

My Visions His Reality Chapter 11-20

2573 Views,

Chapter 11

Chapter Eleven: "I thought I would tell you when the right time comes, but I guess now, you will never know."

It has been five days and I have had the same dream, about the woman in white, asking me to stop Harper from 'making the mistake of his life by marking another female. I felt like I was watching a video play, again and again.

It was Thursday today and the dream had plagued all my waking thoughts, the image of the white woman practically begging me to stop Harper.

At first, I simply thought that it was just a dream but as the days passed and I saw the same dream every night, my gut told me that I had to follow the white lady's instructions. Something in my being wanted to follow her directions. I didn't have a reasonable explanation for this feeling but it has created a dominating presence in my life these days.

Ironically, it seemed Harper was too close and yet too far.

He had gone back to making out with girls in full force. Whenever I saw him, he had a girl on his arm and was thus unapproachable.

I was quite hesitant about approaching him in the first place. I didn't want him to think that I was nagging him, because whatever I wanted to tell him didn't even sound sane to me. And I certainly didn't want him to think of me as some crazy girl who would come up with anything to just talk to him.

The desperate need inside me to tell him was getting stronger day by day. It was like an insatiable itch.

As I sat in the cafeteria, I couldn't help but look at Harper who was sitting in the middle of the room amongst the popular crowd with Amanda Byrnes sitting on her lap. I had seen him with Amanda too many times these last few days and I had even heard rumors that they were in a committed relationship.

He was talking to Aiden and other guys on the table who I noticed had come to the bakery the other day. At least, he wasn't making out with Amanda. Yet.

As if he could feel his eyes on me and hear my thoughts, he abruptly turned in the direction of our table and our eyes met/I blushed because now, he knew I was staring at him. Before I could loo

k away, he turned his eyes away and carried on whatever conversation he had with Aiden. Just like that.

I sighed. What the hell was happening to me? My mind was messing with me. All **this** while, I had been thinking about what Natalie suggested **too**, about the possibility of me liking Harper. With everything that was going on, I hadn't concluded yet and I was not **sure** if I would like **the** result.

"You are looking like a creep staring at Harper that way!" Natalie's voice brought me back to the present.

Our debates about Harper's questionable character had stopped indefinitely after our sleepover as if the three **of** us had made a pact not to talk about him. I didn't know how much Sam knew, but Natalie knew all about the turmoil of emotions within me. We just avoided the topic altogether.

I didn't tell my best friends about the dreams I had been continuously having. I didn't want them to freak out and declare that I had finally lost my marbles.

"I am not!" I retorted immediately. Wow, that was the best I could come up with?! We both knew I had been staring at Harper.

Samantha rolled her eyes. "You know that we know you like the back of our hands, right?"

"One could just look at you for a few seconds and they would notice you that you were staring at Harper. It's no rocket

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science." Natalie **said**.

"It's just I have been thinking about what you said the other night, about me being attracted to him," I said softly, afraid

someone would hear me.

"And?" Samantha piped up.

"I don't know. I mean, I don't feel jealous at all when I see him with other girls. I am so confused. I **groaned**.

Well, it was not a total lie. It was just not the real reason I was looking at Harper, right then.

"Well, relax. It doesn't matter anyway. What matters is **that** there's a party **tonight**. That's what matters?!"

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“Oh God. No. I am not going.” Whatever happened at the last party, had made me hate parties altogether. I plan to avoid them, for now, at least.

I steered clear of the last two parties that had happened early in the week and I had no plans to attend this one too.

Look at the effect Harper had on my life and he didn't even know about it. I simply hated it.

“Look, we know what happened at Harper's party, but that doesn't mean you won't go to parties at all. You are wasting your senior year.” Only Natalie could say I was wasting my senior year by not going to parties. I rolled my eyes.

“You should come, you know. What's the worst thing that could happen.” Samantha said.

“Look guys, I can't come. As it is, I have a double shift at Monique's today. Amy can't come today so I have to share my shift with Stephanie.”

“Oh, **god**. You hate her.” Samantha scrunched her nose.

“And she has a good reason too.” Natalie snorted.

I stopped my thoughts from going towards Stephanie. What she did was simply unforgivable and I didn't want to think about it, ever.

The bell rang signaling the end of the lunch period. I gathered my stuff, waved to both my friends, and walked towards the class I shared with Harper. I needed all the courage I could get.

I had been mentally preparing myself to gather my confidence and tell Harper what the lady in white had been telling me in my dreams, I felt a burning need in me to tell him as soon as I could manage. It was as if a supernatural force was acting on my being and forcing me to go to Harper.

But when I entered the class, Amanda **was** sitting on his lap again and they **were** making out like it was the end of the world. I lost all my courage to go up to him and tell him the words that had been pestering me all these days,

The crowd at Monique's Bakery was slow too. I was left with my thoughts which was not a good thing these days. Earlier, I had no problem with being alone. I loved to think about trivial things, but that was just one more thing Harper had an impact on.

Stephanie sneered at me as **soon** as I came in and I expected that. We maintained a distance of a few feet between us, which was way better than us trying to gouge each other's eyes out all the time.

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The bell rang, signaling the arrival of a customer. The sound of the bell chime **shook** me out of my **thoughts** and I turned

head to look at the customer **who had** entered. And it was Harper.

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Thank God, he was alone. This could be my chance to talk to him.

He walked in like he owned the place. Not sparing me a glance, he went to sit in one of the booths in the corner of the bakery. Where I didn't serve

I sighed in disappointment. I thought this would be my chance. Wow, I never thought I would see the day when I would look forward to any sort of interaction with Harper.

Stephanie straightened her apron and her waitress uniform. She pulled her top down, so her cleavage was visible and hitched her skirt higher so her shapely long legs were in full view.

I had seen her eyeing Harper from the corner of my eye. I understood it, Harper was a catch. A jerk, but still attractive. That didn't stop me from snorting at her desperate actions, though. She must have heard it because she glared at me before turning around.

Sashaying and swaying her hips, she somehow made her way to the booth Harper was sitting in. How did she even manage to walk like that? I was pretty sure I would be lying face-first on the floor if I ever tried such a thing.

The bakery was pretty empty today, except for Harper and a teenage couple.

I went back to the English homework I had planned to do while doing my shift at the bakery.

"He asked for you." I looked up to find Stephanie glaring at me like I stole some valuables from a museum and pinned the blame on her.

"What?"

She rolled her eyes and in an impatient tone said, "The guy sitting in the booth asked you to serve him. After shooting a murderous glare at me, she went in the back, clearly disregarding Monique's instructions that when one of us would wait tables, the other would have to be the cashier.

When did she ever follow the rules?! I scoffed at the thought.

Harper wanted me to serve him?!

Guess this was it, then. Maybe **this was**

my

chance.

Squaring my shoulders and taking a deep breath, I grabbed the notepad and walked toward the table where Harper was sitting.

He looked at ease in the booth, his legs stretched under the table while he leaned back against the padded wall of the booth. He had his eyes closed and his hands rested on the table.

“Hi, what can I get for you?” I said in a fake chipper voice.

He opened his eyes at the sound of my voice and stared at me. He leaned forward and gave me a once—

over. I fidgeted under his stare and shifted nervously from one foot to another. His green eyes held some sort of power over me, they made me so damn nervous and fidgety.

“A cold coffee and two dark chocolate cupcakes.” He **gave me** a small smile and closed his eyes once again, relaxing in the laid-back position he was in before I had disturbed him.

Go on. He is right in front of you. Tell him.

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I just nodded even though he couldn't see it, because his eyes were already closed. I turned around and walked back to the counter and handed his order over to Antony.

Antony looked over the order and went to prepare the cold coffee, while I took out two muffins **from** the show case.

My subconscious was **screaming** at me to go back to Harper **and** tell him what the white lady had told me and burning that had been inside me these last few days.

I

get rid of **the**

I was trying to convince myself to take a plunge because I knew I wasn't going to get another chance like this anytime soon, or ever **again**.

I **placed** the cold coffee and muffins on the tray and walked slowly in Harper's direction. I placed the order on his table. He was in the same position I had left him and I envied him for his laid-back attitude.

He didn't acknowledge my presence and I didn't expect him to. I was tempted to just turn around and never look at him again. I tried to ignore the itch but it won the end. I sighed inwardly. It was a losing battle from the start.

"How did you know these cupcakes were my favorite?" I blurted. That was **not** good conversation opener.

wanted to talk to him about, but it was a

He opened his eyes as if he just realized I was still standing there and looked at me intensely. I resisted the urge to fidget again but a blush still crept up my cheeks.

He looked wistful. "I thought I would tell you when the right time comes," he sighed, "but I guess now you will never know," His expression became dark and dangerous in the end and all I wanted to do was run away.

I had no idea what that meant. Why was he talking in riddles?!

He brought the coffee closer to his mouth, silently dismissing me.

"He is going to think I am mad," I muttered under my **breath**. But I have to do this.

He stopped and turned to look at me. He arched an eyebrow as if to ask me why the hell I was still here.

"Um, Harper. I don't know what I am going to say but I know that I have to say it." God, I was babbling now. And what did I even say right now? Did that even make sense?

"What?" His brows furrowed and he looked genuinely confused. Any normal person would be. I don't blame you.

I **took** a deep breath. "I just wanted to say that you are going to make the biggest mistake of your life if you mark the girl, you **have** been planning to. The goddess forbids it. There, done. I felt immediate relief seep into my body, as soon as the words left my mouth and I felt like I could breathe again.

His eyes widened in shock and disbelief at what I said. He was momentarily stunned. His mouth opened and closed again as if he had no idea what to say.

I don't blame him. It sounded absolute gibberish to **me**.

Before he could gather his bearings, I turned around and briskly walked towards the counter, eager to get out of his bubble and back to the safety of the counter.

Shit. What was that?!

At least the itch was no longer there.

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Chapter 12

Chapter Twelve: "Zara, did something happen between you and Harper?" Nat asked tentatively.

I hadn't even taken three steps toward the cash register when a hand latched around my elbow, preventing me from taking another step.

I didn't need to know who the hand belonged to; I knew it was Harper. Though, how did he digest whatever I told him so soon, was beyond me. How did he react so soon and even get up to grab my arm? Stupid football players and their reflexes.

"What did you just say?" Harper hissed in my ear, too low for anyone else to hear.

There **was** nobody in the bakery. The teen couple who had been sitting had long gone after leaving a generous **tip**, Stephanie still hadn't come out from the back and Monique and Antony rarely came out in the front. I was at his mercy now. Great! Just my luck!

"I know you heard me, Harper." My voice was so small and quiet, I didn't even recognize it. Something in Harper right now terrified me and I simply didn't want to anger him.

I couldn't even look at him right now, I was just looking towards the doors hoping someone would come in the bakery. forcing Harper to let me go.

