

The Dan The Man Fan Club

by SeverusLovesUs

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She meets the man of her dreams, who also happens to be the most popular guy in
school . . .

New Beginnings and New Interests

Chapter 1 of 6

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I had just moved here, to Billowing Heights, when I met my major crush...a guy who topped both McDreamy and McSteamy, beloved characters from my favorite evening television program, "Grey's Anatomy." I had been very unhappy when my family had to move to a different state for my father's job. This year I would be a senior and graduating high school. If only I could have finished this year with my friends back home, many of whom I had known since kindergarten!

A few days after we finally had settled in and unpacked, I grew bored and frustrated. I lashed out at my mom, who had come in my room with a hammer and nails so we could hang up my pictures. "Mom! Why did you guys make me come here? How am I supposed to make any friends at this new school? They all already know each other, and I won't be able to mix in!" I threw myself back on my bed and covered my head with my pillow.

"Janey, dear, I know it's hard on you to leave your old friends and our old home, but you will be just fine. I know you. Your charm will draw friends from miles around!"

"Oh, Mom! Things aren't always so easy!"

My mother, Elizabeth, smiled at me and said, "I was thinking earlier today that you still have the whole summer before school starts. Perhaps you should think about a summer job..."

"What?" I cut in. "Why? Dad just got a huge promotion. Do I have to start paying for all my own things?" At this notion I threw the pillow down and sat up to stare incredulously at my mother.

"While I do think it is a good idea for you to get a taste of the working world," she answered, "no, I do not expect you to make your own ends while you are still under your parents' roof. I just thought that, aside from earning some money for your savings, you might be able to work with other youngsters your age. It might be a way to meet people and make friends before you get to school."

I opened my mouth to retort, but nothing came out because everything she had said was sensible. My mother hung up my picture of a stunning, white mare spiriting freely through a gorgeous countryside. Before she left the room, she turned and said, "Perhaps you could try the local movie theatre. There are lots of kids who work there."

So, within a few weeks of arriving in this new town, I started working at the movie theatre. I will never forget that first day, when I met *him*: Daniel . . .

On my first day, I was being shown around the concession stand and learning the tasks of the job. It felt great being around so many other teenagers. I could tell that this job was going to be full of laughter and fun. I had walked around to the middle of the concession area when I stopped suddenly. Before me stood the hottest guy I had ever

seen. In awe, I stood frozen in place for several seconds. I knew there was something very special about this guy. I immediately felt tingly and giddy. Finally, I smiled and introduced myself, not being able to tear myself away from those gorgeous eyes. He smiled and shook my hand. As our hands touched, I felt an intense heat surge up through my own hand.

"Hi, I'm Daniel," he said. "Today's my first day, too." Goodness! His smile was so charming!

We continued our training, and whenever I got the chance, I would sneak a glance at Daniel. My attraction for him was intense. From that day forward, I loved the idea of going to work and would find opportunities to talk to Daniel as often as I could.

While there were several people my age working there, only a few attended the school I would be going to this year. One of them was Daniel, and it was very hard for me to contain my excitement when he told me so! Another girl, by the name of Krissy, went to my new school as well. Krissy and I started to talk more and were soon hanging out together outside of work. I was glad to have started making friends sooner than I could have hoped.

Working at the movie theatre had several other perks too. Employees were allowed to see free movies and could come to screenings of all new movies before being released for the weekend. I started to hope that Daniel liked me too. He certainly had no problem hanging out with me at those screenings. And during our work shifts, he would always choose to work next to me, flashing his charming smile at me every so often. Many times we would just hang around after work talking, each of us stalling as long as possible before finally going home. I soon realized that I had a huge grin permanently affixed to my face whenever Daniel was around. We would flirt constantly. It quickly became clear to everyone we worked with that we were really into each other.

One day, Krissy told me how cute everyone thought we were together. I hoped that he would make a move or something, but all we did was flirt. Our flirting would consist of racing each other up and down the aisles of empty movie theaters, having wars with the soft boppy seats used for small children, and having water fights. Once, for a few days, neither of us could come near the other without fear of having ice shoved down our shirts. A couple of girls who were a bit older than me liked to kindly tease me about liking Daniel. One of them, a girl named Maggie, said she could see why: he was incredibly hot!

I soon started to realize that Daniel was rather well liked. Krissy confided to me that he had hordes of admiring girls after him at school. I didn't like learning I had fallen for the guy every other girl had fallen for, but I didn't let it bother me too much. Those other girls, whoever they were, were far away. Daniel and I worked together, and when we did, we always had so much fun! It was hard to imagine a world outside of our job where other girls fawned over him. At the movie theatre, I was the only one seriously interested in him. And with his overt flirting with me, I felt sure I had a chance with him.

Sometimes I wondered, though, whether or not he really had any interest in me. His flirting was obvious, but perhaps he was teasing me because he knew I liked him? Or perhaps it was just his idea of fun?

One evening the both of us were scheduled off just in time to see a popular new movie. We decided to go watch it together. He went to change out of his uniform and said he'd return in a minute. I was so nervous and excited about seeing a movie with Daniel! I went in to find us some seats. I sat in the row closest to the doors, which was a very short row of only four seats. I sat one seat away from the aisle, thinking that he would choose to sit in the seat next to me by the aisle.

When he came in, I had to catch my breath. He stood tall and handsome, wearing fitting clothes that showed off his muscular body. His dark, long locks were a bit rumpled and messy, as if he hadn't thought to tidy his hair after changing his shirt. He was all the more breath-taking for it, and that warm, thrilling sensation pulsed within me in such strong waves that I wondered how it was possible he could not feel the heat of them.

He grinned at me in his annoyingly attractive, mischievous way and stepped right over my legs, which were propped on the chair in front of me. I thought he meant to sit in the seat on the other side of me instead, but no . . . He plopped down nonchalantly in the fourth and final seat. I couldn't help but chuckle. He turned and with a twinkle in his eyes gave me that same grin, which made me grin back, even while hating it at the same time. *Damn him!* I thought. *He is teasing me relentlessly!*

Daniel continued to be a mystery to me. Our flirting continued, along with his teasing. I didn't think he could possibly know how much of an effect he had on me, and I doubted even more that I might have a similar effect on him. He certainly didn't seem tormented by me like I was by him! If only he knew how badly I wanted him! Even though I was often assured by my coworkers that he really liked me, the truth was anything but clear.

On a day off, I came into work to see a movie with Krissy, who had the day off as well. I was wearing one of my favorite outfits: a cute blue top and good fitting jeans. Daniel was working in the concession stand, and we went to say hello to him.

"Whoa!" he said, staring at me. In answer to my questioning gaze, he added, "This is the first time I've seen you without your uniform on."

I cannot imagine how I was able to keep my voice calm and cool after that startling and thrilling comment. I smiled softly and simply said, "Well, the movie is starting. I'll see you later."

Walking down the hallway to the auditorium, our arms linked with one another, Krissy turned to me and said rather dramatically, "Okay! Let it out!"

"What do you mean?"

"You know what I mean!"

"I don't think he meant it the way I want him to have meant it." I sighed dejectedly.

"Of course he did," she said. "He just couldn't take his eyes off you!"

"I don't know . . ." I muttered, unable to help smiling at that thought.

"Come on, girl, let's go watch the movie," Krissy said. "There will be time *forhim* later."

I smiled as we sat down. I wanted so badly to believe it, but how could I be sure when he teased me so badly?

As the summer began to draw to a close, Daniel and I had not progressed beyond our relationship of flirting and teasing. I decided I would try to make it clear to him how I felt and hoped he would make his intentions known to me.

The day I decided to do something about this, a girl came into the theatre and noticed Daniel. She got excited and ran to give him a hug. They talked for several minutes, both laughing and smiling. My insides were in utter turmoil, and I had to distract myself by going to check the individual auditoriums to make sure the movie-going experience was up to our customer service standards.

I didn't want to see what was going on with them! I didn't want to know!

Yes, I did! I needed to know!

Krissy found me midway between theaters. "Wait," she said, catching up. Since it was slow, we decided to take a quick walk around outside.

"Calm down," she said.

"I am perfectly calm," I replied in a tone that warred against my claim.

"Your fidgeting says otherwise." Krissy smiled. "Look, I don't think he's interested in that girl. She probably does like him, though. You remember I said lots of girls like

him?"

"Yeah, I do remember." I had tried to forget that. It wasn't easy now, though, seeing it with my own eyes.

"I went and talked to him after she left," Krissy said.

"What? You did that? What did you tell him?"

"Nothing about you, don't worry!" she assured me. "I just asked him if that was his girlfriend or something. He said no, just a girl he knows. I asked him if he even wanted a girlfriend, and he confided to me that he doesn't know which girl he wants to go out with."

"And that is supposed to calm me down?" I said in frustration.

Krissy smiled and gave me a quick hug. "Well, at least you know why nothing more has happened between you two," then she added, "yet."

I said, "Well, I think I was right. He was just teasing me because he knew I liked him. He probably gets off on all us girls falling all over the place for him!"

"He may be an indecisive idiot," she said, "but I still think it's obvious he has a thing for you!"

"Me and who else?" I muttered bitterly.

Only once more that summer did our flirting reach a level that made me think Krissy could be right. After work one night, we were chasing each other around, laughing and flirting, as was our usual custom. We both came to a halt near the arcade, panting slightly from running about so much. We stood facing each other, and for just a few moments we stared at each other silently. We were only a foot apart, and I felt tense and exhilarated by his closeness.

