

Chapter One: In the Room

"What did you say?" I asked Ms. Kimber, turning my head towards her.

"I was saying I could show you who else is going to be in the class with you since you're going to be moved to Mr. Harrison's third hour English," she answered, moving the screen so I could have a look.

This had to be a dream. But dreaming about school? No that just wasn't possible. My eyes quickly scanned the list of students to see if I knew anyone. Brandi, popped out to me and I was friends with her boyfriend, Mark; both of them had been kind to me for the most part. Right below her name was Candace's, who I had dated once last year. A quiet gasp escaped my lips as I came to the one name that had been floating around in my mind since eighth grade: Abigail McKee, or Abby as she was called by everyone—the girl I'd always wanted to ask out, but had never gotten up the nerve to ask. Once I realized that the rest of the names didn't stand out to me, I thanked Ms. Kimber as I left her office, mixing in with the other students in the hallway, all on their own paths to their lockers and classes.

"Hi, Seth. So you're in this hour now?" Mr. Harrison asked me as I walked into his classroom.

That was the cool thing about him; he knew all of his students' names and said hi to them no matter what, and if they looked sad or something, he'd ask about it.

"Yup, looks like it, Coach," I responded, looking for my normal seat in the back corner where I could be left alone by the other kids in the class.

This was the other thing; he didn't mind that most of us called him "coach," considering that he was the coach of the lacrosse team. It was either "coach" or calling him by his first name Frank since he didn't like being called "Mr. Harrison."

I sat down as the other kids continued walking in, looking around, and saying hi to coach and each other. Then she walked in. Time seemed to slow as I saw Abigail. She looked beautiful in her light blue blouse and tight dark blue jeans, her sleek blond hair pulled back into a short ponytail. Her blue eyes sparkled as she took in the room. The bell rang and just as Mr. Harrison moved to close the door, Candace quickly walks in.

"Not so fast," she says heading to her seat in the front row next to Abigail who let out a small laugh.

“One of these days, you’re not going to make it,” he responds with a chuckle as he moves to the podium at the front of the room.

“To start off, we have a new addition to our class,” he says looking over at me motioning for me to stand up.

“Hi I’m Seth and I’m an alcoholic”, I say earning a few laughs and what I think I might have won a smile from Abigail before I sit back down.

“Thank you for that wise guy. Moving on, the next few weeks will be spent working on your research paper on your favorite writer which will be due next month and be a fourth of your final grade. I’ll need to know who you picked by the Monday before spring break, so be thinking about it. Unless there’s no questions, you all can have free time,” Coach says before he heads back to his desk in the back corner of the room.

This was the other cool thing; unless we had an assignment, we could do almost anything we wanted. We could take a nap, do work from other classes, or even sit and talk to each other. I decided to take a chance by asking Abigail out and if it was a dream she’d say yes. I got up and walked up to the front of the room where she sat with her friends. As I walked over to them, I almost tripped over someone’s blue bag. Candace saw me first and arched an eyebrow silently wondering what I was up to. Before I started to speak I closed my eyes and took a calming breath.

"Before I started to speak, I decided to close my eyes and take a calming breath. As I opened them Candace asked, "Hi Seth. Is everything ok?" regarding my curiously.

“Um” was all I could say to get their attention before I suddenly lost my train of thought from nervousness. Oh, god please don’t let this be a repeat of Valentine’s day, when all I could muster was a weak “here” when I handed her a single chocolate rose before I scurried off. The bell, however, chose to go off at this moment further derailing my thought process or perhaps saving me from embarrassment. I went back to my desk, packed up my belongings, and headed out to the hallway.....only to find Candace waiting for me.

Chapter Two: At lunch and After

“Did you need to talk to me about the test we had in Government?” Candace asked since since I had missed this morning due to having my meeting with my counselor, Ms. Kimber.

"No, Mr Williams already knew I wasn't going to be in class today," I replied looking down the hallway. "I was hoping to talk to Abigail." I answered as we walked down to the commons. We walked down the hallway together, passing other classrooms and posters for various events, like an upcoming car wash to raise money for the science club, until we came to an intersection of hallways. We came to an intersection of hallways. The hallway to the right would take me to the cafeteria where the majority of the juniors ended up for lunch. It wasn't a strict social rule, but it had been heavily implied by the seniors, mainly due to the fact that the main doors were located in the commons. This meant that seniors would have easy access to their cars as needed during lunch to get whatever.

"About what?" She said as we stood in the doorway.

"Maybe going out Friday," I said looking around for where Abigail sat.

"Good luck," Candace answered as she headed off to get her own lunch.

I smiled as I spied Abby head back to her table with an apple and a bottle of water. I walked over to where she sat down to find her leaning against the wall, using the back of the chair as an armrest. The closer I got the more of their conversations I could hear.

"So who are you going to do your paper on?"

"I'm not sure. Any idea what you're going to be doing for spring break?"

"Not yet. Ugh, I can't believe I left my math at home."

"Are you going to go to Ben's party tonight?"

I stood on the edge of the group slowly working up the muster to speak, but before I could get a word out, Candace walked right past me.

"Hey, Abby, Seth wants to ask you something," Candace said sitting down across from her.

"What was it you wanted to ask me, Seth?" Abigail asked as she took a sip of water.

"Well, I was just wondering if you'd like to go out with me Friday?" I asked, My eyes following the apple she was rolling around on the table.

She froze as the rest of the table fell silent waiting for her answer. I started to get nervous as the seconds went by.

"I'll have to see what work will be like, but otherwise sure. I'll let you know Friday morning," she answered before taking a bite of the apple. It was clear by now that this wasn't a dream. Well, whatever was going on, I didn't mind it one bit for now.

I nodded and quickly went off to get my own lunch from the make your own sandwich bar. After making a roast beef and cheddar I sat down at a table where my friend, Alan, was eating nachos.

"Did I see you over at Abby's table?" He asked me while I sat down.

"Yeah, I finally asked her out," I answered taking a bite.

"And?"

"I'll find out in English on Friday."

After lunch I headed to my last class for the day, teacher aide. It wasn't so much a class as I just showed up, help grade papers, run errands for Mr. Williams, my government teacher. He taught freshmen U.S History along with Government. I had already talked to him before the meeting with Ms. Kimber, so I'd be taking the test now since I had missed it this morning. The test was pretty easy and for the rest of the class time, I graded papers and took part in discussions as needed. The bell went off and while everyone else went to their next class, I was lucky enough to be able to head home.

Leaving the building, I heard my name and turned around to see Candace.

"You want a ride home?" she asked pulling her car keys out of her bag.

"Sure, if it's no trouble," I said, glad that I wouldn't have to wait for the city bus. I followed her over to her car, a dark green Jeep Cherokee that she had nicknamed "The Tank" after getting in an accident during the summer between her sophomore and junior years.

"Still driving The Tank huh?" I said while getting in.

"Always and forever or at least until I can afford something, ...better," Candace eyed me before she went on. "You realize.... that if Abby does go out with you, it's going to be a one time thing right? I mean it will be a pity date like the one we went on last year." Candace says starting the car and pulling out of the parking space.

