

rewind ...

∞ Quinn ∞

The last place I wanted to be right now was Swain's Psych 101 class. It was bad enough the class started at the crack of dawn, but I was an econ major—not some wannabe head shrink. I couldn't care less what most people were thinking. But I'd heard this class was easy, and it fulfilled one of my graduation requirements, so I registered for it.

And since I had swim practice all afternoon, my entire day was pretty much shot. At least I was faring better than the two hung over jackasses sitting next to me. I looked at Adam and Stewie, suffering in their seats, and smirked in satisfaction. The luck of the Irish was not with them last night. Served them right. They should've known better than to try to hook up on sorority pledge night—the one night where girls were guaranteed to be more interested in “sisterhood” than in getting laid.

Speaking of girls, my thoughts were interrupted by one in particular who just walked into the lecture hall. Apparently, she'd interrupted Swain's thoughts, too, because he stopped mid-sentence and glared at her. In fact, the entire room stopped and stared at her.

“I'm glad you decided to grace us with your presence this morning,” Swain barked.

“Um, sorry ... rough morning,” she replied.

Man, Swain didn't have to be such an asshole. The poor girl already looked frightened enough—her eyes were wide, she was out of breath, and her cheeks were flushed. I watched as she slid into an open chair up front and removed her jacket. With her glasses, the knit cap that covered most of her brown hair, and the IU sweatshirt that had seen better days, she looked like she'd literally rolled out of bed a few minutes ago. She was kind of a mess, but she was kind of a cute mess.

I'd seen her before at one or two parties that Adam's fraternity had thrown last semester. She was a freshman, and as a general rule, I steered clear of freshmen—even last year when I *was* a freshman. They were young and naïve, still all wrapped up in their romantic college fantasies, and I certainly didn't claim to be Prince Charming. I preferred hot seniors, who were looking to check “wild, meaningless sex” off their to-do list before they graduated.

Still, there was something about this girl ...

I couldn't help but steal glances in her direction during class. She looked distracted, like maybe she was stressed or worried about something, and it made me wonder what she meant when she said she was having a “rough morning.” Did she have a late night? If the way she looked was any indication, she wasn't the sorority type, so I assumed whatever was going on with her didn't involve pledge night. Had she spent last night with a guy? Was he an asshole? Did he treat her badly? Hurt her? I suddenly felt a little possessive and protective of this cute mess of a girl. I also couldn't ignore the streak of jealousy I felt rip through me at the mere thought of another guy touching her.

What the hell? I asked myself, shaking my head in an annoyed attempt to rid my mind of the strange, unsettling feelings that were screwing with me. I tried to focus on Swain's lecture, but it wasn't long before my eyes—and my thoughts—wandered back to her. Like an itch I had to scratch, I had this undeniable urge to find out who and what this girl was all about.

“Let's end class early today,” Swain announced, pulling me out of my fog. “We'll pick up on Friday where we left off today. And everyone, please bring a little more enthusiasm with you to the next class. This information could appear on your midterm exam.” The professor gathered his lecture notes and booked it out the door.

“Thank God that’s over,” Adam mumbled as he packed up his stuff at a snail’s pace.

“Seriously,” Stewie added, moving just as slowly.

“You’re both pathetic,” I said without an ounce of compassion. I shoved my crap into my backpack, threw on my jacket, and hightailed it down to the front row. I wanted to catch her before she left.

“Hey, would you mind giving me your notes from last Friday’s class?” I asked as soon as I reached her. Okay, admittedly, not the smoothest opener, but it was the first thing that popped into my mind. Okay, not the first thing—that would’ve been the image of what I’d like to do to her if we were alone right now. I felt that all too familiar stirring below the belt and mentally grimaced. This wasn’t going to go well if I couldn’t keep things under control.

Down boy! I ordered myself as I recited the “Pledge of Allegiance” in my head.

