

Reminiscing

Lark closed her eyes and let the music take her away. Having dinner with her parents and little sister and the Villeneuve's worked wonders for her heartache. She couldn't lie and say she hadn't been on edge the entire time worrying Max would show up but then Ollie mentioned he was in the middle of acquiring a new company and was burning the candle at both ends.

Now, with her hands over her head and her body swaying to the music, alcohol oating through her system and her phone tucked in Ollie's blouse, she was doing far better than if she stayed in Houston and faced off with Douglas.

She felt hands on her hips and looked over her shoulder to see Ollie grinding behind her and she laughed. She turned to face her and danced with her best friend. Together since they were born, literally born weeks apart to two women who were best friends, they moved like one person.

"I need a drink!" Ollie yelled at her and tugged her through the throng of writhing bodies.

She went with it, deciding she too was parched. She tossed her dark hair over her shoulder and sidled up to the bar with Ollie who ordered them each a boilermaker and winked provocatively at the bartender. He offered the drinks for free if Ollie kissed him. Lark giggled as her friend, ever the daredevil, hoisted her torso over the bar, cupped the back of the man's head and kissed him like her life depended on it.

Ollie was the life of the party wherever she went. Lark used to be as bold as Ollie but along the way, Ollie's outrageousness grew epically, and Lark's embarrassment forced her to hide in the shadows. When her parents became so bogged down in having triplets and then another child, Ollie's reaction was to become nearly feral. She'd put her parents through the ringer.

Lark on the other hand, found herself frequently trying hard not to get pulled into the quagmire. She and Max were often trying to pull Ollie back from many of her more creative ideas for chaos. When they were sixteen, Ollie convinced them they needed to go to a concert featuring their favorite country band in Nashville. They snuck out of the house and after the concert ended, when walking to the cheap motel Ollie booked for them, they'd gotten mugged. The problem was, Ollie let her sts y and the three of them were arrested, not because she'd beaten the man so badly, he was hospitalized. No, it was because when the cop pulled her off the man, Ollie'd assaulted him too and of course the rest of the group joined the fray when the cop punched her back.

After spending a night in a jail cell waiting for their parents to come get them, Lark realized Ollie was out of control and she needed help. Lark intuitively knew she wasn't equipped to be the one to help her friend the way she needed. So, while she let her friend cry on her shoulder, and listened to all her rantings, ravings, insane plans, and plots, she learned ways to avoid Ollie when she was starting to spiral and to warn her mother. Usually, Ollie's spirals were in perfect timing with Max's accomplishments.

Max was a brilliant man, a genius even and for as long as they could remember, was arrogant with it. However, like his twin sister, the moment they were no longer the sole purpose of their mother's life, he went off the rails. His father used to sit in her father's living room and ask Grady how the hell he could stop his son from becoming a criminal mastermind.

Lark found herself thinking of the boy she crushed on for most of her life. He was her rst kiss when they were twelve, in the treehouse in the back of his parents' yard. A gangly skinny pre-teen boy and she'd been as tall as him, he'd kissed her, their teeth banging together and her braces cutting his top lip. Ollie there to cast judgment on whether it was a real kiss, laughed and then kissed Max's friend Johan but Lark reeled with her burgeoning love for Max.

She blushed so hard, her heart thundering with such adoration, a tear rolled down her cheek from the kiss. Max however declared in front of Johan he did not like kissing Lark because it was as weird as if he were kissing Ollie. Lark, to save face, agreed it was gross and then she'd gone home and cried in her bedroom closet at the rejection.

Over the years, Max rejected her too many times to count. When they were twelve in the treehouse. At fteen when a boy on the drama team approached Max and asked if he and Lark were a couple since they were always together, Max boldly declared in front of the entire cafeteria he'd rather make out with his other best friend, his dog. When they were sixteen and she'd Lark gained her driver's license and one of the girls from debate team made a joke about going parking with Max, she nearly crawled under the table. He then pretended he was vomiting while insisting best friends didn't f**k best friends. He then stood on the picnic bench and declared to everyone nearby Lark was his best friend and people needed to stop thinking they were f*****g because it was gross.