"Okay," he said, and he took a step closer to me. He was so close I couldn't breathe. The feeling was so overwhelming and so unexpected that I took a step back to relieve myself of the intensity. The look on his face told me he had been about to kiss me. As soon as I thought it, I doubted it. Still, I was angry that I had stepped away. I desperately wanted to find out if that was what he had been planning to do.

Kiss me!?! Would he really? I thought, suddenly giddy and excited.

Exhilarated, I continued our flirting routine, but with a nervous energy attached to it. I kept trying to land us back in the same place we were when I thought he was about to kiss me. We were a little more distant though because the moment had passed. I strongly suspected he knew what I was thinking. Was he just teasing me again?

The next day at work, I was chilly and distant towards Daniel. I didn't know how exactly, or why, but something had changed between us. Until I could figure out what it was, I was very uncomfortable around him. I couldn't tell what he was thinking, and it drove me mad. I wondered if he cared at all about what I was feeling or if he even knew. I hoped things would go back to normal between us, but I just needed some time to recover from what happened.

What happened anyway? I wasn't even sure he wanted to kiss me. Oh, this was torture! Daniel and I were both getting off work at the same time that night. I knew that I would vary from my normal routine and leave work as fast as I could. I didn't want to talk to Daniel. Not today . . .

As soon as 10:00 arrived, I clocked out and hurried out the door as quickly as I could. I did not want to hang around long enough to risk having to talk to Daniel! When I got outside I heard someone shout, "Hey!" I turned toward the voice and saw a guy standing next to a display of movie posters. He smiled and beckoned me over with his arm.

I walked over curiously, although I was still in a hurry to leave. "Uh, hello," I said.

"Hi there. My name's Zacharias. What's yours?"

"I'm Janey."

"Did you just get off work, Janey?" he asked, noting my uniform.

"Yes, but . . . actually I'm in a little bit of a hurry right now," I said apologetically.

"Oh, are you? That's too bad. I was hoping you'd have time to chat. I saw you and thought you were very pretty."

His compliment caught me by surprise. I took the moment to take in his appearance. He was fairly tall, but a little thin. His blonde hair was in very short curls. He wasn't bad looking, and he seemed nice. 'But he's not Daniel,' I thought.

On that thought, I recovered and said thank you. Then I added, "I'm not really interested in dating anyone right now."

"Oh, are you taken already?" he asked.

"Well no, not really." I could feel my cheeks reddening and hoped he didn't notice.

"Ahh, but you'd like to be, I take it?" I couldn't help it. I nodded sheepishly. "So who's the lucky man?"

I glanced back towards the doors of the theatre and saw Daniel pushing through one of them. My heart leapt as it always did when I saw Daniel, and I said, "Him!"

Zacharias turned to look with an indefinable expression on his face. "That guy there? So that's your type, hmm?"

"Yeah, I'm hoping we get together, but I got to go. I really don't want to talk to him right now. Uh, it was nice talking to you. Bye."

"See you," he said with a grin.

I got quickly into my car and began my drive home. Inwardly, I was flattered that I had been hit on by a fairly cute guy. Yet I knew I wanted to make it very clear to him that I was uninterested. I only had eyes for Daniel . . . I sighed. At least telling Zacharias that I was interested in someone else was more polite than blowing him off completely! My mind wandered back to Daniel. I couldn't keep ignoring him when nothing even happened. Sure, I wanted something to happen all right! I smirked at the thought, but realized nothing *would* happen if I kept acting nervous around him!

Chapter 2: Do I Dare? How He Dares!

Janey starts school and meets her biggest competition for Daniel's affections.

Today would be my first day of school. Strangely, I was looking forward to it, despite my trepidation about being "the new girl." Something about a fresh new year of school had always filled me with anticipation; I wondered how I would enjoy my classes and what kind of teachers I would have. This year, though, I wondered also about new friends and especially about Daniel. Despite what had happened between us, I couldn't wait to see him again. I hoped we would have classes together! Pulling out my schedule, I looked again to see what classes I would be taking. The first day, an "A" day, I would be taking Speech and Debate, Humanities, and Calculus. I had the fourth and final period off, which was nice, as I would be able to continue working at the movie theatre after school on those days. Tomorrow would be a "B" day, and I would have World History, Theater, my free period, and then English.

The school day began with no sight of Daniel anywhere. When I arrived in Humanities, I was relieved to see Krissy. I had been feeling alone and friendless, having not known anyone in my Speech class. At least I had Krissy in three of my classes. Krissy and I had compared schedules at work the past weekend and learned that we had Humanities, Calculus, and World History together!

Humanities was an interesting subject. We would be discussing various societies and cultures. The teacher, Miss Heibrit, gave us an overview of the class. Then we were allowed to talk amongst ourselves for awhile about our own cultural traditions. After awhile, many students started to talk of other things. Four people sat at my table: Krissy and I sat next to each other, and across from us sat a blonde haired, fair-faced girl named Karina and a girl named Marissa with mouse-colored, curly hair. Karina was talking about a guy she liked, and I listened to this interesting gossip. I knew nothing about anybody at this school!

"His best friend, Zach, said that he is actually looking to get into a relationship with someone!"

"With you, most likely," answered her friend, Marissa.

"Well, maybe not," Karina pouted. "Apparently, a lot of girls like him, and he can't decide who he likes back!"

"That sounds familiar," I piped in.

"Oh, really?" she asked, interested.

"Yeah, unfortunately I like a guy just like that."

Karina said, "Yes, it's frustrating, isn't it? I like the most popular guy in school. I'm pretty sure he'll see that he likes me too. It's only proper for the most popular guy in school to date the most popular girl." She flipped her hair back and turned to talk more with Marissa.

I turned to look at Krissy, asking for confirmation of this bold, not-so-humble assertion. Krissy rolled her eyes in answer. I laughed. Krissy said, "As far as *your* crush goes, don't worry, Janey. You and Daniel got to know each other pretty well over the summer. I bet he asks you out soon!"

I smiled in thanks for her assurances, but across the table from us, Karina froze in her conversation. She turned to look at me and said, "Daniel? Daniel Pajerty?" I nodded in assent. Her jaw dropped, and she asked, "Daniel is the guy you like?"

Feeling this wasn't going to be pretty, I answered, "Yes . . ."

"Ha!" she scoffed. "Well, that's too bad for you. Daniel is into me and has been since last year. You should just get over him."

"What? I thought you said he couldn't make up his mind! How does that make him interested in you? What makes you think he wouldn't like me?"

Karina smirked and said, "Look, you don't know anything. You just got to this school. This is my domain. If I want Daniel, I'll get him, and there isn't anything you can do about it."

"We'll see," I muttered. Thankfully, the bell rang to end class, and Krissy and I hurried out of the classroom.

"I can't believe this!" I declared in exasperation.

"Karina can be real nasty. She always gets what she wants too. This can't be good for you," said Krissy.

"So now you think I've got no chance?" I asked pleadingly.

"Well, now is your chance to find out. He's down the hallway there," she said as she pointed the way.

I looked, and sure enough, there was Daniel at the end of the hallway, chatting with . . . Zacharias. *Oh no!* I thought. *He's guy I met at the movies this summer! If they are friends, that means I told Daniel's friend how I feel about him!*

"No way can I talk to him now!" I said to Krissy.

"Just do it. We have to walk that way to get to our Calculus class."

"No . . . later. I'll explain why later. Let's just go and hope he doesn't see me."

We had just passed the spot where Zacharias and Daniel were standing, and I was about to turn the corner to go down the adjoining corridor. Zacharias called out, "Hey, we could ask Janey."

I stopped and turned. "Nice to see you again, Zacharias," I said without holding back the sarcasm. "Hey, Dan," I added much more softly, trying not to blush.

"Hi, Janey," Daniel said. He looked at his friend and said, "I didn't know you two had met before."

"Well, we certainly have," Zacharias said.

My head was spinning, and my heart was thumping at the sight of Daniel casually leaning against the lockers and looking at me.

Zacharias continued, "We talked at the movie theatre this summer, and she told me all about how much she adores you." Zacharias turned to look at me, an evil grin spreading across his face. "As president of Dan's fan club, Janey, could you please tell us who all fancies Daniel, here? You see, we are trying to find him a girlfriend. The best girlfriend."

Stunned, I stood frozen. My breath stopped, and tears formed in the corners of my eyes. How could anyone be so cruel, teasing me right in front of him? Daniel was looking at me with a curious expression. *Damn him*, I thought. *He acts as if he didn't already know I like him.* Quickly tearing my focus away from Daniel, lest he see the hurt etched in my face, I stood my ground and stared at Zacharias. "Why don't you stop worrying about finding Daniel a girlfriend? If he can't decide which girl to choose, that's his problem. You should be worrying about yourself because you have no one to choose from!" I stormed down the next hallway, forgetting all about Krissy, who had been standing next to me.

I found my Calculus class and sat down. Krissy came in just as the bell rang and sat next to me. She smiled reassuringly, but I just looked down at my desk, feeling miserable. Mr. Siens, our teacher, began to go over the class curriculum for the year. All the students were stifling giggles at Mr. Siens' atrocious outfit. He wore a blue and yellow, horizontally striped, collared shirt. The waist of his pants came up well past his navel and were secured in place by red and purple suspenders. You could just see his many colored, striped socks between the bottom of the pant legs and the surprisingly normal, brown work shoes. With great enthusiasm, he described the mathematics we would be learning as if their perfection and beauty were somehow more artistic than scientific. He asked the class at large a question just to see if anyone knew the answer. When a student sitting across the room from Janey answered, Mr. Siens jumped up and nearly shouted, "Yes! Yes! That's right! Now then . . ."