When she looked up at me, I felt like someone had slammed head-on into my chest at forty miles per hour. This girl was beautiful. How could I have not seen it before? She had the most unbelievable light green eyes. She wasn’t wearing any makeup, and her skin was flawless, and so was her perfect little nose. And her lips—her lips were made to be kissed. *I wanted to kiss them—over and over again.*

She opened her mouth as if to say something, but nothing came out. The way she puckered her mouth only made me want to nibble on her bottom lip before my hands—

I swore all of the blood in my brain just made a mad dash south. I felt like I had the self-control of a horny kid in junior high school. *Crap, who is this girl?*

“That is, if you were here last Friday,” I quickly added to curb the uncomfortable silence between us, as well as my own physical discomfort that I feared was becoming more noticeable by the second.

But she still didn't say anything. She just stood up and put on her jacket. I did, however, catch her eyes roaming over me, and I had to fight the grin pulling at the corners of my mouth. I knew I was pretty easy on the eyes, and if she was like most girls, I knew she liked what she saw. I realized how arrogant that sounded, but it was the truth. I never had a shortage of hot girls to pick and choose from at the end of the night.

I bent down and picked up the girl's backpack and my shoulder grazed her arm, sending a jolt of energy through me—like a static charge. She must've felt it, too, because she gasped and looked away from me. *Interesting.*

"Sorry, I didn't mean to startle you. I guess I should've introduced myself before I tried to snag your notes. I'm Quinn."

"What, Larry and Curly don't come to class either?" she asked, glancing behind me at Adam and Stewie, who were hanging back by our seats watching the show.

So this girl has some fire in her—nice.

She zipped up her jacket and motioned towards the door. I knew I was blocking her path, but I wasn't ready to let her escape yet, so I just stood there.

"Would you trust the likes of them for class notes?" I joked, flashing her my winning smile, the one my mom said always got me what I wanted. The girl blushed, which was exactly the reaction I was going for.

"And you would trust me?" she countered. "A perfect stranger that you randomly picked out of the class?"

Oh, she definitely has some fire in her. I felt my chest fill with excitement and anticipation at the thought of getting to know this girl better.

"You tell me. Should I not trust you? I mean, you certainly look smarter than those two heathens—and a bit more attractive I might add," I teased.

“Great, so I’m a step above a heathen. Thanks.” She sounded annoyed, which was definitely *not* the reaction I was going for. “Let me ask you something,” she continued in a sharp tone. “Do you always make a point of being so *nice* to someone you’re asking for help?”

I heard Adam clear his throat, and I knew he was stifling a laugh as Stewie muttered “Mayday” repeatedly under his breath.

Oh, the game’s not over yet, I wanted to assure them. *Watch and learn, ass-wipes. Watch and learn.*

“Let me ask *you* something,” I responded calmly. “Do you always make a point of being so difficult when someone asks for your help? Hmm ... I bet Professor Swain would have something to say about that.” I flashed her another grin.

She stood there for a minute and then finally smiled at me.

That’s better, I thought smugly.

“Didn’t he already say enough about me this morning?” She rolled her eyes, making me laugh out loud. I realized I was still holding her backpack, so I offered it to her.

“Oh, thanks,” she said as she took it and threw it over her shoulder. “Look, I’m sorry. It’s just that good moods and early mornings don’t really go hand-in-hand with me—especially when I’m running late for my next class. Speaking of which,” she looked down at her watch, “I really have to run. Excuse me.”

She gently pushed by me and headed out the door, but I wasn’t about to let this be the end of our conversation. She’d captured my attention, and I wanted to make sure I captured hers. I’m not sure why it was so important to me, but it was all that mattered at the moment.

“Later,” I called out to Adam and Stewie.

“It’s not like you to chase tail, dude,” Stewie commented. “You always have the chicks lining up for *you*.”

“Yeah, well, maybe I’m bored with that. Maybe I miss the challenge.”

“Well, then why don’t you invite her to the party on Friday night?” Adam suggested. “And see if she has any hot friends.”

“Not a bad idea,” I replied with a satisfied smirk, knowing it gave me another reason to talk to her.

I chased after her, following her out of the building, and shivered the instant the cold air hit me. I stuck my hands in my pockets. *Damn, I should’ve dressed warmer.* I scanned the immediate area and spotted her walking down the sidewalk. I ran to catch up with her, being careful not to fall on the ice and look like a total idiot.

