymore. I hear a faint mumbling outside. I rub my eyes and realize I'm in the pocket of Julie's coat. I hear footsteps and a hand reaches in and grabs me. It's Julie to save me from the pocket!

I look around to see where I am. I'm not in the house anymore. There is a coat rack where many coats are hanging and there are rows and rows of desks with children in them all looking in Julie's direction, and at me. At the front of the classroom there is a kind looking lady with black hair. A clip on her jacket says *Miss Allen*.

"Well Julie, who is this little creature you've brought into our class today?" asks Miss Allen.

"This is... Lewis," says Julie.

Lewis? My name is not Lewis. My name is Jacob, but then I realized she wasn't the one who named me and I guess I really love her so I'm willing to have my name changed for her.

After being introduced to her whole class I am put back in the pocket. I am now swinging and bumping against her hip. She's running around on the playground.

“Well Lewis, that was a great day. I love you so much!” says Julie to me.

Just then a boy walks up and says, “Can I see your little donkey?”

“Why?” asks Julie.

“I just think he's really cute.”

“Well, fine. But give him back quickly. He's one of my favorites,” says Julie. Then the boy grabs me out of her hands and runs. He sprints down the street and I can see Julie's horrified face disappearing slowly far into the distance.

We've been running for half an hour now. I think the boy is worried that Julie will catch up to him. We finally reach a small ramshackle house in an alley. I begin to feel badly for him.

He opens the door and slips inside, whispering, “Mom? Toby? I'm home.”

From the bedroom whispers back a weak voice. It sounds creaky and sick.

“John, you're home. I missed you.”

“Hey Toby. I brought you a little something,” says John.

“What? Tell me tell me tell me!”

When I hear the excitement in Toby's voice I know I can't be mad at John anymore. He brought me home for his sick little brother and I will take good care of him.

John walks into the dark bedroom. A bed is set up in the corner. There's a boy with brown hair and blue eyes staring up at him. I know at once I will love this boy with all my heart, just like I loved Julie.

John puts me in bed with his brother and Toby snuggles close and whispers,  
“Thank you John.”

The next day John comes home, and he looks weary and tired. “Toby, I'm sorry. I took the donkey from a girl and she wants him back. I have to give him back. I am sorry. I have to take him away from you and I'm taking away maybe the last toy you'll have and I'm so sorry. I'll save all my money to get a new one. This is all my fault. I never should have stolen him because you got attached to him and now I have to give him back. And you're going to be gone soon.”

At the word *gone* my eyes fill with tears and I look at Toby and his eyes are closing and his breath is short and then he's not breathing at all and John goes to his knees.

John weeps and his eyes overflow and he takes me in his arms and he says,  
“You're the last thing that Toby ever held and I have to give you up. But at least you get to go back to where you were before.”

The next day at school the boy hands me back to Julie.

Julie says, “Thank you for giving back my possession.”

I feel anger boiling up in me! I was taken away for a reason. I was loved at Toby and John's house. I wasn't just thrown in the dryer to faint! Is there reason to love Julie at all? I mean, I loved Toby way more than I love her. She just wanted to make me fancy and perfect and show me off to her class and not give me to a person who actually needs me!

But now I'm back at Julie's house smelling like raspberries and it's driving me insane. Julie is upstairs in the hallway playing "Little Prince Louis" with me. She's putting me in and out of a box, pretending my wife is a rabbit. Then, suddenly, there's a *ding dong*. Julie leaps to her feet, dropping me in the box. She runs downstairs screaming, "I'll get it! I think it's Molly!"

Once she's gone I feel relief, but soon I hear footsteps. It is Julie's mom. She comes towards me and closes the box top around me. Then I hear Julie's mom say "Honey, is there anything you want in this giveaway box before I donate it?"

What Julie says makes me think for sure she doesn't care about me. "You can give it away," she yells.

I am horrified. Now I know I was better off with Toby and John. She is going to give me away! The next thing I know, Julie's mom is putting me in the trunk with a bunch of toys Julie doesn't care about. The engine starts and the car moves forward. The box slides around and for a long time I have the sensation of being warm, but now a chill goes up my spine. My head is throbbing. No one in the world loves me. No one cares about me. I am alone.

The car finally stops and the engine turns off. Julie's mom grabs the box and I get tossed into a pile with what feels like other boxes. It will be a long time before I move again. The lid opens and blinding light floods in. Hands grab me. I look around and I am in a bleak, gray building. A sign reads, *Thrift Store*. I have heard of this place before. It's where toys go and are never seen again.

Next thing I know, I'm being tossed onto a shelf. Days turn to weeks which turn into more weeks which eventually turn into months. I watch people pass and I know that I will never see the outside world again.

I am sitting on that shelf, feeling bleak and alone, when an employee comes up to me. I am sure that it's my end. They are taking me away to what they call the *garbage*! But she didn't touch me. Instead, she puts an old rabbit with one button eye next to me. Soon, even the rabbit is taken away by a little boy who is happy to have a new toy.

A week passes and I am sure I am destined to be put in the garbage. But then a family skips in. They look oddly familiar. There is a mom and two little girls. Then it hits me and I know why I recognize them. It is Sara! They walk to the clothes section and I think they will never see me but then I see Sara pull on her mom's sleeve. She says something to her mom and then she and Jenny come bounding towards me. They poke around between the other toys. Jenny picks out a worn doll and pulls it close to her chest. Then Sara's eyes catch my green keychain and she comes running over.

She grabs me and pulls me close to her chest and says in a whisper, "Oh Jacob. I thought I would never see you again!"

I look up at her and I see tears welling in her eyes and they well up in mine too. I am back with Sara again. She is older now, but she still cares about me no matter what. After all this time she hasn't forgotten about me.

# The End