I rolled my eyes at the teacher's exuberance for his subject and returned to dwelling on my situation with Daniel...which seemed to be more and more perilous as the days went by. Soon, Krissy passed me a note. After checking to see our teacher was looking the other way, I opened it and read:

Don't worry about that prat, Zach. I hung back and berated him a little more,

but you did a good job yourself with that comment you gave him! =)

Daniel apologized for Zach being a jerk and said he hopes you're alright and not mad at him.

He also told me that he thinks he does know who he wants to ask out

but that he's not sure if she really likes him!

I think he means you, but he's an idiot if he doesn't know how you feel by now!

Anyway, he said he'd make clear to everybody by tomorrow who it is that he likes!

So cheer up!

Tomorrow! Tomorrow! He'll love you tomorrow . . . It's only a day away . . .

Later that evening, I sat at home in my room, filled with anticipation for the next day. *I hope he likes me!* I thought desperately. *I'll find out for sure tomorrow . . .* I laid back on my bed, envisioning a scene where Daniel approaches me in front of a corridor full of students, declares his undying love for me, followed by a kiss that is so intense I just buckle and fall into his strong arms . . . Shortly into this exciting fantasy, reality grabbed me and pulled me back into the world where doubt crept in, and I refused to have too much hope. What if he was actually interested in somebody else? What if it wasn't me after all? For the second time since I had met Daniel, I suddenly felt like all I wanted to do was just ask him. I would tell him how I felt and see how he responded. Normally, I would never have been so forward with a guy, but Daniel drove me crazy! I would go mad with jealousy, seeing him in the arms of another girl just because I didn't take the chance to make a move first. I didn't think I could confront him at school and risk being embarrassed before my new classmates, and we didn't work together again until Friday . . . but I could send him an E-mail! I sat down at my computer and composed it.

Dear Daniel,

Hey, how are you?

I need to tell you something . . . I like you.

There...I said it.

I needed to tell you just in case you didn't know, just in case you thought all our flirting was innocent and didn't mean anything.

I really love being around you! We have so much fun at work together, but I wonder if we could have more?

I need to know how you feel.

If there's nothing here for you, then I hope we can still be friends.

Please let me know, Janey

I stared at what I had written for several minutes, looking for a way to make it better so I wouldn't feel so embarrassed. Finally, my pride...or my embarrassment, I wasn't sure which...made me decide to save the E-mail to my "Mail Waiting to be Sent" box. I clutched my hands over my face. Then I decided to write a simpler message instead:

Daniel, hey, how's it going?

Are you enjoying school so far?

It's been weird for me, not knowing anyone except you and Krissy.

Maybe you can help me meet more people . . .

Well, I'll talk to you soon hopefully.

Also, there's something I want to ask you about.

...Janey

"Alright," I mumbled to myself, "this I can actually send." Yawning, I sent the E-mail, knowing that once I did, I'd be roped into talking to Daniel. I went to bed, eager for the next school day but dreading it at the same time.

The next morning, I headed to my first period class, World History. Already it promised to be my favorite class. While history could be really interesting sometimes, it wasn't normally my favorite subject. My favorites were usually English and Theater. No, it wasn't the subject that was so exciting . . . It was Daniel, who I saw heading into the classroom ahead of me! As the students entered the room, the teacher took our names and directed us to our assigned seats. I sat down and pulled out my textbook, notebook, and pen as the rest of the class filed in.

Soon the class had all settled down, and my eyes were drawn to rest on Daniel, sitting in a desk a couple rows ahead and over to the right. I thought about how extremely hot he looked today and felt that warm tingling rush up through my body. He was wearing dark blue jeans and a black shirt cut tight against his muscular torso and arms. His long hair was swept to the side, his bangs adding an allure of mystery to him. He turned his head and scanned the room. His eyes swept past me and then flickered back, apparently having noticed me staring at him. I strongly resisted the urge to turn my head away, but instead, rather courageously I thought, I continued to gaze at him. As my eyes met his piercing ones, I smiled, and he smiled back. There was something different in his smile, in his eyes. It was all very soft...no traces of his normal mischievousness. Time stood still for a moment, or several moments possibly, as we gazed at each other, smiling, until Mr. Bragin called the class' attention to the day's work. Daniel turned to face the front of the class again, and my heart pounded inside my chest.

What was that? I wondered. It felt as if something had just happened between us. What did his smile mean? Had he received my message already? Had he guessed at how much I liked him? Could he possibly have reciprocated my feelings?

Remembering not to feel too hopeful, I let out an audible sigh that was loud enough to turn the heads of the students sitting nearby. I thought I might even have seen Daniel turn, but when I looked, he was actively engaged in what the teacher was saying.

"Bored already, Janey?" smirked Krissy, who sat in the desk next to mine. "It's only the second day of school!" She was whispering softly, so the teacher wouldn't hear. Then she added, her teasing smirk even bigger, "I saw you and lover boy exchanging looks!"

"Shut up!" I hissed back, but she only smiled bigger, and I couldn't help grinning back this time. "Alright . . . so what? It doesn't mean anything."

"Mmmhmm . . ." taunted Krissy knowingly, "except that you two want each other!"

"Shhhhhh!" I whispered warningly. Unfortunately, this time my whispering carried over, and the teacher heard.

"Janey Parker, do you have something to share with us that is more important than my explanation of what you will be expected to learn in order to pass this quarter?"

"Oh, no...Um, I'm sorry," I stammered. I wasn't used to admonishments from teachers. With my strait A's and love of learning, my teachers and I normally got on quite well. This year wasn't boding well for making good first impressions!

"Quite. Well, Miss Parker, if you want to excel in my class, I suggest you focus your attention more on the lessons and less on your love life," said Mr. Bragin. He turned back to the overhead projector and pointed to the next item on his outline of discussion. "Furthermore," he continued as if there had been no interruption, "we will be covering . . ."

Despite his reprimand, I still wasn't listening. I buried my face in my hands for a moment, wondering just how much of our whisperings our teacher had overheard and how many students had overheard as well! I snuck a look at Daniel, who was scribbling down the notes from the overhead rather furiously. Krissy caught my eye and smiled slightly, apologetically. I gave a little shrug and then resigned myself to listening to Mr. Bragin. I would have to worry about what Daniel thought of me later.

Still, I couldn't help feeling hopeful at Krissy's comment, "You two want each other!"

It was clear what I wanted, and maybe Krissy could see what I wouldn't allow myself to see...that he wanted me too! Swooning, I copied down the next line of the overhead. I would simply have to make myself talk to him and find out how he felt. *I just can't stand not knowing!* I thought furiously. *Either way, I need to know!*

When the bell rang, I started to put my books back in my bag when I noticed Daniel hadn't moved to get up yet. Maybe if I stalled and hung back a bit, I could get a chance to talk to him without any of our classmates around. Daniel was putting his things away slowly, and most of the class had left. I had just zipped up my bag when I heard Mr. Bragin say, "Miss Parker, if you would please, come talk to me for a few minutes. I will write you a pass, so you are excused from being late to your next class."

Damn it, I thought. *I am in trouble, and I lost my chance to speak to Daniel alone.* Daniel had finished packing up and threw a quick, furtive look at me as he cantered out the door.

"Um, Mr. Bragin . . . I'm sorry about..." I started to say.

"Nevermind that," he cut in. "I have records here of your stellar performance at your old school. You may be able to win an academic scholarship for college with these grades, if you can keep them up. You'll also need letters of recommendation from your teachers, so mind you work extra hard in my class," he said with a hint of a smile.

"Thanks, Mr. Bragin. I certainly will."

"Yes, well, it seems your old school's History curriculum is taught a bit differently than the one here. You may be missing some lessons that are a prerequisite for this class, which are normally taught at the junior level at this school. By your next class, I will give you a list of reading material to get you caught up."

"Oh, okay. That's not a problem. I want to make sure I do well in this class."

Mr. Bragin smiled and wrote out a pass for me, "Hurry along now. Enjoy the rest of your day."

I left the room and rushed to my Theater class, held in the school auditorium. The teacher, Ms. Purtkis, examined my pass and had me join a small group of students working nearby. The class had been separated into small groups, each working on their own skit. On the far side of the room, I could see Daniel working in a group with some other guy and a girl. Daniel was in this class too! Oh, wow! How I was going to *love* the days I had World History and Theater! Slightly resentful Ms. Purtkis hadn't put me in Daniel's group, I turned to my own, and we began reading over our skit which was a scene from Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest." My group informed me that we were going to practice today and at next class we would perform our skits for everyone. We began practicing our roles, and I was back in my element. How I had loved being in the school plays at my old school. Acting was such fun!

Towards the end of the period, I glanced at Daniel across the room. He was locked in an embrace with the girl from his group, a pretty blonde . . . NO! I realized who she was...Karina! My apparent competition for Daniel's affections had her arms wrapped around his neck with a huge grin on her face. *They had better be acting their script!* I thought furiously.

Just then, her squealing laugh echoed through the auditorium, and I heard her say, "Oh Daniel!" Doubting very much that Daniel was playing a character named Daniel, my stomach lurched, and I grabbed up my bag just as the bell rang. I walked past the pair on my way toward the exit. I saw her still hanging on him, batting her eyelashes, and became momentarily blinded by hot tears building up in my eyes. In my haste to leave, I slammed into the wrong side of the double doors, and the locked door thrust me back so that I nearly fell. I heard laughter. Trying to blink back the forming tears, I turned and saw Zacharias smirking. He turned to Daniel and laughed. "I think she's jealous. What do you think?"

