

ROCK BOTTOM BOMOSEEN

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“When you hit rock bottom, you’ve got two ways to go,
straight up and sideways.”

J.R Cobb and Buddy Buie

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For Princess, the original Monique. Until we meet
again and walk in God's light together.



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Contents

PROLOGUE-THE LAST HURRAH	1
CHAPTER 1	5
CHAPTER 2	9
CHAPTER 3	13
CHAPTER 4	21
CHAPTER 5	29
CHAPTER 6	45
CHAPTER 7	53
CHAPTER 8	63
CHAPTER 9	77
CHAPTER 10	93
CHAPTER 11	99
CHAPTER 12	109
CHAPTER 13	117
CHAPTER 14	123
CHAPTER 15	133
CHAPTER 16	143
CHAPTER 17	149
CHAPTER 18	157
CHAPTER 19	165
CHAPTER 20	177

Jennifer C. Madaras

CHAPTER 21	193
CHAPTER 22	203
CHAPTER 23	213
CHAPTER 24	227
CHAPTER 25	239
CHAPTER 26	245
CHAPTER 27	255
CHAPTER 28	265
CHAPTER 29	275
CHAPTER 30	279
EPILOGUE-- SEVEN YEARS LATER	289

PROLOGUE-THE LAST HURRAH

Janine Winters looked out to the crowd of at least a thousand. Everyone's hands were in the air, and many eyes were on her. Five official and quite possibly unofficial photographers were all around the stage snapping away. Five teenage boys were in the front, cheering for her. One even tossed her a pen and a piece of paper with her picture on it. It was a promo shot that they hand out at their shows. She happily picked it up and looked at the blue-eyed kid who tossed the picture on stage and smiled. On it was a scribble Janine could barely read- "Can I have your phone number?"

The request turned the corners of her mouth upwards. Every show Lordz 'n' Ladiez, LNL for short, played always brought out their most dedicated fans or "psycho stalkers" as Ashley Levin, their singer would say. After signing it, she handed the picture back to the kid and with much neater writing-"Maybe in five years, sorry."

Did it ever occur to her that she could be jumped on stage? No, she felt secure behind her shiny blue Ibanez. Brad Kelley, Lordz 'n' Ladiez's bass player, was much taller and wider than Janine, and he was a wrestler. He doubled as her bodyguard. Mark Stanley, their drummer, was about as big as Brad. However, he was far from wrestling material. Anytime the ladies were hassled, they would just have to go to Brad for help.

Janine looked over at Ashley who was about to go into their last song for the night. She looked back and

Jennifer C. Madaras

gave Janine a wink. She knew then Ashley saw her signing the picture.

As Lordz 'n' Ladiez said their final "goodnight" and were walking off stage, they could hear the crowd screaming and thumping their feet for an encore.

"I think that was the best show we've played," Ashley said while gulping down her water, and wiping away eyeliner running down her face.

Janine looked at her and admired her vibrant red hair and matching fingernails. "I think so, too. That audience was dynamite!"

"Excuse me."

She turned away from Ashley to find a short, bald-headed man approaching them.

"My name is Will Forester. I'm here from *The Rock*, the area's weekly newspaper, and I was wondering if I could spend a few minutes with you and ask you a few questions?"

"This is like what, the second interviewer we've had approach us this month?" Mark whispered into Janine's ear.

"The third," Brad replied clearly hearing what Mark said.

"Yeah, that would be fine Will." Mark agreed.

"Guys?" A girl came in the room. Her hair was short, spiky, and black, and she had on matching lipstick. "And girls, sorry," she said when she looked at the ladies.

Janine never saw her before. She was wearing a headset and an all-access pass so she assumed the girl worked for the concert hall.

"Some of your fans want a group picture."

Every time Janine heard that, or if someone asked for her autograph, her heart still quickened. She turned back to Will, "sorry, we'll catch you some other time,"

Rock Bottom Bomoseen

she replied skipping away. “We love our fans too much to say “no” to them.”