His grip on my arm wasn't too tight, it was just enough to hold me and not let me go.

I didn't expect this kind of reaction from Harper. I thought he would just look at me, call me weird, shrug it off, and just state that I had gone mad. I didn't expect him to go all crazy on me.

"Who told you about us, hun? Was it your precious friends?" He spat at me and spoke the word friends with as venom as a person could muster.

“What the hell are you talking about, Harper?” I furrowed my brows and looked up to meet his eyes. He looked furious! Why, I didn’t know!

“Don’t act all coy with me, Zara. I know your type of girl.” He seethed. His grip on my hand tightened and was starting to hurt now.

It seemed more like a power play between us rather than a simple confrontation and I didn’t plan to back down. His grip hurt and I tried not to flinch or jerk my hand away from him.

“I thought you were different, Zara. But you’re not. You are just like all the other pathetic girls that are after me. His words hurt me more than I thought they would. His expression was hard and I knew he meant every word of it. He seemed menacing and totally out of control and I was panicking inside. I didn’t know how one person could change moods so often.

He didn’t stop. He just kept going. Those fucking kisses meant nothing to me, Zara. I go around kissing girls all the time and you were just a number. A number I can’t even fucking remember. I played with you, Zara. Open your fucking eyes Don’t make up some godforsaken story to make me come to you. I have enough whores around me that are willing to go to desperate measures to get me to fuck them. And tell you what, they are fucking better storytellers than you could ever be!”

Was this guy bipolar because one second, he was just sitting there, lazing around, while the other second, he pounced upon me making ludicrous accusations no one could even dream about?!

His words struck a chord within me and I could *feel* two, big and fat tears roll down my cheeks. This was the last thing I expected to happen.

I knew that those kisses had meant nothing to Harper, but having him say them, set the fact in stone. I **wasn’t** hoping he

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would metaphorically **open** his eyes and realize that those kisses meant something to him too. I just wanted to pack those kisses as a **fond** memory, never to be opened **again**. But he had destroyed that. He had destroyed a happy memory and I hated him for it.

No. I didn’t hate him. I loathed him.

My vision started to blur because of the tears and I couldn't find it in me to look at him again. I kept my head down, trying to control my tear

He had won the power play; it was pretty clear. He had made his point clear.

"Don't you have anything more to say, hun?" He chuckled. His chuckle held a dark timbre to it and sent dangerous down my spine, activating my fight and flight response, I wanted to get away from him. Right. Now.

shivers

"I want you to stay the fuck away from me, Zara. Do you hear me?" I would be a psycho if I would try again to talk to him. I had no qualms whatsoever to be near ten feet of him. Weird dreams and itches be damned, I would even change all the classes I had with him, just to make sure I don't even get to see his face in the hallway.

"Look at me when I am talking to you!" He said while roughly grabbing my chin and making me look at him. More tears streaked down my cheeks as soon as he touched my chin and I hated myself for showing weakness to him.

I didn't want to stroke his ego and let him have the pleasure of proving me weak and making me cry. I tried to control the onslaught of tears as best as I could but they just kept coming.

Regret flashed through his almost black eyes and his grip on my hand loosened. He stepped away from me, leaving my bruised elbow as if I had set his skin on fire.

I cradled my elbow using my other hand. Red, angry fingerprints were visible on my pale skin and they looked horrid. I choked back a sob at the sight.

Harper moved like a superhuman and ran out of the bakery. The bell dinged violently as he left..

I wiped my **tears** and took a deep breath to control my emotions and get back to work.

No one came to the bakery after Harper's little fiasco. Stephanie had volunteered to stay back and take care of the bakery for the night. It served her right, she just vanished after Harper left and I wouldn't be surprised if they were shagging each other in the alley behind the bakery. That thought left a bitter taste in my mouth.

In the last half hour of my shift, Nat messaged me and told me she was going to pick me up and that Sam would meet us at her house. An impromptu gets together. I could live with that.

I was relieved because I was **too** emotionally drained to drive. I would just leave my car in the lot in front of the bakery and pick it up tomorrow.

I had a lot to tell both Nat and Sam and this impromptu meeting couldn't have been scheduled at a better time. I needed to flush Harper out of my system **as** soon as possible.

His actions had only guided me in the right direction and I knew it wouldn't take me too long to forget whatever happened between us. Practically speaking, nothing happened between us, we weren't lovers and we weren't friends.

I stood in front of the bakery's doors at exactly seven in the evening for Nat to pick me up.

I had already messaged my dad that I was going to Nat's house and that there was a possibility that I could spend my night there too. He protested a little at first, but I assured him that we would be in school on time because Sam would be staying the night with us too. That was all the convincing he needed.

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It wasn't the first time Nat or Sam were picking me up from the bakery unplanned, so it wasn't totally out of the blue..

Nat arrived in her car and without missing a beat, I sat in the passenger seat and buckled my seatbelt.

Silence reigned in the car and none of us was willing to break it. The tears had finally stopped when I reminded myself that one couldn't expect better treatment from a guy like Harper. I didn't know about Nat, but I had a lot to think about and had

reasons why I wasn't talking,

my

“**Zara**, did something happen between you and Harper? Nat asked tentatively. She was never tentative and I knew whatever she was going to say next, would be serious.

“Yes.” My voice came out quiet and resigned and I hated it. I **hated** Harper for bringing out the scared little cat inside of me. I had always been a strong person and I prided myself on the fact.

I cleared my throat which had been scratchy **and** hoarse after crying. “Why?”

“Because he is waiting for you at my house. She glanced at me for **a** second and then concentrated on the road ahead of her.

I suddenly didn't want to go to Nat's house. It was a safe sanctuary for me and I didn't **want** to embellish it.

I wanted to go home and cry because whatever reasons I gave myself for comfort, I knew Harper's words cut deeper than I had expected them to.

Shit! That was the last thing I expected.

Good luck flushing Harper out of my system.

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Chapter 13

Chapter thirteen: "And I will never, ever, cross your path again."

I hate Harper because he always brought out a weak side of me, a side I have never been fond of. I have always been proud of the fact that I could school my emotions and stand tall whenever a problem came my way.

But with him, all this control somehow goes down the drain. I never considered myself a control freak and I never wanted people to bow down to me, or listen to every word I say. The only thing I wanted was to never appear weak in front of anyone. I never wanted anyone to emotionally exploit me or know what was going on in my head.

In short, I never wanted to be vulnerable in front of anyone. People take advantage of you if they come to know about the c**s in your armor and I didn't want that. I wasn't a superhero. I knew I had weaknesses but that doesn't mean I was keen on showing them to anyone. I would much rather prefer to don a carefree and strong mask like everyone else in the world.

I rarely cried in front of anyone or because of anyone's actions. Well, except Harper.

He had already made me cry twice in a month, one at his birthday party and today, at the bakery. So, it wasn't exactly a surprise that I didn't want to see him. It was probably the very first time in my life that I didn't want to go to Nat's house. I wish I hadn't messaged my father about my plans for the night. At least, then I would've had a reason to ask Nat to drop me back at the bakery, so I could go back to my house. To my haven.

I didn't want to ask Nat to drop me back, because she would know that something was wrong. I didn't want to appear weak in front of my friends and Harper.

I wanted to show them that I could hold my ground and that I wouldn't be intimidated by Harper. I was ready to face them all.

I didn't know what else Harper wanted to say to me. If he wanted nothing to do with me, our exchange at the bakery should have been the last. He made it clear. He wanted me out of his sight and I was more than ready to oblige.

But I wouldn't tolerate it if he planned to insult me again, and that too, in front of my friends.

I me**ly pictured myself wearing my big girl panties, donning battle armor, and becoming ready to face Harper.

Nat parked her car in the driveway. I unbuckled my seat belt and got out of the car. We both walked towards the front door of the mansion. I stood beside her while she opened the door and we both walked in.

Usually, Nat's house was filled with maids bustling around and doing their chores, but today, the house was eerily silent. As I walked into the living room, all the while following Nat, I couldn't help but notice that the house felt too big and empty, and the thought made me uncomfortable. The living room was styled like the rest of the house. The furniture was the perfect blend of Victorian and modern themes, The walls were painted peach and couches were placed around a center table. Various vases and other decorative items were placed around the room. The room was too big, in my opinion. To each their own, I guess.

Harper was sitting on one of the beige-colored couches, his elbows on his knees and his expression one of deep thought.

Samantha sat across from him and was picking at her nails. It was a nervous habit that I had identified after years of friendship.

When we entered the room, both of them looked up.

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Before either of us could take a seat, Sam stood up from her seat and hugged me hard, while Harper had his gaze fixed on me. I didn't dare meet his eyes because I didn't want to see his face or his intense green eyes.

Nat took her seat on the couch beside Harper and I didn't miss the nonexistent space between them. Brushing the thought aside, took the seat fa*st from Harper in another armchair beside Sam.

Silence descended in the room. I wasn't in any mood to speak first, as I had no idea why I was here in the first place. Scratch that, I knew why I was here, I was here to spend a good night at Nat's house. The only odd person in the room was Harper, who I had never seen here before, and had wanted to "talk" with me.

"Who told you about us? Harper's voice came out sharp and deathly. He looked calm, but I could see his tense shoulders and alert form, ready to pounce and kill Its prey.

His aura screamed danger and my hand subconsciously went to my elbow, where his fingers had left angry purple bruises. His eyes followed my movement and when they landed on my elbow, they lingered a second longer. Regret flashed through his eyes once again and he clenched his fists. Before he could look at me, I diverted my gaze to Nat. I scoffed at his fake concern and rolled my eyes.

"What?" My voice came out steady and I was surprised because I was feeling anything but. Three pairs of eyes stared intently at me, eager for my answer. But the question itself didn't make any sense. What the hell was I supposed to know about them? How was I supposed to know anything if nobody would tell me?

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If it was possible, Harper's gaze turned colder than I had ever seen before. "I won't repeat my question. Who the f**k told you about us?*

Harper looked like he was controlling a beast caged within himself. I wasn't probably too far from the truth with the way the vein in his forehead was pulsating.

I looked at Nat and then Sam, they were both looking at me, waiting for me to speak. Would it be okay to say I was a little afraid?

"What am I supposed to know?" I felt like an idiot sitting there. Today had been full of weird exchanges and I wanted this one to end. I had no idea what these three were talking about and by the way they were looking at me, I should have had some inkling.

Sam was the first one to speak after an uncomfortable silence of a few minutes. “I told you she doesn’t know. We didn’t tell her and she doesn’t talk to anyone else.”

Did she just say that I was a loner?!

Harper groaned and ran a frustrating hand over his face and through his hair, messing it up more.

“I would like to talk

to Zara alone. His voice was rough and determined.

I started to protest, but before I could speak anything, Nat and Sam were already heading out of the room. Both of them gave me apologetic glances and quickly walked towards the doors.

