



# The Band Geek (The Jocks and Nerds Collection #2)

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**Category:** Sport

**Description:** I've hated Jocks ever since one broke my heart in highschool. I was humiliated by the whole football team and bullied by the rest of the school for being a band geek.

Now I'm in college and I'm not a little naive girl anymore. I swore to myself, I won't let anyone ever make me feel that way again.

Then Sawyer Jackson enters my life. He is everything I hate and nothing I need.

Or so I thought.

**Total Pages (Source):** 11

# Page 1

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## ONE

A pillow crashing into my head startles me awake, and I jump up, practically falling off the couch in the living room. My head is pounding, and I squint my eyes to keep the bright daylight from stinging. My roommate and lifelong best friend, Talon, stands in the living room with a bowl of cereal in his hands, staring at me.

“Don't you have class?”

“Fuck,” I say before standing and running my fingers through my hair, rushing to the door to slip on a pair of shoes and grab my keys. Thankfully, the university is only a five-minute drive from the apartment, so I won't be too delayed getting there. Professor Nichols is difficult to deal with, and I know I'm only getting on his bad side by arriving to class fifteen minutes late.

I park the car and run inside, ignoring some of the guys from the team as they wave at me and try to talk. This is the last time I have people over to watch a football game when I have class in the morning.

All eyes are on me as I walk into the classroom, and I can't help but feel a little embarrassed.

“Nice of you to finally join us, Sawyer,” Professor Nichols says with a sigh, gesturing to the desks in the room. I make my way to an open seat toward the back of the room and drop my backpack beside it, leaning back in the chair to try to focus on the lesson. “I know all of you are wondering what the final project will be this semester, and you'll be pleased to know it's a group assignment.”

Murmurs fill the room as Professor Nichols crosses his arms and waits for it to die down. Some people are immediately happy to hear it's a group assignment, including myself. Others, not so much. I enjoy learning about history, but I'm not exactly planning on being valedictorian. I'm busy enough with the football schedule this semester as well as constant practices and strength training in the gym to worry about an elective history class. That being said, it's imperative that I maintain a 2.5 GPA just to remain on the team.

“For the project, I will be randomly assigning groups and topics for research projects. You will be researching one of the topics we've discussed over the course of the semester and presenting a visual aid to the class,” Professor Nichols continues, grabbing a clipboard from the desk and looking down at it. He starts reading names, and I listen carefully for mine. “Covering the section on the Renaissance era will be Sawyer Jackson and Rowen Peebles.”

Rowen Peebles? Who is that?

I look around the room to try to make eye contact with my partner only to find a girl sitting in the front desk looking over her shoulder at me with a scowl on her face. She purses her lips and turns back to the professor, her shoulders slumping slightly. Honestly, I don't know her very well. I didn't even know her name before she looked at me.

Of course, I've been in class with her all semester, so I know a little bit about her. She is the kind of girl who always raises her hand when the professor asks a question and gets disappointed when he doesn't call on her. She is a know-it-all. She would ask about the homework when it isn't collected because she knows she did well and needs that validation when it's returned to her. Being on the football team, many girls throw themselves at me, but Rowan isn't one of them. No, she's not like a lot of the other girls I've met.

Even though I don't know her very well, I'm looking forward to working with her. As I've said, I don't get the best grades, and I know the chances of her taking over the project are high. This is a guaranteed A for me. With a final project that's almost half of my grade for the entire semester, I can consider this class done and passed.

As always, a minute before class is scheduled to be over, everybody begins packing their bags to leave. The professor waves us all off in annoyance, reminding us that the project is due at the end of the month.

I grab my backpack and turn toward Rowan, expecting to talk to her about a time to get together for the project, but she immediately rushes to the desk to talk to Professor Nichols. I lean against the desk and wait for her.

"Is there any way I can have another partner?" she asks, pleading with the professor. "I can work alone if there isn't anyone else too."

Professor Nichols shakes his head and puts the strap of his bag over his shoulder, eager to leave the room and get a move on with his day. "Sorry, Rowan. The groups are already decided, and a majority of the grade is based on your performance as a group. I can't let you do this alone."

"Let's face it, I'm going to be doing it by myself anyway," she says, huffing and crossing her arms in front of her.

Ouch. I mean, it's the truth, but hearing her say it makes me look like an asshole.

"You can't know that until you get started," Professor Nichols says, looking at his watch to signal his need to get away. "Look, if things aren't going well at the end of the week, come talk to me then. But you have to at least try."

He waves goodbye at her and walks out of the room, leaving Rowan and me alone.

She turns around and glares at me, shaking her head in disappointment as she packs the textbooks and binders she had neatly stacked on her desk into her oversized backpack.

“Maybe giving me a chance could be a fair option?” I say, strolling across the room to stand in front of her.

She rolls her eyes and sighs. “I don't need to give you a chance. I know your type. You expect to just sit back and let the band geek do all the work so you can get a good grade.”

I mean, she's got me. But I have no intention of giving her the satisfaction of winning this argument.

“That's not true. I didn't even know you were in the band,” I say, shrugging my shoulders.

She lets out a sarcastic laugh as she puts both straps of the backpack around her shoulders, her spine immediately straightening as the weight of it practically pulls her back.

“Of course not. You wouldn't pay attention to the band playing on the sidelines, only the cheerleaders throwing themselves at you.” Once again, she's right. Other than a few passing glances on the field, I haven't really spent any time getting to know anyone from the band. I open my mouth to think of a response, but she shakes her head and cuts me off. “Whatever. There's no use arguing about this. We can't change partners, so we're stuck together. Do you have another class right now, or can we go to the library and get started?”

My head is still pounding from the minor hangover I have after the get-together last night, but flaking on her now will only prove her point. Plus, the sooner we get this

project over with, the better.

“I have a class at noon, so we can work until then,” I say, gesturing for her to lead the way to the library.

I follow her across campus as she confidently strides in front of me, holding the straps of her backpack as she walks. Her long brown hair is tied back in a loose braid that sways as she moves. By the way she walks ahead of me, it's like she doesn't want to be seen with me, which I think is ironic. By all standards, I'm pretty popular on campus. Shouldn't these roles be reversed?

When we get to the library, she sets her backpack down on a table. After she takes a seat across from me, she pulls out a notebook and our history textbook. “Do you actually remember anything about the Renaissance unit, or will I have to go over all of that with you?”

She scrunches her eyebrows at me, and I stare at her while trying to think about what I remember. I remember some parts of the unit, but during the week we discussed that, I was preparing for a big game, so I was distracted. When I don't answer right away, she rolls her eyes and flips to a page in her notebook and starts writing.

“Fantastic, I guess I will be doing this by myself after all,” she huffs, writing a title on the page for the final project. “Since it's a visual representation, we need to think about how we want to convey our research. We could make a video, poster board, or PowerPoint.”

She keeps talking, but I lose focus on what she's saying. I study her face as she thinks, seeing behind the oversized glasses and noticing how pretty she actually is. Her hair is a dark chestnut brown with natural auburn highlights that capture the afternoon sun shining through the windows. On top of that, she has beautiful hazel eyes. As she talks, my eyes eventually fall to her lips and that makes my mind go

places I didn't expect. They're plush and a deep, natural red that I imagine most women would kill for. That's not even mentioning the modelesque figure she has. She's taller than most girls I know, but I'm still a good five inches taller than her.

"I can tell you're not paying attention," Rowan says with an annoyed sigh, jolting me back to reality. "Stop daydreaming about your next big play on the field and focus. This is a big part of both of our grades."

I take a deep breath and force away any thoughts I had budding about her. At least she can't read my mind. If she could, she would be less than thrilled to see me thinking about how pretty she is and imagining what I would like to do with her. Maybe she'll realize I think she's good looking soon enough, and working on this project with her might be more interesting than I initially thought.

## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 6:30 am*

### TWO

I don't take out crippling amounts of student loans to babysit football players during class projects. It's exceptionally annoying that I can't have a different partner. Sawyer doesn't even remember the Renaissance unit. He was probably too busy partying and getting drunk all the time, hooking up with the entire cheerleading squad to pay attention.

I mean, I get it. He's good looking. I've kept my distance from him over the course of the semester because the two of us run in different circles. My friends and I aren't exactly invited to a lot of the parties people like him attend. Being up close to him for the first time is strange. He's much better looking than I initially thought.

Of course, he's good looking from far away too. But sitting across from him, I can see the spark of excitement in his blue eyes as he challenges me. The light hits them, and they turn pale, almost glowing in the fading autumn sun. I can see the dimples on his cheeks when he smiles too. It pains me to admit that as he smirks at me when he says something it's a good look on him. It almost makes me want to fight with him more.

He runs his fingers through his short blond hair as he thinks and I catch myself staring, wondering what it would be like for my fingers to be there instead.

I force myself to stop thinking about it. There's a reason I stay far away from jocks like him. Especially after what happened in high school. I learned my lesson, and I don't repeat mistakes.

"I think the two of us got off on the wrong foot," Sawyer says, flashing me a



charming smile to try to disarm me. I want to roll my eyes, but unfortunately, it seems to be working. “I’ll be the first to admit, I’m not the best student. That doesn’t mean you’ll have to pick up all the slack and do everything on your own. I’m here right now, aren’t I?”

I nod and take a deep breath, relaxing my shoulders as I try to forget how today started. “You’re right. Let’s just focus on the project and figure out what it is we’re doing. We can start with you telling me everything you remember about the unit so we can figure out what we want to cover in our report.”

“Can I borrow this?” Sawyer says, pointing at my textbook. I nod and push it toward him at the same time he reaches for it. Our fingers brush against each other, and my heart races a little faster. His fingers linger on mine, and I do my best to keep from blushing as I quickly pull my hand away.

“Sorry,” I nervously say, tucking a few stray strands of hair behind my ear. Sawyer nods and looks down at the textbook, skimming over some of the topics we discussed in class. “When I think of the Renaissance Era, I think of an era of innovation, so a project focusing on different inventions of the time could be interesting.”

“Maybe we could compare it to modern technology and show how things have evolved since then, too?” Sawyer says, sort of unsure of himself with the idea. I nod and offer him an encouraging smile because I think it’s a good idea.

“That’s always an effective approach,” I say, writing it down in my notebook. “I have experience with video editing, so maybe we could do a short documentary-style video presentation.”

We start talking about the different things we can include in the video and both of us seem to be relaxing a bit. I almost feel bad for prematurely judging him because he is contributing to the project. Though in the back of my mind, I’m wondering how long

this is going to last. Is he going to bail on me to go to some big party the first chance he gets?

I start reviewing the textbook, making a list of different inventions, and comparing them to modern day technology. As I do, I kick my leg out, and it collides with Sawyer's under the desk. Once again, my heart beats a little faster, and I straighten up, pulling my leg away.