“Hey,” I said when I fell into step with her. “I’m headed in the same direction.” *Not.* “I’ll walk with you.” She looked up and flashed me a strange look that I couldn’t read before shifting her attention back to the slick sidewalk in front of us.

“So,” I continued, “you a freshman?”

She simply nodded her head.

Okay, so she wasn’t in a very talkative mood. That was fine. I was fully capable of doing the talking for both of us. I’d just rely on her reactions to guide me.

“I’m a sophomore.” Just then a half-dozen students were about to cross paths with us, giving me the opportunity to move even closer to her as they walked by. I purposefully maintained my new proximity to her body, noting that she didn’t do anything to increase the distance between us. *I’m making some headway,* I thought, grinning to myself.

“I’m here on a swim scholarship,” I mentioned. That always seemed to get a girl’s attention. She glanced at my shoulders and chest once more. I knew she was checking me out to see if I had the telltale “swimmer’s body.” I did. And by the way she licked her lower lip before sucking on it, she knew I did, too.

Oh yeah, she's into me. And I am more than a little into her, I thought as I found myself staring at the way she kept biting her lower lip.

“Yeah, I’ve been swimming for as long as I could walk,” I added after clearing my throat. I had to stay focused or I’d soon be ambushed by thoughts of her and me together. “I guess you could say it’s in my blood. My dad and brothers were all competitive swimmers.”

Another string of people passed us, forcing me to walk behind her on the narrow snow-trodden path. She was wearing a ski jacket, so I could see her tight ass and the curves of her hips as she walked in front of me. I licked my lips and exhaled quietly. While I appreciated the view, it wasn’t helping me accomplish my end goal, which to be honest, I wasn’t really sure of anymore. Suddenly, one night with her didn’t seem like enough.

Yeah, well, if you can’t even get her to come to the party on Friday night, the only night you’ll ever get with this girl will be in your dreams, I chided myself, focusing all of my attention back on the game plan.

“God, I can’t remember the last time it snowed this hard,” I remarked once I was by her side again. “And I grew up north of Chicago!” I chuckled. “I think I’d be able to deal with the cold better if this wind wasn’t chilling me to the bone—and if I wasn’t stuck on campus.” I blew into my bare hands and rubbed them together before sticking them back into my pockets again. “Now, if we were in Utah, or some other awesome place to go skiing, I’d be so happy at the sight of fresh powder I’d probably be on my ass after attempting to do a cartwheel on the sidewalk or something.”

I caught the grin forming on her mouth. *Sweet!*

“So what about you? What’s your story?” I asked, just as we arrived in front of the science building. She stopped, turned towards me, and flashed me a little smile.

“Ah, just in the nick of time.” She let out what sounded like a sigh of relief, followed by a little laugh. “Here’s my next stop ... I guess I’ll see you in class on Friday.”

Here’s my chance, I told myself. Don’t blow it.

“Yeah, um, speaking of this Friday—what are you doing that night?” I took a step closer to her, virtually eliminating the distance between us. I could almost feel her body against mine, and it was driving me crazy.

“Friday night? Why?” she asked hesitantly. She seemed almost nervous.

“Well, there’s going to be this huge party at a friend’s fraternity—invitation only. I could get you on the list if you wanted to stop by—you know, to show my appreciation for letting me borrow your notes,” I said, sticking with my cover story.

“Oh thanks, but that’s not really necessary.”

Whoa. What just happened? Her body suddenly shifted away from me and her voice sounded off. Was she upset that I asked her to the party? *Hub, maybe I’d read the signs wrong. Maybe she isn’t interested in me.*

“I know, but it’ll be fun,” I pushed, trying a different angle. “Lots of people, live music, the whole deal. You really should come. Bring some friends if you want.”

“Sounds great,” she stated rather unenthusiastically, and then quickly added, “But, uh, I’m not sure I can go. My friends and I already have plans that night.” She lowered her head and started messing around with her mittens.

Okay, now she *really* seemed nervous, and I wasn’t sure why. I couldn’t get a good read on her, which was unusual for me. I prided myself on being able to read girls. I almost always hit the mark when it came to knowing what they were thinking—at least when it came to whether or not they wanted to hook up with me. But I felt off my game with her.