None of it though, ever stopped her from dreaming and fantasizing about him. She was a hopeless romantic hoping he was simply diverting the attention to keep her from looking like a tramp who slept with her best friend. She drew their names in hearts in her journal and she never passed up an opportunity to hang out with him whenever she could.

Then it went to hell.

He'd broken her heart at their high school prom. Her date stood her up. Max was going single with the intention of hooking up with whoever he could at the prom. He told her she could go with him since she was stood up. At the dance he cornered the guy who was supposed to take her, and he laid a beating on him for being a douchebag for ditching her. He was her knight in shining armor.

It was then Lark decided she needed to tell him how she felt. She loved him and if it ended their friendship, she would take the risk. She'd asked him to meet her on the rooftop of the school. Except while she was there waiting on him, he was apparently banging the head cheerleader in the janitor's closet. In retaliation, the girl's boyfriend, the quarterback of the football team, went looking for Lark, since everyone thought they'd come as dates, found her on the rooftop waiting for Max. He let her know her boyfriend was screwing his girlfriend.

Lark denied being his girlfriend, insisting they were only friends, but the guy being a drunk teenager with his self-righteous way of thinking, felt since Max took what was his, he was going to take what was Max's.

He'd managed to force her to the ground, get her dress torn up and her panties off before Riggs, the head of security for the Villeneuve family, pulled the man off her and beat him into a coma. Riggs got her out of there after saving her from the boy.

When she'd gotten home, her mom and Ollie's mom, Bobbie, were horried. She'd been taken to hospital, checked over and then released to her parents with nothing more than instruction to try to rest. The humiliation of the night put her young thoughts into perspective. She'd gone home and told her parents she wanted to go to school out of state.

None of them knew why she'd gone to the roof. Max and Ollie never knew why she'd left the prom long before them. In fact, neither of them even noticed she was absent. None of the adults ever shared anything because Lark insisted, she was too humiliated and didn't want anyone to know.

She then skipped graduation, having her diploma mailed to her, while she and her mom took an impromptu trip to check out various universities in other states. They went coast to coast and in the end, she'd settled on going to school in Mississippi. When she'd graduated with her bachelor's degree, she'd moved to Houston to attend law school. She started working in Houston post-graduation and never intended to move back home.

That was until Douglas.

For the last six or seven months, she'd been missing home more and more. Her sister was graduated now from high school and attending college in Dallas, and it dawned on her, despite talking to her family every single day, she missed too much. Twelve years of dodging Max Villeneuve cost her being with her family.

She didn't blame him for what happened. It wasn't his fault he never reciprocated her feelings. If she was honest to herself, he more than once clearly outlined her place in the friendzone, but she foolishly held out hope for him. Instead, in trusting her heart was right and he surely cared about her as much as she did him, she'd put herself in danger going to a rooftop all alone at an event where kids were drinking every time a chaperone's back was turned.

Her crush on Max Villeneuve once made her stupid and to behave as recklessly as Ollie. She removed both her friends from her life for a short time. With Ollie, she'd been able to salvage the friendship, citing she wanted to try to spread her wings and by the time she moved to Houston, Ollie was already there, living with her great-grandfather Gael and her great-grandmother. They reconnected and spent a lot of time together until two years ago, Ollie became depressed.

When Ollie left Houston, it opened the possibility for Lark to go back home too. However, by this time she'd been dating Douglas and trying to gain the experience in corporate law at her new rm. She stuck it out but this entire situation with Douglas opened her eyes.

She stayed behind in Houston out of pride. Now, back in Dallas, she felt she was where she belonged.

She blinked as Ollie snapped her ngers in front of her face. "What?"

"Where the hell did you go? I've been calling your name!" Ollie was laughing. "Do not tell me you were thinking of the asshole."

"Maybe a bit," she didn't elaborate which asshole she'd been thinking about and gave a shrug taking her drink from Ollie.

She saw Ollie frown and then her frown deepened.

"What Ollie. It's not so bad. It was just a minute of thinking --"

"Not that," Ollie grunted and jutted her chin upwards towards the VIP booths they earlier declined to attend.

Lark looked over her shoulder in the direction Ollie was glaring and felt her heart stop. Max Villeneuve and he was glaring back at them.