I just sat there thinking back to the date. Overall, I thought it had been nice, dinner and a movie. We had a good time; she had laughed at my jokes. But when I had asked about the chances of a second date when she dropped me off at home, she had given me the "I like you as a friend" speech. The rest of the car ride was in silence. I live on the other side of town, away from almost everyone I knew. Taking the bus would get me home in a hour, with the ride it took half that long. Our house was a simple one story: living room and kitchen in the front half; the two bedrooms, mine and my mom's; and the bathroom in the back half.

"Well, it will still be a date with the girl I've had a crush on since eighth grade," I say as I get out of her car. I sighed as I unlocked the door and waved back as Candace drove off. I knew

my mom would still be at work for another three hours. I dropped my backpack on the table in the kitchen and then went to my room to lay down for awhile. I was awakened by my mom knocking on my bedroom door. I opened it and saw she had the phone in hand, I took it from her wondering who could be calling. As far I knew only a couple of people had my number from school.

"This is Seth," I said as my mom headed back to the kitchen.

"Hey Seth, it's Abby," she said in her sweet voice.

In response I panicked and dropped the phone. Luckily it was still in one piece, I quickly picked it up and put it back to my ear.

"Hello? You there?"

"Yeah, sorry I dropped the phone. So, what's up?" I said trying to play it cool, as if her calling me was no big deal.

"Well, I was wondering if you'd like to go to Ben's party tonight."

"Yeah, sure. Here's my address-"

"See you soon," she said before I could say anything else followed by a click as the call ended.

I walked out to the living room to find my mom reading a book in her recliner. She looked up at me as I sat the phone down on the side table. I sat down on the couch and leaned back trying to comprehend what just happened.

"Who was it?" my mom asked looking over at me.

"It was Abigail, she's umm going to pick me up to go to a party."

"Oh, that's wonderful. Well, you know the rules: no staying out past midnight, and remember to take your house key with you; if you don't, you will be sleeping outside. Stay safe and have a good time," she said before going back to her book.

"Well, there's also one more thing. I asked her out on a date for Friday night," I said nervously.

She looked up again from the book and closed it making sure to mark her place before speaking, "Did she say yes?"

"She said she would let me know Friday morning if she would be able to."

“Okay then, if she’s able to, I’ll give you the money for dinner.”

“Thanks mom,” I say as I head back to my room to change clothes. I pull out a dark green polo and decide that my ten-dollar jeans would be fine. I go into the bathroom and splash some water on my face in a slight effort to look cleaner. As I’m pulling on the polo there’s a knock at the door and I hear my mom talking. I walk out to find Abigail talking to my mom. I let out a low whistle upon seeing her outfit as I got my shoes on. She’s wearing a purple tank top; that had a shimmery quality with black pants that were tucked into dark brown Ugg boots. The tank top really made her blue eyes pop. Her hair was still pulled back in the short ponytail and her lips looked to be apple red. She smiled turning to look at me.

“I’ll be sure to have him home by one, but no promises on if he’s in one piece,” she said to my mom causing my face to go bright red from embarrassment, pulling on a light jacket as I opened the door for her. We walked out to her black car.

Chapter Three: The Party

"Nice car. What kind is it?" I asked as we got into the car and I pulled my seat belt on.

"It's a Ford Mustang GT. My dad got it for me for my eighteenth birthday. Before driving this, I had a very ugly 1996 Dodge Intrepid," she answered, buckling her seat belt into place.

"Wait, you mean to tell me that you owned that car that looked like someone puked and called it a color?"

"Oh yes, does it surprise you?" she answered with a chuckle as we pulled out from the driveway.

"Yeah, it honestly does. Why did your parents punish you with that?"

"It wasn't really a punishment. I mean, yeah, at first I was pissed. But then I got over it and was happy I finally had my own car. Then on my 18th, when I got the 'stang, my dad explained that the Intrepid was just so I could get a good handle on driving and the responsibility of owning a car."

"So, I want to ask you something."

"I got your number and address from Candace. If that's what you were going to ask," I nodded thinking that made sense, also a little surprised that Candace still had my phone number and address.

"I was also wondering why you invited me and why you're not showing up with Candace or any of your other friends? Also, why a party midweek?"

"Well, Ben's parents go out of town once a month and so he holds a party. Candace is going to meet us there along with the rest of the gang. And as for the first part of your question, can I hold off on answering that till the night is over?" she answered pleadingly.

"Sure, I guess," I answered, wondering what the answer might be.

We came down the street that Ben lived on. Luckily his house was the only one on this street since his driveway was filled with cars and a line that went almost halfway down the street. I point out Candace's car and say, "Looks like she's already here and can you believe she calls it The Tank?"

"Yeah, I was in the car when she got in the accident. The other car's rear end was totaled, but nothing more than a broken headlight on hers."

We got out of Abigail's car and head up to the house. The door to Ben's house was open with a couple of guys standing outside holding cups and talking. I could hear the music playing, mixing with a number of folks talking. We walked past the two at the door without a word. Candace came over to us and smiled as she noticed me. She hugged Abigail and gives me a quick hug before speaking.

"So, that's why you wanted his info."

"I figured why not, and this way a certain person might leave me alone, you know?" she responded while looking around nervously.

"If you mean Paul, he's with the other baseball players standing around a keg out back. Vanessa was also wanting to talk to you something about DECA I think," Candace said.

I realized that I was brought to keep her ex from bugging her. This pissed me off, but I made sure not to show it as we headed into the living room. The living room was huge: my room could easily fit in here with space left over. There was a fireplace along one wall. The TV, which was a large flat screen, hung above it and there were also a number of couches around it.

"I'm going to go find Vanessa and then I'll be right back," Abigail said giving me a quick peck on the cheek, which surprised me. Before I could respond she followed Candace out of the living room. Luckily there was an open seat, so I quickly moved to it and sat down. I looked around, watching everyone. Two kids, one I recognized from Government were speaking close to me.

"Did you hear, some kid dove head first into a desk this morning."

"No, I didn't hear, but that explains the cop cars and ambulance I saw when I got there. Is the kid okay?"

They walked out of earshot before I could hear more, most of the other conversations I could understand were about spring break and who was dating who. I sighed wondering if it would wise to go find Abigail. Before I could make up my mind, her ex walked up to where I was sitting. He was wearing his letterman jacket and followed by a couple of other baseball players.

"Hey loser, I heard you showed up with my girl," he said, looking down at me. I slowly stood up, causing him to backup a little. He was a couple of inches taller than, so I had to look up at him.

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"She hasn't been your girl since she dumped you," I answered, looking him in the eyes. I remembered from a book that if you look a predator in the eye and refuse to back down, it will back off, or something to that effect. I hoped this also applied to jackasses. At this point, I realized everyone near us had stopped talking and was watching us. He moved a bit closer, and

that's when I was able to tell that he had been drinking. The smell of cheap beer was a little overwhelming at this distance, causing me to cough.

