

Because of Who We Are

by Corri Chance

Corri and Cody Chance grew up on different sides of the world, yet are brought together by their impeccable minds. When the world is in danger and nothing is how it seems, who can be trusted? Should all hope be lost? Or can the actions of a handful of brilliant youth manage to correct the injustices taking place? (The first novel of five in the Chance Series)

Lost in the World

Chapter 1 of 1

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Author Note: This is an exciting time for me, the first time I have ever posted my work on-line! Because of Who We Are is only the first of five books about the lives and adventures of the Chance twins, and as time goes on I hope to be able to post all of them. Many chapters have been written for each of them (I am the type of writer who jumps from scene to scene when the mood strikes her), and I have two full spiral notebooks with ideas to fill in the gaps. This being said, please be patient with me as I learn more about the art of posting my work. Reviews and constructive criticism is always welcome, as I would like to improve as a writer. I own this story and all the characters in it, so please do not try to copy anything. On a completely different note, I wanted to clarify one thing you will be seeing a large amount of in this story, and that is this symbol:)(. It's a symbol I've always used when writing the Chance novels, and it is meant to look like a butterfly. What it means to the reader is that a change of character viewpoint has taken place (throughout the novel I switch between Corri and Cody). That being said, welcome to the first chapter of Because of Who We Are!

A dark, shrouded figure loomed in the distance, a mere shadow among the brilliant white, foggy mist, which swirled across the vast twilight. As it came closer, and closer, it got bigger and taller; its features started to become more prominent. A dark green button shirt, the top two buttons undone. Faded blue jeans, the knees worn out to white. Tall and lanky, it was a runner's body, clearly in the prime of his teenage years. Pale skin, showing from where the sleeves of his shirt were rolled up. Short blond hair, neatly combed into place, except for the unruly hairs at the back. A normal sized nose, angular and thin, with high cheek bones. Prominent bright blue eyes that could gaze into your own and see your very soul. Frozen in time and space, he continued to move closer. The fog began to swirl faster the closer he came, and soon the sound of the wind howled through the darkened sky, its high-pitched whine deafening to the ear. As quick as the wind had picked up, it stopped, the white fog disappearing, and along with it, the boy.

Corri Chance woke in a cold sweat, just like she had for at least a week. Something about the guy just struck her. Maybe it was those eyes, so all-knowing and perceiving, as if he knew something she didn't. Running her hands through her shoulder-length auburn hair she tried to shake the images of him from her mind, but they refused to budge. Seven nights of the same dream made it nearly impossible to forget his face. He had a familiarity about him that she just couldn't quite place. Unable to place him or come up with any real answers, Corri gave up and began her day.

She pushed back the deep indigo cotton blankets, and stepped tentatively from beneath their warmth, her feet hitting the cold stone floor. She moved to her dresser, trying not to wake the small brunette girl still fast asleep on the other side of the room. Pulling on some jeans and a baggy sweater as fast as she could, she tried not to let the cold nip at her skin. One hand felt around the drawer looking for socks. Gone again, those stupid little kids, always using other people's clothes for dress up. They better

not have used them for sock puppets like last week!

This really wasn't that bad of a place though. Yes, it wasn't really "home," but the people who ran the house really did try their best. There was always plenty of food on the table to eat, a roof above her head, and clothes on her body, even if they didn't happen to fit quite right, often swallowing her petite frame. But, what could be expected? This was all out of the pockets of Mr. and Mrs. Stanson, the foster home founders. They did the best they could with what they had. Corri knew she was in no position to complain; if she wasn't here, she'd have nowhere to go.

Much of her past was a mystery; she had been brought to the home ten years ago, when she was five, by a stranger who had found her wandering the freeway of New Yalesdale by herself in the dead of winter. The Keepers had turned up nothing after their small investigation, and she'd been written off as just another homeless child, whose parents were probably drug addicts. It wasn't unheard of back then for people involved in drug activity to simply "disappear." At least that was what The Keepers thought her parents had been doing. Today, ten years later, the term drug was hardly used anymore; the Keepers had made sure of that. Drugs were no longer the pandemic they once were.

The only one document they had managed to dig up was an old birth certificate, found crumpled up in the tattered boot she'd had on. Still, that only gave her a name, birthday, and her mother's name. "Corri Chance, born on May 15th 2035 to Corina Chance," that was all it said, nothing more and nothing less on the mud splattered bit of paper. Clearly she was named after her mother, but she couldn't even remember the lady. Corri had long since resigned herself to the fact she very well would never know anything about her past and that she should just make the best of what she did have. Thus, she poured herself into her studies, becoming known among her classmates as the girl who was the "walking Google." But their snide comments rolled off her like water on a duck's back. If there was any way to rise above all this, then education would lead her. Her efforts had paid off so far, and she had always been at the top of her class.

