

Song 29

Song 29 Take 0

I had to put on the brakes at the very last second to avoid colliding with Mother Superior Evangeline. While I felt like I'd just had a heart attack, she looked at me with her usual expression that was a cross between a resting bitch face and acceptance of fate. I knew it was wrong to think of a nun in those terms, but I couldn't help myself. 𐄂

"I'm sorry," I said, panting.

Her eyes narrowed ever so slightly. "Were you running in the hallways?"

I was panting. Half of my face was covered with hair that had escaped my pony tail. I held a binder that was falling to the brink with scribbled on papers. Papers that didn't contain any homework. 𐄂

I couldn't look guiltier.

"Running to meet your expectations, ma'am." I felt my face burn. Like the flames of hell were licking closer to my skin for having said that. Yet, I pressed on. "The shorter my commute, the better I can use my time to not let you down." 𐄂

She snorted and shook her head. "Too much internet seems to give kids these days an answer for everything." 𐄂

I flashed all my teeth into as wide a smile as I could manage. "Does that mean I can go?"

"Sure," she said, and my feet pivoted away from her. But she stopped me next by saying, "Before you go, answer this one question for me, Vera."

A myriad of scenarios passed before my eyes. In one, she asked me if I was focusing on my studies. The answer was, nowhere near as much as I thought I would. In another one, she asked me if anyone was giving me any trouble. I'd give her a whole laundry list for an answer, starting by a certain boy whose last name evoked the coldest season, yet, whose eyes were as warm as the summer ocean. 𐄂

Yes, lots of trouble.

I squirmed as she asked, "Are you enjoying music?" 𐄂

That was unexpected.

I blinked. My mouth opened, as if about to tell her everything that had happened in the past few months. I only realized it much later, a er I kept running to the music room and burst through the open door that I'd said yes with a wide smile from ear to ear that for sure had shown my dimples. 𐄂

Ashton looked up from tuning his guitar and saw me come in.

He lit up. It came from somewhere within him and spilled all the way out from his body. He sat straighter, matched my smile and set his eyes on mine with no hesitation. 𐄂

"Thanks for coming in early," he said.

Yes, okay. I wasn't precisely running over to put my new jogging skills to the test. He called me and asked to meet him before band practice, said he wanted to show me something. I fixed up my hair as best as I could with an elastic band that was so stretched out, it could barely hold my endless bushy hair, and glided over to sit next to him as he patted the empty chair.

"Did you do your homework?"

I answered his question by pointing at the binder full of loose sheets of paper. I'd been so far removed from any kind of rock for my entire life that I had a lot to catch up with. My new homework had been to study some classics. Ash and Link gave me some recommendations but encouraged me to find other bands outside of those, and tell them what I liked best. I spent about a week stuck at '60s and '70s classics until I whined and moaned to them that I really didn't like those. This almost gave them strokes, but they let me move on to the following decades. My favorite so far were late '90s and 2000s. I could definitely identify with the general notions of not belonging, wanting something else, being mad at the status quo. 𐄂

And so as I listened to the songs, I began to daydream. Wouldn't it be nice if I could tell the world how I felt? Inadequate, small in the ways that mattered, big in the ways that shouldn't. Like I didn't matter. 𐄂

I slid a glance next to me as he found something on his computer. Well, I did matter to a few people. I wondered if he really was one of them.

"Give me your best one."

He extended his hand and waited for me to place a paper on top. But I couldn't decide, because I was sure none of them were any good.

"Um." I rummaged through the pages of notes that made some sense at times and none at others. I glanced up for a quick second and his eyebrows were raised up in a challenge. In a panic, I wondered if these notes would sound like straight up amalgams of the songs I listened to for inspiration. Or if any of this would be useful for writing an actual original song that made people's blood boil, starting by mine first.

He nudged me with his shoulder. "How about that one? The one you just passed."

What he pointed at was probably the one with the most scratches and scribbles. "Why that one?" 𐄂

"Looks like it gave you trouble but you stuck to it, because you kept changing it. You wouldn't let it go." My heart leapt to my throat as he smiled at me, so close that I could feel the heat radiate o of his body and start to melt mine. "It probably has the most heart out of all of them." 𐄂

I plucked the paper and handed it to him, clearing my throat as if that could do away with the sudden tension that set itself in my muscles, and could only be alleviated by molding my body against his. I had to remind myself that I had to be firm, that this infatuation he thought he had was just caused by the effect of music. That that was not enough to bring us closer in a genuine way.

He tore his eyes away from me and read the song. I couldn't help but watch him like a hawk, waiting for any reaction that my short little poem, of sorts, was a fresh steaming pile of horse shit.

Ash set the paper in front of him. "I like it," he said, to my shock. "Let's work with it. What's the vibe you want for this song?" 𐄂

I thought about it. "Liberating." 𐄂

I never admitted it to anybody, but this song was about my ma. It might've sounded like it was about a lover to anybody else, but to me it was all about letting go of what had been my mission for the past 17 years of my life: making her happy. 𐄂

He licked his lips and his eyes strayed down to mine. I felt them itch, as if they wanted to be ready in case he leaned in. And he was just close enough that he could snatch a kiss if he wanted to. But he looked back into my eyes as he asked, "What do you want to feel free from?" 𐄂

I was stunned when my first thought was, that right then I wanted to be free o our clothes. My mind cleared o of any other reason than that, but I was saved just before it got too awkward. The other guys strolled in then, and I was both relieved and disappointed to miss wherever this had been headed. Madison strutted over like she was on a catwalk, snatched up the piece of paper from us and whistled low. 𐄂

"Oh, a breakup song. I like it." She slid a sly look my way. "Got your heart broken recently, huh?"

Not really. Ashton may have momentarily shut my brain down with his proximity, but the reason why this song came to be was very much under the surface of my skin.

My heart just had been continually broken by my ma's disappointment in me.

I shrugged at her.

Lincoln took the paper from her hands and read the thing aloud.

I'm at the cusp of a change

A feeling that won't go away

Like I've realized

It wasn't me

It was you

All along

Like I've realized

It's time to say...

Goodbye

I got the future

On the tip of my tongue

When I say

Goodbye

Goodbye

I just wish you'd have become

My favorite regret 𐄂

Goodbye

And

I

Wonder

How you run away and never leave

You miss the train but are still here

As if you want to stay

And never let me free

But I've realized

It's time to say... 𐄂

I'd been ready for some heavy duty side eye but he nodded like he'd seen worse.

"Not bad, we can add more meat to it."

"Okay, let's do this," Quinn said, rubbing his hands together. His arm muscles bulged with the motion and I wondered if he'd got them mostly out of playing baseball or the drums. "I gotta go meet with the team before dinnertime." 𐄂

We all sat around Ash so that we could build some sort of melody before giving it a try playing it. Quinn missed his appointment, because two hours later, well into dinnertime, we took our positions. I grabbed the microphone and faced the empty chairs in the music room. Then a vertigo-inducing cacophony of sounds exploded from us. 𐄂

And that was how we started writing our first song together. 𐄂

SONG OF THE DAY: The Donnas - Take It O