When they walked into the lobby, there were at least a dozen kids waiting for them. Many were waving their promo shots they had of the band.

“Can I have your autograph?” one girl asked. Janine happily stopped to sign her ticket to the show. She looked over at the rest of her band and they too were signing autographs.

“I love *See ya in Columbus*. That’s my favorite song by The Trevor Smart Band because you helped write it.” The young girl was hopping up and down on her tiptoes. “I have that whole EP on my iPod.”

Janine smiled. “Glad you like it, thanks!”

“Is Trevor Smart a nice guy?”

She handed the girl’s ticket back to her. “He’s very nice. So is the rest of the band. If you ever meet them, tell ‘em LNL say “hi”.” She waved her fingers rapidly. “Their tour schedule is crazy now being they sold more copies of their EP than expected. Their full-length album will be released sometime this summer, if all goes well for them.”

“Is it true he was your next door neighbor and that’s how you got to know him?”

Janine nodded. “His parents still live next to us.”

That one group picture—that two young girls all of thirteen years of age asked for—turned into many more pictures of the band—and even more people asking her about the Trevor Smart Band’s upcoming EP. The last band of the night was already on stage but that didn’t occur to the Lordz ‘n’ Ladiez fans.

While walking back to the dressing room Ashley grabbed Janine excitedly by the shoulders. “Our own shows coming in the next few weeks, not opening for Trevor Smart, possible record label contract, and our

Jennifer C. Madaras

songs are already on iTunes! I'm smelling success in the air."

Janine looked at her, puzzled. "We have our shows right now because Trevor's in Los Angeles signing a major record contract. That's the only reason why we're not opening for them." She poked Ashley in the shoulder. "Not to mention we're all still in high school, so our time to shop for a record label is limited."

"I know, but I just feel as if great things are going to happen if we keep chugging along at the speed we are. I just can't wait 'til we do a summer tour all over the mid-west." Ashley by now was jumping up and down. "Plus if we do more shows with Trevor, it will be out of this world. Oh yeah, and need I remind you of all the work you're doing with his band and how far they've gotten?"

"If we get as far as Trevor did, it will be a once in a lifetime chance," Janine said.

CHAPTER 1

Janine Winters was a beautiful girl all of seventeen, just turned as a matter of fact. With long, summer blonde hair that at one time or another, has been streaked every color imaginable. Currently, it was just blonde or “boring” as she describes. “What fun is it being just one color?” she’d say to her mom. Her green eyes matched those of her father’s. People often asked if they were hers or if she masqueraded around with them.

“I was born with them thank you,” she’d say scornfully.

“Mom, where’s my guitar?” she asked impolitely.

“It should be in your room with the rest of your stuff,” Mom yelled from down the hall.

“I don’t see it.”

“Look a little harder, sweetie.”

She fumbled around boxes and crates searching for her electric blue Ibanez with no luck. There was so much crammed in her room she could hardly walk anywhere. She huffed and puffed tossing things aside, her hair flying around, and her arms flailed in the air.

“Man I hate moving with a passion. It’s such a pain in the...ah! I found it!” It was in its case below a bunch of totes.

She tripped over everything to get to her bed that wasn’t even put together yet. She looked around to what hopefully would soon be her personally decorated bedroom. It was larger than her room in Cleveland. She

Jennifer C. Madaras

had so much more space to fill, to decorate, and to make her own.

“Hey, do you have a Phillips screwdriver kicking around here?” David, Janine’s brother was two years younger but had the same blonde hair and green eyes as she.

“For what?”

He held up his arms as if it should’ve been obvious. “Ah, to put my shelves together so I can show off my baseball collection.” He was a huge Cleveland Indians fan and has added to his memorabilia over the past year.

“Oh,” she said matter of factly. “No, not around here. I’ll let you know if I come across one. Perhaps you should look in the garage.”

“But all that stuff’s still in boxes.”

“Well tear one open, and look,” now it was her turn to look as if the point was obvious.

“Oh! Right.”