Before Daniel could even open his mouth to say anything, I turned, seething, on Zacharias. "Jealous? Who am I supposed to be jealous of?"

"Oh, come on!" he retorted. "It's obvious you've got it bad for Danny boy here. We know you'd love to be standing where Karina is right now."

"Really? You think I want to be hanging off someone who laps up affection like a dog? Who doesn't even know who or what he wants? Who ~~is~~ arrogant that he thrives off other people fawning over him without any regard to how they feel? I'm not jealous of *her*. In fact, I feel sorry for her because he will never take her as seriously as she hopes."

Karina was the first to react. She said in a belittling tone, "Honestly, girl, just because he won't take you seriously, doesn't mean he won't be serious about anyone else."

Zacharias laughed heartily, and I pointedly refrained from looking at Daniel. I said, "I'm done with this," and turned around to exit, this time through the right door.

As I reached the doorway, I heard Karina say sweetly, "I guess that means you're all mine now." Helplessly, I turned once more and saw her hugging him tightly, Daniel facing towards the doorway where I stood with a strange look on his face. It might have been confusion or anger, but it was over too quickly to tell because he loosened from the embrace to plant his lips on Karina's.

Finding Friends

Chapter 3 of 6

Janey manages to start feeling comfortable with her new school. Too bad that comfortable feeling doesn't extend to being around Daniel.

A/N: Beta'd by Aestril!

I had two hours before my next class would start. I could go to lunch at anytime, but I was waiting for Krissy, who had her lunch scheduled at the end of the period. I wasn't sure what to do or where to go. All I wanted to do was curl up and cry for hours. Well, I wouldn't let myself do that just now. Everyone looked at me strangely enough already just for being new! I didn't want to ruin my reputation right from the start! So far, I only had one friend...the one I had met over the summer! Yet, I had already managed to make three enemies. Karina and Zacharias were definitely enemies. And Daniel . . . Daniel . . . He'd probably never speak to me again.

Why did I have to blow up like that? I wondered. I had always let people rile me up, and it never took much to reach my boiling point. Subtlety was not my specialty! I was just so annoyed with Daniel for teasing me and flirting with me and never telling me what he meant by it! And to think that just as we were so close...so close to finally understanding each other...he was all over another girl, right in front of me! Anyone would have been mad!

I walked out into the courtyard and sat down on a bench. It was mostly empty, except for a few guys kicking a hackeysack around on the opposite end. I buried my face in my hands as I realized how overwhelming everything had suddenly become. New town, new house, new job, new crush, new friends, new school, new teachers, new classes, new heartbreaks . . . I needed to distract myself from these thoughts. I had no one to hang out with and no homework to do yet. I pulled out the script from Theater class and tried to continue memorizing my part, but it only served to remind me of Daniel and Karina kissing in the auditorium . . . Not for the first time today, I had to blink back tears.

"Hello," someone said.

I looked up and saw one of the hackeysack players standing before me. He reached down and picked up the wayward hackeysack and stood tossing it lightly and catching it in his hand.

"Hi," I said.

"Are you new here? I haven't seen you around before," he asked.

"Yes, I moved here from Washington this summer. My name's Janey. What's yours?"

"Oh, nice to meet you, Janey. My name is Timothy. You look a little bored."

"Oh, just a little." I smiled.

"Would you like me to give you the official tour of the school grounds? It comes complete with commentary on everything there is to know around here . . . teachers, students, social activities, and, of course, all the latest gossip! So, how about it?" He smiled and dramatically offered his hand for me to take.

I laughed and took hold of his proffered hand, and he pulled me up. "Sounds fun," I said.

"Hey, guys, I'll catch you later!" Timothy called to his friends as he kicked the hackeysack back over to them. They nodded and continued their game.

Timothy and I walked along the path around the fenced in playing fields. Timothy told me he played football and was planning to attend the local university after graduation to study engineering. I told him I wanted to be involved in the Theater programs this year and that I didn't know where I wanted to go to school, but that I wanted to be an English major and have a writing career. Timothy started to ask about what teachers I had this year and laughed when I mentioned Mr. Siens, my calculus teacher, who Timothy described as being really kooky in an entertaining kind of way. We had circled around the fields and were headed down the path back toward the courtyard. Timothy then started to tell me about all the different student cliques and how they thrived off gossiping about each other.

"Sounds typical. My old school was just the same," I remarked.

"Yes, well, this year, the only juicy news is that Carrie Anne came back from the summer having lost about 30 pounds. I've never seen her with another guy, but she was kissing one this morning."

"Wow! Well, good for her!" I said.

"Yeah, well, that's the best I've got for you for now," Timothy said as he shrugged and grinned at me.

"I've got gossip juicier than that," I sighed.

"Do you? I guess I'm slacking!"

"Yeah, Daniel Pajerty is going out with a girl named Karina." I managed to say this only slightly bitterly.

"Really? Well, if so, that will certainly make waves. Daniel and Karina. I should have seen that coming I guess, but honestly, I thought Daniel had more taste."

I laughed. "What's wrong with Karina? I mean, I don't like her, but I'm wondering why you don't."

"Probably for the same reasons as you. She's very full of herself, and her personality is like an olive dipped in frosting."

"Oh my! That's very funny. Heh! I wonder how many licks it will take for Daniel to get through all the frosting?"

Timothy smiled and said, "For his sake, hopefully not too many. And all this talk about frosting is making me hungry. I think it's time I head into lunch."

I looked down at my watch and realized that Krissy was due for her lunch break very soon. "OK, I'll come with you," I said.

When we reached the lunchroom, Timothy pointed to a table with several people and said, "Why don't you come sit with my friends? I'll introduce you to them."

"That sounds great, but I told my friend I'd meet her for lunch." I then spotted Krissy coming in. "Oh, there she is now."

"Krissy? Well, that's perfect. She's one of our friends too, and I'm sure she wouldn't mind sitting with us. It's been awhile since we've chatted."

"Hey, Janey!" Krissy called. Catching up, she saw Timothy and said hello to him too.

"Hey, Krissy! Did you have a good summer?" Timothy asked her.

"I sure did . . . Saw lots of movies!" She winked at me, and we both laughed.

"I just met your friend Janey here," Timothy said to Krissy. "Do you two ladies want to join us at our table over there?"

"Sure," we both said.

We went and got our lunches and sat down. Besides Timothy, Krissy, and myself, we sat with a guy named Jason, a junior named Anna, a girl I recognized from my Speech class named Bethany, and Chris...one of my group members in Theater.

Everyone seemed very nice, and they were interested in learning about me and where I moved from. It made me think of home, though, and of all my old friends, whom I missed like crazy. My best friend, Jen, would have been nice to have around right now. She would have made sure I got through this Daniel business with my head still on straight. Yet, Krissy was great too, I had to admit. It was harder to have to get to know new people, but it was also very exciting to meet them and to build relationships. At least none of my new friends would know that Wally Smith de-pants me in front of everyone my freshman year! I laughed out loud, ate my lunch, and joined happily in the group's chatting. When the bell rang and I had to go to English, I realized I'd spent nearly a whole half hour without feeling stressed or thinking about Daniel.

The next three days of my first week at school went by in a strange fashion. On Wednesday, I didn't have any classes with Daniel, but I had to put up with Karina smirking at me all through our Humanities class. Daniel and I hadn't spoken at all. I had worked constructively to avoid him. However, after Humanities was over, I walked out of the room to see Karina rush past me and into Daniel's waiting arms. As she leaned in for a kiss, I rushed past them and hurried down the hallway, so I didn't have to see.

In Thursday's History class, the next time we were very near each other after the incident two days before, I avoided looking at him. At one point, I could feel his penetrating eyes on me. I stared at the blot of ink my pen had just made. I felt that I had spoken the truth after all, and if he was hurt over what I said, it was nothing to how hurt I had felt. Without looking up I knew he was watching me still. I couldn't stand the tension, but then he looked away again, and I realized I had been holding my breath.

The next period, Theater, had been very awkward as well. We were to be performing our scenes and receiving critical feedback on how to improve our characters and presentation. In the next classes we would continue practicing our scenes until we could very naturally portray our characters. I was very excited about the work. If Ms. Purtkis thought highly of my acting ability, I would be more likely to land a leading role in the spring play. Chris played the character of Algernon, I played the role of Gwendolen, and the other two in our group, Jeff and Sarah, played Jack and Cecily. In the short scene we were performing from Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest," two women are upset with each other because both believe themselves to be engaged to a man named Ernest. When the two men arrive in the scene, it is made clear that they have both been pretending to be the fabricated character of Ernest. We stood center stage with our classmates gathered round. We were holding our scripts in case we forgot our words. I noticed Karina leaning on Daniel's shoulder, her hands clutched around his upper arm. I used the angry emotion I suddenly felt and channeled it into my character's shock that this other girl was laying claim to the man she loves.

Sarah delivered Cecily's line, "I feel bound to point out that since Ernest proposed to you he clearly has changed his mind."

With a supercilious tone covered by pseudo politeness, I gave Gwendolen's response, "If the poor fellow has been entrapped into any foolish promise I shall consider it my duty to rescue him at once . . ."

Before my line was finished, Ms. Purtkis called out, "Wait!" She then turned toward where Karina was standing with Daniel. "Karina Johnson, I will not tolerate you kissing anyone in my class. Kindly pay attention to your classmates' scene, or you may miss something important. And, Daniel, I will be forced to break up your group if you two distract each other from the work." She turned back to us and said, "OK, you guys are doing great! Please resume."

We finished our scene, and our classmates clapped and offered their suggestions. When it was time for Daniel, Zacharias, and Karina to perform their scene, I didn't think I could bear to watch them. I asked to go to the bathroom and did not return until I was sure they had finished.