He looks up from his textbook with a half smile on his lips that excites me in a way I don't expect. There's a slight thrill bumping into him that I can't wrap my head around. It's not like I've never held hands with a guy before. Sure, I've hardly done anything beyond that, but this feeling isn't normal. Especially directed toward someone like Sawyer.

I stare down at his hands, and I can't help imagining what those might feel like touching me. They were soft and warm when I brushed against them. Just the idea of his hands climbing up my thighs and slowly inching their way along my body is enough to force me to cross my legs and blush.

"Rowan!" Corinne's voice says across the room. I look at her and see her wincing slightly as she spoke a little too loud in the library. She sits down beside me at the desk and looks at Sawyer with a wrinkle in her eyebrow. "Sorry, am I interrupting?"

Yes, actually. But God, am I glad she's here. My mind was going places it definitely should not have been, so this interruption is much-needed.

"We're just working on a project for world history," I say, turning away from Sawyer and looking at her. Her blond hair is pulled back in a messy bun, and she's in an oversized sweater and long skirt. I remember her telling me about an exam she had today, so her somewhat disheveled outfit makes sense. She's usually very well put together.

“I should actually get going to my next class anyway,” Sawyer says, grabbing his backpack and standing. He scribbles his phone number on a piece of paper and hands it to me. “I guess you and I will just meet up sometime later to finish talking about this?”

“I’ll text you,” I say, nervously smiling and carefully placing the phone number in my notebook. Sawyer waves goodbye to both of us and walks away. I try not to turn around and watch him go.

I focus my attention on Corinne, who is narrowing her eyes at me with a half smile on her lips. “Okay, what was that about? You’re working with Sawyer Jackson?”

“Don’t get me started,” I say, laughing nervously and looking away from her. “It’s just a random group assignment.”

“A random group assignment with Sawyer Jackson is just about every girl’s dream,” Corinne says, a curious look in her eyes as she scans my face. “I’m sure you’re really devastated to spend quality alone time with him.”

I shake my head vehemently, closing the notebook and pretending the fact that his phone number is sitting between the pages doesn’t mean anything to me.

“Trust me, we’re group partners, and that’s it. There will never be anything more than this project between us.” I try to sound confident, but I think it might be a little more defensive than anything because Corinne doesn’t seem to believe me. “Besides, I can’t stand jocks. I’d rather die alone with 100 cats than even consider going on a date with one.”

“That seems a little extreme,” she says with a laugh, nervously looking down in embarrassment as she catches the attention of other students in the room. “Seems like you have somewhat of a vendetta against them.”

“Haven't got to implies I'm trying to get revenge, doesn't it?” I shake my head, trying to appear more casual about my searing hatred. “I just prefer to stay away from them. People like that have screwed me over in the past, and I don't want it to happen again.”

“Rowan Peebles, do you have some drama you haven't told me about?” Corinne asks, inhaling sharply as she leans on her elbows to hear the story.

I haven't told anybody about what happened in high school. It happened in the past, and ever since I started college, I've decided to turn a new leaf. I don't want to linger in the embarrassing things that happened last year, but Corinne is my best friend here. If anybody is to know about this, it's her.

“Toward the end of senior year, someone on the football team asked me on a date,” I reluctantly begin, cringing to myself before I even get to the bad part. “His name was Tyler and I had a bit of a crush on him, so I was elated. I even thought that if things went well, we might go to prom together. It turns out that he and a bunch of other people on the team had made a bet. Everyone threw a hundred dollars in a pool, and whoever took one of the band geeks' virginity first won all the money.”

Her mouth hangs open as she gasps and stares at me with wide eyes. “That's disgusting. Please tell me you didn't sleep with him and instead broke his nose.”

“Thankfully, I didn't sleep with him. I was actually planning on it the next time we went out because I thought I liked him. I believed he liked me too. He called the night before and canceled the date. I asked why, and surprisingly, he told me the truth.” I practically shiver against the memory of that night.

I was in my room frantically looking through my underwear drawer to find something sexy for him. I had just picked out what I was going to wear when he called and canceled. I cried until dawn. Never in my life had I experienced something so cruel,

and I was heartbroken.

Ever since, I've sworn to myself that I won't trust people like that anymore. So yes, I can admit that Sawyer is cute and a part of me is interested in possibly getting to know him intimately, but I've made a vow to myself not to. I won't get hurt again.

## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 6:30 am*

### THREE

Thursday afternoon practice is more difficult than usual. Coach Emerson goes over our plays, and I do everything I can to internalize what I'm supposed to do before we begin a run-through. My eyes wander to the sidelines, and I struggle to get my head in the game.

I never cared to pay attention to the band geeks on the sideline practicing on the field. Honestly, in the past, the off-key horns blaring and drums beating during their practice was a bit of a nuisance. Now my eyes search through the crowd of people for Rowan.

“Jackson, do you need me to bench you tomorrow?” Coach Emerson shouts after blowing a whistle to end our first run-through of the game plan. He storms across the field with his hands on his hips as he glares at me.

“No, sir,” I shout back, shaking my head and forcing myself to focus.

“Everybody from the starting position, now!” he shouts, forcing several of my fellow teammates to groan and stare at me. I take my helmet off momentarily and comb back my hair, feeling the sweat dripping from my brow.

I can't lose focus right now. This is our final practice before our big game tomorrow. If I let the team down, I'll never forgive myself. My entire life has been dedicated to football, and I don't want to fail.

“Come on, Sawyer,” Talon says as he slaps me on the back. “We don't want a repeat

of what happened against Glendale, do we?"

I shake my head and laugh under my breath, rolling my eyes at the idea of him blaming me for those absolute brutes destroying us. "So now it's my fault their coach feeds them steroids for breakfast?"

All of us get in position for another run-through of our plan. Coach blows the whistle, and we begin. Talon and I take off in two separate directions. He runs to get the ball, and I position myself far away from him, knowing that his arm is strong enough to reach me. I brace myself for the ball, and as soon as it goes flying in the air, I run to catch it. It slides into my hands as if a magnet had pulled it directly toward me.

After, I run downfield with it my hands, turning my attention to the goalpost. Normally, I would be laser-focused on where I need to go, but the band members are wrapping up and moving toward the bleachers. My eyes fall on Rowan as she laughs with another one of the band members, tucking her hair behind her ear and smiling.

My legs keep moving, and I know where I'm going, but I'm not exactly looking forward. Out of nowhere, or at least it wouldn't have been if I was looking where I was supposed to, Gerard Ronson slams into me and sends me flying through the air. I crash into the ground hard, lying still for a moment with the ball falling out of my hands.

The wind is knocked out of me, and it feels like I ran directly into a brick wall. I don't register Gerard picking up the ball and throwing it across the field as I lie there trying to remember who I am, what's going on, and what century I'm in.

After a moment, the whistle sounds, and everybody halts before Coach Emerson runs across the field to check on me. Gerard joins him and takes his helmet off with an apologetic look on his face. Gerard looks like he was born to be a linebacker, and he is incredible at what he does. I'm thankful I don't usually have to be on the receiving

end of it.

“You good, Jackson?” Coach asks, disappointment in his voice.

Everyone else from the team, as well as the cheerleaders who have been practicing on the sidelines, gathers around to make sure I'm okay. All of them look concerned, and I'm almost embarrassed. Gerard did what he was supposed to do, and he did a damn good job. If I had been paying close enough attention, I could have at least gotten out of the way so I didn't have to have two hundred and fifty pounds of pure muscle colliding right into me.

I roll over slowly to my side, trying to ease my muscles into being ready to stand. Once again, my eyes lock on Rowan as she prepares to leave. Everyone else around me is nervous, not only worrying about me but wondering if this unintentional injury is enough to take their wide receiver out of the game. On the other hand, Rowan is smirking like she's happy to see me on the ground in pain.

“I'm fine. It just knocked the wind out of me,” I say, standing up and waving everyone off.

Gerard offers me a handshake, and I take it, flinching at the strength of his grip. I think the world is lucky he's actually a very sweet guy. A man like him with anger issues would be a problem for everyone.

“All right, I think we've had enough for today,” Coach says to everyone, waving to dismiss us to the locker room.

Everyone disperses around me, and I look at the sidelines again to see Rowan lingering, carefully putting her flute in a hard shell case. I walk over, ignoring all my teammates around me as they comment about the practice, hoping it is enough to get us a win tomorrow.



Rowan doesn't turn around when I approach. She's too preoccupied being as gentle as possible with her instrument. "So do you usually linger around and watch practice?" I ask, forcing her to turn around with her eyebrows raised. She looks over my shoulder at everyone else as if she's wondering why I would talk to her instead of them.

"Not usually, but if you get knocked on your ass like that all the time, I might make a habit of it," Rowan replies with a smug smile.

"Sorry to say it doesn't usually happen," I reply, moving closer to her and staring in her eyes. The sunlight hits the center and makes them almost look like a pale green, much different than they looked in the library a few days ago. "I was distracted by something today."

"The short skirts on the cheerleaders, I imagine." She locks her case and turns around to face me with one arm folded across her and the other dangling at her side with the case in hand.

I smirk at her and look her up and down, not hiding the expression on my face. She's beautiful, and she doesn't know it, but by the look on my face, she's realizing I think something about her.

"Something like that," I say, taking a deep breath and flashing her the most charming smile I can muster. "You and I need to get together sometime soon for the project, don't we? You haven't texted me yet."

She nods slowly, wearing an unreadable expression as she contemplates what to say. A part of me undeniably looks forward to hanging out with her again. We had chemistry in the library, and I could see that she felt it too. She practically turned into a tomato when our hands brushed against each other.

Most girls don't challenge me the way she does. If I look at them, they'll just bat their

eyelashes and flirt with me, hoping I take them to bed. It's not something I ever thought I would be interested in, but it's certainly got my attention, and I can't stop thinking about her now.

“I don't have classes after eleven on Monday if you want to meet at the library then,” Rowan says, forcing herself to remain stoic.

“Sawyer!” Talon shouts behind me. “Are you coming home, or should I just leave you here?”

Rowan looks over my shoulder with a smirk on her lips as Talon approaches with Merrit right next to him. He couldn't have picked a worse time, could he? Rowan grabs her backpack and swings it over her shoulder, readying herself to leave.

“I'm just talking to Rowan about our history project,” I say, gesturing to her, which makes her freeze and give a half-hearted wave. “This is my roommate Talon and his girlfriend Merrit,” I say to her.

Merrit looks between us and starts putting the pieces together in her head. She is much smarter than Talon and I combined, so I doubt there would be any questions about my motives with her.

“Nice to meet you. I actually have to run,” Rowan says, clearly making an excuse to get as far away from the three of us as possible. “I'll see you on Monday at the library then.”

She turns around and walks away as quickly as she can. I watch her, thinking about all the possibilities that lay before me on Monday. I can tell she likes me, even if it's a small amount. I just wonder if I can wear her down enough to potentially explore something.