Gazing at the million stars that were gazing back at her, she had never seen a sky so clear where she came from. The mountains looked mysterious and monstrous in the darkness. Crickets were chirping sporadically while the fireflies were putting on quite a show. There was something else that was different that she couldn’t put her finger on. Something was out of the ordinary for her, even eerie. She thought long and hard before it popped into her mind.

“Quietness!” She said aloud. No dogs barking, no one yelling at their kids to stay away from the road, and no police cruisers flying by with their sirens on. The neighborhood lacked insanity. She was enamored with the serenity of silence.

With her window wide open, she breathed in the clean mountain air, and then tears poured down her

Rock Bottom Bomoseen

face. She was suddenly tempted to pack her things and head back to Ohio. Moving so far away was the hardest thing she'd ever done. Growing up in Cleveland may have been a little crazy, but it was also exhilarating. The Rock N' Roll Hall of Fame, Hard Rock Café, and Cedar Point were all at her fingertips. She and her friends were always doing something different on the weekends. It ripped at her heart when she had to leave the love of her life of four years-her band.

Just in the last two years, Lordz 'n' Ladiez took over Cleveland's local rock scene with a vengeance. There was a guaranteed gig at least once a week, some with pay. After playing in front of a few friends in Janine's garage, they graduated to a few hundred in their high school's auditorium, and then to a few thousand in concert halls. Sometimes they drove to Detroit or Buffalo for shows and opened up for The Trevor Smart Band whenever possible. They had two EPs to their name and hardcore fans.

One rainy day in early May, her dreams were shattered when she said two little words her friends never wanted to hear-"I'm moving."

"Hopefully not far," singer Ashley Levin said looking suspicious.

"Try over 500 miles to Lake Bomoseen, VT," Janine replied choking back tears. "My dad's company is opening a new office there this summer, so we have to move."

"What part of New York is that in?" Janine remembers someone asking. She also recalls Ashley even offering her the spare bedroom in her parent's house, but her protective parents refused to leave her behind.

Her heart warmed when she thought of all of the awesome times with her band. She, of course, couldn't forget all the shows they played, the crowd cheering,

Jennifer C. Madaras

and some people from the audience jumping on stage, singing along to their favorite LNL song.

She clasped the charms hanging from a chain around her neck. It was her only connection to the life she left behind. A gorgeous 14-karat gold music note and gold guitar hung on the rope-like chain shining like two stars in the sky. Ashley had given her the necklace just two days ago in exchange for her new address. Ashley also promised to keep in touch on Facebook, but Janine deactivated her account the day before the big move.

She exhaled deeply as if she was letting go that part of her life. As heartbroken as she was, she was also happy to be in a smaller town. No one knows her around here. She won't have to worry about stalkers and if someone says "hello" to her, she'll know it's out of kindness and not an ulterior motive. She'll be able to walk into a restaurant with her family and not have someone beg for the latest info on Trevor. She took one last look at the big, summer sky. Out of the corner of her eye, she spotted a shooting star and made a wish.

CHAPTER 2

Awoken by the bright sunshine filling her bedroom, Janine glanced at her clock and blinked twice to make sure she was seeing right. “Eleven o’clock? I didn’t know I was *that* tired.”

“Knock, knock,” Mom opened the door. “Good. You’re up. We were getting worried.” She pulled her long brown hair out of her face.

“Dad’s running to the deli and wants to know what you want for lunch, or in your case, breakfast.”

Janine sat up and stretched her arms. Her red colored pajamas were wrinkled on her left side from sleeping in the same position all night.

“Tell him to get me a footlong veggie sub with an apple juice.”

“Eating healthier are we? I see the fresh air has changed your appetite.”

“Maybe my brain is next,” Janine laughed.

“Dad will come get you when the food arrives.” She smiled and walked out of the room.

Janine’s phone vibrated. She hesitated to see who it was. Getting texts from strange people became a daily nuisance, but changing her cell number just became an inconvenience to her. Being here was a great excuse to swap out her 216 number for an 802 one.