What the hell?!

Whatever he planned to do, I wasn’t going to cave and act like a weak damsel in distress. I had every intention of telling his bipolar ass to leave me alone and mind his own business.

When the door closed softly behind them. I turned my gaze towards Harper once again. His face was blank and his expression was hard. I would probably fail if I ever tried the same intense and intimidating expression.

“Can you repeat whatever you said to me in the bakery?” It wasn’t a question; it was a demand.

Putting the word Can was just

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a formality.

“Is that what this is about?” I arched an eyebrow. What was so important about what I said, was that he had to take time out of his busy schedule to come and meet me here. I sighed. “You heard me the first time, Harper. I’m not going to repeat it.” And sound like a lunatic.

All I wanted now, was to go home as fast as possible. This conversation was tiring me. I could picture my energy being sucked by Harper.

He leaned forward and clasped his hands together. “Okay, I will make you a deal. If you answer my questions. I will let you leave.

I scoffed. “We aren’t in middle school Harper. Do you think we are some middle school girls who would exchange secrets or favors and braid each other’s hair? I’m not playing this game with you.” I liked this confident part of me, the part who would never bow or obey Harper. Or anyone else.

He held up a finger in the air as if reprimanding me for being an impatient child. “And I will never, ever cross your path again. His face was expressionless, but his voice was filled with conviction. And the temptation to never interact with him was too much to ignore. At that exact moment, I wanted nothing more than to get away from him and never see him again. in my life. I sighed again. Whenever Harper was around, I sighed a lot. Another change Harper brought out in me. “Isaid, you mark the girl you have in mind because the goddess forbids it.” I gritted through my teeth.

shouldn’t

Silence/reigned in the room once again. I clasped my fingers together, put them in my lap, and waited for Harper to say something.

When he didn’t say anything after some time, I took that as my due to leave.

I was beyond disappointed in my friends because they left me alone with Harper in the room.

Granted they didn’t know he could turn violent and harm me, like he did at the bakery, but they did know that I hated him and would rather do anything else than have a conversation with him.

When I was halfway towards the door, his voice resonated in the room again. “Who told you to say that?”

This was the question I was afraid of. The question I didn’t want to answer. What was I supposed to say to that? A woman from my dream?

I turned around to look at him. What loss would I suffer after telling Harper this? The real reason would probably give him even more motivation not to talk to me, which once again would work in my favor. And I had this gut feeling that I should tell him about my dreams. I was starting to hate these gut feelings.

Something in the way he was looking, compelled me to speak the truth and only the truth. And I did.

“I had a dream” My voice was barely a whisper, but I knew he heard me nonetheless because, in the next second, he was standing in front of me.

“What did you say?” His voice was strained like he was barely controlling himself. “Tell me everything. He looked me in the eyes and demanded it. He looked desperate and his voice was pleading. This was probably the first time that I had seen him a little shaken up.

Those pools of endless greens compelled me to speak the whole truth and I did just that. I told him about the dreams, the

I when I reached the end of my story. Harper had held me in a trance which I think only broke when I had finished my story.

white woman, and her request to tell him to not mark some girl kept talking and only stopped out the dreams, the

He listened intently throughout the whole narration without blinking an eye, as if he just couldn’t believe what I was saying

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I don’t blame him; I don’t believe myself.

When I stopped talking, he threw his head back, closed his eyes, and groaned out loud.

I just stood there, dumbfounded again by his reaction, twice in a day. He had quite a habit of leaving me speechless.

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He looked me in the eyes once again and sighed as if he weighed the world on his shoulders. He looked intently at me and opened his mouth to say something. He closed it immediately, shook his head in frustration, and ran out of the room. Again!

He is so damn frustrating.

Does he, like, have a habit of running away like this?

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Chapter 14

Chapter Fourteen: Apparently, you don’t thank your best friends for any sort of help.

He left me there, in the living room, alone, with a thousand unanswered questions of my own. I didn’t expect more from him and I was glad that this would be the last encounter we would have with each other.

I turned around to see Sam and Nat standing in the doorway of the living room, looking

expectantly at me.

“You were listening through the keyhole, weren’t you?” I asked softly, afraid of their answer. Did they hear about the dreams that I had been having?

They frantically shook their heads and I smiled at the sight.

I sighed and moved towards one of the couches. I sat down and pulled my knees to my chest, waiting for the both of them to sit down.

They both walked in and took their seats in front of me.

“What happened?” Sam asked, concern evident in her voice.

“Honestly, I don’t know.” There were too many unanswered questions and theories for me to comprehend. “What did he tell you when he came here?”

They looked at each other and shifted uncomfortably in their seats.

“It’s a little hard to explain,” Nat whispered.

I groaned and flopped back on the couch, my back hitting the padded cushion. “Harper came in the bakery today.”

Both of them looked at me, giving me their full attention, silently urging me to continue.

What was I supposed to tell them now? I had not told them about my dreams and I wasn’t planning to, either. Honestly, it didn’t even come to my mind, now that I think about it.

The dreams that I had and the message that I was supposed to give to Harper had been the center of my life these past few days. All my actions and unnecessary anxiety were to be blamed on those very dreams. It was all I could focus on

I wasn’t exactly dependent on my friends but it was unlike me to hide things from them, however small and inconsequential they may be. And it wasn’t like I didn’t want to tell them, I just couldn’t.

I couldn’t explain it exactly, but I felt the need to keep this secret with me. It wasn’t even a secret; it was just a dream. There was nothing special about it, I reminded myself.

I could fool myself all day into believing that I kept all of this a secret because it all sounded insane and straight out of mystery or a fiction novel. I didn’t tell them about it because of somethin... Something more, which I didn’t know about. Yet Ironically, everything came out of my mouth the second Harper asked me about it. Well, when he asked nicely. The reasons which sounded plausible to me at that moment sounded ridiculous to me now, because they were. I didn’t trust him. And it bothered me that I could tell him the truth without any sort of hesitation, whereas I couldn’t tell my friends who have been with me for as long as I could remember.

“I said something and he took it the wrong way. He thought I was, um, desperate for his attention.” The words left a poisonous tinge on my tongue. My hand subconsciously cradled my elbow where Harper had manhandled me. It now showcased dark angry purple bruises and it wasn’t hard to decipher that these were imprints of someone’s hands. I briefly

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wondered how I would explain these marks to my parents..

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I was never an attention seeker and had never been labeled as one. I had never been called desperate and clingy, and Harper had used all those words to describe me on the same day. I felt insulted and hurt. Nobody liked to hear such words and it didn’t matter where these words came from.

I felt my throat closing and a tear slipped down my cheek.

No, I didn’t feel insulted. I felt humiliated. And that was probably the first time in my life that I

had felt this way.

Both of them got up and moved to sit beside me and engulfed me in a group hug. Their thoughtfulness brought a smile to my face.

“How did he end up coming here?” I looked from Nat to Sam and back to Nat again.

“He just got the idea that you knew something that you shouldn’t and he thought that we told you something about it,” Sam said looking anywhere but me.

I didn’t understand a single word she said but I didn’t need to, because it simply didn’t matter anymore. Harper was gone and he would remain that way, hopefully.

I wiped my cheeks and sighed. “Well, everything is done now. I won’t be hearing from Harper again. The thought brought instant relief to me.

“What do you mean?” Nat asked me curiously.

We made a deal. He told me he would never bother me again.” My lips curled into a smile at the thought.

I never knew I could despise a person so much that the simple thought of them never talking to me again would be welcomed by me.

“Wow, that’s great. Nat beamed at me and I felt my lips form a full grin.

“You know what this calls for, right?” Sam piped up.

Oh, God! No way!

“Let’s watch The Notebook, in hopes of finding our true love.” She dramatically sighed at the end.

“Hell to the no!” Nat yelled at Sam. “We are not watching that movie again.”

I burst into giggles at the scene in front of me. Whatever may come, I know that these two will always be with me. They were my constants.

P.S. We ended up watching The Notebook again.

The tension dissolved as the night progressed and I slept with a smile on my face.

The three of us climbed into Nat’s car to get to school early in the morning. None of us wanted to go to school because we had spent the night talking till the early hours of the morning, joking and having fun. But I had promised my dad that I would go to school and I meant to keep my promise to him, much to the dismay of my friends.

I had borrowed a full-sleeved silk blouse from Nat so that I could hide the ugly purple bruise.

Seriously, how strong was

Chapter 14

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Harper that he managed to leave such a bruise on me? Damn him to hell!

We hopped in Nat’s car with Nat on the wheel, Sam in the passenger seat, and me in the back.

“Closer” by The Chainsmokers was blasting on the radio. We still listened to the song, we loved it that much. We often put it on repeat on our sleepovers together and we had it on repeat for the fifteen-minute drive to school.

We reached school in precisely fifteen minutes. Nat parked the car in the school parking lot and we got out of the car.

We got weird looks from people, probably because of the sound we were blaring. It was as if we were the most popular girls in the school. All eyes in the parking lot zoomed in on us, giving us weird looks.

Nat was in her element as if she didn’t notice anything and if she did, she didn’t say anything.

Samantha seemed oblivious to all the stares too. I tried to maintain a neutral face and a calm

facade.

We were fifteen minutes early and had enough time before the first period would start. So, we first went to Nat's locker and then to Sam's locker together and then made our way to mine. People were milling about in front of my locker, snapping photos and whispering to each other. As soon as they saw me, the chatter ceased and the crowd dispersed to let me reach my locker. Ok, so, everyone in the parking lot wasn't staring at us, they were staring at me and they had a very good reason. That much was clear from what I saw.

The hall was silent despite the number of people crowding it. They were waiting for my reaction, I suppose, and all I could do was just stare at my locker, with my mouth open.

The theme colors of our school were blue and gold. The mascot of the school was a tiger dressed in a hideous blue and gold outfit, every club and sports team had their uniforms designed in blue and gold and all of our lockers were painted blue (probably because gold would have been too much, thank God for that).

Well, except mine.

My locker, which yesterday, like any other locker was blue, was now painted in a vivid red color. The only locker in the whole damn school which had any other color than blue. No wonder people were staring at me.

And that's not it. Oh, no.

There were balloons taped to it. Heart-shaped balloons. Red, heart-shaped balloons. Exactly twenty in number.

The balloons took up so much space that my neighbors weren't able to use their lockers and were giving me stink eyes. Romance was good, but only if it didn't interfere with anyone else's life.

Oh, God!

I flushed in embarrassment at the sight. People were still staring at me. They probably had their cameras at the ready to capture a video of me, gushing and squealing like the silly teenager I was, and running in the arms of my man.

Well, I sure hope that some boy did this. I wouldn't know what to do if it was a girl. Not that I know what to do now.

If they hoped to get my attention, they had it now. Mine and the attention of every other pupil in the school. Count the teachers too and we can't forget the janitor.