I blew on my hands again and rubbed them together, trying to warm up my fingers before I reached out and gently

cupped her chin, tilting her face up, and holding it there until she looked at me. When her gaze reluctantly met mine, I saw it. I *felt* it. The attraction between us was intense. And the way her pupils dilated the instant our eyes met told me I wasn't alone in feeling this way. She was right there with me. She was just as into me as I was her—no question about it. In that moment, I decided I wasn't going to let her go. I couldn't. I lightly brushed the tip of her nose with my index finger and smiled.

"You should come." My voice was deep and gravelly, surprising me. *Did I just come off sounding like I was begging? God, I hope not.* It was time for me to make my escape before I risked making an ass out of myself. "Thanks again for your notes." I turned and began walking away before realizing I'd yet to learn her name. I turned back around and caught her staring at me, frowning, and I had to bite back my smile. I bet she was bummed I was leaving.

"Hey!" I called out to her. "What's your name?"

"Eve—but most people call me Evie."

"Well, *Ee-vee*," I replied, playfully drawing out each syllable of her name, "I hope to see you Friday night." I winked, turned back around, and continued to walk away, the entire time knowing she was staring at my ass.

"That went well," I congratulated myself, smiling. "Evie," I repeated her name. There was this energy buzzing around my head—buzzing through my body. I hadn't felt this wound up about someone in a while—if ever. This was going to be a fun. "Oh, Evie, you have no idea what's in store for you."

* * *

My head was consumed by thoughts of Evie the rest of day—and that night. The next morning, I was even more determined to conquer her—no, that wasn't the right word. I wanted to charm her—mesmerize her. I wanted to make her want me as much as I wanted her. I wanted to drive her to

the point where she couldn't resist me. My entire body sprung to life at the very thought.

The day seemed to pass in a blur as I daydreamed about all the different ways I planned on making Evie's body sing in response to my touch. I was beginning to wonder if I was developing an unhealthy obsession with her. I found myself looking for her at every turn—even at swim practice. It was like I was hoping Evie would come watch me. Yeah, right, like that was going to happen. She probably hadn't given me a second thought after I'd walked her to her class. An uneasy feeling settled somewhere deep within my gut, making me feel on edge at the possibility that she'd already written me off.

What the hell was this girl doing to me? Before I could come up with an answer, however, I spotted Evie sitting alone at a table in the student union. My mood improved immediately. She was on her cell, so she didn't notice me approaching her from behind. I smiled as my plan to raise the heat index between us played itself out in my mind.

She was wearing her brown hair up in a ponytail; I hadn't realized it was so long. I wanted to reach out and run my fingers through it, but I restrained myself. I didn't want to freak the girl out. *Keep calm. Be cool,* I coached myself as I stopped behind her.

"Who was that? Anyone *interesting?*" I asked, leaning over Evie's shoulder just as she ended the call. I still didn't know if another guy was responsible for her having a "rough morning" yesterday, and it made me wonder who was on the other end of the line just now. But the twinge of jealousy that threatened my good mood was numbed the second I inhaled and smelled her perfume. It wasn't that super-sweet flowery crap that a lot of girls wear. Evie smelled fresh and sexy as hell. It was the weirdest thing—I didn't even know this girl, and yet it felt like I should be kissing her hello, like it was the most natural thing in the world for me to do. I inhaled again,

almost losing the battle with myself not to run my lips over the exposed nape of her neck. I had to take a step back to bolster my self-control.

“Who wants to know?” she replied. There was a confident, flirty edge to her voice. I liked it—a lot.

“Still being difficult are we, Evie?” I asked, mirroring her self-assurance. “What, cat got your tongue?” I teased when she didn’t answer me. “Or is it *still* too early in the day for you?”

She turned around to look at me. She wasn’t wearing her glasses, so I had an unobstructed view straight into her green eyes. I’d never seen eyes like hers before—they were amazing.

“Maybe it’s just the present company,” she countered, grinning at me. She was definitely flirting with me. *Game on!*

“Sorry, not buying it.” I flashed her my winning smile.

“Well, I have news for you—nothing about me is for sale,” she replied without missing a beat.