Sweet as Sour will drop early next week. Cross fingers it gets into the top 100. U make to VT ok? We’re living it up in Cali, if ya know what I mean! Miss you ~T

Jennifer C. Madaras

She gasped. Trevor! With all the commotion in her family, she completely forgot that The Trevor Smart Band's full-length album is being released nationwide in less than seven days. Being they're an Ohio band, they were already popular there. She was sure that so few here heard of them, so remaining an unknown songwriter will be easy.

Before she returned his text, however, she thought it would be best to do so after she devoured her sub on the sun-drenched patio.

“Meow.”

“Hi, Monique!” Janine put down her notebook and pen and lovingly picked up her gray and white tuxedo cat and patted her gently. “You’re going crazy since the move aren’t you?” She placed the pretty kitty next to her on the couch.

Monique was just a two-month-old kitten when she was brought into the Humane Society. When the lady set her down on the counter, Janine, a volunteer there, walked over to the gorgeous feline, took one look at her, and Monique was homeless no more. Janine nicknamed her *Unique Monique* because she had a very distinctive gray dot on her white chin as well as gray on her ears and eyes that made it look like she was wearing a mask. In the past, she’d rehearse speeches she had to recite to her class in front of Monique. Silly as it may be, Monique always had an intent expression that she somehow understood Janine. Even though she slept at the foot of Janine’s bed, there was a comfy cat bed for her in the corner of her bedroom.

The door to the den burst open announcing David’s entrance.

“I caught that freaky, furry feline pawing around in my goldfish tank again.” He eyed the regal cat sitting on Janine’s lap, bathing.

Rock Bottom Bomoseen

“Then keep your bedroom door closed. Didn’t we discuss this before?” Janine said hastily. “Anyways, Monique has yet to catch a fish.”

He recently purchased five goldfish and kept the tank on his desk. He clenched his fists as he always did when he got annoyed. “Yet is the key word.”

“Besides, you’ve only caught Monique at the tank twice-“

“-this week,” he interrupted. “I swear, one of these days that cat of yours will be finding a new home.”

She picked up her notebook again. “I’m sure she’ll stay far away from your bedroom once your dirty clothes start piling up.”

“Who are you writing to, an ex-boyfriend?”

“No, just throwing ideas around on paper. Besides,” she said casually, “I have to find something to do since there’s nothing to do in this podunk town.”

“There has to be like a Cedar Point around here.” He suggested while toying with his Indians watch.

“Good luck finding that. Don’t even try the radio. I only found one good station that plays Alternative music. Now if you don’t mind lil’ bro, I’d like some privacy. So if you could kindly shut the door on your way out, that’d be great.”

That night, Janine had a dream she was back with Lordz ’n’ Ladiez. Only Ashley unexpectedly quit the band, so Janine was forced to sing. They were the headlining act at a large venue. It was five minutes until showtime and everyone was peeking around the curtain looking out at the crowd. Oh God, there had to have been 20,000 people there chanting for LNL. Janine was excited until she realized she didn’t know any of the words to their songs.

Jennifer C. Madaras

She dared not announce her lack of knowledge to everyone so she confided in Mark Stanley, their drummer.

“You’ll be fine. Besides, everyone loves your voice,” he assured her. “Come on! It’s time to party!”

As she was walking towards the stage, she could feel a warm stream running down her pants. “Oh my Lord, what’s happening?” she screamed while her band and music techs ran to the stage.

“Showtime!”

She woke up hyperventilating, sweaty, and super thankful it was only a dream. She pulled back her covers just to make sure what happened in her dream didn’t happen in real life. Relieved that all was good and dry, she fell back to sleep.

The next day she assisted her parents with unpacking, organizing, and cleaning. Bedroom sets were assembled and the living room and den were put together. Pictures and décor were hung, finally making it a cozy home. David didn’t seem as interested in putting the house together as Janine did since he was disgruntled the entire day. By 10 PM that evening, she passed out on the floor in the den with a book in her hand.