As the eldest girl in the home, much of the responsibilities of day-to-day operation usually fell on her shoulders. Making her way down the rickety, chipped stone steps, her feet were beginning to feel numb to the cold. Not a good sign. She pondered again where she could find more socks. Having reached the bottom floor, she tiptoed into the nursery, eager to feel the soft carpet on her feet. Careful not to wake the babies, she paced and thought about her options. She could go down to Caroline's room and ask to borrow some of hers; they were roughly the same size, though she'd never hear the end of it if she woke her up on a Sunday, so that was out. She could go up to the attic and dig through the donation boxes, or maybe they simply got lost in the laundry yesterday. Thinking it best to check there first before disturbing anyone, she darted across the hall and dug through the clothes hamper. Catching a glint of red, she snatched a sock out of the heap. It wasn't hers, nor was it clean, but it would have to do for now. Soon, after finding another one that matched, Corri pulled on a plaid coat and snow boots, and ventured outside into the snow.

Overnight, the once bare ground had been blanketed with a good foot of snow. The one bare tree in the yard bent in the gentle breeze that moved the snow drifts about the yard like sand. The cold nipping at her face, Corri hurried over to the small chicken coup at the side of the house, eager to get done with her task, and get back into the house. The chickens clucked at her invasion into their space; paying no attention to them, her hands sought out the warm eggs that lay in the nest with the skill of someone who was used to this. Having collected them, she ran back toward the house, hardly glancing at the old gray, run-down three-story building that had been her home since she could remember. Had she been looking up at the house though, she would have seen the blinking red light of a camera, trained right on her, its modern look standing out from the old shingles around it. Its presence unknown to everyone except three people.

Back in the kitchen, Corri took out the necessary pots and pans and began to cook breakfast for herself and the kids. Though not much younger than her, "the kids" was how she'd always termed her fellow housemates. She had always felt somehow older than them. With eggs cooking on the stove, she went over to turn on the home's old laptop, a donation from a company going out of business. First she checked the mail. Everything from bills, to advertisements, to junk mail now came through a secure cyberspace mail room, and at times it took a little bit of time for them to be processed. Of course, the laptop was rather old and slow, a 2025 model; so while her account was logging in, she moved swiftly back before the solar cooker, turning the eggs over and popping the whole wheat bread into the super sized toaster.

These quiet few hours in the morning by herself she treasured dearly, as the rest of the day she was either surrounded by schoolmates or taking care of the other countless home children. There never was a dull moment in this house when everyone was actually awake. She knew that soon everyone else would start to straggle downstairs and the peace would be disturbed. She went back to the laptop, quickly typing in her extra security password in order to allow herself into her inbox. Twenty messages today, roughly normal give or take a few. Furiously scanning through them, she sent most of them to the junk trash can, leaving only two to look at. She opened the first one and sighed, annoyed at a piece of junk mail that had been disguised better than the others, off to the trash it went! Hearing footsteps on the stairs, hurriedly, she opened the last one.

Dear Corri Kana Chance,

After recent test results, it is our pleasure to inform you that you have been among 50 chosen to receive a full paid scholarship to Paragonridge Academy. If you choose to accept this offer you will be flown out immediately to the school, where your room, board, spending money, and tuition fee will be paid in full for you. An answer either way is required in the next 24 hours in order to qualify.

Sincerely,

Anaya Fuller (Co-President of PA)

In complete disbelief, Corri read and reread the letter at least six times, before the news sunk in. Of course she had taken the required Standard Preparatory Mandatory Intelligence Test a few months back, but only because she'd had to. She'd never suspected anything like this would happen! Taking a look at when the email had been received she nearly fainted, 7 am yesterday morning, which meant her 24 hours were about to expire in less than 10 minutes. Thinking quickly, she typed fast, her fingers a blur as they strolled over the key pad.

Dear Paragonridge,

Thank you for this wonderful opportunity. Though I have never heard of your school, it seems too good a chance to pass up, so I will be accepting it. Please send me more information.

My sincere thanks,

Corri Chance

Trying to contain her emotions, Corri quickly reread what she'd typed. It sounded formal enough, right? Gracious even. With no time to wait she did not hesitate to hit enter. One click of a button, and her life was about to change forever.

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On the other side of the world, a blond haired boy opened his email to find the exact same acceptance letter. Today, Corri's life would not be the only one turned upside down; another life would change forever with the click of a mouse.