“You have your fake ID? We need to make a beer run for the party tomorrow night,” Talon says, grabbing Merrit’s hand and leading her off the field. I follow them to the parking lot, wishing I can have something like they do someday. They're so in love, and even though I've been with my fair share of women, I've never had strong feelings for them.

Sometimes I wonder if I can even have that. If that life is meant for me after all.

## Page 4

*Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 6:30 am*

### FOUR

As predicted, we win the football game on Friday, and chaos erupts all around us. The only reason I'm here is because the band is all required to attend every game and perform during halftime. Of course, that is the unofficial intermission for everybody watching the game. The stands are practically empty as everyone goes to the bathroom and the concession stand to refill their popcorn and get another hot dog or pretzel.

The only people who really enjoy the band performance are other band geeks like myself. Unsurprisingly, most of us aren't that interested in football. We usually sit on the sidelines and eat snacks, joking with one another while we wait for our signal to play. Today, though, I find myself more interested in the game than I would generally be.

I hate to admit it, but I'm not actually interested in the game. I watch Sawyer as he performs, holding back applause and cheers when he does well. I surprise even myself with how nervous I am toward the end of the game. Every time he takes a hit like he did during the practice yesterday, my heart skips a few beats. I don't understand how he does things like this.

Because we win the game, the band has to return to the field and perform our university's victory song. All the cheerleaders run around, wrapping their arms around the necks of the football players, climbing on their backs and straddling them. I can only imagine the rewards they will get after today.

Even as I'm in the middle of performing, my fingers dancing along the keys of my

flute, my eyes search for Sawyer. It stings when I find him in the crowd with one of the cheerleaders wrapping her arms around his neck. I have to look away to keep my composure, hating the effect Sawyer has on me.

We get through the song, and I'm eager to leave the field. I'm probably the first person to leave. Usually, we linger behind for a little while, chatting and waiting for our connection in the concession stand to give us some of the leftover pretzels to take back to the music room. I just don't feel up to that today.

I practically run back to my dorm and close the door behind me, changing out of my band uniform promptly. While everyone else is going to be out partying, getting shit-faced drunk and celebrating the win, I would rather stay in bed watching Netflix.

I'm midway through an episode of *Veep* when Corinne unlocks the door and walks in. She drops her clarinet case on the floor nonchalantly as she starts hastily changing out of her band uniform.

"Turn off the boring show and get dressed. We're going to a party," Corinne says, looking over at me with an eager smile. I can tell she's excited. The only parties the two of us get invited to are our university-sanctioned gatherings completely free of alcohol and any other illicit substances. In Corinne's eyes, that means they're not fun.

"Whose party?" I ask, curious and sitting up, pausing the show.

"No idea. Apparently, someone came up to Mia and invited all of us to a party off campus. Supposedly, this place throws the best parties," she says with an excited squeal. "Maybe we can finally get drunk. Ooo! Maybe someone will have pot, and we can try it. Just do me a favor and don't tell anybody we've never smoked before. We'll look lame."

"Honestly, I'm tired. I think I'll just stay in tonight," I say, falling back on the bed and

holding my laptop on my chest to stare at the screen. If this party is to celebrate the football game, I have a sinking suspicion there will be a lot of football players there. Even if Sawyer isn't at this party, I don't want to run into him. I don't want to run into any other jocks, for that matter.

“No!” Corinne shouts louder than she definitely should be. She walks across the room and stands next to my bed, holding her hands in front of her face in prayer formation. “Please come with me. If you're not having fun, we can leave in an hour. Just give me an hour there. You know how long I've been waiting for something like this.”

I take a deep breath and stare at her, seeing the pathetic yet earnest look in her eyes. “One hour, then I'm leaving with or without you.” I close my laptop screen and slide out of bed, then dig through my closet for something remotely appropriate for a party.

Corinne ends up lending me a black dress with small pink roses covering it. I slip into it, seeing that it's shorter than I would like, but the fabric is at least loose enough that my body isn't on full display for the world. Despite her protests, I grab an olive-green cardigan from my dresser and throw it on.

We called an Uber to take us to the address Mia texted her, and during the short ride, Corinne excitedly rambles about all the possibilities for her tonight. I tune her out a bit as I stare out the window and brace myself for potentially running into Sawyer.

Other students stand on the lawn with red Solo cups in hand, laughing with each other and shouting over the loud bass of the music. The front door is wide open, so we don't bother knocking. The living room is packed like a can of sardines, and Corinne takes my hand to guide me through, faking confidence even though I know she's nervous.

We find a few other people from the band in the crowd and join them, all of us nervously looking around like fish out of water. This is far beyond our comfort zones,

and the only way to survive is by sticking together.

“Whose place is this anyway?” Corinne asks Mia and Jamie as they huddle in a corner of the room.

“I think Talon and his girlfriend live here with another guy from the football team,” Mia says, bobbing her head to the music.

Oh no. Not only do I have to worry about running in the Sawyer, I'm in his house now. He already told me that Talon is his roommate, so I should expect to see him walk down the stairs any moment.

I almost want to grab Corinne and tell her we're leaving ahead of schedule, but instead, I find myself scanning the crowd for any sign of him. I try to tell myself it's just to be on the offensive, but deep down, I know the truth. I want to see him. I want to see him with a beer in his hand, laughing casually as he jokes with his friends, the dimples on his cheek visible again.

What I don't want to see is him leaning against a wall with one of the cheerleaders tracing her fingers over his chest and practically foaming at the mouth over him. Of course, what I don't want is exactly what I see. Sawyer seems to be incredibly into it too.

It stings a lot more than I would have ever imagined. I don't really like him. I can't. Sawyer is a jock, the pride of the football team. This is his life. He doesn't spend late nights in the library like I do. He attends parties like this, hooking up with girls like Jessica Chamberlain.

After yesterday, a small part of me thought he might be interested, but in reality, he was probably just flirting with me so I would be more inclined to do all the work on our project. He couldn't possibly have wanted anything to do with me romantically.

I look away from him, staring down at my hands, and I'm surprised that my skin hasn't turned green from the jealousy I apparently feel. I've always been happy with who I am. Sure, I was bullied in high school for being a bit of a geek, but I have come to terms with it, and I like myself. But for the first time, I wish I could be like Jessica. She's so confident and carefree, and she can have any man she wants in a heartbeat.

I look back at them again, seeing him put a hand on Jessica's shoulder and push some of her hair aside. God, what am I thinking, wishing that was me? What is happening?

Sawyer laughs and looks up, his eyes looking around the room momentarily. They move right past me, and I don't think anything of it. I'm used to that kind of behavior from people like him. However, he looks back, the smile on his lips falling as he pulls his hands away from Jessica. I can see the disappointment on her face as he walks away from her and starts making his way through the crowd toward me.

I almost want to run for the door and pretend I didn't see him, but I stand my ground. Maybe he's here to tell me to get lost, anyway. Right now, I would be more than happy to.

"Aren't you just about the last person I expected to see here?" Sawyer asks when he finally approaches. Corinne, Mia, and Jamie are all surprised to see him talking to me. They busy themselves with small talk, pretending anything they say matters as they eavesdrop.

"We got an invite, and I wanted to see what all the hype was about," I say with a shrug. "If I'd have known you lived here, I would have at least brought my textbook so we could get some work done."

"All work and no play." Sawyer sighs, rolling his eyes at me. His eyes fall from mine to the dress Corinne made me wear, and his lips part as if shocked to see me in something so different from the sweaters and jeans I usually wear. "You dressed up



for the occasion, I see.”

My face heats, and I try my best to ignore it so I don't get even more red. I hold my cardigan a little tighter to shroud myself from his gaze. “I wouldn't call this dressing up.”

“I would,” Sawyer says, looking back at me with a pleased glint in his blue eyes. “You look amazing.”

He smiles wide, and I just barely see the tip of his tongue peeking out to lick his bottom lip. It sends a rush of excitement through me, and I have to look away from him. My heart beats faster, and the excitement grows between my legs too. What the hell is happening to me?

I don't register Jessica moving across the room until she's standing beside Sawyer, grabbing his arm and clinging to it while holding a bright red fruity drink in the other hand.

“I can't believe you would leave me like that.” She rests her head against his arm, her silky brown hair falling in front of her face. “I'm surprised to see you lot out here. You're not usually invited to things like this.”

Sawyer rolls his eyes and pulls his arm away from her, looking back at me with apologetic eyes. “I invited them, Jessica.”

She looks at him with shock and looks back at the four of us with a disgruntled expression. Her hands grip her plastic cup tighter as she steps forward, plastering a fake smile on her face.

“I had no idea!” She turns her attention to me, and the smile falls, quickly replaced by a devilish grin as she looks down at her drink and leans in for a hug, tilting it to spill

it all over the front of my dress. “Oh no! I'm so clumsy. The drink must have gone straight to my head.”

Jessica backs away with a pleased look as I hold my hands up and look down at the fruity drink soaking through the dress, covering my legs. It was 100 percent intentional, just something to get her revenge on me for stealing Sawyer's attention for a moment. She's just another mean girl who wants to make my life miserable.

“Let me help you,” Sawyer says, immediately slipping off his plain white T-shirt and dabbing the front of my dress.

Suddenly, the entire room shrinks in, and the only thing to look at is Sawyer's chest. He has incredibly toned washboard abs that glisten with a light sheen of sweat standing in this packed room. My mind wanders to places it never has as I think about pushing him down on a bed and licking the peaks and valleys of his stomach.

Those thoughts don't get any better as his hands dab the dress, soaking up the droplets of liquid. After a moment, he stops and stands inches away from me, looking down with his eyes focused entirely on me. I forget all about Jessica, and Sawyer clearly does, too.

“How about I take you upstairs and get you something of Merrit's to change into?” Sawyer asks, reaching down to grab my hand and guide me away. My skin shivers and awakens as he touches me. I want nothing more than to follow him up there and see where this takes us, but I pull away from him.

Even though I need a change of clothes, under these circumstances, that could be all he plans up there. But I can't help but wonder what he really wants. What are his real intentions?

“I wouldn't want to without running it by Merrit first,” I say, shaking my head and

standing my ground. “She might not like someone borrowing her clothes without asking first.”

“Okay, I’ll go ask her,” Sawyer says, holding his finger up to signal for me to wait right there. He looks around and finds her in the room, carefully maneuvering his way through the crowd.

Jessica makes her presence known as soon as Sawyer is gone, standing directly in front of me and crossing her arms defiantly. She’s several inches shorter than me, so I have to look down, but she still seems imposing.

“Stay the hell away from Sawyer, geek,” Jessica says, her eyes narrowing as she tries to intimidate me. “What do you think’s going to happen with him anyway? Men like him aren’t made for girls like you. Back off if you know what’s good for you.”

She stands her ground, and I don’t know what to say. Thankfully, I don’t have to answer because Sawyer comes back and looks between the two of us, focusing more on me than her once again.