I hastily walked ahead and stripped all the balloons that were taped to my locker. When I was done, I looked like I was in the balloon-selling business. Those balloons were huge and I felt as if I would just float away because of the excess helium in the balloons.

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I looked around to see that the crowd had dispersed, sensing that there wasn't going to be any romantic drama in the hallway. My

locker neighbors gave me grateful glances and I smiled back at them.

I looked around to see Nat and Sam still standing there, with shocked expressions. I sighed.

"Help me with the balloons?"

They snapped out of their trances and nodded. They quickly walked towards me and took some of the balloons from my hands.

You know what was the biggest problem with the balloons? They were so hard to dispose of. I had a limited amount of time to take care of them before my class started and I had no idea what to do.

I tried stuffing them into trash cans in the halls, but they just floated back up, earning me weird

glances from my peers in the hall and sniggers from the girls in the cheerleading squad! Couldn't this guy just get me a bouquet or something?! They were comparatively easier to carry. And get rid of it.

In the end, the three of us just stuffed all the balloons in an empty classroom that hadn't been used in years and smelt like mold. If we were lucky, no one would find those balloons and they would deflate on their own.

With a few minutes to spare, I hugged my best friends and thanked them for helping me. They just flipped me off, in return. They still hadn't said anything about the balloons. They were probably too shocked, like me.

You don't thank your best friends for any sort of help.

I giggled at the gesture and ran towards my first class.

I was on time and breathed a sigh of relief. The teacher stood just outside the classroom discussing some projects with two sophomore girls. I was on time, thank God!

I didn't want any more surprises and neither did I expect them. Just like I didn't expect the surprise at the locker!

But my eyes popped out of my sockets when I entered the class

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2457 Views,

Chapter 15

Chapter Fifteen: Meet me on the benches during the third period.

Aiden was there, in my classroom, standing with a big box of chocolates and a bigger bouquet of red roses in his hands, right beside my designated seat. He was smiling and looked at me with so much admiration in his eyes, that my knees nearly buckled.

I could practically hear the lyrics of Wildest Dreams in my head!

That's right. These scenes only happen in movies and cliché teen novels. In real life, a girl like me only gets a cheap box of dark chocolates, a single red rose, and a letter on my desk.

I walked ever so slowly to my seat, careful to avoid eye contact with everyone's inquisitive eyes. I put my bag down and grabbed the box of chocolates. You can't blame me, people. Turns out that they are not cheap. At all.

I stuffed the single rose and the chocolate box in my bag. Without sniffing it, may I add.

I opened the letter, which was torn out of a notebook. It was nothing extravagant, just simple words. Sure, as hell, wasn't expecting poetry.

Meet me on the benches during the third period.

That's it! Those were the words written on the small letter.

So damn romantic! I can hear the sarcasm dripping from my words!

Not a clue about who this person was. I didn't even know if the locker-and-balloons guy was the same chocolate-and-rose

guy.

The note was simple enough. The benches. The person had asked me to come to the football field; everyone at school liked to call the bleachers 'the benches: Quite original, I know.

Would it be believable if I said that I wasn't able to concentrate on my classes at all? The only thing on my mind was to fast forward the time and meet this person during the third period.

When everyone would be studying, I would be out having a meet-and-greet session with my secret admirer. When did my life get so exciting?!

Those gestures were so sweet. Though quite simple, they made me feel wanted and cared for. I felt special, so screw me for acting this way. The whole mystery was killing me. I even considered just skipping classes and going straight to the benches and waiting out the whole third period, while sitting on the benches and eating my chocolates.

I had to use my locker at the end of every class which didn't help my case at all. It was just a big reminder of wh waiting for me just before lunch. Rather, who was waiting for me?

People were giving me weird and knowing looks in the hallway and my friends were begging me for details. All this had put me on edge. It got me excited.

So, I don't think anyone would blame me if I told them that I practically ran out of my second-period classroom and instead of heading towards my class like everyone else, I waltzed towards the football field.

I tried not to run in the hallway, but I did. But it was just so hard. I mean, can you blame me for wanting to be on the field as soon as possible? It was not every day something like this happened to me.

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Everyone gave me looks like they knew exactly where I was going. And why wouldn't they, nothing was subtle today, not the locker fiasco, not the chocolates and the rose, and certainly not my desperate "brisk walking" towards the football field, in the opposite direction where all of the academic classes were held.

I took a deep breath when I reached the doors that would give me access to the outside world, where in a few steps, I would reach the football field.

I was nervous. I should be, right?! Damn nerves!

My legs felt like jelly and my stomach was trying to make me throw up. In excitement, of course.

I headed towards the top of the bleachers so I could get a good view of the football field and know where the person I was supposed to meet was.

I had made the right decision of climbing to the top of the bleachers because I could see someone dressed in a grey sweatshirt sitting on one of the lowest levels of the benches with their back to me. Waiting for me.

It was a boy because no girl could have such broad shoulders and a muscled back. Don't ask me how I could make out the muscles when this guy was wearing a sweatshirt. I just could, okay?!

At least the 'person' is a 'he'!

I climbed down the steps of the bleachers towards the boy who had so kindly, made me the center of the school's gossip today. His shoulders tensed as he heard me climb down the steps and walk towards him.

I was excited. I was. I didn't expect to run and launch myself in the arms of the mystery man waiting for me, but I did expect him to turn around when he knew I was coming towards him. I did expect him to acknowledge me in some way.

Was he afraid I would just turn back and run for the hills when I saw his face? I mean, he couldn't be that ugly!

I was now standing just behind him. I think this is the point when he gets up and lets me see his face.

He got up abruptly and took a deep breath. I could tell because I could see his shoulders rise, as

he took a forceful breath in He turned around and I found myself having a staring contest with a pair of green eyes. The green eyes which I had no plans of gazing into, anytime soon. Or ever. The green eyes I had stared into, when I had made out with Harper, the same guy who had, none too subtly may I add, called me a **t and asked me to stay away from him.

Of course! Why did I even expect something else? My life had become a joke recently, all because of Harper, why not call him again to mess it up even more?!

I had to give him credit though. He had balls coming here, stirring up things and rumors like nobody's business when he wanted to do nothing with me. What is this guy's problem, anyway? Was this all a sick game to him?

"You promised me you would stay away from me, Harper. Last night." I folded my arms under my chest, ready to shoot-him down once and for all. I gritted my teeth in frustration.

I was going to need a lot of deep breaths if I was going to talk to him now!

He shrugged and tucked his hands into his blue jeans. "I couldn't stay away." I can smell b**hit from a mile away, boy!

How could he just shrug, as if what I asked him was of absolutely no consequence?

And what does he mean by "he couldn't"?!

Chapter 15.

Bep

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"Well, too bad." I scoffed and rolled my eyes, already getting annoyed at his presence. "I don't want anything to do with you.

He sighed and ran a frustrated hand through his hair, messing it up even more and giving that smoldering I-don't-care- about-anything look.

Sounds cliché, I know. My life has lost. Its originality and has turned into a Spanish telenovela.

"Just give me a chance, okay?" His eyes were hopeful and pleading. Is this guy for real?! I wonder if Harper had ever had to beg or plead for anything in his life and I got a sadistic pleasure when he begged me because I was probably the only person who wasn't going to give him what he wanted.

What does he even mean by asking me for a chance?! His moods were giving me a whiplash!

"This coming from a boy who called me a **t yesterday, called me an attention-seeking wh**, who just wanted you to f**k her, and who you dutifully informed, that the kisses we shared meant nothing to you," I said, my voice rose in the end in

that! anger and I rolled my eyes because it was simply unbelievable. This boy had some nerve, I can tell you

He does not get to play with my life. We have been back and forth with each other for weeks now and every time he just . ends

up hurting me. And the best part about it all? We weren't even in a relationship. I could only imagine what being in a**ng bipolar and I had no plans to spend the rest of my senior year getting into a relationship that was doomed from the very start and had no strong ground whatsoever.

I may be clumsy but I wasn't a masochist. I had a very good idea of what was good for me and giving Harper a chance wasn't one of them.

I didn't even like him, for heaven's sake, and I wasn't going to enter a relationship where I could not even stand the guy. I wits pretty sure he didn't even know how relationships worked and that monogamy was an essential part of it.

Why did he even want a relationship with me?! He made it clear yesterday that the sight of me

disgusted him and he would be glad if he would never have to lay his eyes on me.
No thanks. I wasn't desperate for the kind of attention and popularity that comes with dating the hottest guy in the school. I would rather go on a date with a guy, I at least liked.

I made a m**l note to get rid of the note and the rose sitting in my bag. I wasn't going to throw the chocolates. They were innocent in this mess.

I turned around, ready to walk up the stairs join my friends in the cafeteria tell them about the false alarm, and diffuse the excitement the morning had created.

I even wasted three periods on this silly escapade, if you could even call it that. I could have learned something. Anything would have been better than daydreaming about Harper,

Before I could even climb up the first step, he spoke. Of f**g course.

"You always carry a bar of dark chocolate in your bag. You are one of those people who like to eat their bars by breaking off each cube rather than just randomly biting it." Where the hell is he going with this?

I turned around to face him. Okay! This was just creepy. How did he even know that I had a "way" of eating chocolate?

That crazy stalker!

I quirked an eyebrow, all the while thinking of the police and telling him that I had a stalker.

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"There were only two items in Monique's Bakery that had the ingredient dark Chocolate in it. One of them was a shake and the other one was a muffin. Me and the guys had already ordered our drinks so I ordered the mu**. That's how I knew it was your favorite item on the menu. Like I said, it wasn't just a lucky guess!"

His green eyes were so sincere that I wanted to forget everything and jump into his arms. That clears everything. Proximity to Harper damages my brain's capacity to reason.

And I was angry at myself for that. No guy should hold such power over me. And especially the one guy who had insulted me again and again, and even made me feel used on more than one occasion.

Just one chance. That's all I am asking for." His voice was small and his eyes were hopeful. His shoulders were hunched and his posture was defeated, like he already knew what my answer was going to be. Why did you even ask then, when you already knew what my answer was going to be?!

I shook my head and tried to reason with myself that we were talking about Harper here. He had no reason to feel hopeless and defeated. I was pretty sure that he didn't even like me. There was no reason as to why I should feel sorry for him.

I was rejecting him, big deal. Girls rejected boys all the time.

"It's too late for that, don't you think?" My voice came out soft too, like I was begging him to understand my reasons for not giving in to him. Like I wanted him to know I was hurting too, I wasn't sure why, though.

I turned around and climbed up to the top of the bleachers. I didn't turn back and he didn't stop me.

SEND GIFT

2695 Views,

Chapter 16

Chapter Sixteen: Would someone help me plot his murder?

“You’re never going to believe what just happened.” I said, putting down my tray and sitting down at our “reserved” table in the cafeteria.