“What—not on the market?” I looked at the cell phone. *How could this girl not have a boyfriend? I mean, c’mon. Just look at her!* Jealously pricked me again, and I found myself silently praying she was single.

“Let’s just say that I don’t make a habit of discussing my personal life with people I barely know.”

What kind of answer was that? I asked myself. *Well, at least she didn’t say she’s off the market—although, she didn’t deny it either. What the hell does that mean?* I was frustrated ... and intrigued.

“Okay, good to know.” I took a breath and exhaled slowly as I gathered my thoughts. “Well, now that we’re setting the ground rules ...” I pulled out one of the empty chairs next to her and sat down.

“Ground rules?” She seemed curious as to where I was going with this.

Remembering her reaction to the “heathen” comment I’d made yesterday, I wanted to tread lightly. “Yeah, well, I seemed to have offended you yesterday, and I have a

sneaking suspicion I'm on the verge of doing so again right now. So before I say something I'll regret later, is there anything else I should know about you? You know, any personal mantras, pet peeves, wild sides, tattoos, piercings, or addictions of which I should be aware?"

"Wow!" she laughed out loud. God, she had a sexy laugh. "That's quite an interesting list you've compiled," she continued. "I hope these aren't the standard questions you ask all the girls. Because if so, I could give you a few pointers."

I couldn't help busting out in laughter. *Seriously? Did she just try to call me out on my skills? This girl has some cojones.* "You are pretty feisty, aren't you?"

"So I've been told." She smiled again.

"What else do people say about you?" I actually really wanted to get to know this girl.

"You expect me to just open up and reveal all my secrets to you? Come on, that would be *way* too easy. Besides, where's the fun in that?" She smiled again, but this time it didn't reach her eyes. My question triggered something in her.

"Full of surprises, are we?" I asked lightheartedly as I continued to explore the unsettled look in her eyes. I'd have given anything at that moment to figure out what she was thinking.

"I guess that's for me to know—"

"And for me to find out," I finished. Taking advantage of the fact that our eyes were locked on each other, I leaned forwards so that my face was barely an inch from hers. "I look forward to the challenge."

I was lost in her gaze; it was like she had me under her spell. The heat between us was burning me up—scorching me. I couldn't take it much longer. "Well," I said, forcing myself to blink and look away. "I should get out of here while we're still on good terms." I smiled and stood up to leave. "I'll see you tomorrow night, Evie."

“Maybe,” she mumbled.

Nub-ub. There’s no ‘maybe’ about it, I said to myself. I want to see you tomorrow night. I want to do a lot of things with you tomorrow night. I stepped behind her and gave her shoulders a little squeeze, which made her jump in her seat. I couldn’t help but chuckle. Upping the ante a bit more, I leaned in so close my mouth was practically grazing her neck. *God, she smells good.* I ran my tongue over my lips, fighting the urge to taste her delicate, perfect skin.

“Well, then I *hope* to see you tomorrow night,” I said softly in her ear. I squeezed her shoulders once more and heard her sigh as I walked off, grinning like the cat that ate the canary.

* * *

I decided to ditch psych class the next morning, although I’m not exactly sure why. When I ran into Evie in the union yesterday, I’d played the game perfectly and left having the upper hand. I guess I didn’t want to take the chance of screwing things up between us before the party tonight. I gave Adam explicit instructions to get her last name and the names of her friends to put on tonight’s list and to *not* give her the opportunity to toss out some last minute, lame excuse as to why she couldn’t come.

The anticipation of possibly seeing her tonight had been building all day. This evening couldn’t come soon enough. I couldn’t help but imagine what she’d feel like, smell like ... I imagined kissing her. But it was also more than that. I was excited to see her—to continue flirting with her to see how the rest of the game played out. *May the best man—or woman—win.*

* * *

I looked at my watch—*again*. Eleven o’clock. “What the—Where the hell is she?” I grumbled anxiously under my breath.

“Do my eyes deceive me?” Adam quipped as he approached me. “Has Quinn Harrison been stood up? *The Quinn Harrison?*”

“Shut up, jackass. You sure you put her name on the list?”