CHAPTER 3

Janine whisked into the Countryside Deli for the first time since arriving at the lake. It was a deli, a grocery store and gas station all in one. It was the area's only gas station until you got to Fair Haven. Granted, Fair Haven was only seven miles away, but if you ran out of gas between the two towns in a blinding snowstorm, it could seem like a 300-mile walk.

The deli looked like it was once a home long ago. The screen door didn't have a handle, and the floorboards squeaked like mice as she walked across them. Half of the tiles by the refrigerators were missing or broken. She shuttered at its outdated appearance. The candy rack had old logos on it that she didn't even recognize.

There were two men talking about fishing gear that stopped abruptly when they saw her. The middle-aged man, who was wearing dilapidated clothes, looked at Janine disapprovingly through his horn-rimmed glasses, which adorned duct tape. The older guy was leaning against the deli counter nodded his head at her, as if to say "hello." Perhaps they don't say "hello," they say "howdy," or they just nod here. He was wearing a baseball cap that also had duct tape on the front. She couldn't figure out if he was covering up a profanity, or if the tape was there as a replacement for the thread. Another guy with a coffee-stained shirt and a scraggly beard looked at her as if she was about to rob the place.

Turning on her platform sneakers, she picked up the milk and bread like her parents asked and started walking toward the front counter. She kept glancing

Jennifer C. Madaras

behind her back to see if the hicks were still staring at her. They were. Walking closer to the register startled her a bit. She was prepared to have a big, hairy guy greet her with a toothless smile.

“Are you all set?” She heard a much younger guy ask from a distance.

“Yes, I am.” She looked in every direction to find a face with the young voice. The footsteps grew louder. She had turned her back to the counter, expecting someone to come from the doorless back room.

“Hi.”

She turned around and did a double take at who was behind the register. He wasn't burly, nor toothless. He was a tall, thin, blonde with perfectly white teeth.

“You... uh...you work here?” The second she said it she knew it should've stayed in her head.

The blue-eyed kid chuckled. Maybe it wasn't the first time he was asked that. “Yes I do. You must be the new girl in the neighborhood. I met your dad the other day. Welcome to Vermont. I can't believe you guys found this place on the map. Most GPS tools can't.”

“Thanks.” Seeing him was a breath of fresh air. He was proof that other teens existed in the county.

He looked up from the register. It took her a second to realize he caught her staring at him. He shook his head lightly and shrugged as if to say “why are you staring at me?”

She shook her head. “Oh I'm sorry, my name is Janine.” She held out her hand to shake his.

“I'm Jason Gilbert. You'll see me here almost every day, especially when school's out.” He leaned in closer to her and whispered, “Oh, and by the way, my family owns dairy cattle so you don't need to buy your milk here. Either I or my sister can deliver it to you.” His grip was firm on her hand.

Rock Bottom Bomoseen

She giggled as she withdrew her hand. She caught something sticking out of his sleeve. It looked like something that she has a life size version of. “What’s that?” She pointed to his arm.

“This?” He lifted his sleeve to reveal a tattoo of a guitar. It was nicely inked with shades of blue and green on the body. It even had the dots on the neck. The strings were thin but could be seen clearly. The headstock was perfectly shaped and its coloring matched the body.

“It’s just a fake tattoo that will fade soon, but it was one that was drawn on so the quality is a bit better compared to the ones you just wet and stick on.”

“You play?” She screeched. She was getting all excited now.

He nodded. “I’ve been at the bass since I was ten.”

She dropped her money and didn’t realize it. This has got to be a dream. The first person she met and they had something in common? No way.

“I play guitar and I write also. I’m looking for others to start something with. If you want, we can get together sometime and jam.” Her heart beat a little faster and wiping the smile off her face proved impossible.

His eyes widened. “That would be awesome. I just quit my last band. All the guys lived near Stratton Mountain. That was a lot of driving for me, especially on a school night.” He looked at the ground. “Searching for serious musicians here is a dead end. For now, I’ve just been hanging with my cousin Alex who plays drums-”

“You have a cousin that’s a drummer? Please don’t take offense to this, but is he any good?” *Whoa!*

Jason nodded his head. “None taken. He’s great! Sometimes he plays way too fast for me, though. You

Jennifer C. Madaras

would think he's a violent person judging by the way he jams, but he's actually really mellow."