“She said it’s fine,” he says, holding a hand out for me to grab. Jessica raises an eyebrow at me as if silently asking me what choice I’m going to make. I can do what she says and walk away, or I can go with Sawyer, and she’ll make my life a living hell.

I don’t like to be threatened. I take Sawyer’s hand and follow him upstairs, not looking back at her once. I can imagine, though, her eyes are staring daggers at both of us, and she’ll do everything in her power to stay true to her word.

This might be a mistake, but it’s undoubtedly what I want.

## Page 5

*Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 6:30 am*

### FIVE

After the game, I couldn't find Rowan anywhere on the field, so I had to invite the entire band to the party. I thought it was a long shot, anticipating someone like Rowan would stay as far away from a party like this as possible. Luckily, I was wrong. Here she is, in my house so late at night, wearing a dress that makes her look incredible.

Jessica was being a bitch to her, but that gave me all the more reason to get Rowan alone. That was my original goal, after all. Even though Jessica might have had her own interest in mind, she did me a favor.

I close Talon and Merrit's door behind us as I make my way to Merrit's dresser. Rowan doesn't say anything as I start digging through for something for her to wear. All I can think about is how she's been staring at me without a shirt on. I work hard on my body, and I know she's noticed that.

"You certainly looked taken aback when I took my shirt off out there," I say, grabbing a shirt and a pair of jeans shorts from the drawer and approaching her. "I take it you like what you see?"

Her face turns red, and she looks away from me, embarrassed by calling her out. "No, you just made such a spectacle of it. I had no idea you were such an exhibitionist."

"There's a lot you don't know about me," I say, handing her the clothes. She takes them and stares at me expectantly for a moment, raising an eyebrow.

“Would you mind turning around or leaving the room so I can change?” She purses her lips, and I shake my head, forcing her to wrinkle her eyebrows in confusion.

“This is my house. I think you should be the one to turn around,” I say, backing up a couple of feet and folding my arms across my chest. “I don’t take kindly to being told what to do.”

She stares at me for a moment, not quite understanding, and then she does what I say and turns around. I watch with my mouth hanging open, very eager to see what she does as she drops her cardigan to the ground and lifts the bottom of the little black dress. Underneath, she’s wearing a pair of black panties that perfectly hug her curves. There’s lace trim around the bottom, and I want to see more.

“You have a perfect ass,” I say before I think any better of it. Before I know it, she’s pulling the bottom of her dress back down and spinning around with a furious look in her eyes.

“You’re disgusting,” Rowan says, moving to take a quick step away, stumbling on the cardigan that’s wrapped around her ankles.

She shrieks as she falls forward, her arms flailing in front of her as she starts crashing to the floor. I move quickly, taking a long stride toward her and holding my arms out to catch her before she falls. She lands in my arms, facing me as she breathes quickly from the fright.

Her eyes lock on mine, and I stare down at her, my heart thudding against my ribs. We linger here for a moment, our eyes studying one another as I hold her close, feeling her body tense against mine.

Without thinking and completely caught up in the moment, I bend over and kiss her. My mouth crashes against her, a heated frenzy overtaking me as her lips swish

against mine, parting slightly to allow my tongue entry. I taste her, fueling my hunger with every sweep of my tongue in her mouth.

It feels incredible. I've never felt so invigorated kissing anyone before. I don't want this to end. I want to explore more of her. A yearning deep in my chest only seems to grow as her tongue entangles with mine.

I'm caught in a daze when she pushes me away, wiggling out of my arms and standing up beside me. She backs away and looks frazzled like she can't believe what just happened. I want to move closer to her, to take her in my arms again and kiss her until both of our lips are sore.

“That was a mistake,” Rowan says, rushing to the door, leaving her cardigan on the floor and still dressed in the alcohol-soaked clothes.

I don't waste a second following her out, not caring about the few people standing around the room watching the two of us. As soon as I catch up to her, I grab her arm and yank her into my room as we approach it. She doesn't pull away from me until the door is closed, and she turns to look at me in confusion.

“Why are you pushing me away?” I ask her, almost desperate to feel her lips on mine again. “You know I like you, and it's obvious you like me too.”

She rolls her eyes and crosses her arms, backing away from me. “How can you possibly know that? Just because you kissed me and I was caught up in the moment doesn't mean I'm fawning after you like everyone else.”

I scoff and shake my head, not understanding why it's so hard with her. “Why can't you just trust what you're feeling?”

“You don't know what I'm feeling!” Rowan shouts, flailing her hands at her side out

of frustration. “You're just trying to rationalize this because you can't handle the fact that I'm not dropping my panties as soon as you walk into a room like every other girl you meet.”

“Do you really think that's why I feel like this?” I ask, walking closer to her and locking my eyes on her face, slowly lowering them to her lips. She doesn't back away as I get closer, and I know that's because she wants me there. “I'm not blind, Rowan. I've seen the way you've looked at me since we were partnered together. Hell, I've looked at you the same way. Why would you want to hold this back?”

“Because you and I don't work together,” she says, her tone filled with annoyance as if I am just not understanding something so obvious. “We're completely different people, and we will never understand each other. The only thing between us is this project, and honestly, you can just consider it done. I'll take care of it. Just stay away from me.”

“You don't really want that.” I shake my head and inch closer to her. She backs away for a moment, then stops with plenty of space still behind her to move. “You might not have wanted to be paired with me initially, but you like it now. You like me, and I know it. Stop fighting.”

“I could never like someone like you,” she spits at me like venom.

She doesn't know who I am. She doesn't know anything about me and refuses to even try. “And who am I exactly?”

Rowan shrugs and shakes her head almost as if she is disappointed. “You're just some jock who wants to use me.”

I shake my head and move closer, reaching my hand to touch her cheek. She backs away from me for a moment but leans into my touch shortly after. “You're wrong.

Just let me prove that to you.”

I lean forward and press my lips against hers again, almost immediately being met with her willing mouth as she parts her lips for me. She moans as my tongue fills her mouth, swirling around hers and tasting every inch of available space. My desire grows, and I feel my cock hardening from the anticipation.

I don't know if I'll be able to take her right here, right now, but God, I want to. Her arms wrap around my neck, pulling me closer as my hands lower on her body, grabbing her waist and holding her close to me. She gasps when she feels my cock through my jeans, practically begging to be free.

“You drive me crazy,” I say, lowering my mouth to her neck and licking the delicate skin as she moans in my ear. I grip her butt in my hands as I hold her close and grind myself against her. I lift what little fabric covers her ass and feel it, squeezing it in my hands.

My bed is a foot away from us, so I back her up to it. She falls back, not letting go of me, so I'm immediately on top of her. I move my hand from her ass and grip her thigh, spreading her legs wide as I slowly move between them. She pulls her mouth away from me and looks down at her spread legs, biting her lip as my fingers slowly trail inward.

“Do you want me to touch your pussy?” I ask, nibbling on her earlobe as she nods her head eagerly. I move my hands closer and feel just how wet she is already through her little black panties. “That's so hot, Rowan.”

I trace my fingers along the indent of her slit, feeling just how her juices soak through the cotton. She moans when I graze her clit, pressing two fingers against it and massaging.



“Oh my God,” she moans, shivering against my touch.

I continue massaging her while she leans her head back, and her breath quickens as her legs spread wider. My cock throbs against my zipper, and I know what I'm about to do is only going to make it worse. I slip my hand inside her panties, feeling her wet mound against my palm. It's warm and wet, and my desire completely ignites my core.

“You're so fucking wet,” I say, turning her head to face me with my free hand, pressing my mouth hard against hers. I lower a finger to her entrance and delicately slide it inside, tasting the sounds of pleasure escaping her throat. Her pussy clenches around me as I continue moving, barely fitting my middle finger inside. “You're so fucking tight. You're going to feel so good around my cock.”

I pull my mouth away from her and look down at her body as my hand brings her closer to orgasm. My thumb brushes against her clit, and she whimpers from the pleasure, spreading her legs wider as I move my finger faster. She's practically writhing against the bed sheets as her pussy throbs. I stare at her, desperate to make her come, to hear her whimper and moan in the throes of pleasure.

The door to my room bursts open, and I pull my hand away from her quickly, pulling down the skirt of her dress to hide her body. Some drunken man I don't immediately recognize squints his eyes at the two of us and shakes his head as if he doesn't understand what's happening.

“Get the hell out of here!” I shout. He shakes his head again and closes the door behind him. Before I can turn back to Rowan and continue what we started, she's pushing my arm away and jumping out of the bed.

Her face is red, and it's spreading across her body from the embarrassment of being caught. “This was a huge mistake.”

I stand and try to sway her again, but she shoves my hand aside and runs to the door. “Rowan, this wasn't a mistake, and you know it.”

“This can't happen again,” she says, only lingering by the door for a moment before running out. I chase her, but she's already down the stairs and maneuvering through the crowd of people before I get to the door.

At the party, I don't spot her anywhere. I see a group of other band kids huddled in a corner and walk over to them. When I approach, their eyes are wide once again, and they almost look nervous.

“Did any of you see Rowan?”

They nod and point at the door. “She just left with her roommate.”

I force my way through the crowd to get to the door as quickly as I can. There's a chance I can catch her before she leaves, and we can have a real conversation about this. I know she feels as intensely about me as I do her, so I'm not just letting her get away.

As soon as I step out on the lawn, my eyes scan the curb for any sign of a car with her in it. Finally, I see her and her roommate climbing into the back of an Uber and run to catch up to them. It takes off before I reach her, and I stand on the sidewalk watching the car drive away.

## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 6:30 am*

SIX

Thankfully, I was able to avoid Sawyer all weekend, and despite how often Corinne asked me about what happened between us, I managed to avoid the subject. I just don't know how much longer I'll be able to do that having to see him today.

Sure, there's a chance he isn't going to show up to the library for our meeting. But if I've learned anything about Sawyer since knowing him, it's that he's dedicated. He's more than likely going to be there, and he's going to ask me once again about why I won't just give in and be with him. As if it's simply that easy.

I never tune out lectures when I attend them. I pay good money to enroll in these courses and want to make the most of them. But as I sit in the front row of my French literature class, I can't help but zone out thinking about Friday night. The memory of his hands on me, his finger sliding inside me, and his lips hot against mine is heavy on my mind.

Even thinking about it makes me flustered enough to squeeze my legs together and shift in my seat uncomfortably. I'm grateful for the class to be over. I don't even notice people are packing up until the professor clears her throat and lets me know.

The last thing I have to do today is go to the library and potentially work on my project with Sawyer. I'm torn about whether I want to see him there. A part of me is excited at the prospect of seeing him again, but the other part is terrified. He does something to me that I can't explain. Nobody else has been able to elicit a response like this from me. Maybe with the exception of Tyler back in high school, but that was all a lie.

I guess I can't help but wonder if that's the same thing with Sawyer. Is this some kind of a cruel prank? Is that why he's so desperate to be with me? If he manages to sleep with me, are the other people on the football team just going to clap them on the back and high-five him, telling him he's won some elaborate prank?