Each day I had lunch with Krissy, Timothy, Jason, Chris, Anna, and Bethany. And on the "B" days where I had no class during part of the lunch period, I usually spent them hanging out with Timothy outside, occasionally playing hackeysack with his friends, Dirk and Scott.

Friday at school passed without any incidents except one. In Humanities, Karina and Marissa would not stop talking about Daniel. Karina would make very soppy comments about him. "He's such a good kisser, too!" she had exclaimed while briefly glancing in my direction to make sure she had made impact. My insides churned, but I was able to keep that a secret. I acted as if I didn't hear nor care. If I let her get a rise out of me, she would only keep up the game. This class I had with Karina was worse than the ones I had with Daniel. There was no reason I had to interact with him in those classes. I had found that sitting through all that tension I felt when Daniel was so close and having to distract myself from it was easier to deal with than Karina taunting me.

Still, facing classes with either of them was nothing compared to how much I dreaded going to work that night. Daniel and I would be working together the entire shift. We were both scheduled as Ushers and would have to work together to maintain the floors and auditoriums. I became so sick with dread by the end of the day that I nearly would have felt justified in calling into work sick! However, my work ethic was strong and so was my desire to add money to my savings, so I went to work. If I had known how events would turn out, I would have gone ahead and called in . . .

A/N: The quoted lines from Janey's scene in Theater class comes from the play "The Importance of Being Earnest" by Oscar Wilde. I copied them from a book entitled "The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde."

Silence Screaming

Chapter 4 of 6

Dan and Janey have to work together after trying so hard to avoid each other for a few days. Will they be able to work things out? Why are these two so desperately determined to misunderstand one another?

When my shift began, things went smoothly for a while. One of us would check the tickets, and the other would sweep the floors as the shows were starting. When the shows were letting out, one of us would pick up left over cups and bags, and the other would take the broom and sweep up the popcorn and candy wrappers. We had an unspoken agreement not to speak. It wasn't a comfortable silence by any means, but I was able to get my work done and was pleased that nothing terrible had happened.

We had been alternating who swept and who picked up when we got really busy and had to rush as a few different movies all ended within a few minutes of each other.

The turn-around times between the showings were not very long on a Friday night like this one. We reached the third auditorium, and as we both reached for the broom, our hands touched briefly. After a sharp intake of breath, I pulled my hand back just as he did the same. Our eyes met for a moment, but he reached for the broom again and started sweeping before I could look for any meaning in his eyes.

That touch and that look were just enough to make me blurt out, "Dan, this is just messed up. We need to talk."

He looked up, surprised by my deviating from our silence routine, and murmured, "You talked plenty the other day."

"Just listen to me for a sec, okay? I know I flew off the handle, but your friend Zach is just so . . . irritating! Every time I see him, he does his best to humiliate me. I don't know why he insists on doing so, but he is obviously just a big jerk."

Daniel didn't say anything for a minute, then said, "Zach has been my best friend since middle school, and sometimes he doesn't think about what he's doing. He likes his games—likes having fun."

"Some fun!" I retorted.

"So, it's all Zach's fault?" Daniel asked me then.

"Well, no . . . um," I stammered.

"So, is it true?" he asked me next.

It took me a moment to realize what he was asking me. Zacharias had said I was jealous and wanted Daniel to like me instead of Karina. I couldn't believe Daniel was blatantly asking me if that was true! He probably hoped I really was jealous . . . just another "Dan the Man Fan!"

I sighed and decided to lie. "No, it isn't."

When I said this, I thought I saw his face grow softer and something like relief settle there. That was strange. I thought he'd be disappointed. Maybe he was actually worried that I liked him when he didn't want me at all, and so he was relieved to hear that I felt otherwise so that he wouldn't have to break the bad news to me!

"Why did you say it then?" he asked as we neared the last row.

That didn't make sense. Now I was really confused about what he was asking. I said, "Wait, what do you mean?"

"You tore me down and called me arrogant and all that. Now you say you didn't mean any of it. So, why say it?"

"Oh! Whoops! I thought you were asking if what Zach said was true—that I was jealous."

Daniel stood up straighter, no longer bending over to sweep. He brushed a lock of hair back, which had fallen over his eyes and stared at me. "Okay, so you're not jealous, and you were just mad at Zach for riling you up. Why did you take it out on me? Why did you say those things? Were they true?"

This time I could not mistake the question. It was very clear. The problem was that I had spoken my true feelings. He had played with me, teased me I thought, and from what I noticed—was always the center of attention; and if he didn't enjoy every moment of it, he showed no sign of it! Seeing Karina hugging on him had set me over the edge, but it had confirmed for me that all those things I said were true, even while I still inwardly hoped that they were not.

I frowned at Daniel and didn't answer immediately. He saw it in my face though, and his eyes narrowed as he took a step back.

"I'm sorry," I finally said. Even though we were both upset, I could feel the energy between us crackling. It felt so good to be near him but so horrible that we were fighting. I wished I could hug him and hold him . . . but he was angry with me now. And I was angry with him for choosing to go out with Karina. These feelings between us were so wrong and so unwanted that I felt shaken to the core.

"Theater nine should be out now," he said, no longer looking at me. He turned and walked back up the auditorium.

As I watched him walk away, I felt the tears rising again and wanted to call to him, wanted to fix this mess. Yet, he was right; we had to keep working. I didn't even know what I could say or do to fix anything, anyway. In fact, I felt like I had only managed to make things worse.

The rest of the night passed with the same silence as it had begun with. Only this time, it was an extremely uncomfortable and tense silence. When the end of the shift came, I hurried outside, but Daniel was following right behind me.

Most unexpectedly he caught up to me and walked alongside me into the parking lot. Looking ahead, he said, "This is my last weekend here at work, you know."

Surprised and disappointed, I said, "Really? Why?"

Daniel replied, "I gave my notice back before school started. I won't have enough time with homework, the upcoming school play, and my football games and practices."

"Oh," is all I said.

"So, I guess we won't be seeing as much of each other," he said in a tone that made it sound almost like a question.

"Guess not," I said. Then I added, "Well, except in class, and you will definitely be seeing me in the school play!" I grinned at him almost in the same flirty way I had so often used with him. Though this time I wasn't so happy on the inside. He gave me a small smile.

We had reached my car, and I pulled out my keys to unlock it. "Well, see you around," I said.

As I opened the car door, Daniel called, "Janey?"

Daniel saying my name took my breath away yet again. I looked back at him, and he looked hesitant. "What was it you wanted to talk to me about in that message you sent me?"

"Oh that . . . it was . . . nothing. It was nothing. I thought you could answer something for me, but it has already been answered." I said it dismissively, but in my head I was screaming, "It was answered when you kissed Karina!" I didn't want to let him know how I felt anymore. Since he had no interest in me, it was better to pretend that I had none for him either.

"Oh, uh, right," he said, "see you then." He walked on over to his own car.

That night when I went home I curled up with my pillow and finally cried. All those intense emotions Daniel had made me feel were swirling like crazy inside me, and the knowledge that we weren't going to have something more between us had hurt me a lot. Finally I wiped the last tears away and decided I was just going to have to get over Daniel. I would concentrate on my school work, on acting, on my new friends. Surely I would be able to forget about him soon enough. Surely I would forget that charming smile, those piercing eyes, that rugged sexiness portayed by his hair and his poise—and his sweet, fun personality . . . *Oh my God! I am never going to get over him!* I realized, burying my face in my pillow. *I have to try!* was the last thing I thought to myself as I started to drift off to sleep, a picture of him in my mind of that day when he smiled at me so sweetly in History . . . and I knew nothing else until morning.

The Nature of Asking Questions

Chapter 5 of 6

Everyone is asking questions—most of them having to do with the upcoming Homecoming dance. In the midst of all the heightened excitement, will Janey find a date? And what will her friends think of her choice?

It was a Saturday night about two weeks later, and I was at a party with Krissy, Tim, Bethany, and Jason. The party was at Marissa's house, and it seemed that nearly every member of the senior class was there...and then some. Krissy and I stood next to the bar, although we were not drinking anything. Tim was off dancing with Bethany.

Curious, I asked Krissy, "Are they a couple?"

Krissy snorted. "No. I asked Bethany about that earlier. She said they were just friends."

"Why do you want to know?" inquired Jason, who was still standing with us.

I frowned at his implication. "Simple curiosity excuses any question," I answered.

Jason smiled. "If that's true then I could ask you anything I wanted without fear of repercussion if my questions got a little . . . personal."

Krissy asked, "And why would you ask Janey personal questions, Jason?"

"Oh, no, I wouldn't. I'm just saying, Janey, that curiosity isn't likely to be the motive in asking a question like that."

"Are you trying to ask if I like Timothy?" I asked, my eyebrows raised in incredulity.

"It's a good enough question. You two always hang out together," he replied politely.

"Well, I'll just assume you are simply *curious* about us, and I'll answer you truthfully. I just like Timothy as a friend."

"Are you sure?" asked Krissy.

"Krissy! You know who I like! How could you ask me that?"

She shrugged it off, then asked, "So then, have you seen *him* anywhere tonight?"

I hadn't spoken properly to Daniel in the past two weeks...since the last night we worked together. I hadn't seen him outside class, and in class, we simply didn't interact. And all that evening, I had been trying to keep my stomach from flip-flopping as I nervously and surreptitiously scanned the party for Daniel.

"No, but he's bound to show up. His 'girlfriend' wouldn't miss a party this big, especially when it is held at her best friend's house. He goes where she goes . . ." I cringed at the thought.