"You stupid little piece of crap," he said as he pulled back his right arm to punch me. I quickly moved to the left, pushing someone out of the way as gently as I could, muttering a sorry.

He had put enough weight behind the punch to throw off his balance, causing him to fall on the couch where I had just been sitting. Everyone laughed at him as he got up, looking at me with murder in his eyes.

"Paul, what the hell is going on here?" Abigail said, walking into the living room with her friends behind her.

"This little shit said you aren't my girl," he answered, slurring his words a bit .

"I haven't been "your girl" since I broke up with you around Christmas, you asshole, and this is another reason why I'm not with you. Let's go," she said with a slightly pissed off tone in her voice as she took a hold of my hand, which, under different circumstances, I would have been totally excited about. We the left the partygoers in silence as we walked out to her car. I could feel a few eyes following us. I wondered if it would be safe for me to make an appearance at school tomorrow.

"What was that about?" I asked, pulling my seat belt back on as she started up the car.

"I don't want to talk about it," she responded as she ran a red light.

At this point I wasn't even sure if I would make it home safely.

"You shouldn't be driving if you're angry," I said in an effort to lighten the mood.

She turned left and drove a little more sanely before taking a right and pulling into a park, where she pulled across two parking spaces before turning the car off. She just laid her head on the steering wheel as tears started to fall down her cheeks. Without saying a word, she got out of the car and walked over to the swings. I quickly followed and took the swing next to her.

"You wanna talk about it?" I asked, looking at her as she was wiping the tears, along with any makeup she may have had on.

"You think you know someone after going out with them for so long and then suddenly you learn you didn't know a thing about that person," she answered, looking off into the distance.

"I take it your ex back there wasn't the greatest of guys?"
She chuckled, shaking her head and turning to look at me.

“Oh, he was great at the beginning, but then it went quickly downhill after homecoming. I was picked as homecoming queen, you know, and he wasn’t picked as anything. That was our first big fight.”

“I heard about it, some of the nasty stuff he called you.”

“Yeah, well, the next couple of days he spent apologizing to me, buying all kinds of stuff—a new CD he knew I wanted, tons of jewelry, even a dozen roses. I finally gave in and told him I forgave him. God, I feel like an idiot now.”

“What lead to the break up?”

“At the Christmas dance, he and his buddies had snuck in some beers and were drunk. We went out to the parking lot and started kissing, but then he took it further than I wanted to. I had to shove him back, at which point he yelled at me again, calling me a bitch and a whore. He left me there and walked off,” she started to choke up after saying it all. I had heard a little about it, but not all of it. I moved the swing to get closer and hugged her. She hugged me back which made us spin around. We pulled away from each other, laughing a little.

“Remember, back during our freshmen year and you stuck a box to my locker?” she smiled reaching up to her neck. “You gave me a necklace with a penguin pendant. That was better than anything else I got that day,” she said, pulling the necklace out from under her tank top and showing it to me.

“Wow, you still have it. I was sure you would have thrown it away.”

She smiled again, letting the necklace drop back down, but not moving to put it back under the neckline tank top. “Who told you I like penguins?”

“Candace told me back when we used to hang out at lunch together. You two had the same science class, and the teacher wanted you to do a report on your favorite animal. You told her it was penguins, and so she told me along with which locker was yours. I’m guessing Candace told you it was me that left it for you?” I asked since I didn’t even leave a note with it. I was worried someone would have stolen the gift.

“After that year, I hung it up on my mirror so I can see it every morning and smile,” she said smiling, and then pulling the jacket tighter around herself. “I guess now I should give that answer to your question, but first I wanna ask you a question.”

“Okay, what’s the question?” I asked.

“Why me?”

“Why you, that’s your question?”

She nodded, waiting for answer. I sat there wondering what type of answer she wanted to hear. I decided to be honest and go with the truth.

“Well, to be honest, as you know, I’ve had a crush on you since eighth grade. Seeing you smile makes my day a lot better. I love how confident you seem whenever you do anything. You’re nice to everyone no matter if you know them or not. In fact, that’s what got my attention was back in eighth grade around Thanksgiving, I was walking down a hall with my arms swinging at my sides and you stopped; and despite being surrounded with the rest of the popular kids, you said to me that I would look better if I could stop the arm swinging when I walked,” I smiled, looking at her for a reaction.

She started to lean towards me. Time seemed to slow down, letting me take in every detail of her face. I just now realized that she had killer dimples and her eyes had this sparkle in them. She slowly closed her eyes, and so did I. I could smell her now, and it was a wonderful smell of sugar cookies. Just then a car horn went off, causing us both to jump a bit. We both started laughing as I reached over and moved a couple of strands of her hair back behind her ear. We looked to see a cop car pull up next to us as we walked back to the car.

“Hi, officers,” she said, smiling as the cop rolled his window down.

“The park’s closed, so go home, kids,” the cop responded, watching us.

“Yes, sir,” she said moving toward her door still wearing my jacket. I did the same and got in as she buckled her seatbelt. I sat there thinking back to that moment. Stupid cop, ruining my first kiss with Abigail. I wondered how her lips tasted. Then there was her smell. The sweet smell of sugar cookies...I wondered how she got that smell. Looking out the window, I quickly figured she was taking me home. Will she give me a good night kiss or a hug? I was hoping for the kiss, but I’d take the hug. Is she finally going to answer my question? She dropped me at home, giving me a hug before I got out of her car. She waited just long enough for me to unlock the door. The lights were off in the house. I figured that my mom decided not to wait up for me so she could ask me tons of questions. I was thankful for that. It would have been awkward explaining everything to her. I went into my room and took a glance at the clock to see what time it was. It was after ten p.m. I slipped into my bed and fell asleep, realizing that she still had my jacket.

Chapter Four: The Next Day

My alarm woke me up at 6:30 in the morning by giving me a mini heart attack. I slammed my hand down on the button, making it stop. I got up, grabbed a towel, and headed into the bathroom to take a shower. The shower helped wake me up. I stood under the spray of hot water, wondering how school was going to go. I sighed loudly as I got done cleaning myself up. I went back into my room and decided a green shirt and cargo pants would suffice for the day. I went into the kitchen to find my mom pouring herself a glass of milk.

“Good morning. Do you want a ride to school on my way to work?” she asked me as she pulled a pop tart out of the toaster.

I mumbled something that sounded vaguely like a “yes” as I opened up the refrigerator and pulled out a small bottle of chocolate milk. My mom went back to her room to finish getting ready for work when there was a knock at the door. I took a drink from the bottle as I walked over to the door wondering who would be knocking. The door opened, and it was Abigail wearing jeans that hugged her hips and lead down to her gleaming white tennis shoes that obviously had never been worn anywhere near dirt and to top it off, she had the necklace on top of a grey shirt, showing it off.

“I forgot to give you back your jacket,” she said handing it to me.

“That’s okay, you didn’t need to bring it to me right away,” I said tossing the jacket on a nearby chair.

“Well, I also wanted to offer you ride,” she said sliding a hand into her pocket to pull out her car keys.