After the “meet and greet” with Harper, I walked straight into the girl’s washroom to clear my thoughts, and to convince myself that I did the right thing by refusing to give Harper a chance. Every cell in my body wanted to go back and remove that despondent look on Harper’s face, that I put there in the first place, but I had to hold my ground.

My faculties were in total debate with each other. The sane part of me stressed the fact that I did the right thing by refusing him. He didn’t deserve any more chances. He hadn’t done anything that showed me that he was serious about me and after

and all the things he said yesterday, it was going to take a lot more than painting my locker, balloons, chocolates, a rose, heartwarming love note!

I waited for the lunch bell to ring and then headed straight to the cafeteria, after deciding to ignore Harper to the best of my abilities. I had to simply flush him out of my system and I was prepared to do everything to achieve that.

I needed some alone time with my best friends and made a beeline towards

I lifted my fork, ready to roll some spaghetti on it when I heard that voice.
our table.

“Sounds interesting. What happened?” My head whipped up to see Harper standing in front of me, on the other side of the table holding, his tray of food.

My eyes

widened in disbelief and Nat’s and Sam’s eyes bugged out of their sockets. I’m really glad to know that he has that effect on everyone!

Silence. Silence reigned in the cafeteria after everyone realized that Harper, the most popular boy in the whole damn school, was standing at our table. It wasn’t unusual, it was bizarre. It wasn’t that we were social pariahs or anything, we were just one of those people who blended in the background. Me and my friends were just there, not going out of our way to resist popularity and not trying to gain it either.

Sam, who was sitting beside me turned and raised a questioning eyebrow at me and Nat was still staring at Harper who had now, very comfortably, may I add, had sat down on our table.

I didn’t have the strength to look and meet the eyes of anyone else in the cafeteria. In the teenage code of conduct, Harper had just made a very bold statement, and that too, in front of the whole school.

Everyone just stopped what they were doing and looked over at our table where, he had now started eating his lunch, not caring about anything.

“What the hell are you doing?!” I whisper-yelled at him.

He casually looked up innocently and shrugged. “I believe I am eating my lunch. It is lunch, isn’t it?!”

Would someone help me plot his murder?

“I thought I made it clear that I wanted nothing to do with you. What the hell are you doing here!

I angrily whispered again.

He looked so bloody calm as if everything was just a walk in the park for him and it infuriated me to no end. I had, very clearly, given him my answer. Why couldn’t he just man up and handle a rejection?!

“You know, whispering won’t help you. At all. Half of the people in this cafeteria can hear

whatever you're saying, He

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casually looked around the hall. People who had been keenly looking over at our table and trying to catch every single word. spoken, averted their eyes when they realized Harper had caught them staring

Wow! I wish I had that power over people!

I looked around the hall once again. People weren't directly looking at us anymore but it wasn't hard to know that they kept throwing furtive glances and their ears perked up whenever anyone on our table said anything.

People die for gossip here, I swear!

"What are you doing here anyway?" Nat said, turning her body to his side and giving him her full attention.

Sam raised an eyebrow at the gesture and I couldn't help but roll my eyes. Seriously, Natalie!

"I just had some unfinished business. Harper shrugged and looked straight at me as if daring me to say something against him.

I swear, if he shrugs one more time, I'm going to break his damn shoulders!

I narrowed my eyes at him. He didn't get to do this.

"It better not be what I am thinking, Harper." I don't think I looked threatening enough or he wouldn't have shrugged again! He looked up from his tray full of spaghetti and meatballs and gave me a wink which turned into a full-blown smile.

He proved that a wink and a full-blown smile could go together. Wow!

Tingles erupted throughout my body and I could feel my cheeks growing warm. The effect Harper had on me and my body was simply unexplainable. After everything he had done to me, one would think that my body would side with my brain and stay away from Harper as much as possible and create an impenetrable armor. But I wasn't at fault here anyway, he just never left me alone.

He leaned forward and gave a mischievous smile. "What if it is?"

"I think you should get up from this table and go back to your own." I pointed to his table in the center of the cafeteria where Aiden and the rest of the football team were sitting and watching us with curious and confused glances. Aiden met my glance and gave me a curious look, probably wondering why Harper was sitting across me, just like my friends were. And the whole school.

"I don't want to!" He went back to eating his spaghetti again. Is he serious?!

"I think we should just steer clear of any drama and get through this lunch period," Sam said while looking pointedly at both Harper and me.

I huffed and crossed my arms over my chest. I watched Harper Have his lunch in peace while I kept glaring daggers at him.

I could get up from the table and walk out of the cafeteria, but I was hungry and I didn't want to leave the battleground. Not when he was challenging me at my home ground.

I gingerly picked up my fork and got back to eating my lunch, quite aware of the sneaking glances Harper constantly threw at me.

The week that followed was one of the most frustrating and exasperating ones of my life. In the days that followed, Harper didn't just make a statement, he had gone all out and made a

declaration to the world, which landed me in the center of all

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the attention and the public's scrutiny.

Every damn day, my day started with finding Harper in front of my locker, waiting for me, before the first class started. He had the gall to just turn up even after I told him off.

I knew it was useless to ask him to stop bothering me. So, I didn't even try, but I was in no mood to entertain him by paying any heed to his futile advances to any kind of conversation starters.

Kudos to him for even trying to start a conversation for the second time after I gave him the deadlines glare, I could

manage.

As if waiting for my locker at the start of the day wasn't enough, he stood outside after every one of my classes and "accompanied" me to the next one. It didn't matter that he didn't share the class with me, or that his class was at the other end of the school, he was always there. Waiting for me..

It does sound chivalric, but believe me, it is not.

Everyone gave us a pretty wide berth to let us pass in the hallways. If I wasn't a social pariah before, I was certainly a social disaster now.

Nobody talked to me and if they did, it was to enquire about Harper because everyone suddenly assumed that I was a walking encyclopedia about the guy. Girls sneered at me and gave me cold shoulders and boys gave me weird looks, probably wondering what Harper found remotely interesting in me.

Harper had conquered our cafeteria table and took the liberty of inviting Aiden to sit with us. I had once luckily escaped Harper when I went to the girl's washroom and discreetly went to the library instead of going to the cafeteria. That was the most relief I'd had in the week. He soon caught onto that, not that I was surprised,

He followed me even after school and sat at one of the booths at Monique's Bakery through my shift. And he ordered a lot of dark chocolate mu***ns. It was good for business so nobody was exactly complaining. But they were asking questions. Especially, Monique and Antony.

Questions I didn't have any answers to.

Questions I didn't want to give answers to.

Harper was practically stalking me, in front of everyone, as if he was a righteous man and wasn't doing anything wrong. I wouldn't be surprised if everyone in the town knew about it. It was surprising how my parents hadn't yet questioned me about him.

But not once, not even on a single instance did he make me feel remotely uncomfortable. He was pretty open about what he wanted and that appealed to me. He never hogged me, he was just sending out a clear message to me and everyone. The message was that he was going to keep trying to get my attention and I would have to listen to him, sooner or later.

It was a completely disastrous approach and if it had been anyone other than Harper, I would have dialed 911 as soon as I realized what he was doing. But this was Harper,

The insane part of me was winning and I could feel myself caving in.

As I cleaned the display case of Monique's, I couldn't help but steal a glance at Harper, who had his earbuds in his ears and was listening to some song after he had finished eating his lime pie.

I am sure he has tried everything on the menu by now.

I squared my shoulders and took a deep breath. It was show time. It was time to give him what

he wanted and rid myself of his shadow. It was time to listen to him.

I made my way towards his table and sat across from him. As if sensing my presence, he promptly took out the earbuds and

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put them back in his pocket

He gave me a charming smile which had me swooning. I returned it by giving him a small smile of my own. If he kept doing that, I would be eating out of his palm soon enough!

This was a first, I returned his smile and it showed on his face. The twinkle and joy in his eyes were unmistakable and it gave me immense pleasure that a small smile from me could do that to him.

“Ok, I’m here. What do you want?” I put both of my hands on the table and laced my fingers together.

He gave me a nervous smile and rubbed the back of his neck, cheeks tinged red.

I bit my lips to stop the smile that threatened to break out.

“I want you to go out with me.” His Adam apple bobbed up and down. “Like, on a date.” He stopped fidgeting and looked at me with those green eyes of his, awaiting an answer.

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2621 Views,

Chapter 17

Chapter Seventeen: “I think we should go because your friends are standing at the bottom of the staircase, listening in on us.”

Nat and Sam were on my case. Like literally. They had been privy to everything **going** on with Harper and wanted to know about every decision I made regarding him.

But I was reluctant to tell them that he had asked me out on a **date**. But then again, I didn’t want to hide anything from them.

It was a futile battle. After I reached home, it took me a few minutes worth of debate with myself, and before I knew it, I had already called them on a conference call.

“What when he asked you out?” Nat asked.

did you **say**

“Yeah, what did you say?” Sam **asked**.

“I said yes.”

There was a moment of silence. Silence of consideration and musing and after that came the debate. The debate was about whether saying yes to Harper was a good idea. A debate I had been ha

ving with myself and a debate in which I needed more clarity. A clarity only my best friends could give me.

Nat gave me all the possible reasons why giving another chance to Harper was a bad idea. She listed the points I had in my mind and some more. I had always been on the vulnerable side in anything remotely related to Harper. He could hurt me, like he had done so many times before, without any remorse, and I would be left standing with my shattered pride because that was what Harper hurt the most, my pride. His words were brutal and said with such sincerity that I found myself believing them.

Whereas, Sam listed all the reasons why I should go out on a date with him. For as long as I could remember, I had been judging Harper for the way he played with girls and used them, but even after knowing him for so many years, I had no idea who Harper was. I doubted anyone did. He had gone to great lengths to stalk me and make me listen to **him**.

He wasn't exactly proposing marriage, he **was just** asking me out on a date. There was no commitment. It was just two people going **out** and having fun with each other. And I could do that with Harper. I could go out and have fun with him and it was just a one-time thing. I knew Harper wasn't ready for a relationship and I doubted that he had even considered even being in one with **me**.

I could do one **date**.

And everything aside, I wanted to go out with him. I did and Sam pointed out that, in the end, that was what mattered. I could just go out and see **how** things go.

Despite everything he said and did, I still wanted to go out with him. There must be seriously something wrong

with me.

I had gone from hating the boy to considering going out with him on a date, in a matter of weeks. I couldn't explain how this was happening, just that it somehow felt right. Something in my gut told me that giving him a chance would work in my favor. There was some kind of pull I felt towards him which was so hard to describe. I doubted anyone would believe how I felt about this whole situation.

I was thinking about going out with him just because my gut said so, and that I had a good feeling about it.

I had all the pros and cons in my mind now. I wasn't going to carry myself on a platter for him. I was going **to** keep my emotions and feelings out of it, and then face **him**, without all the prejudices I had against him.