"Who?" asked Jason.

Just then, Timothy and Bethany reappeared, looking flushed.

"I need a drink," Bethany said breathily.

Timothy grinned at us and said, "I'm still up for dancing. Anyone . . . ?" He reached for my hand and said, "Come on, Janey. Let's dance."

A rowdy, exciting song was playing: "Riot" by Three Days Grace. "Sure!" I said and let him lead me out into the throng of teenagers in various states of sobriety, dancing and jumping up and down to the song.

Timothy and I danced for nearly an hour before finally paying heed to our bodies' demands for rest and refreshment. The truth was, I really loved to dance. Timothy had some pretty slick moves, and he was just so much fun!

When we found some room to sit down at a kitchen table, we looked around for our friends, not seeing any of them. Still a little sweaty and breathless, I said, "That was fun, Timothy."

He looked at me and smiled. "You're killer on the dance floor, Janey."

Suddenly, I felt a little uncomfortable. I remembered what Jason had implied, and for the first time, wondered if it could be true.

Timothy paused, frowning. Then he leaned in towards me and said thoughtfully, "Janey, I wonder if we should go to Homecoming together?"

He sounded strangely disconcerted, which was how I felt. "Do you . . . ? Um, are we . . . ? Um . . ." I stumbled.

Timothy sat back and sighed. He answered the question I couldn't manage to get out, "I don't know honestly. We always hang out together, and it is always a good time . . . I'd just never really thought about it until now, you know?"

"Timothy, neither have I. I was wondering if there was anything between us just now, but only because of something Jason said. I've never really considered it either."

He nodded. "Yeah, Bethany said something to me too. But, I think we're simply good friends who like to hang out. Nothing wrong with that, right?"

"Definitely not!" I grinned. "What is it with everyone wanting to assume that there are always romantic feelings in every relationship?"

"I don't know. They're obsessed!" he said as he laughed. "So, Janey, do you have anyone in mind who you want to go to Homecoming with?"

"No, there's no one," I replied honestly. *Daniel was taken, so that leaves . . . no one!*

Timothy leaned in again and said, "Janey, I think we should seriously consider going to Homecoming together. We know we're just friends, but we'd have plenty of fun dancing and hanging out watching the dramatic and sordid affairs of our classmates. There's no one I really want to go with either, and really, I don't want to ask someone just for the sake of having a date. She might expect more than I'm willing to give right now."

"Timothy! You are a life saver! I thought I was going to have to go as the pathetic new girl who couldn't get a date!" I exclaimed, giving him a quick hug.

At that moment, Jason wandered over to us and sat down. "Hey, where've you two been?"

"Just dancing," I replied.

Jason snorted. "This party is getting boring."

"Well, where's Krissy?" I asked.

"Oh, she left about an hour ago. She said she was feeling sick. Bethany took her home."

Poor Krissy, I thought. I'll have to give her a call first thing tomorrow to see if she's okay.

Timothy, Jason, and I chatted for a short while longer before deciding the party really was a little boring. We walked across the semi-crowded living room towards the front door. Suddenly, some girl whom I vaguely recognized from the school hallways staggered into me as she was laughing with one of her friends. I tripped on the edge of a coffee table, lost my balance, and tumbled to the floor. Jason reached down, grabbing my hand to pull me up, while Timothy said, "Hey, Amanda, watch out!"

"Sorry," she said vaguely and dispassionately as she and her giggling girlfriend plopped down onto a couch. My eyes followed their movements, then noticed a third giggling girl on the sofa of the adjoining side of the coffee table. Karina. Sitting with Daniel. Sitting *on* Daniel. My stomach turned over on itself, seeing him there, gorgeous as always. He shifted where he sat...Karina was sitting sideways on his lap, an arm swung around his neck.

"Janey, you are always so clumsy!" Karina said as if trying to explain something obvious to someone not bright enough to understand. "Do be more careful!" she said, laughing.

Jason still had me by the hand, and he tugged on my arm slightly, saying, "Come on, Janey. Let's go."

Sunday morning, I woke up and ate a hot breakfast with my mom and dad. We always had breakfast together on Sundays. My dad was at work every other morning, and I had school, so this was, and always had been, a special family time. I smiled, realizing that not everything in my life had changed completely.

Afterwards, I picked up the phone and called Krissy. She answered, sounding groggy.

"How are you feeling, Krissy? I heard you felt sick last night?" I asked out of friendly concern.

"Oh, I am okay now. Just tired," she answered, yawning.

"So are you feeling better then? I missed you last night!" I said.

"I'm fine now, like I said," she answered tersely. Then more politely, "Sorry, Janey. I just didn't sleep well. So, uh, did you have fun at the party?"

"It was okay," I said, not wanting Krissy to feel like she had to miss out on anything spectacular. "Timothy and I just danced for awhile, then sat around chatting with Jason."

"Oh," replied Krissy. Then she added, "Well, did you see Daniel there?"

I laughed. "Yeah, I did. It was horrible, but I don't really care."

"Huh? What happened?" she asked avidly.

"Some girl bumped into me and made me trip and fall...right in front of Daniel and Karina!" I explained.

Krissy gasped. She asked, "Are you okay? That must have made you really embarrassed!"

"Yeah, I'm fine. I got over it pretty quickly. Karina tried to laugh at me, but I just ignored her and left with Jason and Timothy."

"That's not like you," she remarked teasingly. "You should have put Karina in her place."

I laughed again. "Trust me, that would be good fun. I just don't want to get into it with her, especially with Daniel right there. I don't want them to think I'm still all hurt by them being together."

"Hmmm," sighed Krissy. "So what about Daniel?"

"What about Daniel?" I asked, confused.

"Did he look at you in any way, or did he say anything?"

"He didn't say anything. I don't think he was looking at me in any way at all, but I'm not sure, because I didn't keep looking at him," I answered.

"So, you stayed calm and you don't care that it happened . . . I think you may actually be getting over him!" Krissy exclaimed. Then, dramatically, in a sort of stage whisper, she asked, "Is there someone else you like instead?"

I rolled my eyes, thankful that Krissy could not see. "No and no! I don't like anyone else. And I'm not over him at all. I just didn't want to keep looking at him because I would have fallen apart and done or said something really embarrassing." I sighed. "He looked stunning, as always!" I continued, "I think I've just realized that I can't have him, so I'm going to do my best not to fret over him. Hopefully, I'll get over him eventually . . . Uh, that is, as long as I don't have to look at him!"

Krissy chuckled. "Too bad that won't be easy to do! Well, I got to go. See you at school tomorrow."

"Alright. Bye," I said.

The next week at school, I continued to settle in and get used to my new life here. The teachers had well-established their routines, we followed their expectations (well, most of us anyway), did homework, and took tests. I still felt uncomfortable at times, being new to a school where all the students had known each other for years. However, I felt at ease with the friends I had made so far.

At lunch, sitting, as always, with Krissy, Tim, Bethany, Jason, Chris, and Anna, I discovered that no one seemed to be able to discuss anything other than Homecoming. Tim, at least, preferred to talk about the upcoming game, but after reassurances that our school would win the Homecoming football game, the conversation always turned back to the dance...and who was going with who.

Chris and Anna told us they were going to go together as they gave each other a shy smile and tentatively slipped their hands into each other's. Krissy and Bethany resolutely, and almost mournfully, declared themselves dateless. Just then, Timothy excused himself to go purchase an extra drink, and the conversation about the dance came to a halt.

When the bell rang, my friends headed to their respective classes. I had no more today since it was an "A" day. I would have enough time to go home, relax for a little while, change, and then go to work. As I made my way out of the cafeteria, Jason caught up to me. I looked at him quizzically because I knew he had a class to get to.

"Hey, Janey," he said, walking astride me. "I know I've got a class, but I only see you at lunch when all our friends are around." He rambled on, "So I just wanted to talk to you real quick..."

"Uh, Jason..." I began.

"Janey, I was hoping you'd go to Homecoming with me," he said rather quickly. If I hadn't already been suspicious of why he wanted to talk to me, I might not have even understood his question.

"Oh, no, I can't," I said apologetically. "I'm sorry..."

"Nevermind," he said tersely, frowning and turning around to begin walking down the hall the other way.

"Wait, Jason!" *He didn't even let me explain that I already had a date!*

He turned and called back to me, "Forget about it. It's alright. I'll talk to you, um, later then?"

"Yeah . . . I guess," I said, my voice trailing off because he had already disappeared into the throng of bustling students.

I made my way outside to my car. *Jason!* I definitely had some things to think about!

The next day at school was a rather interesting one. In Theatre, we were once again performing the same scenes for our classmates, this time with blocking and without scripts.

We finished early, and the class sat in clustered groups all over the stage, chatting with each other until the bell rang. I was talking to Chris about how he and Anna had figured out they liked each other. Unfortunately, I was sitting very near the unevadable trio: Daniel, Karina, and Zacharias. I could hear every word they were saying, although I tried to make myself block it out.

"And then she said she still had no date for the dance . . ." Chris was saying.

"Oh, I'm not worried," Zacharias was saying to Daniel and Karina. "There's plenty of girls without dates yet. I just have to ask someone."

Helplessly, I looked over and watched them. Daniel had his fingers interlaced with Karina's. She was looking smug, like she always did when Daniel showed her affection. Daniel was grinning at Zacharias in that mischievous, teasing way that I had seen too many times and had found to be terribly tantalizing.

"Well, what are you waiting for?" Daniel asked, laughing.

"Oh, I don't know. All I have to do is ask, and any girl would say yes, even if she already had a date," he said with his eyebrows raised.