The thought of that makes me sick, and I hug myself as I walk into the library. Okay, I'll wait here for thirty minutes, and if he doesn't show up, I'll leave. After that, I can go to Professor Nichols and tell him Sawyer is blowing me off and work alone.

I scan the mostly empty library for any sign of Sawyer, feeling excited when I don't see him initially. However, luck has never been on my side, and I spot him in a far corner of the room waving at me with a cocky smile on his face.

“Why can't you just leave me alone?” I whisper under my breath as I slowly make my way across the room to him.

Maybe he doesn't remember what happened on Friday. He had been drinking a lot, and I figure most of his flirting was just drunken friendliness. But at the same time, the look in his eyes was sincere, which couldn't have been faked with alcohol. Still, his conveniently forgetting about what happened between us is my only hope in getting out of this situation.

I stand in front of the desk and see that there are only two chairs, both on the same side. The empty one is directly next to Sawyer, which I immediately think he planned. I walk around and pull it out, taking a seat there instead of moving it to the other side. I don't want him to feel like he's winning by pulling my strings.

“I almost thought you weren't going to make it,” Sawyer remarks.

“I'm not easy to scare off,” I reply, crossing my arms and staring at him with a stoic look.

Sawyer stares at me unblinking, a soft smile on his face as he studies mine. I almost want to ask him why he's staring, but I know the reason. I can see in his eyes that he's clearly thinking about Friday night. I spent a good part of this weekend wondering what might have happened if that guy hadn't walked in on us, and I know he thought about it too.

“Go on a date with me,” Sawyer says, folding his arms on the desk in front of me.

“No.” He waits for a moment, expecting an explanation, but I don't give one. I've already given him my reasons, but those don't seem to be enough to deter him, so I'm not going to waste my breath. He and I don't work. It's as simple as that.

“What if I finish what we started on Friday and make you come? Will you go out with me then?” He flashes me a devilish grin, cocking an eyebrow as he licks his lips. His eyes fall on my legs, barely covered through the jean shorts I'm wearing today to fight off the extra warm September heat.

“Absolutely not,” I say, shaking my head and backing away in my chair.

He's testing me to see how much I'll let him get away with. I don't know why he feels like he needs to know that, but it worries me. Tyler did the same thing when I “dated” him.

Sawyer's hand reaches for my thigh under the table, his finger tracing along the soft skin toward the hem of my shorts. My breath catches in my throat, and I stare at him in shock, pushing his hand away.

“We're in public,” I say through gritted teeth as I try my best to keep my voice down. Only a few other students occupy desks with their noses shoved in books, so nobody looks at us. We're in the very back of the library, and I'm all too aware of how secluded we are now.

“So if we weren't in public, you'd let me? Because we can go right back to my house.”

I shake my head and let out a long-drawn-out sigh. I grab my backpack and put it on my lap, making it clear I'm ready to leave. “No, I wouldn't if we were in private either. I turned you away the other day, remember?”

The tip of his tongue peeks out from his lips, immediately catching my eye. I remember what that felt like in my mouth, against my neck, and the growing wetness between my thighs wishes I could feel it again.

“But that's not what you wanted. We both know that,” Sawyer continues, leaning closer to me to whisper in my ear. “I could feel how badly you wanted me to fuck you then. I promise, one day, I will.”

His hand falls on my thigh again, and this time, I don't do anything to move it right away. My mind is too fuzzy thinking about his words to register the fact that he's slowly moving his hands between my legs. My entire body tenses in my chair as he massages me through the crotch of my pants, forcing the seam of the shorts closer to my clit.

“I didn't know you were such an exhibitionist,” Sawyer jokes, watching me closely while he continues massaging me.

I bite my lips, but I don't say anything. I'm acutely aware of the fact we are not alone, and if I make a noise too loud, someone is bound to turn around and catch us like this. He unbuttons my pants and slides his hand inside, digging underneath my panties to make contact with my already wet pussy.

“I knew you were turned on,” Sawyer says with a cocky grin.

His thumb presses against my clit, forcing me to inhale sharply and hold my breath as intense pleasure forces all my nerves to stand at attention. I look around nervously, making sure nobody can see the two of us. Sawyer doesn't take his eyes off me as a finger slides inside, and I let out an uncontrollable moan.

Both Sawyer and I shift in our seats to hide what's going on as somebody looks over their shoulder with their eyebrows furrowed, wondering what could have sparked that noise in the library. I quickly lean over to look at his notebook as if I'm checking something on the page while his hand stays between my legs, his fingers slowly thrusting in and out of me.

“You better be quiet, Rowan. We're in a library after all,” he whispers in my ear as I lean in front of him.

I shove my face in the palm of my hand as I try to stifle another moan. His middle finger explores me while his thumb massages my clit perfectly, nearly sending me over the edge from the overwhelming sensations. I look down at his lap to see his cock straining against the front of his pants.

God, I want it so bad. I want to reach down and hold it, to feel it inside me instead of his finger. Just thinking about it is enough to send another thrill of anticipation through my body.

My breath quickens as my orgasm comes closer, and I do everything in my power to keep from crying out. He slides another finger inside me, completely overwhelming me as he moves it faster and faster.

“I had no idea a little band geek like you would be so naughty,” Sawyer says, his voice barely audible. “Make sure you keep your voice down when I make you come.”

My entire body shakes and trembles as I bite down on my fist, stifling the moans as

best as I can. Someone in front of us looks over their shoulder, and I busy myself by trying to look as inconspicuous as possible. Either they don't seem to care or they just turn a blind eye to it because they turn back around and look at their work.

Sawyer pulls me back while he continues pumping his finger in and out of me, watching my face as I struggle to keep my composure. He likes seeing me like this. In his own weird way, he's tormenting me, and I'm just letting him.

When I finally calm down, Sawyer slides his finger out of me and rests his hand in his lap, staring at me as I lean back in the chair, my legs feeling weak.

“So that means we have a date, then,” Sawyer says with a smug grin.

All I can do is shake my head for a moment, and he watches with satisfied amusement as I try to formulate words again. “I never agreed to that,” I say after a moment.

“I’ll be here to pick you up at seven,” he says without even flinching at my comment. He stands and gathers his things, looking at me with a playful glint in his eyes. “If you don't show up, I'll just have to make a scene.”

I don't know what he means by that, but I'm honestly too afraid to find out. He gathers his things and waves at me before walking out of the library.

I guess this means I have a date with Sawyer Jackson.



## Page 7

*Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 6:30 am*

### SEVEN

As I make the drive to the dorms to pick Rowan up, I think about all the opportunities I have to embarrass her if she decides to leave me hanging. I'm not above throwing rocks at windows and lifting a boombox Say Anything style. I know most of the girls I've gone out with would be thrilled for me to do something like that, but something tells me Rowan would hate it. People would look at her, and her entire body would turn bright red from embarrassment.

Do I want to embarrass her? No. But I will if I have to.

She's not getting out of this date easily.

Luckily, I won't have to throw any pebbles or climb any windows because she's sitting on a bench outside of the dorm in a pair of sweatpants and an oversized band T-shirt. Her brown hair is thrown up in a messy bun, and she's not wearing any makeup. Compared to my khakis and button-up shirt, she definitely looks disheveled. But there's something adorable about it that I like.

I park my car and get out to walk to her like a gentleman. She doesn't trust me, and I don't fully understand why, so I will do everything I can to earn her trust tonight.

"Don't you look ravishing," I say, walking over to her with my hands in my pockets. She looks at me and stands up, gesturing to her clothes. "I'm so glad you decided to dress up for this. I worried that you might think this wasn't a serious date."

"It's laundry day. What can I say?" Rowan says, shrugging casually. "I guess we

should probably reschedule or something.”

Of course she would dress like this just to get me to call this date off. That's not going to work on me, though.

“No, you're not getting off that easy.” I pause and laugh. “Unless you play your cards right.”

She blushes and nervously looks away from me, no doubt remembering what happened in the library earlier this afternoon. I've been thinking about it nonstop, and I've practically had a semi ever since. I want her more than I can describe, and I know she wants me too. I'm not going to stop until both of us are satisfied.

I hold my arm out for her to take, and she reluctantly grabs it, following me to my car. I open the door for her and close it as soon as she sits in the passenger seat. She stares at me with a surprised look as she buckles her seat belt.

“So what's the plan? Fingering in a museum?” Rowan asks with faux excitement in her voice.

“You'd like that, wouldn't you?” She can't help but crack a smile. “We're going to Le Fleur, actually. I wouldn't count your blessings for fingering, though, this is a classy establishment. Sorry to disappoint.”

I put the car in drive and pull away from the curb, but she immediately looks back toward the dorm with a panicked look. “Wait, that place is super fancy. I can't go there like this.”

It's true, she definitely can't. It's one of the most high-end restaurants in the city, and she's wearing sweatpants and flip-flops.

“Sorry, I have reservations, and we’re already cutting it close,” I say, almost enjoying the pained look on her face. At least now she knows this is what happens when she tries to mess with me. Two can play at her little game.

The restaurant isn't far from campus, so we get there in a little less than ten minutes. I hop out of the car and run around to her side before she can open the door. She hesitates in the car for a moment, and I feel bad for bringing her here, knowing she feels self-conscious.

“It'll be fine, I promise,” I say and hold my hand out to her. She takes a deep breath and grasps it, walking with me toward the front door.

She doesn't let go when we walk inside and see a dining room packed with well-dressed diners. My face falls when I see that the hostess is Jessica. She smiles when she sees me, then looks at Rowan standing beside me, her eyes scanning her from the tip of her messy bun to her unpainted toenails.

“I'm so sorry, we actually have a dress code here,” Jessica says, walking around the podium to stare at the two of us. “Sawyer, if you would like to come to the table, I can take you there now. But you'll have to go, geek.”

Jessica smirks, twirling her hair between her fingers and staring at Rowan with contempt. I look at Rowan and see just how embarrassed she is. Her entire face turns red, and she looks like she might be on the verge of tears.

“Apologize,” I say to Jessica, nodding my head to Rowan. “Apologize to her, or I'll tell your manager you are calling customers names.”

“She's not a customer,” Jessica immediately retorts, rolling her eyes at me before landing them on Rowan and glaring. “We would never let somebody like her in here.”

“Why do you have to be so mean?” I ask, remembering how she poured her drink on her at the party and how possessive she was of me. I know the answer. I just want her to say it.

“I’m just upholding the restaurant’s policies,” Jessica says, getting defensive as she realizes I’m not going to take her side in this battle.

“Is it because I wouldn’t sleep with you on Friday?” Rowan’s mouth hangs open as I say it, and Jessica looks terribly offended. She lets out a fake laugh as if to tell me I’m ridiculous, but the look in her eyes tells me I’m right.

“As if you could get me if you wanted to,” Jessica replies, tossing her hair over her shoulder. “Now if you two could get out of here so I can free up your table, I would appreciate that.”