Molt, sep

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I had already given him my answer and it wasn't like me to back out of anything.

Everything seemed to work out for Harper. The universe worked in favor of him, it seemed. He had asked me at the bakery on Friday and our date was supposed to be on Sunday night.

Are we still **on** for Sunday?

So when I received a text message from an unknown number, I had no doubts in my mind.

I didn't ask who it was. I didn't ask how he got my number. I just saved his number on my phone and replied with a short message. Yes.

For many questions my We had arranged for Harper to pick me up from Sam's house, simply because I didn't want to face the many parents who would ask me. I had permission to spend the night at Sam's house, even though it was a school night.

Everything had worked out. Sunday was supposed to be my date. And Harper was going to pick me up at Samantha's house. It was perfect.

But that didn't mean I wasn't nervous. I was nervous as hell. And till the very last minute. There was just something about Harper that always put me on edge and kept me up on my toes.

Natalie

worked her magic on me while Sam munched on popcorn and watched me getting all dolled up.

Samantha wanted me to go for a dress but Nat was against it and I agreed with her. A dress was way more intimate for me.

Nat chose a peach boat-

neck top with flowers imprinted on it. She paired it with faded skin light blue jeans and belle flats. It was a perfect look for me. My makeup was minimal and my hair was pulled back in an elegant ponytail at the back of my head. I looked cute and girly at the same time.

It didn't take long for me to get ready or I was just shot with nerves so much, that I didn't know how much time had passed.

I didn't know why I was nervous. I kept repeating in my head that it was just a date. I had gone on dates before and this night was going to be, more or less, platonic. Nothing more, nothing less.

Sam scrambled off the bed when the doorbell rang and ran downstairs to open the door to let Harper in.

Nat put both of her hands on my shoulders and looked me in the eye. "You look beautiful. Just don't do what I wouldn't do"

I smiled and hugged her. She patted me on the back. I love you, okay? Go now. He's waiting for you."

"Aren't you coming downstairs?"

"I have to gather all my makeup supplies before **Samantha** sees this mess and never lets me in her house **again**." Nat giggled.

I looked around and sure enough, the room was a mess. Clothes and makeup were strewn everywhere.

I giggled. "I wonder how Samantha controlled herself all **this** time.

She laughed. "I know, right? Have a good time."

I looked at her and with as much sincerity as I could manage, thanked her.

"Hey, you don't thank me, **now** get your ass downstairs and have a **good** time."

I hugged her again and walked out of the room and towards the stairs, which would lead me towards my date.

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I took a deep breath and slowly climbed down the stairs,

Harper was sitting **casually** in the living room and Sam was sitting across from him, keeping him company. They looked weird sitting in the same room. Opposites, they didn't even know what to say to each other, which explained the silence in

the room.

Samantha's parents had gone out of town for business, so we didn't have to worry about them knowing about my date with Harper.

Harper looked cool and calm as ever. He looked in control as he always did, and I envied him. He had on a grey v-neck with his leather jacket, black jeans, and combat boots. It looked as if someone had sucked all the color out of him and splattered it

on

His eyes landed on me as soon as I entered the room and I could feel those green orbs lighting up. His eyes raked me up and down in appreciation and I felt myself blush under his gaze. All the nervousness was gone, all that mattered at the moment was him.

“Ok, so, um, this isn’t awkward at all.” Samantha chuckled.

Seriously, this is how she chooses to break the ice.

Her cheeks tinged red when both mine and Harper’s eyes landed on her.

“Um. I’m just going to go. Have fun you too.” She squeaked while running a nervous hand through her hair and taking one step at a time to get out of the room.

The tension between us was stronger than ever when Sam was out of the room. He took definitive pleasure in raking his eyes up and down my figure again and I hoped that he liked what he saw.

“Say something.” That didn’t **sound** like my voice at all. It sounded like I was in the middle of a hot make-out session. My **voice was** all breathy and strained.

This weird power Harper had over me was the only thing that unsettled me. Okay, so there were a lot of things that unsettled me when it came to Harper but this physical attraction I had towards him, seriously took the cake.

He took a slow step towards me and took my hand in his. A strange kind of sensation shot up through my arm where my skin touched his and heat spread through my body. I liked this sensation. A lot. I wondered if this was a good thing.

wasn’t “You look beautiful. He **was** sincere when he said those words. I could tell, because standing in front of me, right now, the coolest cucumber and the hottest boy in the school, he was a vulnerable boy who **wasn’t** sure how I would react to such a bold declaration from him. This was as far as he was going to go, to let me know that he was taking things between us seriously and I appreciated the thought.

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I don’t think I needed to say anything because my cheeks heated up even more and I was sure I probably looked like a tomato right now, I was at a loss for words **and** my response delighted him, I could see in his eyes and by the way his shoulder muscles visibly relaxed.

He bent forward slowly and I was afraid he was going to kiss me. Despite the physical tension between us, I wasn’t sure I was ready for that. Yes, we had kissed before and I had enjoyed every minute of it, but a lot of things had happened between us since then and I wasn’t sure if kissing was going to make our situation healthy.

“I think we should go because your friends are standing at the bottom of the staircase, listening in on us.” He whispered in my ear. His breath fanned my ear lobe, sending shivers down my spine.

He took an abrupt step back and smiled at me. A smile that would have buckled my knees and helped me land on the floor, if I hadn't heard the thundering of two **pairs** of footsteps rushing up the staircase. Probably Natalie and Samantha.

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I giggled. I knew that they were going to listen in on me and Harper but I wasn't counting on Harper to know about it. Like I **said**, he was a man in control.

He laced our fingers together and spent a minute just looking at them. It was strange, the way he looked at our hands, as if he was studying a specimen under the microscope. His face was set in concentration, his brows furrowed as he examined the way our hands fit together, his large and callused, mine small and soft.

He snapped out of his trance without me having to interrupt his musings and then looked at me with a large smile on his face.

“So, are you ready for tonight?”

I just nodded. Words failed me.

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Chapter Eighteen: Guess there is more to Harper than I initially thought!

“You know, I thought you were going to cancel till the last minute. Harper glanced at me while driving to the destination he had planned and refused to tell me.

“I almost did.” That was the honest answer. I kept having second thoughts about the whole matter. Even now, I wondered if there was any way to ask Harper politely, to turn his car around and go back **to** Sam's house.

He sighed. “Well, I guess I deserve that.”

“Yes, you do.” My reply was prompt and I glanced at Harper from the corner of my eye who was gripping the steering wheel with greater force than necessary, his knuckles turning white.

“Have you, um, ever been on a date before?” Harper chuckled nervously.

Where is he going with this?

“I

“Yeah. Haven’t you?” I turned to look at him, giving him my full attention.

“I don’t exactly date girls.” He smirked at me.

“Yeah, I know. All you do is sleep with girls and then break it off them.” I rolled my eyes.

time, and to do that it was **necessary i**

-All I had wanted to do tonight, was just to have a good me to not bring up whatever happened between **us** in the past, which included his playboy habits and his vile words. I had promised myself that I wouldn’t bring up any of these to pics but his cocky and arrogant side brought out the worst in me.

He sighed again. “Look, I think if we are going to do this tonight, you will have to give me an honest chance. Just keep an open mind, ok? That’s all I’m asking for.”

“This **is** not a good idea, Harper. Turn the car around.” I folded my **hands** together in my lap to keep some semblance of control.

“Nope, I can’t do that.”

Would it be considered a kidnap if I got in his car willingly?

“**And** why is that?” I said, exasperated.

“I don’t think you want to be stalked for another week, do you?” He looked at me and gave me a teasing grin.

I couldn’t help but smile at the sight. He had asked me to keep an open mind about him. I had already planned to do it in the first place but considering how **things** always turn out between us, I wasn’t **sure** for how long I could keep that promise.

We had entered a rocky trail a few minutes ago which went deeper into the forest. Trees surrounded us clouding any light which could be offered by the moon overhead. The only light *on* this path we were on, was created by the car’s headlights, w

hich were not doing a pretty good job. I had no idea where we were going, but I sure hoped that I would come back in one piece.

I'm certainly not going to ask him if he has brought me out here to murder me.

After about fifteen minutes, I could see a tiny building ahead. As we moved closer to the building, it became *clear* what it was; a one–storeyed house. It was old and weathered. I couldn't make out the color of the walls in the dark, but I was pretty

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sure that it had turned into a darker shade of what it used to be. The house was nothing grand, it just stood alone in the middle of nowhere, with weeds growing in the gravel driveway. The windows were boarded up, which made it look haunting.

He will murder me and bury my body here. Oh **god**, no one would ever find me.

I couldn't move. I sat frozen in my seat. I couldn't fathom the sight in front of me. What the hell was happening here? Was this some kind of a sick joke!

From the corner of my eye, I could see Harper **unbuckling his** seat belt and getting out of the car. I wasn't sure I wanted to

out of the safety of the car, at least he wouldn't stab **me** and fikk getting his leather seats painted with my blood. He came around to my side, opened my door, and gestured for me to get out. This, indeed was our destination.

Leaves and twigs crushed under my feet as I landed my feet on the **ground** and turned to look at the house once again-

“You seriously brought me here?” I didn't know what else to say. I turned to look at him and even in the dark, I could see the red tinge in his cheeks. So he was nervous, good.

“Um yeah.” He put both of his hands in the front pockets of his jeans. “If you don't like it, we can, um, go somewhere else.” He shifted his weight from one foot to another.

I decided at that moment that the nervous, fidgety Harper was more appealing than the cool and collected Harper. His lack of control only made **him** more **human** and more attainable.

I smiled at him which seemed to reduce his nervousness a little, I had decided to give him a chance and keep an open mind, I reminded myself.

“So, what are we waiting for?”

“Hun:”

I giggled at his confused expression. “Shall we go in?” I asked and pointed at the decaying house in front of us.

“Oh, yeah. Come and watch out for the weeds. Harper looked apologetic, it was pretty evident that he had never done this, before and had come up with the venue of this date on his own because no one in their right mind would ever suggest such a venue for a date. It showed that he had put real thought and effort into this day and that mattered to me. Or he just came up with this at the last moment and chided my subconscious.

I walked behind Harper who was a step ahead of me. The door looked exactly how the rest of the house did, beaten, worn, and old. He took a key out of his jacket’s pocket and unlocked the door.

Why does he even need a lock for this place?

He held out his hand and gestured for me to go in first.

The inside of the house was just as I had expected. The supposed living room had old and beaten furniture, the wallpaper was moldy and was peeling off the walls. There **was** a thick layer of dust everywhere and I thanked God that I wasn’t allergic to anything or my throat would have closed up by now and I would have undergone an anaphylactic shock!

The living room was cast in a soft glow of yellow light which emanated from the adjoining room .