“Just let me tell my mom and get my bag,” I went back into the house, leaving the door open, and I told my mom that I had a ride. I quickly grabbed my backpack and headed back to Abigail.

“Let’s go,” I said walking to the rear of her car.

She opened the trunk so I could put my backpack next her blue one. We got into the car and pulled out of the driveway.

“Is it okay with you if we go by Starbucks on the way to school? I need to get my morning caffeine.”

“Not one bit; I don’t have a class till second period anyway.”

“Lucky! How did you manage to pull that off?”

“I took a class at seven a.m both sophomore and junior years, along with a full schedule, so I didn’t get till out three last year.”

"So you just hang out for an hour before you have to actually show up?"

"I use the time to do any homework, or I take a nap on one of the benches," I said with a small chuckle. We pulled into the drive-thru at Starbucks. Luckily there wasn't anyone ahead of us. She lowered her window, and before the person on the other side of the speaker could say anything, she started to order.

"I'd like a venti caramel macchiato with double caramel and whip cream, please."

We pulled up to the window where she got her drink and paid for it. She took a sip, letting out a satisfied sigh as we pulled out onto the road to head to school. I sat there looking out the window, watching everything passing by. We pulled into the school's parking lot in about fifteen minutes. The way the parking lot was set up was almost the same way it worked at lunch. With a few changes, the closest row was for handicap, and then a row for the teachers. After that came the students, then seniors, then juniors, and then anyone else lucky enough to own a car. Abigail pulled into a space, which was the first of the student spaces. We got out and got our stuff from the trunk of the car. I started to walk away to head inside.

"Hey, aren't you forgetting something?" she said, moving to catch up with me behind a teacher's car.

"Thanks for the ride," I said, mentally kicking myself for not saying it sooner.

"Well, that's a good start, but not what I was looking for."

"Oh?"

"Yeah, traditionally if a guy and girl are going out, the normal send off is a hug along with 'see you later,'" she said, smiling as she reached out for my hand.

"So, we're going out...like a couple?"

"Maybe," she answered with a grin.

I blushed slightly, taking her hand in mine. A jolt of electricity shot through me. I was really holding her hand, and she wasn't pulling back hers. A smile formed on my face as we walked into the building. I glanced at Abigail, and she returned my smile while looking around for her friends. They were standing by the vending machines, so we headed over to them. She let go of my hand to give Candace a hug.

"Hey, guys, what's up?" Abigail asked, taking a hold of my hand again.

"Not much, just waiting for the bell to ring. I heard about the party last night," a guy I didn't know answered, looking at his watch. I stood there looking at them. I didn't know any of their names. I looked down at my clothes and it dawned on me that I honestly didn't fit in this group. I wondered once again why Abigail had said yes to going out with me, and then I started wondering why she had pulled me over to her friends. Was I just a way to show how nice she is to those outside of her social circle or was this some sort of prank like in the movie Carrie?

"Yeah, Paul was being a jackass. How come you weren't there Brandon?" Abigail said giving my hand a squeeze.

"I was babysitting for my folks," He answered.

"So who's he?" One of them said wrapping his arms around a girl while looking at me. I started to speak but was interrupted by Abigail.

"This is Seth, my new boyfriend. I took him to the party last night Chad, or were you too busy with your face stuck to Melody's to notice?"

"Speaking of that," he said as starting to kiss Melody's neck.

Melody swatted him on the head saying, "Down boy."

"Get a room you two. My name's Vanessa," Vanessa said, rolling her eyes at the actions of Melody and her boyfriend.

Before I could speak, the bell went off. Abigail turned to me and gave me a kiss on the cheek with a "see you later." I smiled and put my hand up to my cheek where she had kissed it. I sat down at a table and leaned against the wall. I slowly fell asleep, which to me was another sign that this wasn't a dream. I mean, who dreams of falling asleep inside of a dream? I was woken up by a kick to my right leg.

"Ow, what the hell? Other people's friends just shake them to wake them up or say something."

"Well, I'm not other people's friend; I'm yours," Alan said, sitting down tossing his backpack on the table where it landed with a thump.

"How wonderful for me. How long till the bell rings?" I asked, sitting up and sliding my hands down my face as a yawn escaped.

"Ten to fifteen minutes. You plan to tell me why you weren't home when I called last night?" Alan said, looking at me as he pulled out a book from his backpack. I leaned back against the wall as I told him about the party and what happened there. I told him a little about what happened at the park, but I left the part where she had almost kissed me. He didn't need to know every little detail about it. I then told him how I got to school this morning and let him know that I was worried she was just showing me off to her friends. He looked up from the textbook he was reading before speaking.

"I don't think so. She still has the necklace you gave her in eighth grade," I nodded. "So I think she has feelings for you. Not sure what kind, but it's clear she has them," he then went back to the textbook.

“So, why did you call anyway?”

“I was gonna see if you wanted to hang out with me at the mall today while I pick up applications,” he answered, slipping the text book back into his bag.

“Sure, I don’t have anything else going on tonight.”

“What about Abigail, do you have any plans with her tonight?” Alan asked as the bell went off.

“No, the official date is hopefully tomorrow night,” I answered as I picked up my bag and headed toward our first class, Government. We took our seats in the back row by the door and the teacher’s desk. Everyone else walked in talking about whatever had been on TV last night or, in some cases, the party. I got a few looks from a couple of people that had been at the party, but that was it. I sat there taking notes, wondering what Abigail was thinking. After the bell rang I left Government, after telling Alan I would meet him at his truck. I went over to my locker and tossed my History notes and textbook into it. I pulled out my English textbook and walked into the classroom to find a few others already in there. Conversation came to a complete stop while they all looked at me as I sat down. Then they quickly went back to talking to each other, so I figured they had been talking about the party. Abigail walked in and came over to me. She leaned down and gave me a hug before taking her seat up front. I smiled; pulling out my text book and putting it on my desk as Coach got the class settled and started to talk about the requirements for our papers. I just started thinking about Abigail and my plans with Alan and other random junk, like what I planned to have for lunch. By the time I figured out I would have a chicken sandwich, the the bell rang. I got up and started to put my stuff back into my backpack as Abigail walked over to me. I took her hand in mine, and we headed out to the commons.

“So what are you planning to eat today?” she asked, looking around for her friends.

“I’m thinking a chicken sandwich and a Pepsi.”

“Cool. I’m going to get a salad and water, and I’ll meet you at the table, okay?” she asked, waving to one of her friends.

“Umm . . . sure,” I responded as she headed off to get her food.

I walked up to the counter and got in line to get my food. I wondered if they would be okay with me sitting there or not. I still needed to let her know that I was planning on hanging out with Alan tonight, just in case she had any plans in store for me. The line made its way up to the counter and I got my chicken sandwich and drink. I then looked around to see if she had sat down. I spotted her at the same table at which she had been sitting the other day. My mind briefly wondered if they had the table reserved or not. I moved over to them, wondering where I was going to sit or if I need to pull a chair from another table over to sit with them. To my surprise, it looked like I had a seat that was being reserved for me. Abigail looked over at me standing there and motioned to the seat next to her. I took my seat and numbly said hello to everyone. They all greeted me back before going back into their own conversations.