I grab Rowan’s hand and lead her to the door again, walking to my car fuming with anger. I’ve gone out with plenty of girls like Jessica, and their attitudes are always why I can’t be in serious relationships with them. But hearing her talk about Rowan badly as if she wasn’t standing there infuriates me.

I open her car door and close it for her, sliding into mine as soon as I’m done. I grip the steering wheel tight as I look ahead and pull out, fearing this date is already going downhill for her.

“Thanks for sticking up for me,” Rowan eventually says, looking at me with a meek smile. “I really didn’t mean to cause any trouble for you. I dressed like this to mess with you because I didn’t think you would have anything like that planned.”

“Why not?” I ask, taking a few deep breaths to soften my demeanor. I try to think about what else the two of us can do now that my original plan is out, and when the idea hits me, I make a U-turn to go to Benny’s Diner.

“I mean, that place is super serious. People go there when they want to propose. I didn't think it was going to be a first date, especially when it's not something serious,” Rowan says, laughing it off.

“Why wouldn't it be serious? I asked you on a date because I wanted to go on a date with you,” I say, stopping at a red light and looking at her as she stares at me. It's finally setting in for her that I'm not just messing around or trying to get in her pants. Of course, I want nothing more than to sleep with her, but that'll come in time. I can wait for that.

“I guess I just didn't realize you were being honest,” Rowan says, looking away from me down at her hands in her lap. “I've just had problems with jocks like you in the past, and I thought this was some kind of joke. Like maybe you and some of the other players decided you'd try to date one of the band geeks and tell everyone else about it.”

We pull up outside of Benny's Diner, and the bright blue neon sign fills the car. Rowan looks at it and squints her eyes, seeing that there is no restaurant inside for us to go to, though there are some picnic tables outside. A few moments after arriving, a woman in roller skates stops next to my window and leans down to take our orders.

I look at Rowan, and she has a wide smile on her face, clearly having never been here before. Benny's Diner is a staple in our city, and the rest of the guys from the team and I almost always come here after a rough practice.

“You eat meat, right?” I ask before I place our orders for both of us. Rowan nods, and I turn to the server and order two Benny burgers and hand-spun vanilla milkshakes for both of us. When the server leaves, I roll the window up and turn back to Rowan. “Normally, I wouldn't place an order for a girl, but if you didn't have this, we would have had problems.”

“I’ll trust your judgment on this one.” Rowan laughs, leaning back in her seat and relaxing for the first time all night. “So, since this is a date, I suppose we should get to know each other a little bit.”

“What do you want to know?”

“What are you planning on doing with your life?” she asks, raising an eyebrow with a genuinely interested look.

“Well, I do have dreams of making my football experience more than just a college hobby, but I’m also a realist. I’m studying marketing to make sure I can provide for myself and my family in case the whole NFL dream doesn’t pan out,” I say, shrugging my shoulders.

“I don’t know. I’ve seen you on the field, and you’re pretty talented. Granted, this is the only football I’ve really watched since high school, and I don’t have much to compare it to because my school was notoriously bad,” Rowan says, rambling a bit as she blushes. “But I think you’re talented enough that you could have a good future ahead of you after college.”

I look at her with pretend shock on my face. “Is Rowan Peebles saying something kind to me? What has happened to the universe?”

“If you want, I can go back to being standoffish. Your choice.” She shrugs.

“No, let’s not. I liked the other version of you, but this one is great too.” The server knocks on the window shortly after and brings our food. I open it and excitedly hand Rowan her burger and shake, watching as she takes her first sip. Her eyes open wide, and she nods, immediately going back for another.

“That’s delicious.” She moans as she takes another sip, and it immediately reminds

me of the library. I don't think the sound of her crying out from pleasure and having to cover her own mouth to hide it will ever leave my mind. I could listen to that everyday for the rest of my life.

“What about your big dreams?” I ask between bites of the burger.

“I want to be a music teacher,” she says with a soft smile. “I've always loved music, hence being in the band. I'm dual majoring in music composition and early childhood education right now.”

I have to say, I'm impressed by that. Dual majoring is incredibly difficult. I can imagine that's a lot for her to handle, especially with band on the side.

“What makes you want to do that?”

“When I was in third grade, my dad died in a car accident, and it was the worst thing I ever experienced.” She sets her food down on her lap and clears her throat, clearly trying to fight back the emotion she feels talking about it again. “It was a really difficult time, and my mom didn't know how to handle me because I was so upset and misbehaving. Eventually, we went through a rotation in our art lessons at school for music. The teacher gave me a recorder and taught me how to play ‘Auld Lang Syne,’ and that sparked my love for music. After that, I was sent to music camp, and it's helped me all through my life. I want to be able to help other kids like me.”

A wide smile grows as I stare at her, weirdly proud of her. She's intelligent and kind, and she has a good head on her shoulders. “That's really sweet. I know you'll do just that, too.”

We finish our meals, and I reluctantly drive back to the dorm. If I could, I would stay out with her all night long and get to know every detail of her life. I want to ask her what her earliest memory is and ask her to recount every detail she remembers so I

can know everything about her. Unfortunately, we have classes tomorrow. I'm not particularly studious, but I even care about that.

When we get to the dorm, I once again jump out of the car and open the door before she can open it herself. I walk her inside and linger by the metal elevator doors as we wait for it to open, wishing I could go upstairs with her.

“I don't know if you think what happened in the library means I'm going to sleep with you, but I'm not,” Rowan says, her voice soft as she stares up at me, biting her lips softly.

I smirk at her and shake my head, reaching my hand to cup her cheek. “Actually, I wasn't planning on that. I was only going to kiss you good night.”

I lean toward her and press my lips against hers. She doesn't hesitate with this kiss like she did the first time. Her lips swish against mine and part, hungry to taste more of me again. I hold her close, grabbing her waist and pulling her toward me, wishing neither of us had said what we did about not sleeping together.

Rowan's tongue explores my mouth, gently tapping on the roof and tickling me. I could do this all night, easily. But Rowan's words are heavy in my mind, and I don't want to push this too far. The last thing I want is her to think I'm taking advantage of her, so I reluctantly pull away. Her head is still tilted upward, a pleading look in her eyes silently asking me to kiss her again.

“I should probably get going,” I say just as the elevator door opens and a few students scramble off, their conversation coming to a halt when they see the two of us embracing. Rowan's face turns red as she climbs on the elevator, looking at me.

“Tonight was surprisingly fun,” she says, waving at me as the doors close.



“Don't worry, it won't be the last time I take you out,” I promise just as the doors close, separating the two of us.

## Page 8

*Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 6:30 am*

### EIGHT

I wait all day to hear from Sawyer again, but he doesn't reach out. I feel like a teenager in some '90s movie sitting by the phone, waiting for it to ring. This feels like torment.

Even though I haven't heard from him, I'm strangely content. I'm confident he's going to reach out. Especially considering we have our world history class together and still need to work on our project at some point.

Toward the end of the day, when I finish my last class and head to the football field for marching band rehearsal, I'm excited, thinking I'll see the football players practicing on the field, too. Sawyer and the rest of the team are in the center of the field doing warm-ups, and Sawyer subtly waves at me when he sees me.

The entire cheerleading squad sits on the bleachers, shrieking laughter at each other, and all of us in our band uniforms are immediately self-conscious. We've all had our fair share of mean people making fun of us for being in the band, and the uniform just makes it that much more apparent.

Nevertheless, we straighten our spines and walk past the mean girls giggling at us. I look forward and of course see Jessica sitting in the center, her eyes glued to me as I gripped my flute tight in my hands.

“She came to Le Fleur wearing sweatpants, and I had to kick her out,” Jessica says louder than she needs to to ensure I hear. “I can't believe Sawyer would stoop as low as someone like her.”

The others around her all laugh hysterically like Jessica is performing her own stand-up show. I'm not going to pretend it doesn't hurt. Sawyer is popular, charming, and ridiculously good looking. He could do much better than me, and he likely has. The thought of him choosing me over someone like Jessica is preposterous in most cases.

People like Jessica are the reason I don't think Sawyer and I work. With people like him, catty bitches come with the territory. I've dealt with them for far too long in my life, and it's not something I want to be involved with much more.

I can see my face turning red, and I bite the insides of my cheek to try to keep any emotion from showing. The cheerleaders continue laughing behind us as we get into our formation, and I can't focus on practice. Sawyer spots me, and I watch him wrinkle his eyebrows, curious as to why I'm turning red.

"Are you all right?" Corinne asks beside me, grabbing my arm and squeezing it.

"I just got really nauseous," I lie, holding my stomach and taking a deep breath. "I'm sorry, I can't be here right now. I'll have a makeup day later this week."

Before she can say anything else, I pick up my case and hastily walk away. The only thing on my mind is Sawyer and how the two of us just don't work. As I walk back, I see the cheerleaders in their skimpy uniforms, their breasts practically hanging out and their legs on full display. Sawyer should be with a girl like that, not me.

Jessica can have him. I can't compete with someone like her anyway.

I get back to my dorm just in time to let out a long exhale and finally unleash the tears I feel. A few stream down my face as I think about talking to Sawyer and telling him again that this doesn't work, refusing to let him convince me otherwise.

A knock on the door catches my attention, and I take a deep breath to calm myself

before answering. When I open it, Sawyer is standing there with a concerned look.

“Are you okay?” He walks in the room and closes the door before taking me in his arms.

I let him hold me, sinking into his warmth for a moment as I cling on to him, knowing this could be the last time. My body shudders as I take a deep breath to calm myself before speaking. I have to make sure he knows this is something I've been thinking about for a while, and I'm not just being ruled by emotion.

I back away from him, and he moves closer, but I hold a hand up to stop him. “Go back to practice. Go be with the other jocks and the cheerleaders where you belong.”

“Rowan, if I wanted to be with them, I would be with them,” Sawyer says, moving closer and holding my head in his hands, forcing me to look him in the eyes. “I'm here with you right now because I care about you. I know you think I want something else, but all I want is you.”

I can't help the tear that slips from my eyes when I hear that, and he swipes it away with his thumb, leaning down and kissing me. The kiss is uplifting, healing the part of me that felt like I wasn't good enough. I stand on my tiptoes, wrapping my arms around his neck as I lean against the bed.

“I want you,” Sawyer whispers as he pulls his face away from me. “I want all of you.”

I nod my head and lower my hands from his neck to his chest, rubbing his hard muscles under his shirt. A moment later, I lift it over his head and toss it to the side, letting my hands trace his warm body. He lifts my shirt and drops it, cupping my breasts and his hands as he kisses me again.

He lifts me onto the bed, and I fall back, spreading my legs for him to kneel between them. I know what's about to happen and want it badly, but I'm reminded that I have no experience whatsoever. Sawyer's probably used to girls like Jessica, who lost their virginity on prom night like every normal girl. That's just not me.