The arrogant bastard. I snorted in derision.

Three heads swiveled in my direction. Karina's eyes gloated as she met mine, her finger's tightening around Daniel's hand. Daniel looked at me blankly, but then I looked at Zach, who still had an eyebrow raised and was wearing a smirk.

He cajoled, "Hey, Janey, need a date?"

I laughed outright. "With you? No thanks!"

His eyes flashed at my insult, but he grinned anyway. "So much for charity," he snickered. "Are you going to stay at home, sobbing into your pillow because you can't go with Daniel?" He crossed his arms and his smirk reappeared.

I shook my head. He was outrageous! I wanted to run and hide or yell at him, but I sighed resignedly. I knew Daniel was a lost cause. I already had a ~~date~~ someone else who had asked me out, so he couldn't rile me up! Calmly, I said, "No, Zach, I will be at the dance with my date. Stop making insinuations about me that you couldn't possibly know the truth about." I couldn't help adding, "And *shut up!* With your mouth, I seriously doubt any girl would say yes to going to Homecoming with you."

I rolled my eyes when he opened his mouth to retort. "Shut it, I said!" I turned away, linking my arm with Chris' as we headed toward the door, knowing the bell was about to ring.

"Sorry about that!" I said apologetically. "So what did you say to Anna after that?"

"That's all right," he said congenially. "I said I didn't have a date either. Then I just sort of asked her if she wanted to go. She said, 'Sure!' and then she kissed me!"

"That sounds sweet." I smiled.

The bell rang, and Chris said, "Well, we'll see you in a little bit at lunch."

"Yeah, sure thing." I went outside to the court yard to look for Timothy.

I found him playing hackey sack again. I joined in for awhile, but then Derek and Scott had to run to the library to finish an assignment for their next class.

Timothy and I sat down on a cement bench.

"Did you tell any of our friends that we are going to the dance together?" he asked.

"No, not yet. You?"

"Nah, but I guess we should tell them at lunch. They will probably get the wrong idea, so it'd be better if we could sort it out at the beginning."

"They won't believe us, anyway," I stated. "Most of them seem to think we like each other."

"Yeah, they'll make of it what they will," he agreed. "We'll just tell them then and get it over with."

"Fine by me."

We headed into lunch. Jason looked uncomfortable. I smiled at him encouragingly, and he smiled back hesitantly.

Once our usual group had assembled and were settled down eating their lunches, Timothy announced nonchalantly, "I have a date for Homecoming."

I chimed in, "So do I!"

"Who?" gasped several of them at once.

"Janey," he answered.

Simultaneously, I said, "Timothy."

At the news, Chris and Anna grinned and whistled. Krissy simply looked surprised. Bethany and Jason both said, "What?"

Jason was looking at Timothy and not at me. Bethany was looking at Krissy and began whispering conspiratorially in her ear. Timothy just shrugged and said, "Well, that's settled then."

I just laughed, a little overwhelmed by the absurdity of the situation. It was kind of amusing how big of a deal our friends seemed to think it was. I felt only a little remorseful for Jason's sake, but I planned to smooth things over with him as soon as possible.

The rest of the lunch went rather quietly. When the bell rang, I started walking with Jason as he headed out. It was a "B" day, and we both had our final class of the day in the same corridor.

He nodded to me and said, "I was right . . . that night . . . at the party, wasn't I?"

"Jason," I began, "I'm really sorry about yesterday. I wanted to tell you that I already had a date."

He shrugged and said, "I guess I should have known."

"Jason, I'm really flattered that you asked me to go with you."

He tensed up, not looking at me, and quickened his pace.

I matched it. "Jason, Timothy and I are just friends," I added, hoping this news would assuage him.

Jason stopped walking and finally looking at me. "What are you saying? Are you just trying to make me not feel like such a dunce for asking you out? You are going to Homecoming with him. Clearly..."

"Listen, Jason, please? Timothy and I have kind of an agreement to go together as friends. That's all it is. If I hadn't already promised to go..."

This time he cut me off. "Would you have said yes to me?"

Remembering my thoughts last night about Jason and how he was actually fairly good looking and he seemed nice, I answered truthfully, "Yes."

He gave me a wary smile. "I like you, Janey. I wish we could test 'us' out, but you are already going with Timothy. That's cool. Maybe we can share a dance together at least?"

"Definitely." I smiled, strangely excited by the thought.

We parted ways when he reached his classroom. I headed down a few doors to my own. I walked in and sat in my usual desk, next to Krissy, whose face looked stony. She glared at me, then turned her head away to stare at nothing.

"Krissy?" I asked tentatively. She ignored me.

Make-ups, Break-ups, and Hook-ups

Chapter 6 of 6

The Homecoming dance has arrived . . . bringing many status changes among the people Janey knows. Will Janey herself be involved in any of this?

Tonight was the night of the Homecoming dance. I stood in front of my dresser mirror, my eyes glowing with my excitement to be dressed in a beautiful, long, spaghetti-strapped, midnight-blue dress with an added layer of sheer, black rose designs across the chest. My mom had twirled my long hair up into a french twist...the ends in little ringlets, leaving a few dainty curls to frame my face. This was my senior Homecoming dance . . . Things might be a little crazy with my friends, and Daniel was decidedly not my date, but I was determined to make sure I still had a good time!

Timothy and I plopped down in a couple chairs at an empty table on the side of the dance floor. We sipped some drinks, and I drew in a few deep breaths to help bring my breathing back to its normal pace. We had just danced to several fast and frenetic songs, mutually knowing it was time for a break when a slow and sappy song began screeching its sickeningly sweet tones for all of the lovey-dovey couples. We sat silently, companionably, watching those who were dancing. My eyes, unsurprisingly, seemed to instantly find Daniel and Karina, and I rolled those eyes as I pried them away: I just seemed entirely unable to ever escape noticing them! I then watched Zacharias dancing with a girl for a long moment while I snorted...my mouth twisted into a sardonic grin and my thoughts displaying mock shock that he ended up with a date after all.

After two of these distressing, mushy love songs, another fun one began to play. Timothy said, "Let's sit this one out too, okay?"

I nodded; that was fine with me. Krissy, Bethany, Jason, and a few of their other friends...all of whom came to the dance together as a group of dateless friends, joined by Chris and Anna...were standing in a circle, jumping, bouncing, shaking, and just wildly dancing to the rocking song. I looked over at Timothy and noticed he was watching our friends as well.

Abruptly, he asked, "Janey, how come you and Krissy aren't speaking?"

I frowned, remembering the silence I'd received from Krissy for the last several days and how unhappy it made me. "I'm not even sure exactly . . ." I started. "She is mad at me for *something*, but doesn't seem to find it necessary to inform me of what that is."

"I wonder what it could be . . ." he said, his voice trailing off as he continued to stare out at them.

I looked back to the group as well and so saw it when Krissy had turned her head toward our direction. She caught my gaze and glared before turning away again. Next to me, Timothy flinched. I looked at him again and was surprised to see a hard look in his normally jovial facial features.

"Anything wrong?" I asked. He shook his head, still staring ahead. I followed his eyes and noticed he was intently watching Krissy, his brow furrowed, and his mouth...a frown. I realized something.

"Timothy! You like Krissy, don't you?"

Finally, he turned towards me, an eyebrow raised, leaning back in his chair with his arms crossed, but looking slightly dejected. "Is it obvious then?"

Feeling suddenly exuberant, I smiled in spite of his overt dolefulness. "Why didn't you ask her to the dance then? She must like you too! I'm sure she does!" Even more excited, I continued, "That's probably why she's mad at me! Why else would she be so mad? This all started that day we told them we were going together . . ."

Timothy interrupted my ramble. "She doesn't like me. She's my ex."

"What?" I was at a loss of words after hearing this startling statement. Why hadn't I known that?

"We dated for almost half of last year. She broke it off." He stole another glance in Krissy's direction. Turning back to me, he repeated, *She* broke it off. She doesn't like me anymore. She didn't even tell *you*, her best friend, about us. She's obviously over it."

I managed to close my mouth, realizing it was hanging open. *Why wouldn't she have told me that?* To Timothy, I said sympathetically, "But you're not, are you?"

The sadness in his eyes answered my question.

"What happened?" I whispered.

"I don't really want to think about it," he said. "If you two ever start talking again, maybe you can get her to explain it to you . . ." he said bitterly, then added emphatically, "because I am, sure as hell, confused about it! All I know is that she thought we could still be friends. And we are . . . at least, we act like it, but we don't talk like we used to . . . and every time I look at her . . ." He trailed off with a frustrated sigh.

I quickly pulled him into a hug. Our friend Bethany, who had clearly been privy to whatever Krissy's problem was, chose that moment to sit down with us, a glass of punch in hand. She raised her eyebrows, regarding our embrace and said, "You two seem to be having a good time."

Timothy and I said hello, ignoring the slight. He turned his gaze back to the dance floor, leaving me to talk to a Bethany that had been very distant with me lately. It was time to sort out this mess.

"Bethany," I began, "does Krissy like Timothy?"

At my question, Timothy's eyes snapped to Bethany's, clearly eager for her response.

Her eyes widened. "I don't think it's my business to be telling *you* anything about Krissy."

"Bethany, please, just tell me. I mean, if she's mad at me because we went to the dance together, then I really should explain..."

Timothy interjected, "Please tell us, we...I need to know."

"You two are unbelievable," she said acidly. "Timothy, are you trying to get back at her for breaking up with you?"

"What! No way! How could..."