I looked back at Harper to check if he **was** coming after me **and** not leaving me alone in **this God-** forsaken place. The floorboards creaked under my weight and I prayed that they wouldn’t break. That would be so embarrassing! Harper chuckled behind me. “Don’t worry. Those floorboards are strong. They will hold.” I felt his hand on my lower back

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spreading tingles through my body, and felt him guide me toward the source of the light.

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The light was cast all around the ‘dining **room**’ by lanterns. Where did he even get lanterns in this day and age?

The room **wasn't** in any better condition than the house. All my attention was focused in the middle of the room where there was a table, which looked in a better condition than the rest of this dilapidated house, two chairs were set across from each other and they looked better too. On top of the table, there was a picnic basket and.... Were those paper **plates**? A lantern sat in the middle of the table, which **had** been covered by a **tablecloth**. A tablecloth that was perfectly clean and looked hygienic. Thank God!

Screw candles, lanterns are the new black anyway!

Harper cleared his throat nervously, probably wondering if I had gone into shock. "Um, I know it's not much. I was just so confused and I di-

"I love it. Wow. I love it. I cut him off and turned to look at him. His face lit up the **entire** house, as cliché as that sounds, and it made me very happy. I felt myself returning his smile like second nature now.

He held out his hand and gestured for me to take my seat on one side of the table. He pulled out the seat for me and helped me sit down, which in my opinion wasn't necessary, but I didn't say anything. After that, he walked around the table and sat across from me.

I put both my hands on the table and smiled at him. "So **what's** the story?"

"What story?" His brows furrowed and he just looked so adorable I couldn't help but ogle at him.

I waved my hand around. "The story of this house. How did you come to know about it?"

He looked around the house and I noticed his gaze lingering at some places. "This house belonged to my grandparents. After they retired, they both decided that they wanted to live **away** from the city, in complete wilderness and they made this house. Whenever things got too much at home, I used to run away and come here.

Harper was opening up and showing me, a new part of his life and I was afraid a wrong question would make him guard up and I didn't want that. So, I asked my next question carefully. "Harper, were your parents, um abusive?"

"What? No. It's just that they have always expected me to take over the, um, family business, and have always expected great things from me. When things got a little too overbearing for me, I came to meet my grandparents. They were supportive of me and encouraged me a lot." His eyes clouded in the memories he must be remembering after being in this house again. "When they died, my parents wanted to destroy this house but I was against it. I fought with them and just to get my point across, I slept here for three nights in a row. I was thirteen years old then. Even now, whenever I feel alone, I come here and spend time here, alone. It helps me think and just, deal with things."

I smiled at **him**. “How often do you come here?”

He could sense I was genuinely curious and I could see that it pleased him. “I come as often as I can. Though, for the last few weeks, this house has been my sanctuary. I had no idea where to take you out and I didn’t want to look like a complete idiot and that’s why I thought to bring you here.”

My heart soared at the prospect of Harper showing me such a raw and tender side of him felt special that he trusted me enough to bring me here and let me in.

“So, who else knows about this place!”

“My parents do, but they don’t ever come here.”

“Nobody else?” I said, surprised at his admission. He smiled at me and gently shook his head, his eyes showing that he said

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what he meant.

Guess there is more to Harper than I initially thought!

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Chapter 19

Chapter Nineteen: “I think we should go. If I am a minute later than 12, Samantha will bite my head off.”

“Why did you choose a BMW?” Harper asked me. We had been playing 20 questions and we had been going back and forth for a few hours now and surprisingly, I was enjoying myself.

Turns out Harper can be less of an idiot wanted to. talked and laughed. And talked. And laughed. A lot.

I giggled. “I think the question you should ask is, “Why not a BMW?”

“You got me!” He threw his head back and laughed, his shoulder shaking which showed how genuine he was being right now.

We had done eating our sandwiches some time ago, delicious and my mouth watered just thinking about them. When I asked him about it, he told me he had his housekeeper make them. We had a can of Coke with the sandwiches and then ended up sharing a chocolate bar.

Harper smiled at me and then checked his wristwatch. I knew it was time to leave. I checked my phone which showed that it was nearly 11:30. Holy moly! We had been talking for almost four hours straight and the conversation was never uncomfortable. There was never a dull moment with Harper and I found him to be quite intelligent.

“I think we should go. If I am a minute later than 12, Samantha will bite my head off. She does sound like my mother! He laughed while shaking **his** head and simultaneously, got up from his chair.

This was it. This was the end of our time together. It was time to burst my bubble and I **was** reluctant to do it.

I smiled at the thought. I was dreading this date till the very last minute. I thought we would have nothing to talk about, that we would never find a common topic between us, and that this night would end up in a fight between us. The night exceeded my expectations and I found myself wishing for more.

It was a dangerous thought and I quickly killed it before it could sprout and take root in my mind. Wanting “more“?! Where **had** the thought come from?

I picked up my leather jacket from where I had hung it on the back of the chair, earlier in the evening. I dusted dirt off of it **and** wrinkled my nose when I could see dust particles swirl in the air.

Harper gathered the used paper plates and put them all in the wicker basket. He then folded the tablecloth and put it inside

the basket.

Meanwhile, I watched him; how his lithe body worked, how his long and deft fingers folded the tablecloth, how his prominent muscles bulged through his leather jacket. He looked graceful and lethal in that moment and I couldn't help but marvel at him.

“Don't look at me like **that**. Harper's voice broke out of my reverie. His voice had suddenly become heavy and had lost all its playfulness. It sounded strained and a little breathy.

I folded my arms across my chest, my jacket still in my hand. “Like what?” My eyes met his **in** the soft glow of the lantern and they looked like two little pools of black and not the usual green I had become accustomed to.

He left the basket on the table and walked slowly towards me, giving me a chance to stop him but I couldn't move or **say** anything. At all. The trance Harper always seemed to hold me in was the dominating factor between **us** right now. It was surprising how moods shifted between us and I found it hard to keep up.

In a few seconds, he was in front of me, standing close to me, our faces inches apart. His chest was heaving up and down as if he had just run a marathon. My breathing was erratic too and I knew he could see it in the fast rise and fall of my chest.

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This was wrong. I had not signed up for it. At least, not tonight. I was still coming to terms with his playful, fun, and normal side of Harper. Although I could see that he wanted to kiss me as much as I wanted to kiss him, it could seriously mess things up between us, even before anything started.

A painful thought crossed my mind. The memory of Harper calling me **easy** a few days ago was still fresh in my mind, and so was the hurt I had experienced afterward. The last thing I wanted to do right now was to give him an upper hand in our... arrangement. What do I even call it?

Harper leaned down slowly, his face close to mine and I knew that this was the moment I had to take a step back if I wanted to salvage any form of respect. I had for myself.

And I did.

I took two slow steps back, although my body protested at every movement, I made to create distance between us **and** looked everywhere but at him. Every atom in my body wanted to be touched and embraced by him and it was taking a lot of willpower to not throw myself at him.

I nervously tucked a strand behind my ear and gathered the strength to look at him. I'm sorry, I can't do this." My voice was small and unsure and I wondered if it gave any indication of the battle of thoughts that was going in my mind right then.

He smiled at me and shook his head. "It's my fault. I never should have made a move on you on the first date."

My head whipped up to look at him in surprise, "The first date?"

"Obviously. There could be other dates, um, if you want." He nervously ran a hand through his hair and I smiled to myself at his adorableness.

"You don't believe me, do you?" He started again nervously and looked everywhere but at me, his cheeks tinged red.

He was asking me out on another date and I knew what my answer was going to be. I would simply love to go on a second date with him. I enjoyed myself during the time I spent with him and it certainly wouldn't hurt to have such a night again.

"I, um, plan to take things seriously with you."

What? Take things seriously with me? Who even says that?

This was more than I was ready for and everything in me, right now, wanted to protect myself, protect my feelings. Warning bells started ringing in my head and the only thing I was sure of, right now, was **that** I just didn't want to get hurt again.

"Harper, going on a date and taking things to the next level are two different things. Two completely different things." My voice was small and sounded uncertain to my ears.

"I know. Look, I asked you to keep an open mind about everything, right?! To keep an open mind about me?! It wasn't so bad, was it?!" His voice became small at the end of his rant and I felt uncomfortable. Did he believe the time I spent with him was bad? It was anything but.

I found myself itching to ease his worries and I frowned internally at myself.

"I had a good time tonight." I nodded my head to make him believe that I was telling him the truth. "But it's a really big step! **One** I'm not ready to take." I sounded desperate to my ears and I wasn't even the one proposing **right** now.

"Take **your** time, okay? Just give me a chance." He looked at me with his eyes shining so hopeful that I couldn't say no to **him**. I don't think I even wanted to say no to him. Is that how everything is going to be between **us**, him giving me puppy eyes which would simply hinder my senses and make it hard for me to say no to him?!

"I need some time and space to think about it, Harper. That means no following me around." He smiled at me; relief evident

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in his voice.

"I can deal with **that**." He picked up the wicker basket and I took that as my cue to walk out of the house.

He locked the door behind me and I once again took my time assessing the house. This house held a new meaning for me now, it was a major part of Harper's life and he cherished it. And now that our first date had taken place here, it was special

to me too.

"Where are we right now?" I turned to look at Harper who had pocketed the key to the house.

“What do you mean?*

“I mean, what’s this place called? How far away are we from the town?”

He chuckled and looked at me with a mischievous glint in his eyes. “Say yes and I will tell you.”

I laughed at his playfulness and shook my head, sticking my tongue out at him. “Not a chance.”

The ride back to Sam’s house was quiet. The silence was comfortable and the music coming out of the speakers filled the distance between us. It gave me time **to** ponder over whatever happened in that house, from all the fun to Harper saying he was serious about me.

He sounded like a medieval virgin man proclaiming his love to a woman who he had always shielded from. The thought brought a smile to my face.

Harper accompanied me to the front door of Samantha’s house and knocked on it. He checked his wristwatch. “Ah, I still have 5 minutes.”

I giggled and looked at him. He looked unreal in the faint glow of the night and I wanted nothing more than to jump in his arms and kiss him. I already knew what my answer was going **to** be, I just wanted to make sure that I had made the right decision, and for that, I needed my best friends.

We stood there, looking at each other, aware of the fact that at any moment, any one of my friends would open the door.

I somehow knew that Harper wouldn’t kiss me. I had already stopped him once and if I wanted **to** kiss him I would have to take the first step. I did not doubt that Harper would follow.

I smiled at him.

“Oh! Just **kiss** each other already!” Came the muffled voice of Nat from behind the door.

Harper’s cheeks tinged a deep red and I had to bite my lip to stop myself from laughing at his discomfort. He looked so uncomfortable and it was a nice change to see him like that.

He put his hands in **his** pockets. “I think I should go.”

Nat and Sam were probably chuckling on the other side of the door.