“Wait,” I said, pushing him away and staring into his hungry eyes. “Before we do this, I just need to let you know that it's my first time. Just please be gentle.”

He leans down and kisses me again, pulling away after a moment and staring at me with a comforting smile. “Of course.”

His mouth falls to my neck as he slowly kisses me, his lips hot against my skin, sending shivers of excitement through my body. His tongue grazes against it, teasing me as he slowly works his way lower, kissing the soft skin between my breasts. I lean forward, and he unclasps my bra, tossing it aside. He takes my nipple in his mouth and twirls his tongue around it. I moan softly, feeling how he reacts through the vibrations of his moans against me.

His hands moved to my pants. He pulls them over my hips, and I kick them to the side, sitting in front of him in nothing but my panties. He rubs the outside, massaging my clit and sending small pulses of pleasure through me.

“I love how wet you get,” he says as he feels my juices seeping through the fabric. Sawyer stares at my half-naked body, licking his lips from the anticipation. I reach forward and press my hands against the front of his pants, feeling the hard bulge beneath them. It's the first time I've ever touched a penis, and I'm desperate to feel more of it.

He sits back while I lower the waist of his pants and pull his cock through the hole in his boxers. I wrap my hand around the shaft, feeling just how firm it is in my grasp. I slowly massage it, watching how it responds with fascination, rubbing my thumb

over the tip to spread the small droplet of pre-cum around the head.

“Do you like it?” Sawyer asks with a quiet laugh. I nod and continue moving my hand as he rubs his fingers against my clit. “It's going to feel so good inside you.”

“I want it,” I say, biting my lip as I look up at him. He slides my panties down around my ankles and drops them on the floor.

“I'm going to give it to you.” His hands crawl up my body, caressing every inch of my bare flesh splayed out before him. He spreads my legs and stares at my pussy, seeing it for the first time. He moans just at the sight and gently traces a finger along my folds. “I've just got to get you good and ready for it first.”

Before I know what's happening, his mouth is between my legs, and he's licking my clit while staring at me, his blue eyes filled with desire. “Oh my God,” I cry out as my entire body electrifies. My breath quickens, and my hands instinctively reach for my breasts to caress my nipples while his tongue swirls around me.

Just as I feel I'm about to experience a dizzying orgasm, he pulls his mouth away and gently kisses the inside of my thighs until my body calms down. I stare down at him, desperate for him to finish me off, but he smirks as if he's enjoying keeping me right on the edge.

“Please, Sawyer,” I beg, needing to feel that explosive release.

“Not right now,” he says, taunting me as he gently laps his tongue against me. “I want you to come when my cock is stuffed inside you.”

I can't wait another second for it. My fingers lace through his blond hair as I pull him away from me, gesturing for him to climb back up my body so I can feel him inside me once. His cock grazes against my folds, sending a jolt of anticipation through me.

He presses himself against me and grinds his cock between my legs, letting it soak in my juices before readying himself to slide inside me. "Fuck," he moans in my ear before he takes my earlobe between his lips and nibbles it.

"I'm ready," I say, spreading my legs wider to give him complete access to my pussy.

He backs away and looks down at me, positioning his cock exactly where it needs to be and slowly pushing his way in. My body stiffens as the pressure fills me. Sawyer stares at me with his mouth hanging open, waiting for me to nod and give him the go-ahead to keep going. My body slowly adjusts to him, stretching to fit his entire length as he sheathes himself inside me.

"You're so fucking tight," he groans, clearly trying to hold back from coming too early. "You feel even better than I thought you would."

"So do you," I say through a struggled breath, a slight moan escaping.

When my body relaxes, he moves his hips against me, pulling his cock out and slowly pushing it back in, letting me take every inch of him with each thrust. At first, it's a little bit uncomfortable, but as he keeps going, I get used to it, and the pleasure is more prominent. My nails dig into his back as he keeps thrusting, his cock hardening and throbbing with each movement.

He holds off often, letting his cock get just the edge of exploding before slowing and stopping long enough to settle down. When I reach the edge, my pussy tightening around him, he doesn't slow down, though. He sees how desperate I am for an orgasm, and he pumps his cock longer and harder inside me, letting me feel every throbbing inch.

"Yes, Sawyer!" I cry out as my entire body trembles from the earth-shattering orgasm that completely overtakes my body. I can't control the screams or moans that I make,

and Sawyer does nothing to silence me. He stares at me with satisfaction in his eyes as his cock stiffens even more and twitches when he comes.

He buries his face in my neck as he continues pumping, squeezing every last drop of pleasure out of the orgasm as he can. When both of us are finished, he lies down beside me and turns my face to his, kissing me once again, searching my mouth with each sweep of his tongue.

“How do you feel?” Sawyer asks, brushing my hair out of my face before kissing my cheek.

“I feel good,” I say as I sink into the warmth of his chest and feel his arm drape around me. He holds me close and covers me with a blanket, nuzzling the back of my head before we drift off to sleep.

\* \* \*

My standing 7:00 a.m. alarm goes off, and I jolt awake, immediately realizing half of my bed is cold. I start to panic, thinking Sawyer did use me after all and left in the night. But then I find a sticky note taped on top of my phone telling me he's run to the café to get us breakfast. I rip it off as I silence my alarm and snuggle back into the sheets.

I want to send him a text message to thank him, but before I unlock my phone, I see countless other text messages from an unknown number.

“What the hell?” I say as I unlock the phone and open them to investigate. I sit upright and hold my hand over my face when I see countless images of Sawyer with other women. Some of them are at school, some at his house, some even in the very dorm building that I live in. But there are countless women with their arms wrapped around him, kissing him and touching him. Of course, there is a picture of Jessica on



the football field, his hands on her ass as he holds her close and kisses her too. Looks like Sawyer has worked his way through the cheerleading squad and has made his way to the band geeks. You are just one conquest of many, the message reads.

I feel like my heart is ripped right out of my chest and stomped on thousands of times. I believed he was someone different, and I was a fool.

I jump out of bed and run to the door, locking the knob and the deadbolt on the top, refusing to open it for anyone. Sawyer is due back any minute, and I can't see him right now, no matter how difficult that will be.

## Page 9

*Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 6:30 am*

### NINE

Carrying a greasy bag with some bacon, egg, and cheese bagels, hash browns, and a tray of piping hot coffees in my hands, I make my way back up to Rowan's dorm. I didn't want to wake her, but I hope the note is at least enough if she wakes up before I get back. Something tells me she's a bit of an early bird.

Last night was spectacular. It's everything I wanted and more, and I can't wait for countless other nights just like that with Rowan on my arm. I can hardly recall a time when I was happier than I am right now.

I reach for the doorknob to her room and slowly turn it. I'm careful because I don't want to be loud and wake her. After a brief wiggle, the knob doesn't budge, and I try again, realizing it's locked.

"Shoot," I say, regrettably having to knock on the door to let her know I'm back. At first, I just assumed she must be changing and didn't want someone to walk in while she was naked. But when she doesn't answer right away, I wonder if something else is going on.

I wait for a couple of minutes, thinking she might have run to the communal bathroom in the building and she'll leave any moment to see me standing in front of her door with breakfast and coffee. But after five minutes, that doesn't happen.

I knock again and wait for an answer, but I don't get one. Then I call her and hear her phone ringing on the other briefly before it's promptly silenced.

“Rowan?” I say it through the door, knowing she's behind it and can hear me. “What's going on? Can you let me in?”

There's no answer, and I start to panic. I don't know what happened between last night and this morning that she would be refusing to talk to me. I thought she and I had come to terms with our relationship, and we were going to see what could become of us. What did I miss that made me so wrong?

“Can you let me in so we can talk?” Still, I don't get any answer. Some other students are wandering around, eyeing me suspiciously as I continue to knock on the door. “Please, Rowan.”

After about ten minutes of standing there with the coffee getting cold, I decide to leave. I set breakfast down outside of the door, hoping she might eventually peek her head out and grab it. “Listen, I don't know what I did, but I want to apologize if I did something to hurt you. I just don't understand what's going on. I'm leaving, but please just call me.”

I head back downstairs, my head swimming with confusion. Something isn't right. Last night was perfect for both of us, and it doesn't make sense why she would shut me out like this.

High-pitched, familiar laughter catches my attention in the lobby, and I see Jessica sitting on a couch with her legs crossed, surrounded by a couple of her friends. She stops laughing when she sees me, and a mischievous look flashes across her face.

“Hi, Sawyer!” she says in a singsong voice, beckoning me toward her. I plan on ignoring her and just leaving initially. “Did your little girlfriend like the pictures I sent of you working your way through the cheer squad?”

I freeze by the door and turn around, glaring at her as an icy smile rests on her face.

Of course this would have something to do with her. Why would I have ever thought it was something else?

“What did you do?” I ask, my voice low and serious.

“Oh, I was just protecting another girl,” Jessica innocently says, as if she was doing Rowen a service. “I thought she should know that you're just a player, and all you ever wanted was to use her like you used the rest of the squad.”

“Back the fuck off, Jessica,” I say in a voice more threatening than I thought it would be. “You don't know a goddamn thing about me or Rowan or our relationship.”

She stares at me with shock on her face for a moment, then she laughs and looks at her friends for support. “I don't care. The two of you don't belong together, and that's all. You should be thanking me. Soon enough, the entire school would see you with the geek, and your reputation would plummet.”

“My reputation? What the fuck is wrong with you?” I ask, exasperated and exhausted with this vapid bullshit. “Look, just because you have to abide by these dumb societal standards doesn't mean everybody else does. I don't like you because you're a shallow bitch. You're nothing but a pretty face. In thirty years, that's all going to be gone, and you're going to be left as a hollow shell of a person constantly clinging to your youth. If I were you, I'd get a personality before it's too late.”

Her face is blank as she tries to process what I said, not believing someone would talk to her like that. She's gone her entire life skating by on her looks, and that's all she has. I walk away before she can say anything else, not needing to hear any more stupid excuses from her.

I skip classes today and go back home, fuming at the idea of someone like Jessica meddling in a potentially incredible relationship. I have strong feelings for Rowan,

stronger than anything I've ever felt. I see a future with her and want to build on that if I can. I just don't know how to repair this.

“What's gotten into you?” Merrit asks as she sees me pacing back and forth in the living room, running my fingers through my hair.

I explain the entire situation without sparing any details, even letting her know that last night I took Rowan's virginity. Merrit isn't the kind of person who will spread this information to everybody at school. I know that what I tell her will be strictly confidential, and she won't even tell Talon about it.

“But I don't understand why Rowan lets Jessica get to her,” I say when I'm finished, shaking my head in confusion. “Rowan is the complete package. She's stunningly beautiful, and she's smart, witty. Jessica has nothing on her, and she has to know that, right?”