"I was in a band before my family moved here."

"Really? You'll have to tell us some stories when we hang out." He tore off a piece of register tape and wrote his phone number down for Janine. "Make sure you call or text me. If you don't, I think I know where you live. I'll come find you," he added sarcastically.

"And bang down my door at two in the morning?"

"Nah," he shook his head, "I'll wait 'til at least five in the morning."

"Oh, well I'm sure my parents will appreciate that." She started for the door. "I'll call or text sometime this week. Maybe you and your cousin can come over and we'll see how good, or bad we sound."

"Great meeting you," Jason said as she walked out of the deli.

Colleges in Vermont. Janine typed into a search engine on her laptop. Up came countless options; University of Vermont, Champlain College, Johnson State were the first to pop up. Of course, the student population paled in comparison to that of colleges she was familiar with- Kent State, Ohio State, which were schools she wasn't going to rule out. NYU or UCLA would be her top choices, but she wasn't sure if her parents would be willing to pay that high of tuition, or if they could even afford it. Being her parents were protective, she knew they were going to encourage her to stay close, though they always told her she can attend whichever school she chose.

She wasn't sure what to major in. She knew she wanted something that would encourage her creative side, especially with music. However, she was aware that so few survive the industry. As long as she had a

Rock Bottom Bomoseen

career that still allowed her free time to write songs and play in a band, that'd be alright.

Her phone vibrated, indicating she had an unread text message. When she read it, she immediately yearned for more familiar faces.

Hey Miss. J, how's Vermont? Miss you!

Trevor. She wanted to give him a nickname on her phone since he's going on a nationwide tour and their album was hours away from being released, even in her neck of the woods. But then she talked herself out of it since she's keeping that part of her life a secret.

VT's not bad. Met a bass player today, looking to jam soon. Miss u too!

10 minutes went by, her phone vibrated again.

Holy crap! I knew you'd be quick to find someone, but I didn't think it'd be this quick. Good luck.

Speaking of luck, I wish you tons on TSB's (Trevor Smart Band) album dropping. They're hyping it up like crazy on the 'net. Not really sure if they're playing you guys on the radio, haven't listened

Lol thanks. Only time will tell. But it's a group lottery. If I win, u win

Clearly, it was late because it took her a few minutes to figure out what he was implying.

Shhhhh!!! Keep that under wraps. I really don't want anyone finding out about that.

Seriously? You know when interviewers dig deeper, they're gonna want to know who "J. Winters"

Jennifer C. Madaras

is when they crack open the CD and read the liner notes. And the EP with all three songs you contributed to has been out now for six months with your name on it

Oh yeah. She forgot about that.

At least in VT, they won't go that far. Wasn't the EP only available in OH, and on iTunes?

She autographed one for a fan the day before her family moved. Suddenly, something else unrelated popped into her mind.

Do you know how the Winters' house is since we moved?

Dunno. Haven't talked to my parents in about a week. If it comes to mind, I'll ask how our new neighbors are. And I wonder if there's finally a cute girl in that house.

Janine shook her head. She knew he was going to make a smart comment sooner rather than later. That's okay, she had one up her sleeve.

I am not sure what the kids look like who moved into our house as I only met the parents, but if the girl is anything like the dude at the Smart house next door, then she's not only lacking in looks, but is a lost cause in the talent dept

Her phone failed to vibrate for almost 15 minutes. She worried she may have offended him. He should know her better though, as they were harassing each

Rock Bottom Bomoseen

other all the time. As she was about to text an apology, his reply popped through.

Phew!

Ha! Ha! I owe you one. I'd say something now, but I'm going on a coffee run.

Yeah, in the meantime Trev, think of something realllll good since your brain is failing now ;) miss u. talk to u soon!