“Evie Sanders, plus two,” he huffed, clearly irritated by the skepticism in my voice.

“And she said she was going to come?”

“Yup.”

“Well, then I’m sure she’s just running late.” I practically willed my answer to be the truth. “Besides,” I continued, trying to save face, “I don’t see any girls hanging around you.”

“I’m just feeling things out—you know, waiting ‘til the time’s right to make my move.”

“Yeah, right—that’s it.” I smirked sarcastically.

“Yeah, right—she’s just running late,” Adam replied with equal bite.

I was just going to make some smartass comment about Adam’s less-than-zero chance of scoring this evening when I felt her presence in the room. I turned around, spotted Evie on the stairs, and sighed in relief. I caught her staring at me and smiled. But rather than smile back, she quickly averted her gaze and looked out into the crowd. I could see the reservation written all over her face. She looked like she was about to turn around and make a run for it.

“Evie!” I called out to her as I pushed my way through the crowd. I was like a man possessed. I couldn’t get to her fast enough. “Evie! You made it!” I exclaimed, picking her up and hugging her. She felt and smelled so good I didn’t want to let her go.

“Um, yeah,” she replied when I finally set her down.

“For a while there I thought you wouldn’t show,” I admitted loudly enough to be heard over the music.

“For a while there, neither did I,” she responded.

“Well,” I continued in a lower voice just as the song ended, “I guess my wishful thinking paid off.” I took a step back and smiled again. She looked so hot in her black v-neck sweater that clung to her every curve. I wanted to reach out and run my hands all over her. Her long hair ended at the middle of her back, and she didn’t wear a lot of makeup, which I loved. Her lip gloss made her lips that much more irresistible, and it took everything I had not to kiss them.

“Not in your *usual* attire, I see. Dress up for anyone special?” I teased.

“Yes, *me.*” Evie sounded confident, but her body language was saying something very different. She was not the same playful, flirty girl she was yesterday in the union.

“Well, Evie Sanders, you look beautiful,” I said sincerely, drinking her in.

“Thanks.” She smiled.

“Want something to drink?” I thought maybe a drink would relax her.

“No, thanks. I’m fine.”

“Want to dance?” The band started to play a slow song, and I imagined her hips, her ass, grinding against me to the rhythm of the music. My body started to stir with excitement.

“Maybe later,” she replied.

“Well, then, maybe we should get some fresh air,” I suggested, desperately needing the brisk air to cool me down. “It’s quieter out there.”

“Sure,” she agreed.

I took Evie’s hand in mine and felt the electricity coursing through our fingers. Surprised, I glanced down at our hands and then back up at her before flashing her a huge smile. There were definitely sparks between us.

I led her across the room and up a different staircase that led outside, into the frat house’s snow-filled courtyard. It was pretty warm for a winter’s night, but still cold enough that my arms could easily find their way around her should she get

chilly. I pulled her off to the right of a security light for a little more privacy. We stood there looking at each other, and I wondered what she was thinking. Evie suddenly exhaled deeply, allowing a rush of warm steam to escape her lips.

“You’re cold,” I noted. Taking advantage of the moment, I stepped behind her and rubbed her arms up and down with my hands to create some friction before wrapping my arms around her and pulling her into me. As sappy as this might’ve sounded, Evie fit perfectly in my arms. I edged closer, eliminating what little space there was left between us. With her body pressed up against mine, I closed my arms around her even tighter. I was so turned on by her. In fact, I couldn’t remember the last time I was this hot for a girl. My muscles tensed, and I hoped Evie couldn’t tell how tempted I was to whip her around and crush my mouth against hers.

That she didn’t resist me holding her this close encouraged me to test the waters further. I reached up and swept all of her hair to one side, exposing the beautiful neck that I’d wanted to devour yesterday afternoon. I couldn’t help but lean in and smell her perfume. It made me dizzy with need. Evie was trembling, and I hoped it was for the same reason that was making me shiver. And then she made a move of her own. She leaned back against me and pulled my arms tighter around her body.

But before I could respond, Evie shut me down—well, sort of. She laughed, but it wasn’t a sexy, flirtatious laugh. It was a laugh filled with what sounded like doubt or regret or disapproval—or maybe a combination thereof.