“If what Jessica said is true and she sent evidence of you hooking up with a bunch of different people, that might not instill a lot of confidence in her,” Merrit says, flashing me a reassuring smile as she offers advice. “She might think you were just using her for a good time. You have to show her that you're serious about her and that she's different from the other girls you hooked up with. Plus, if last night really was her first time, she was probably feeling very vulnerable, and you not being there when she woke up didn't help anything.”

“What am I supposed to do, then? She won't even talk to me.” I sigh, leaning back on the couch and racking my brain for anything I can do.

“Wait, I think I have an idea,” Merrit says, staring at me as if a light bulb just went off in her head.

I don't know what she has to say, but I'll do anything to make it up to Rowan. But by

the look on her face, I'm starting to get a little worried. I just hope whatever it is works.

TEN

“You know, maybe I can just drop the class?” I say to Corrinne as I sit across from her in our room and brainstorm ways to deal with this. It took her a good thirty minutes to come to terms with the fact that I slept with Sawyer Jackson, and after explaining everything, else we finally got to the nitty gritty. “I still have some time, and that's the only way I can see successfully avoiding him.”

“Okay, but your transcript is going to be shot after that. Plus, you know you shouldn't cower away from a guy like that,” she says, huffing at me and thinking deeply.

After twenty minutes, when neither of us comes up with a good solution, it's decided that I'm going to face the situation head-on. I'm going to be a strong woman and not back down. I'm going to stay in the class, and I'm going to continue working on the project alongside Sawyer, letting him know his actions don't actually affect me. It's a huge lie, but it's the only way I can imagine being around him without crying.

I head to the library the next day for our scheduled meetup to go over the project. The last time both of us were here, Sawyer's hands were between my legs, and I had one of the best orgasms of my life. It's a shame we won't be replaying that today.

Sawyer is already in the library waiting for me once again, and I walked to the table, setting my backpack down without any greeting. He doesn't say anything either.

A part of me expects him to be angry with me for shutting him out. I wouldn't even listen to his side of the story, which I know is not ideal in most situations. But I just couldn't do it. I couldn't listen to him rationalize how he's screwed around with every

girl on the cheerleading squad. I couldn't listen to him talk about how he got tired of them and moved on to the first new girl he could.

I worry that what the text message said was true, and Sawyer was only looking for a good time. He got what he came for, and everything between us will disappear.

“We only have two weeks left to finish this. We really need to start nailing down exactly what it is we'll be talking about,” Sawyer says when I sit down, being more serious about the project than he's been this entire time.

We start going over our bullet list of ideas, and it's hard for me to stay focused on the schoolwork. A tiny part of me is offended that he is so casual right now. It's only reinforcing all of the fears I had before thinking he was just using me. After about a half an hour of talking about our visual aid like nothing happened between us a couple of days ago, I've had enough.

“What the hell is wrong with you? Two days ago, you were begging for me to hear you out, and here I am right now, and you don't have a goddamn thing to say?” My voice is loud, and I don't do anything to lower it. Sawyer looks at me as if in shock at me raising my voice in the library, but I don't care. I'm well beyond caring. “You're sweeping everything under the rug like none of that mattered to you.”

My voice cracks, and I feel my throat aching like I'm going to start sobbing. Sawyer stares at me and shakes his head, not even opening his mouth to say anything. Instead, he lifts his shirt, which is a very confusing thing for me to see right now. I shake my head and back away, not understanding right away, but then I see the raw red skin with a name etched into it. My name.

“You got my name tattooed?” I asked in a hushed voice, surprised by how much I like the idea of this. “You didn't have to do that.”



“I did. I needed to show you that you mean more to me than any other girl,” Sawyer says, lowering his shirt and reaching his hand across the table to grab mine. “All those other girls, they're in the past. You are the only person I would do this for.”

A tear streams down my cheek, and I wipe it on my shoulder while I smile at him. I have to believe what he's saying is true. This is a sign of commitment from him that I wasn't expecting, but it proves I'm wrong about him.

“When I got those text messages, I was so afraid,” I say, my voice cracking as I choke out the words. “I really thought you were just using me, and you were going to hurt me. I should have known better than to believe it, but I let the past dictate how I felt.”

“Rowan, I promise I'm never going to hurt you,” Sawyer says, lifting my hand to his lips and kissing my fingers. “I'm ready to put the past behind me, and I think you should do the same. Rowan, I love you. I'm ready to commit myself to only you.”

I smile and stare at him, biting my lower lip as excitement rushes through my body. I never thought someone like him would say those words to me, and it's invigorating in a way I never would have expected.

“I think I love you too, Sawyer,” I say before Sawyer leans across the table and holds my face close to his for a kiss.

### EPILOGUE

With mere seconds left on the clock, Talon runs into the end zone and scores a game-winning touchdown, and everyone in the stands cheers. The entire team runs and collides with each other, ecstatic that the game we have been prepping for weeks is over, and we've come out on top.

As the team celebrates, my eyes search the sidelines for Rowan, watching her in the band as they play our victory song. After a few moments of the song playing, she stops performing and runs toward me with her flute still in hand, wrapping her arms tight around my neck and kissing me.

This is the reward I was playing for. I don't care if it puts our school in the top ranks this year and inevitably earns us more funding next year. All I wanted to do was impress my girlfriend. I set her down on the ground, and she stares at me, beaming excitedly.

The cheerleaders surround us, and Jessica and some of her friends walk by, scowling at the two of us. Rowan has done a lot of work over the past few months to learn how to ignore people like her because no matter what we do, people will have their opinions. Most of my friends have taken to Rowan and her friends very well, but Jessica is different.

I pick Rowan up again and swing her around before kissing her while she's in my arms, being as cheesily romantic as possible just to rub it in Jessica's face.

“Didn't you tell me that I'd have a present waiting for me if we won?” I ask,

wrinkling my eyebrows at her.

“Well, that's at home, and you're going to have to wait until after the big party.” Rowan laughs, teasing me with anticipation.

“I would much rather skip out on any party and just go home to be with you.” I lean forward and kiss her again, holding her close before wrapping an arm around her and walking off the field.

A few months after the two of us had been dating, Rowan ended up moving into my house with Talon and Merrit still living there as well. The four of us get along exceptionally well, and I think Rowan is happier than she's been in a long time. It definitely comes with the added perks of having a live-in girlfriend. Let's just say that Rowan is much more experienced now in the bedroom.

“You remember what we've been talking about over the past few months?” Rowan asks as she leads me to the bedroom, closing the door behind us. I wrinkle my eyebrows and shake my head, knowing that the two of us have been talking about a lot of things. I watch as she goes to her dresser and digs out a box and opens it in front of me. She pulls out a pair of fuzzy pink handcuffs and a black blindfold, biting her lip while she waits for my response.

“Well, this is an incredible gift,” I say, walking over to her and taking the blindfold in my hands before carefully placing it over her eyes. “I can't think of a better way to celebrate.”

Rowan lifts the blindfold and stares at me with a coy smile, biting her lip as she moves over to the bed. “I've had them for a while, I just haven't had the confidence to initiate this yet. It's a little out of my comfort zone, but I want to try. I want you to do whatever you want to me.”

I move close to her and scoop her up in my arms, kissing her long and hard, letting

my tongue slip into her mouth and tangle with hers. I place her gently on the bed, lifting one of her arms and cuffing it to the bedpost.

“If you ever want me to uncuff you, just let me know,” I say as I cuff her in again and put the blindfold over her eyes.

She bites her lip nervously, but I can see the excitement in her smile. I unbutton her shirt first, licking her stomach and listening as she gasps and giggles. My cock is already hard just seeing her in the handcuffs alone, so I slip out of my pants and kneel over her.

“Open your mouth,” I say, and she eagerly obliges. With her lips parted, I slowly work the tip of my cock in her mouth, feeling how she moans against it and swirls her tongue around the tip. It's warm and wet, and she moves her head just right along it. I pull it out and stay where I am for a moment as she leans forward and licks my shaft hungrily. “You're so sexy.”

I move away from her mouth, knowing I could have just stayed there for the time being and let her lick me until I come down her throat. I'm just not ready for that quite yet.

I climb down her body, pulling her pants over her hips and tossing them on the floor beside the bed before doing the same with her panties. She squeals with excitement as she feels the heat of my breath between her legs and immediately moans when my mouth crashes into her.

My tongue caresses her folds, tasting her juices as I tease her more. She moans and spreads her legs wider, giving me complete access to her pussy as I slide a finger inside. Her breath quickens, and I know she's about to come. I pull away from her, backing away as her breath hitches in her throat, and she slumps against the mattress in defeat.

“Please,” Rowan begs, straining against the handcuffs for the first time. “Please don't stop.”

I laugh to myself and look down at her glistening pussy before bringing my tongue to it once again. I moan from satisfaction as I go down on her, knowing this sets her over the edge more often than not. As she feels the vibrations of the noise against her, she cries out from the pleasure, but I pull my mouth away.

“You're cruel,” she says, panting heavily as she tries to close her legs and create friction for herself to get off. I hold them apart and shake my head at her.

“I don't think so,” I say, tracing my tongue along her folds to tease her as she comes down. “You gave me control, remember?”

I know she can't take much more of this, so I tease her a little more before sucking her clit between my lips. I lap at it with two fingers stuffed in her pussy until I feel her clenching around me, and her entire body writhes against the sheets. She cries out and moans, whimpering from the ecstasy flooding her veins.

My cock is throbbing, begging to be shoved inside her by the time she's done, and I don't waste a moment. I spread her legs wide and position myself between them, plunging myself in one long thrust deep inside her. Her body twitches, and she cries out, her fingers gripping the bedpost tightly.

“Do you like my cock inside you?” I say through a stifled moan as I pump deeper.

“Yes!” Rowan cries out, practically whimpering as I thrust in and out of her right after her orgasm, immediately building up to another. She bites her lip hard, and her chest heaves as I reach out and grab her breast, squeezing her nipple between my fingers.

I want to stop and savor this more, but I can't. All I can focus on is her perfect, tight

body splayed out before me for me to completely control, and that's enough to spill me over the edge. I slow down as I get closer, and my hand moves between her legs to massage her clit as I continue pumping.

I feel her pussy tightening around me, and my cock can't take it anymore. I moan loudly, slowing down and shaking as an orgasm ripples through me. "Oh my God," Rowan cries out, her voice cutting in and out as it shakes from both the pleasure and me pumping harder inside her.

It takes a few moments for my orgasm to settle, and I pull out of her, immediately taking the blindfold off and undoing the handcuffs. Rowan's arms fall to the bed limp as she breathes heavily, recovering from both of her orgasms.

"That was an incredible gift," I say as I climb into bed beside her and lean down to kiss her. "I love you so much."

"I love you, Sawyer," she says, holding me close as we lie in bed together. I don't care about going to whatever celebration parties are happening tonight. All I want is to lie here with Rowan. Something I'm looking forward to doing for the rest of my life.

\* \* \*

Thank you for reading The Band Geek, next up in this series is The Study Session .