“So Seth, what are your plans for Spring break?” Candace asked in between bites of her lunch. “Hang around here; work on my paper for English. What about you?” I responded before taking a bite of my own sandwich.

“Sadly, sticking around this dump. My parents decided that my grades weren’t good enough to go anywhere. Abigail, you still going to that resort down in Puerto Vallarta this year?” Abigail nodded as she took a sip of her water.

“Yup, I’m also hoping to find a good prom dress there, too, since it will be a month away once break is over,” she looked in my direction as she said it.

My mind panicked, wondering if she wanted me to take her to prom. Surely there must be others she would rather be seen with. But if that were true, why had she taken me to the party where most, if not all, of the seniors had seen or heard that I had been her date? The sudden realization hit me: I didn’t even have the money to pay for prom tickets or a tux, nor did I have any way of getting us there. I decided that I should just ask Candace as I changed the subject .

“Abigail, I’m going to be hanging out with Alan tonight. I hope you didn’t have anything planned,” I said before finishing the sandwich.

“No, that’s fine. I have to work tonight anyway.”

“Oh, where do you work at?”

“Hollister.”

The rest of the day passed by quickly and uneventful, but I kept wondering about the prom and Abigail. I hadn’t had a chance to ask Candace about it, so I decided to call her that night and ask her then. We pulled into the mall’s parking lot. The mall itself was one story. Next to the main entrance were the movie theater and the food court. Alan went over to the ticket counter there and picked up an application before coming back to my side.

“You don’t have to tag along with me to every place,” Alan said as he pulled out a small binder and slipped in the application.

I shrugged my shoulders and followed him around the mall. To the left of the movie theater, and leading away from the food court, was Eddie Bauer. I went in behind him and looked around while he grabbed the application. We repeated this process at a few more stores. As we walked into Banana Republic, Candace was walking out with a bag in her hand.

“Hey, Candace, can I talk to you?” I asked, stopping as Alan walked past me into the store.

“Sure, what is it?” She asked as she stopped and put the bag down in front of her. Alan came back out as I finished explaining my confusion about the prom and Abigail’s comments at lunch.

"Oh, hey, Candace, Seth. I'm gonna head back to the food court and fill these out," Alan said, putting the application in his binder with the others.

"So, Candace, can you help me out?" I looked at her as she picked up the bag.

"Sure, but first we have to go meet someone and it might take awhile," she answered with a sly grin.

"I'm gonna get a ride home with Candace, so I'll see you later, Alan." I glanced at her to make sure it was okay, she responded with a slight nod picking up her bag. Alan nodded as he headed to the food court. Candace started walking towards the exit. I followed her wondering what her plan for helping me was. We ended up going downtown to the bank building. I still wasn't sure what her plan was until we went inside and took the elevator up to the fourth floor. The sign next to the glass door said "Greysteel Investment."

"You want me to meet her dad? Are you nuts?" I said almost in a whisper as we walked in.

"No more than you, but you'll need his help and permission if you're going to take Abby to the prom," she answered walking up to the receptionist. The receptionist looked up at us from her computer.

"Can I help you?" she asked, looking at us as if we didn't belong in the office. I honestly couldn't blame her for the look since I really did feel that way.

"I need to talk to Mr. McKee; it's about his daughter Abigail," Candace said. The receptionist picked up her phone and spoke in it before turning her attention back to us.

"If you'll have a seat over there, he'll be out in a few minutes," she pointed to a couch and other chairs surrounding a table that was covered with magazines. We both sat down in separate chairs. Candace looked like she was used to, while I was terrified out of my mind. I haven't even met Candace's parents. We sat for what seemed like forever before a large man came out with a worried expression on his face. Once his eyes saw Candace his expression soften a little. She stood up and gave him a quick hug.

"Candace, everything okay with Abby?" he asked his voice deep and reassuring.

"Everything is fine, sir. Can we go into your office?" she asked as I stood up and walked over to both of them. He nodded as he turned and headed down a hallway lined with pictures of buildings and people. His office wasn't that far, there were a number of photographs along the walls and on his desk. The ones on the walls I figured were important people from the city, while the ones on his desk were of Abigail and her mom. I took one of the chairs that faced the desk while Candace took the other. I wasn't sure if I was going to have to say anything or if I could just stay silent.

"Well, this is Seth Curlin."

I reached across his desk to shake his hand, and he shook it, his grip firm and tight.

"Oh, so you're the boy Abby took to the party. Go on."

I just nodded my head, wondering if Abigail had told him anything about me or if he just planned to kill me at some later time and place.

"Yes sir." I answered hoping to cover up the fact that I was nervous.

"Okay, so then go ahead and explain," he said, leaning back in his chair with a more relaxed expression on his narrow face.

"Well, as you know that during spring break, Abby's going to be looking for a prom dress."

"And let me guess," he interrupted Candace before she could get to the part where I was confused, "She said something and now Seth is confused about it. Candace, if you'll go back out into the outer office so I can have a private talk with Seth."

Candace stood up, gave me a look that said "good luck," and walked back into the outer office with her bag.

"Okay, Seth, care to tell me what's going on between you and my daughter?" he asked, leaning back into his chair. I let out a sigh and told him about the party. It actually felt good to tell someone everything. He nodded as I went on telling about the necklace from eighth grade, then the park, but leaving out the kiss. I also told him about the comments that Abigail made during lunch about prom. When I got to my concerns, he smiled, nodding his head. I wondered if the smile meant he was glad I wouldn't be able to take her to prom or if he figured out a way to kill me and leave no evidence.

"So my daughter has set her sights on you."

"Yes, sir, and I really like your daughter, too."

"Okay, here's what I'm going to do: I'm going to help you get a tux and transportation, along with help for dinner, but it's on you to ask her out. I figure you'll ask Candace for help with that," he said, pulling out a notepad and writing on it.

"Aren't you worried about me breaking her heart or something?" I asked nervously, running my hands over each other endlessly.

"I am, but I figure you won't break it . . . unless you lied to me. I want you to take this note to Malcolm Foster at Formal Warehouse on Tenth street, and he should get you all set up with a tux. I'll need your number to finish out the rest of the details. I'll make sure Abby buys the tickets for both of you as well if she hasn't already," he stood up and stretched out his hand. I shook his hand and walked out of the office in a daze. Candace stood up, putting down the magazine she had been reading and said goodbye to Mr. McKee. Once we got back to the elevators, I explained what happened.

"Abby must have given him an earful, if he's doing all this," she said laughing as we left the building.

We got to Formal Warehouse and walked in. Candace went over to the dresses, while I made my way up to the counter.

"Excuse me, but I have a note for Malcolm Foster." I said as I put the folded paper on the counter. The woman at the counter took the note and headed into a doorway, that I guess lead to the manager's office, because a few moments later a balding man walked out with the note in hand looking surprised.