“What?” I asked, confused.

“I just realized I never actually gave you my psych notes,” she noted.

“Uh, yeah.” I chuckled awkwardly. It was time to come clean. “I guess I should fess up about that ... I don’t really need your notes. I just used them as an excuse to talk to you.”

“And to get me to come here?” she called me out.

“That too,” I readily admitted. “Is that so wrong?”

“So the psych notes were part of your master plan to get me here tonight—standing outside with you in the freezing cold.”

There was some of that fire I saw in her yesterday.

“Well, I don’t know if *outside* was the exact place I had in mind.” I chuckled. “But things have worked out pretty well so far,” I joked as I pulled her into me even more. As soon as the words escaped my mouth, however, I realized I didn’t feel like I was in a very joking kind of mood. I wanted Evie to know I didn’t bring her out here just to try to hook up with her. I wanted her to trust that I wanted to get to know her better. I wanted her to trust *me*.

“I have another confession to make,” I said hesitantly.

“What’s that?”

“I noticed you the first day of Swain’s class.”

“Yeah, I’m sure you did. Night of the walking dead is a hard look to miss.” Her feisty side was coming through loud and clear now. Evie was self-deprecating and sexy—a rare combination.

“I wouldn’t go *that* far.” I laughed. “I think you come to class looking more ... real. It’s like you don’t care what people think about you. You’re comfortable just being you ... doing your own thing. Most of the girls around here seem to have one goal in mind—to be part of the college version of *Next Top Model* or something. I mean, don’t get me wrong, they’re pretty and all—but not one of them can hold a candle to you ... especially tonight.” I took a deep breath and turned her around to face me. She was actually blushing. Just when I didn’t think it was possible for her to look any more beautiful.

“Evie, you’re different,” I continued. “You stand apart from the rest like you’re above all that superficial stuff. I just kinda get the sense that you know what’s really important, and I like that about you.”

“Wow. Hmm. I have to admit I wasn’t expecting that.” She sighed and took a step away from me. My arms instantly began to ache from the loss of her. “Look, Quinn, you just met me; and you obviously know nothing about me. I’m really not all that carefree about my appearance. I come to class dressed the way I do because I don’t have time to care about the way I look. I’m *always* running late. I roll out of bed in the morning with barely enough time to make it to class. If I had my crap together, don’t you think I’d wake up early enough to at least find something to wear from my closet instead of my floor?”

“In fact, if I had my priorities straight,” Evie continued, sounding more and more tense with each breath, “I wouldn’t even be here with you tonight having this conversation with you right now. And I certainly wouldn’t have allowed myself to be here in your arms, flirting with you ... wondering how far I might let this little game go—And, trust me, if your master plan included sleeping with me tonight, you’re going to be sorely disappointed. I have a *boyfriend* ... and I *don’t* cheat.”

And there it is. She has a boyfriend. Crap. Evie said something else, but I couldn’t get past the bombshell she’d just dropped. Well, if she thought she could just up and walk away from whatever this was between us, she was wrong. At the very least, I was going to get to her admit she felt something for me.

“So,” I began, letting the word roll off my tongue, “if you have a *boyfriend*, why *are* you here with me tonight?”

“I—I don’t know,” she admitted, looking down at her feet. I gently tilted her chin up so I could see her eyes.

“Well, don’t worry, it was never my intent to get you to sleep with me tonight,” I assured her. “Although,” I added, smiling, “if it had been *your* intent to do so ... well, I can’t say I would’ve objected.”

Evie rolled her eyes at me. “I’m sure you wouldn’t have.”

I don't know why, but I felt like I needed to plea my case and convince her to give me a chance—to convince her to choose me over this other guy she was dating.

“Evie, when I saw you that first day of class, I just wanted to get to know you better—I still do.” I picked up the silver charm hanging from her neck, rolled it between my fingers, and then let it drop back down onto her chest before looking into her eyes again.

“I can't explain it—there's something about you. I can't stop thinking about you,” I admitted in all honesty. If this had been any other girl, I'd never hang myself out on a limb like this. Then again, if this had been any other girl, I'd never have *wanted* to take this chance because I wouldn't have felt as strongly about any other girl as I did about Evie—not even close.