"You don't date your ex-girlfriend's best friend! Even if you really like her. It's just wrong!" Timothy looked stunned, like he'd never considered that his "date" with me could be perceived that way. Before either of us said anything in response, she turned on me, saying, "Janey, Krissy said she never told you about him, but I think that you haven't been a very good friend to her, seeing as how you've been too guy-obsessed yourself to ever ask her about who she likes."

"What? Woah! This is just crazy!" I exclaimed. I stood up and marched over to where Krissy was dancing. I hooked my arm through hers and started to pull her away from the noisy dance floor, saying "We need to talk!" She stopped short, looking every bit wanting to refuse. I said, "Please, Krissy! Let's talk." She nodded begrudgingly and followed me.

When we were well away from the intruding noise, I said to her, "You haven't spoken to me since the day Timothy and I said we were coming to this dance together. You've been glaring at us. Just tell me what the problem is! Do you still like Timothy? Or are you just upset because he's your ex on a date with your best friend?"

"Yeah, that is messed up, but that's not the entire problem!" she said vehemently. "It's so hard to see him with you! I still . . ." She trailed off, shaking her head.

"Why didn't you just tell me, then?" I asked exasperatedly. "I would never have..."

"Well, first of all," she exclaimed, her eyes burning, "you've been so obsessed with Daniel. Daniel this! Daniel that! You never bothered to ask if there was anyone for me..."

"Wait a minute," I interjected. "I'm sorry, but I didn't know there was anything to tell! If there were, why wouldn't you just tell me!"

"I would have told you! I asked you more than once if you liked Timothy, and you assured me you did not! I would have told you then if you had been honest with me!"

I reached out and patted her arm. "I was honest," I said amiably. "Timothy and I are only here together as friends. We only came together because neither of us can be here with the person we really want!"

Krissy's eyes widened, and her features softened a bit. I leaned over and whispered in her ear, "The person he wanted to be here with is you."

Her even more-widened eyes were lit from within as she looked longingly in Timothy's direction. He was watching us. She looked at me uncertainly.

"Really," I said. "He told me so."

"I should go talk to him," she said dreamily. She began to waft away, but stopped and turned back to me. "I'm sorry, Janey. I suppose you and I should talk about all this?"

"Yes, but it's okay. You need Timothy, and he needs you. You and I can talk more later."

She gave me a quick hug and murmured, "Thanks." Together, we walked back over to where Bethany and Timothy sat.

"Hi, Krissy," Timothy said with a soft, awkward smile. "You look really amazing tonight."

I caught Bethany's eye, and with a nod of my head in the other direction, she stood up and followed me in order to give our two friends the time they needed alone. As I walked away, I heard passionately angered tones...faded and inarticulate, though, as the distance between us increased...and the loud noises of talkative teenagers and pop music flooded into the space. *I really hope they can work things out!*

Anna and Chris had been watching the events unfold ever since I pulled Krissy away from their dancing troupe. They joined Bethany and me, and we all sat down and talked for awhile. Most of it was about how they thought Timothy and Krissy had been a really good couple, and they hoped they would get back together. I agreed with them on that note, but I stayed mostly quiet. I was feeling a little overwhelmed at being so thickly involved in a bunch of drama and was sitting in contemplation of my part in it. Hopefully, Timothy and Krissy *would* get back together, and hopefully there would be no more hurt feelings between Krissy and me. It was hard learning how to be friends with people you didn't know. At my old school, everyone had just already known everything about each other . . .

Inevitably, another "couple song" came on. Chris and Anna sauntered away quickly, both eager to lend romantic moments to their new relationship. One of their friends, a guy who I did not know as he was not part of our lunch group nor in any of my classes, asked Bethany to dance, and she readily agreed.

Left alone, I cast my eyes about, suddenly wondering where Jason had been all this time. I didn't see him anywhere, but I did see Krissy and Timothy dancing together! They both wore smiles on their faces, and I felt a warm rush of joy for my friends' reunion.

"Jaaaneeeeeeey!" a voice called. It wasn't a voice that could have belonged to Jason. No, this voice was noxiously sweet and jeering...a voice that could only belong to the ever-snotty Karina. With a big sigh, I turned away from watching my friends and looked at the blonde who wore a knee-length, red gown and entirely too much makeup.

"Karina," I acknowledged indifferently.

"Where's your date?" she asked superciliously as she maneuvered her head to stare obviously at where Timothy was dancing with Krissy.

"Hmmm, where is yours?" I responded in kind.

"Oh, you mean, my boyfriend, Daniel? He went to get us some drinks. He is always so good to me . . ." Her face split into a wicked grin. "He looks totally hot tonight. Have you noticed?" She smirked. "You must have! He and I will look great together when we are crowned King and Queen."

I rolled my eyes and said, "Whatever!"

"You poor girl," she said mockingly. She shook her head slowly and added, "Dumped by your date for your own best friend? I had thought it before . . . but now I know . . . you are really . . . pathetic." She said the last word nonchalantly as she cocked her head, shrugged her shoulder, and raised her brow as a smirk appeared on her heavily caked-face.

I let out a short laugh in surprise. *Really, this girl is out to get me! She just can't stop bragging about her and Daniel ever! I'm sick of it! Maybe I should make her eat her own words?* I snorted. *Could be fun . . . She's the pathetic one here after all, but I can't get upset . . . If she thinks she can rile me up, then she will forever rub her relationship with Daniel all over me!*

"Well, Karina, if you have it so good with Daniel, then why aren't you with him now...enjoying him, instead of spending your time obsessing over me?" I asked with the air of simply posing a question for her consideration. "My love life, or lack of...regardless, neither is of your concern. I could hardly care what you think, even if you are the most popular girl in school." I said this last bit while rolling my eyes.

The room suddenly grew quiet, and I looked around to determine why. The music had ceased playing. Then a voice over a loud speaker declared that it was time to announce this year's Homecoming King and Queen.

"Oh, yay! It's time for your fifteen minutes of fame!" I said, rolling my eyes once again.

She glared at me, saying, "You'll be sorry. You can't contend with *me*!" I grinned. She flipped her hair and made her way quickly towards the stage.

Sure enough, it was announced that Daniel was King. I wryly thought about just how crazy it was that I had fallen for a guy popular enough to be Homecoming King. At my old school, I had never been in with the popular elite. And although I had been friends with many of the mainstream students, I would never have dared to even dream of dating "the big man on campus." *Stupid movie theatre job! If it weren't for that, I'd never even have had the chance to start liking him!*

And without surprising anyone, Karina, beaming, stood as the crown was placed on her head, naming her Queen *Those two deserve each other anyway.*

Instead of watching the traditional King and Queen dance, I veered away from the crowd and headed out towards the restrooms. I stayed in the ladies' for a little while, being finicky with my hair, smoothing my gown, and checking to make sure my mascara wasn't flaking off...all just to give me something to do.

By the time I made my way back inside the gymnasium, an upbeat song was playing, and I knew *their* dance must be over.

I was walking through groups of students when I heard the voices of a girl and guy arguing harshly. Several paces away stood Daniel and Karina. He stood tall with his arms crossed and a frown on his face. She stood with a hand on her hip, her back to me so that I could not see the expression on her face. I missed what they had been saying, but then their voices grew louder and carried over.

Daniel said in snappish, rebuffing tones, "Well, I heard it, and that wasn't right!"

Karina responded waspishly, "Why the hell should you care what I say to that insignificant bitch, Janey?" She turned on her heel and stormed off.

With Karina out of the way, there was a clear path between Daniel and myself. Our eyes met. I couldn't tell what he was thinking. When could I ever? I, however, was surprised, confused, and in wonder . . . What had just happened between them? Had he stuck up for me against his own girlfriend? *Wow! Just wow!*

I regarded Daniel for a long moment, pleading silently for understanding. He held my gaze as silently, I shouted *Say something! Do something! Come talk to me! Daniel, now is the time. Do something, please!*

He dropped his gaze then and took a step back, looking as though he were about to turn and walk away.

Damn it! Daniel! Well, serves me right for getting my hopes up again . . . I should know better by now!

Just then, Jason appeared at my side, eyes sparkling and offering me a gorgeous, red rose. "Hi, Janey! You look beautiful!"

"Jason! Thank you! And thank you for the rose . . . Why?..."

He smiled. "I saw you talking to Krissy, and I saw they made up. I had got this for you, but only meant to give it to you if I could steal you away from Timothy." He winked. We both laughed. He continued, "I had gone to my car to go get it, and when I returned, I was walking around for a little while looking for you."

"Oh, I was in the restroom," I said. I smelled the rose's ambrosial scent and added, "Thank you, Jason! This is so sweet."

"Care to have that dance now?" he asked.

I quickly glanced back over to where Daniel was standing. He still stood there, looking at me. *Going to say anything?* I asked/hoped with my eyes, but, again, he averted his.

I looked at Jason: tall, sandy-blond hair smoothed back for the night, looking sharp in a nice, black, button-up dress shirt and trousers, wearing a smile, and clearly unafraid to be upfront with me about liking me. No confusion. Just a nice, handsome guy...romantic, too. Why shouldn't I give him a chance?

"Certainly," I answered with a smile.

His smile brightened, and he grabbed my hand, leading me away towards the dance floor. I swore I could feel Daniel's penetrating eyes on me, just like I did in class that day shortly after the drama we'd had in Theater class...but I didn't care anymore. I liked Jason. I was over Daniel. And that was that.

Jason and I continued dancing, even when one of those "mushy" and "sappy" songs came on. They didn't seem that way now that I danced to some of them with Jason. They actually seemed sweet, romantic, endearing . . . Just like the kiss he would give me later after I would agree to dating him . . .