"I'm Malcolm Foster and it looks like Raymond wants me to get you ready for prom," The man as he came around the counter and leading me over to the men's section. I figured

Raymond must be Abigail's dad's first name and also wondering what the note said. For the next half hour, I stood in a fitting room getting measured. It was a very odd experience, from what Malcolm said, he and Abby's dad had gone to college together. He had also helped him get started with his business. That must have been why, it wasn't an issue to be doing this I guessed. Afterwards Candace took me home. I came inside to find my mom hanging up the phone.

"That was Abby, she said she looks forward to dinner tomorrow night," she smiled heading into the kitchen with me behind her. I then explained why I wasn't home when she came home. She was pleasantly surprised and glad that it looked like I was going to go to prom. She asked me if there was anything she could do to help, so I gave her Mr. McKee's phone number and explained that she should ask him.

Chapter Five: Friday

I woke up Friday morning excited about the night that laid ahead. I quickly got dressed and headed into the kitchen wondering if Abigail was going to pick me up again. I found the answer in the form of a note on the refrigerator:

Seth- Abby called and said she wasn't going to be able to pick you up.

After reading the note, I walked back to my mom's bedroom and knocked on the door.

"Oh, good you're awake. You saw the note?" She answered opening the door fully dressed.

"Yeah, I'll go get my stuff and meet you at the car," I said heading back to my bedroom. I quickly realized I had left my backpack in Alan's truck the other day. As we started to pull out in our car, Alan pulled up in his red truck. I hopped out of our car and got into his.

"Hey dumb dumb, you left your junk in here," he said pulling away from the house. As we headed to school I explained what had happened after I went with Candace.

He laughed saying, "Well, it looks like you've got a date for the prom. Now all you have to do is meet her mom and hope she doesn't kill you. Also hope that Paul doesn't find out because he will kill you."

"Thanks for that thought, you jerk," I said in response.

He laughed again as we pulled into the school parking lot. As we walked up to the front doors, I looked to see if Abigail's was here.

"Looking for your girlfriend's car?" Alan said attempting to stay serious. My ears went pink from embarrassment as I nodded.

He pointed to her car saying, "She's here."

We went inside and sat down at a table in the commons.

"So, are you going to go to the prom?" I asked Alan as he pulled out a book from his bag.

"I may ask Lacy."

"Whose that?" I said sitting up becoming more interested.

"She's in my AP German four class She's also cute," he confessed.

"Cool, well nap time." I said as I closed my eyes.

After what felt like five minutes the bell went off waking me up. We headed to government.

"Hey Candace, Brandon" I said walking by their desk to mine in the back. Mr. Harrison had us taking notes, and talking about a test next week. After the bell rung, I made my way to english finding Abigail standing outside the door waiting for me. She gave me a hug and a kiss on the cheek. We walked into the room holding hands before going to our separate seats. Once the bell went off and everyone settled down, I noticed that Candace didn't make it this time.

"Okay, everyone, just a quick reminder: Have your author picked by monday, " Coach commented before going back to his desk. I got up and walked over to where Abigail sat

with her friends and joined them. I was greeted with a mix of hi and 'sup. I noticed the necklace was out in the open and smiled seeing it.

"Hey, Seth. Sorry about this morning but I had to run a quick errand for my mom," Abigail explained.

"It's okay, Alan gave me a ride."

"Good, I have a DECA thing after school, so I'll pick you up about 6-6:30 for our date." Abigail continued before I could respond; "I'm also going to miss having lunch since I'll be eating with the student council."

"Oh, cool." I lamented.

As a way to console me she kissed my cheek, which admittedly did make me feel better. The rest of the day passed by in a whirl of boredom.

I looked at the clock and smiled, seeing that it was almost time for Abigail to pick me up for our date. I quickly pulled on my blue shirt and shoes. I went into the living room to find my mom. She reached into her purse and pulled out a couple of twenties, handing them to me. I knew she expected the change back. I told her thanks as I put the money into my wallet and slipped it into my pocket. I flattened my hair a bit, but beyond that, I couldn't think of anything else to do. I grabbed my jacket as I walked out of the house. Roughly five minutes later she pulled up in her car. I jogged over and got into the passenger's seat, smiling. She leaned over and gave me a hug. The silver necklace complimented her dark blue shirt and dark jeans nicely.

"Where to?" she asked as we pulled out from my house.

"Olive Garden," I answered, putting my seatbelt into place as we turned on the main road.

"How did you know it was one of my favorite places?" she asked me as we stopped at a red light.

"Oh, wow, I didn't know that," I was a little startled since I honestly didn't know that it was among her favorite places to eat; I just kind of picked it at random, along with the fact that I had never eaten there but had heard good things about the food. We soon pulled into the parking lot. I quickly got out of the car and went to her side and opened the door for her. She looked up at me in surprise and smiled.

"First time anyone has done that for me," she said, getting out and giving me a kiss on the cheek before taking a hold of my hand. I closed her door and we walked into the restaurant. As we were taken to a booth in the back, I looked around to see if I could spot anyone from school. It looked to be that no one from school was there right now.

"I know your favorite animal is the penguin; what's your favorite color?" I asked as we looked over the menus.

"It would have to be cobalt blue. I'm saving up to get my car painted it. What's yours?" she answered with a twinkle in her eye.

"Dark green," I said as the waitress came back to take our order.

"I'll have the herb grilled salmon with a mixed berry sparkling water please," Abigail ordered as she handed over her menu.

"And for you, sir?" The waitress said writing down Abigail's order.

"I'll have the cheese ravioli and water with lemon," I responded handing over my menu.

"I met your dad the other day," I said as the waitress walked away.

"I know, he told me all about it when I got home after work. If it means anything he

seems to like you better than Paul. But then again he doesn't really like jocks to begin with," she stated.

"Well, then that's good for me since I'm totally not a jock."

"True, you aren't a jock," She replied laughing, as the waitress brought our drinks.

"I know your dad works at Greysteel Investments, but what does your mom do?" I asked before taking a sip of my water.

"She's a real estate agent, what about your mom and dad?"

"My parents are divorced, but my mom works for the federal government at the Social Security Office." I answered honestly. They had divorced when I was little and from what my mom had told me it was for the better.

"Sorry to hear about the divorce. What kind of music do you like?" She asked me, quick to change the topic.

"Well, I enjoy a little of everything."

Our conversation stopped while our food was brought to us, and then we started to eat.

"Mmm, this is good," she said, taking a bite of the salmon. I nodded in response since my mouth was full. She was right the food was good.

"What are your plans for college?" I asked after I swallowed the bite I had before taking a drink.

"I plan to go to Weber State University," she answered before taking another bite of her food.

"Where's that at, and what do you plan to major in?"

"It's in Utah. I'm going to major in business administration. I went with it because I have family that lives near the campus, so I won't have to worry about getting a dorm. What are your plans?"

"I haven't decided fully yet, beyond going out here to the community college and starting there." It's true; I honestly hadn't made up my mind yet. Everyone I knew had at least some idea of where they wanted to go and what they wanted to do, but not me. I was leaning towards something with computers or maybe politics.