“Quinn, we've spoken twice before tonight. Other than that, you've seen me—what—a handful of times in class?” She paused and took a deep breath. “Even if what you're saying is true,” she continued, “it can't happen ... it just can't.” She shook her head and closed her eyes like she was trying to convince herself of her own words. “I shouldn't even be here right now—”

“And yet you are,” I interjected.

Evie looked up at me. “Yes, but only to confirm for myself that this isn't right—that this isn't what I want.”

I sighed in frustration and went for the Hail Mary pass. “Are you *at all* interested in me?”

“Whether or not I'm interested in you is irrelevant. I'm not available—”

I'd had enough with the runaround—I knew Evie was interested. I cut her off by abruptly pulling her into my arms, and without taking my eyes off of hers, I slowly moved in to kiss her. She made a weak attempt to resist me, but I wasn't giving up so easily. I needed to find out what was going on between us. I brushed my lips against hers; they were as soft

and sweet as I'd imagined. I had to have more of her. I kissed her again—I mean, *really* kissed her—and moaned when she kissed me back. I continued my assault, moving down along her jaw line, tasting her, before giving that beautiful neck that had tempted me for the past two days my attention. She tilted her head backwards, giving me total access to nip, lick, and suck her perfect skin. And when I heard her gasp in pleasure, I knew I had her where I wanted her—where I needed her.

One minute Evie had been on her soapbox telling me why she couldn't be here with me, and the next, we were kissing like there was no tomorrow. I couldn't help but smile at how quickly the tables had turned. She looked up at me when she'd noticed I'd stopped kissing her and flashed me what could only be described as a "Screw you" glare in response to the "I knew you couldn't resist me" look in my eyes.

And then Evie completely surprised me by grabbing me by the shirt with both hands and kissing me—hard. *Damn, this girl could kiss.* I kissed her back with everything I had. I'd never wanted anyone this much before. In fact, if I didn't stay focused, she was going to drive me over the edge, ending the moment before it really got started and embarrassing the hell out of me in the process.

I leaned into her, pressing my entire body into hers so she could comprehend what she was doing to me. My hands wandered down her back as I kissed that beautiful neck of hers again before making my way to her collarbone, running my tongue along it and then returning to that sexy, hungry mouth of hers. I felt Evie trembling in my arms as she reached around and clutched the back of my shirt, which only served to stoke my desire for her even more. I was on the verge of losing control, and I could tell she was too.

Then I remembered where we were. I realized that we were a little too exposed for as hot and heavy as we were getting. Reluctantly, I pulled back, gently kissing her lips once

more. She kept her eyes closed as if still swept up in a trance. I couldn't help but smile again. I'd imagined kissing Evie a hundred times over the past two days. I knew it'd be great, but I had no idea it would be this unbelievable. The taste of her only made me crave the feel of her lips against mine even more.

I had a sinking feeling I was in real danger of ending up on the losing side when it came to her, but I didn't care. I was addicted to this girl—this girl who had a boyfriend.

"Evie," I managed in a hoarse whisper, trying to convey every thought I had about her—how she'd somehow already managed to get under my skin and how it kinda scared the shit out of me. Still holding on to me, she buried her face in my chest.

"I know," she whispered in a way that told me she also realized there was something more going on between us than just this intense attraction we shared.

Then it all came crashing down. I heard Evie's cell phone buzz in her back pocket and she gasped. The guilt-ridden, self-loathing look in her eyes said it all—it was her boyfriend. I felt like I'd been slapped across the face. Jealousy and anger bubbled up inside of me, and I wanted nothing more than to throttle this guy—this so-called boyfriend of hers, who obviously didn't take care of Evie the way she needed—the way she deserved. Otherwise, she wouldn't have been in *my* arms, kissing *me*, just moments ago.

The next thing I knew, she tore herself out of my arms. "I'm—I'm sorry ... I have to leave." She couldn't even look at me. And before I could stop her, she turned around and ran inside.

"Evie! Wait! Please!" I called out after her, but it was too late. She was already gone.