I

It all happened so fast, that I didn’t even get the time to react. Harper leaned forward, closer to me, and planted his lips softly on my cheeks.

Tingles erupted in my cheeks by the small and unexpected contact. My toes curled from the simple act and it made me want more. So much more.

My eyes bugged out of my sockets and I looked at Harper who was blushing profusely, already taking big steps back towards

his car.

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He held out his hands as if embracing the world. "I just couldn't help myself."

A laugh broke out of my throat and I felt myself blush at my response. "Good night," I said softly.

He waved his hand at me when he reached his car. I didn't want him to go and it was very hard for me to see his car becoming smaller on the road in the moonlight.

My phone pinged.

Good night

I smiled at the gesture and turned around to see my two best friends standing at the doorway, grinning at me.

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Chapter 20

Chapter Twenty: "You call him right now and tell him that you want to be his girlfriend."

"So, he took you to his grandparent's old house, Natalie asked again.

"She has already told us that, Natalie," Samantha said and threw a pillow at Nat's head.

We were sitting in Sam's room, on her bed, talking about my date with Harper. I had told them everything up to the point where he told me he was 'serious' about me.

"And that's not everything!" I gulped when their head whipped up to look at me, eager for any new information.

"He kissed you, didn't he?" Nat asked eagerly.

"He was about to but I stepped back." I smiled weakly, I had started to regret that decision already. All the reasons that had come into my mind at the time, sounded so foolish and empty right now. But I wasn't going to tell them that.

“What? Why would you do that?” Samantha gasped.

“That doesn’t matter. What matters is what he said after that. I waved a hand dismissively like it didn’t bother me at all.

They both waited for me to go on. “He said he was serious about me, whatever that means. He asked me to give him a chance”

Samantha shrieked while Natalie **gasp**ed. “He asked you **to** be his girlfriend.” They both squealed like mad women and I frowned.

“Hey, hey, calm down.” I playfully rolled my eyes while trying to get these hyenas under control. “He didn’t ask me to be his girlfriend.”

They both looked at **each** other and dramatically sighed. **Natalie** shook her head with a smile on her **face**. “What else do you want him to say?”

Samantha joined in. “Yeah, boys don’t come right out and propose these days. Did you expect to hear him ask if you wanted to be his girlfriend?”

“Um, yes,” I responded weakly, unsure of how they were going to react. I didn’t know boys even do that anymore. Harper had been giving me mixed signals for so long that I didn’t **think** whether he’d ask me to date him. Harper didn’t date anyone. everyone knew that and I’d be stupid to hope otherwise. Girls are supposed to give mixed signals, not boys.

“So, you doubt what we’re saying?” Nat asked.

I nodded in response. She got up from the bed and walked to the nightstand where I had put down my phone after coming back from the date. She picked it up sat back down on the bed. “There’s only one way to figure it out.”

and

“No, no, no. I’m not going to call him.” I shook my head furiously, It had only been a few hours since the date and calling him would make me look somewhat desperate and I didn’t want him to get any wrong idea too.

“We aren’t going to make you call him. We don’t want to make our best friend look desperate. You’re just going to message him.” Samantha rolled her eyes as if whatever she was saying was pretty obvious and it was stupid of me to not know about

too. it. I had started to believe it

“Yeah, here’s your phone. Message him right now,” Nat asked while handing me my phone.

Chapter 20

“What? No. What am I even going to say to him?!” I shook my head frantically, hoping that they would realize that I didn’t want to talk to him, just yet.

“Yes, you are. And we are going to tell you what to say.” Sam winked at me. That girl’s the devil, I tell you! Nat nodded in response.

These two have gone crazy! There’s no way Harper, indirectly or directly would ask me to be his girlfriend. Or would he?!

The way they looked so sure and confident about what they were saying made me doubt my conclusions. And now, I wanted to know if it was true. So bad.

I nodded at them weakly. They grinned in triumph like they knew I was going to give up in the first place.

I unlocked my phone and opened the message thread with Harper, where there were only two messages, him asking me if we were still on for the date and me confirming it.

I took a deep breath and typed in a new message, which Nat and Sam had directed me to send.

What did you mean that you were ‘serious’ about me?

was a foolish move there was no surety that he was even awake at this hour. It was 2 in the morning and normal people were asleep by that time, but not hormonal teenage girls who gossiped about their dates for the whole night.

But I guess Harper wasn’t normal because, a minute later my phone pinged on my lap.

I was worried about what he would think about the nature of my message. It looked like I had been overthinking about his simple words for hours and it made me look like a crazy teenage **girl**.

I hurriedly unlocked my phone to check and found a message from Harper.

I thought it was pretty clear.

Guess, Harper wasn’t normal at all.

The message wasn’t only cryptic but it shut down any other way to approach Harper about what he meant by those words, without me sounding too desperate, of course.

Before any of us could say anything else, my phone pinged again, notifying me that another message from Harper had just come through.

If I wasn't clear enough, I want you to be my girlfriend.

Nat and Sam who had both been overlooking my shoulder, squealed like the hyenas I had accused them of being.

My phone pinged again. Harper.

I have no idea how to go about these things!

That message brought a smile to my face.

Samantha pointed her finger at me. "You call him right now and tell him that you want to be his girlfriend"

"And that you want to carry his babies." Nat laughed.

"What?" I laughed.

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"Yup. I remember, the other day, when we were arguing about Harper," Nat smirked.

"We always argued about Harper. Sam rolled her eyes.

"On the day of his birthday, when we told you that after his birthplay, he may change, and would possibly get into a relationship Nat looked hopefully at both of us, hoping we would catch on.

"Oh, come on." Nat groaned.

"Oh, oh, oh." Sam jumped up. "I got it. Zara argued that he would never be interested in pursuing a relationship with anyone and if he did-

Oh, God. No.

"She would sleep with him. They both spoke together and started laughing.

My words had never come back to bite me in the butt like this. I blushed immediately at the thought of me and Harper rolling in the sheets.

"I'm not sleeping with him. Never." I fake shuddered showing them how the very idea repulsed me, which in reality was far from the truth. The thought of sleeping with Harper was exciting and I felt my body heat up in response.

"You're not going to sleep with him YET!" Sam said.

“Yup, never say never, Nat said in a cheerful voice.

What am I supposed to reply to him?” I asked the two relationship experts sitting in front of me. I needed to divert their attention from me and Harper having sex to some less dangerous topic.

“You call him right now and tell him that your answer is yes.” **Sam** shrugged **as** if everything was that simple.

“I can’t do that.”

“Why not?” Nat arched an eyebrow.

“Harper has been picking up fights with me, degrading me and whatnot and suddenly he wants me to be his girlfriend. It just doesn’t add up. They shared a look and then waited for me to go on. “He said some hateful things which hurt me and I, know he meant it then. I want to know what changed in the span of such a short time. And I need to know a million other things.”

Nat **and Sam** looked at each other and then slowly nodded. They wanted me to jump into a relationship with Harper and I couldn’t do that, not after how my **last** relationship ended.

‘Do you

think it would be better if you would just talk to him, clear your doubts, and then take a decision?’

“Yes.” That was exactly how I felt. Jumping into a relationship like **this** would harm both of us and leave us bitter people in the end. I had questions, an important one at that, and I needed answers. The questions were generic enough and would be quite simple to answer. The bottom line was that I did like him. If I didn’t, I wouldn’t even be considering committing to **him**. I knew what my answer was going to be, I just needed to clear some things before taking the plunge.

I typed my answer into the phone.

We need to talk.

Harper’s reply came instantly.

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Tell me when. I will be there,

He was re

to talk. That was good. This was good.

Tomorrow. Before school. The benches?

My phone pinged in my lap after a few minutes.

I will be there an hour before school tomorrow,

A

There, done. We are going to meet at the benches an hour before the school starts tomorrow.” I put my phone on the nightstand beside the bed and looked up to watch Nat and Sam’s reaction.

Nat groaned and flopped back down on the bed. “An hour?! Why don’t we just go to the school now and wait for Harper to come there in a few hours?”

I laughed while Sam hit Natalie with a pillow.

I felt his eyes on me before I even saw him. I was gazing out towards the football field when I felt him arrive. I turned around to look at him, to find him on top of the bleachers.

This was the pull I had begun to feel towards him. It was getting stronger and I wanted to be close to him for very long periods, if possible. I **was** afraid that I was going mad or horny, beyond limits. That was why I needed answers, that was why I needed to protect myself if everything between us went downhill between us.

Queves met.

I could see his lips quirked up in a smile as our eyes

I took him in as he climbed down the benches to come to me. He **had** on a red polo shirt which showed off his toned biceps and a blue jean. I think this must be one of the few times I had seen him in clothing that wasn’t black and I liked it. If I would get a chance, I would mention how he looked better in color.

He stood in front of me, and the time I had wanted to prepare myself for this conversation had just gone into checking him

I sighed and sat down on the bleachers. I looked out at the field again to sort out my thoughts and ask him what I wanted to ask him, without any kind of hesitation. I was never a blunt kind of person and in **this** very moment, this fact worked against

1. me.

“I just had some questions.” I voiced the first thing that came to my mind.

Harper sat down beside me, his body turned towards me, giving me his full attention. “What did you want to talk about?”

“Why me?”

I turned to look at him.

“What?” His eyebrows furrowed, making him look adorable. I resisted the urge to pull him towards me and bite the sexy pout he was sporting now,

“We have been in the same school and class for years, Harper. You never noticed me. I have never seen you in a relationship. Ever, **And** yet, here you are, proposing to me now, all of a sudden Why me? Why now?”

He sighed and ran a frustrated hand through his hair. “It’s **not** easy to explain. At all.”

Chapter 20

“I have time. We have almost forty minutes till the school starts looked at my phone to see if I was as right. I was, we had time on our hands. Coming to school early had its perks.

“You will **freak** out.” He rubbed his hands over his jean’s clad thighs to hide his nervousness. “**Yup**, you will freak out.”

“You don’t have a drug problem, right?”

That was my first thought, shoot me. He was deliberately building up suspense and making me **anxious**.

“What? No.” He chuckled but I could see his tense posture **and** his eyes nervously darting around the field.

“Tell me, then. What is it?” I was pleading with him now. Whatever his reason was, it was pretty serious or it wouldn’t have shaken him up that much.

He sighed and looked out at the field once again. As if he made up his mind, he got up abruptly and held out his hand for me to take. “It would be better if I just show you. You won’t believe me if I don’t.”

I hesitantly put my hand in his and he pulled me up. Tingles shot through my hand and I felt dizzy for a moment. Whatever he wanted to show me sounded serious and controlled my mind from thinking and considering the worst possible

scenarios.

“You don’t mind missing the first class, right? The, um, thing I need to show you, it will take so me time.”

I just nodded, too nervous to say anything. I was finally going to get some answers.

And I wasn’t sure I was ready for them.