"Oh, that's a good place to start," Abigail answered, smiling as the waitress came to take our plates away; she asked if we wanted anything for desert. We both shook our heads, and the waitress gave us the little binder with the ticket before taking away our plates. I took it and put the money my mom had given to pay for the meal in it. After the waitress took the money and brought back the change, we went back out to Abigail's car.

"Did you have anything else in mind, or was it just dinner?" Abigail asked, pulling on her seatbelt and starting the car.

"Nope, dinner was it."

She pulled out of the parking lot, turning left.

"I'm guessing you've got a plan?" I asked, looking out the car window.

"I always have a plan, you should get use to it," she let out a little puff as she said this.

"Mind sharing this plan with me?"

"No, it's a surprise."

We took a few turns off of Main Street before I figured out where we were heading. It

looked like we going to what everyone called “make out point.” It was a good size hill that overlooked the town. I wondered why we were going to it.

“Umm . . . why are we heading to ‘make out point’?” I asked nervously as we came up to the top of the hill. It looked like there were already a number of cars parked there.

“To be honest, I love the view from up here,” she answered, pulling into the makeshift parking lot and being sure to park a small distance away from everyone else. She then turned the car off and got out. I quickly followed her to sit on the hood. A flicker of hope rose in my chest; maybe we’d finish that kiss that got interrupted. I sat down on the hood next to her and she reached out and took my hand in hers, smiling.

“So I still haven’t answered that question you asked me before the party,” she said nervously as she laid her head on my shoulder. I had honestly forgotten about it.

“The reason why I said yes, and invited you to the party along with prom is..well, you’re a breath of fresh air for me,” she said moving her head so she could look me in the eyes.

“What do you mean?” I inquired.

“Well, I mean, you’re different than the others I hang out with. Different in a good way,” she said quickly going on before I could interrupt her; “You’re down to earth, and as far I can tell you aren’t putting up a facade, by that I mean you don’t care if anyone knows the real you. Oh and you’re pretty cute too,” she answered looking into my face searching for a sign that I might be angry climbing off the hood to stand in front of me.

I sat there dumbstruck as a large smile formed on my lips. It wasn’t an answer I had expected but nevertheless it was one I liked. I started to lean down to kiss her on the lips, as I did so I caught another whiff of that sugar cookie smell from her. I ended up slipping faster than I thought knocking us both to the ground laughing. We stood up dusting ourselves off.

“You can really see the town from here,” I said taking a hold of her hand as she smiled and looked.

“Yup, it’s an awesome view. Time for the bad news. I have to work tomorrow and Sunday,” She spoke with a hint of sadness in her voice as she pressed her head into my chest. I did the only thing I could think of which was to kiss the top of her head. It just seemed right for the moment.

“That’s okay, Saturday at my house is chore day,” I responded as she slowly moved away from me. We walked over to the drivers side of the car and I opened the door for her. She flashed me her smile as she got in.

Chapter Six: Monday and Tuesday

I woke up Monday morning hearing the phone ringing, I got up out of my bed and looked at the clock which read six. Who the hell calls at six in the morning, I thought as I went to the phone and picked it up.

"Hello, this is Seth," I said with a yawn hoping the other person would get the hint that they woke up me up.

Instead I got a laugh that jolted me awake.

"Sorry for waking you up Seth, it's Abby and I wanted to let you know I was going to come by and pick you up around seven fifteen, if that's okay," Abigail said.

"That'll be great," I answered happily.

"See you soon," she responded before hanging up.

"Who was that?" My mom asked walking into the living room.

"Abigail was calling to see about picking me up for a ride to school," I replied putting the phone down.

"Okay," was all that my mom said with a yawn as she headed back to her room.

"So, how was work?" I asked as we pulled out from my house.

"It sucked, I'm honestly thinking about quitting."

"What happened?"

"Well, I got into an argument with a customer over the return policy. Then last night, I got into it with another coworker over hours."

"Over hours?"

"Like which shift to take, I'm in high school so I can't do opening you know? So, which shift was I asked to cover...opening. It just pisses me off sometimes," she explained. We went by Starbucks and she got her normal drink, she also got me a Vanilla frappuccino.

"Thanks!" I exclaimed enjoying the taste.

"Kein problem" She answered with a grin.

"Huh?"

"It means no problem in German."

"I didn't know you were taking German. What hour do you have it?" I asked impressed.

"Frist with Woodward. She's awesome, and as long as I tell her my drink order in German, she doesn't mind me having it. I also had to do a one page essay in German on the history of coffee in Germany." She answered before taking a sip of her drink.

"My other friend Alan has that for third. I know you have AP English and AP German, what else are you taking" I asked before taking a drink.

"First hour is AP German, second is Marketing, then English, followed by Year Book and lastly Calculus. On Tuesday nights, I do a concurrent enrollment class of kickboxing to take care of the phys ed requirement to graduate," she answered pulling in to the parking lot. I didn't need to ask what she meant, since I had done the same thing but during the summer with weight training. It had earned me a college credit along with dealing with the graduation requirement.

"What's your day look like?" Abigail asked as we got out of the car.

"I have second hour Government with Candace, followed by English, then my last class is Teacher Aide" I answered coming around the car and taking her hand in mine.

"How come you ended up in third hour English, you didn't start the year in there. Not that I'm complaining," She inquired giving my hand a squeeze.

"Well, my old schedule was showing up for second hour government, followed by Ap Psych then fourth hour english, lunch and end with Teacher aide. But since Mr. Davidson quit, and they couldn't find someone suitable to teach AP psych, so I moved english to third and lunch to first lunch." I explained as we headed into school. We found her friends sitting at a table laughing. We all greeted each other with hugs or just a simple hello.

"So, this is a real thing?" Candace asked looking at Abigail.

"If by 'this' you mean Seth being my boyfriend instead of just a one time thing, then yes. Is it going to be an issue?" Abigail responded arching an eyebrow.

"Not with me, but with him it might be." She replied nodding her head toward Paul who was just coming in.

"Yeah, well if he has an issue he should really get over it. It's been months since we broke up," Abigail commented after a quick look over at Paul.

"He's got no reason to be pissed, he's dating Olivia from what I hear," Melody added.

"That tramp?" Vanessa asked looking over at Melody,

Before Melody could answer, her boyfriend Chad came up behind her and wrapped his arms around her kissing her on the neck.

"Sorry I'm late babe, but my car wouldn't start so I had to get a jump from my dad," He explained as he sat down next to her.

"I'll see you in english Seth," Abigail said when the bell went off. Everyone else got up and headed off to their classes.

"Looks like you got some new friends." Alan said as he sat down. I didn't say anything in response because I was wondering if I was really friends with any of them other than Abigail and Candace.

"Anyway, I have an interview after school at Eddie Bauer." He said pulling out his government textbook from his bag.

"Cool. I'll take the bus home in that case."

After government, I made my way to english and was greeted with a hug and a kiss on the cheek from Abigail. Once the bell rung and everyone settled down, coach explained that he wanted us to write down who we were going to do our paper on along with either five things about that writer or why we chose that author. I was going to go with John Grisham, I quickly wrote down five things about him that I knew:

1. His first book *A Time to Kill* was rejected 28 times. Wynwood Press took a chance and printed a first run of 5000 copies in 1989.

2. John Grisham was already working on his next book *The Firm*, the day after completing work on *A Time to Kill*.

3. Ten years as a lawyer

4. Has written sixteen books

5. Was a member of the Mississippi House of Representatives.

I got up and put the paper in the inbox on coach's desk before going over to Abigail's. As I came up behind her, I caught Candace looking at me, so I moved my finger to my lips

motioning for to keep quiet. She smirked as she tilted her head as an acknowledgment. I then poked Abigail in her side causing her to jump and let out a little yelp.

"Who the hell..." She started to say as she turned around.

I grinned as I spoke "Boo."

She looked at me with a quick flash of murder in her eyes as she spoke, "Next time, you sneak up on me, I may just backhand you instead." She then started laughing at seeing the horrified expression on my face, "I'm joking."

My face relaxed as I commented, "Oh good, cuz you'd more than likely seriously hurt me."

"Damn straight." She said confidently and I was being honest since she told she was taking kickboxing.

At lunch, we separated to go get our food. I looked around and saw Alan sitting with a red headed girl who I guessed was Lacy. Good for him I thought as I headed to one of the counters.

On my way Paul stopped me and started speaking, "You're the one who's going out with Abby."

I noticed that those who were close to us turned to watch, I swallowed hard not sure what to say. He kept looking at me waiting to see if I was going to do anything.

"I am and do you got a problem with that?" I said trying my best to sound confident but failing.

The next thing I knew was that I was on the ground surrounded by people and having some ice applied to my face by Abigail. The vision in my left eye was blurry and the ice stung causing me to wince .

"Sorry, but this should help keep the swelling down, let's go to the nurse. Security took Paul."

We made our way to the nurse's office. In the office was a weight scale, a cot for students to lay on. The nurse was sitting at her desk when we came in and looked up from some paperwork. She got up and came over to us with a worried expression on her face.

"What happened?" she asked motioning me to set on the cot. I sat down as Abigail explained how Paul had sucker punched me. The nurse then went back to her desk and opened a mini fridge that I hadn't seen and pulled out an ice pack.

"I'll need to inform admin and call your parents Seth," she said handing me the ice pack. I put it over my eye nodding.

"Thanks Abigail," I managed to say as she hugged me tight. The nurse started to fill out a form on her desk when the bell went off.

I started to stand up but the nurse spoke, "You're not going to class, I want you to stay here until I talk to your parents and the assistant principal; Mr. Jacobson. However, Ms. McKee will have to go to class."

Abigail gave me another hug saying, "I'll come by and check on you, if you're gone I'll call as soon as I can." I simply nodded as I sat back down on the cot as she left the room.

Later that night at home, I reflected on what a crappy day it had become. I hadn't gotten in trouble, but from what Mr. Jacobson had told me and my mom Paul was going to be suspended for two weeks and benched for three games, if not kicked off of the baseball team. I wondered what tomorrow was going to be like at school. I was jolted out of my thoughts by a knock on my bedroom door. As I opened it I caught a whiff of sugar cookies and smiled.

"Well this is was unexpected," I said hugging Abigail.

"I figured an in person check up would be better than a phone call,so how are you doing?" she explained hugging me back.

"I'm doing okay," I answered.

"You up for going out to get a bite to eat?" Abigail asked as she started heading toward the front door.

"Sure," I replied following her.

"Candace offered to slash Paul's tires for you," Abigail said while driving.

"Tell her thanks, but that's a bit much. He may be kicked off the baseball team." I explained.

"She offered me the same thing when she found out he cheated on me," she commented with a laugh that sounded like music to my ears.

"So, where are we going?" I asked.

"Ellie's sandwich shop. It's downtown on Fourth street," she answered.

Upon entering the shop I was inundated by the pleasant aroma of baking bread from the back.

"You're here early Abby," said a woman who looked to be old enough to be a grandma from behind the counter.

"Well Ellie, I'm on a date. This is my boyfriend Seth," she waved her hand in my direction.

"Oh, that's wonderful. I take you'll want your usual: grilled ham and cheddar on sourdough?" Ellie asked.

"You know me so well," Abigail answered

"What can I get you young man?" Ellie asked looking to me.

I quickly looked at the menu before making up my mind.

"I'll have a roast beef and swiss on rye along with a bottle of water please,," I responded as Abigail reached into her purse to pull out a card to pay with.

"That will be twenty-two dollars and sixty-seven cents," Ellie said as Abigail handed over her card.

We made our way over to a table that was nestle in a corner sitting down across from each other.

"You come here often?"

"Yup, after I get off of work on the way home."

"Speaking of work, how come you aren't working tonight?"

"Well, I quit."

Before she could explain further our food came. Abigail's came with a bottle of apple juice. We started to eat in silence. This one of the best sandwiches I had in a very long time.

Seeing my expression Abigail spoke up "Good stuff right?"

I nodded as I took a drink of the water.

"So, you quit? Are you going to find another job?" I asked hesitantly.

"I'll start looking after spring break, on the bright side it means more time for you," she answered with a smile.

"Won't your parents be mad?"

"Naw, as long as I find another job within a month or at least have an interview it will be fine."

Wow, if I had a job and suddenly quit my mom would be ticked off at me, I thought as I took another bite. Too soon for my taste buds I had finished the sandwich. I took one last drink of my water and looked over at Abigail's plate and saw that she too had finished hers. I stood up and took a quick glance around to see where I should return the trays, before taking them back up to the counter. I came back to our table to find Abigail standing and fixing her ponytail. I smiled watching her.

"What are you smiling about?" She asked with a grin.

"Just watching you." I answered as we headed to the door, which I opened for her.

"Like what you see?" She asked as we headed to her car.

I rubbed the back of my neck slightly embarrassed as I responded "Well yeah."

She laughed watching me as I came over and opened the car door for her.

"Well, I have some news for you about my looks."

"Don't tell me, you're getting a nose job?" I said teasingly. Her response was a playful slap to my chest.

"No you jerk....wait what's wrong with my nose?"

"Nothing, it's cute just like the rest of you." I said as I poked her nose gently.

She scrunched up her face in mock disgust as she explained, "I'm thinking of dying my hair or maybe going with black highlights."

I sat there imagining what her hair would look like and voiced, "I think it would look great." Her eyes lit up like I told her she was voted prom queen. I guess I said the right thing because she reached over and hugged me tight giving another chance to catch her scent of sugar cookies.

As we pulled into my driveway she gave me another hug and kiss on the cheek say, "I'll swing by around seven to pick you up, okay?"

"That sounds like a plan, and thanks for dinner tonight."

"Your welcome and good night."

"Good night." I responded as I got out of the car and headed inside with a grin on my face.

Tuesday morning came with a light rain and a pleasant surprise. My eyes went wide as I sat down in the passenger seat of the car. Abigail still had her trademark ponytail, but there were now streaks of black all through her hair.

"Well, what do you think?" she asked turning to look at my reaction.

"It looks amazing."