

Southern *Charm*

Meg Queenz

Emalie Jacobson wanted nothing more than to move to the South to a close knit town where people hung out by the river and had bonfires. Considering her mom is from a close knit, southern town, it shouldn't be a problem. But she swore she'd never go back after feeling the humiliation of rejection years ago, so Emalie's dream is not to be fulfilled.

She's devastated when her mother dies in a car crash, and shocked to learn that she held onto the estate in Dyersburg, Tennessee where she grew up and her last wish was for Emalie to move to Dyersburg.

So Emalie and her dad pack up their city life and head down to Dyersburg, where Emalie meets her mother's childhood friend and his son, the hot, bad-cowboy Drew Mason. He's cocky, arrogant and irritating, but he has the thing Emalie has always looked for-- southern charm.

Will Emalie fall for Drew, or will the southern charm not be enough to look past his irritating ways? And why did Emalie's mother leave in the first place?

PROLOGUE

When you lose someone you love, you don't think anything can be worse. The grief, remorse, and regret doesn't let you go. That's why it's always great for a pleasant surprise to come along, letting you focus on how to deal that without including all that horrible stuff.

This is why I'm not thinking about how my mother was in a coma for what felt like forever and they had to take her off of the machine when they found out she was brain-dead. Nope, not thinking about that. I'm thinking about the surprise she left behind for me-- a ranch-style house in Dyersburg! I'll be the legal owner as soon as I turn eighteen, but that's just the downside to this situation.

What situation, you ask? Well, I'm now sitting in the car, driving through Dyserburg. I know, I know, dream come true! For those of whom are now looking like this can talk in Hebrew, my dream life is to live in a small southern town where me and my charming beau go to bonfires with my friends in the woods. The fact that my mother grew up in a close-knit, southern town probably contributed to this dream of mine.

But, I'm not thinking about my mother. I'm thinking about how much I hope the pictures do my house justice. And I'm about to find out if it does, since we're turning onto the street it's on.

I stop writing in my diary to pay attention to my rumbling stomach.

"Hey Dad,"

"Yeah?" he asked tiredly. I guess driving what feels like forever can do that to a person.

"Can we get pizza tonight?"

"Sure," he answers in that same tired tone. Okay, I don't think I'll bother him or he may bring down my happy mood.

Ever since Mom passed away, his mood hasn't been great, and I understand why. My parents were the parents that every kid wanted, even though they didn't admit it because of the PDA. They were the ones that were always happy together, that kissed each other before Dad left for work; the perfect parents in my mind.

I start bouncing in my seat as the car turned right, and onto the street we were going to be living on, Applewood Street.

As soon as the house comes in view, I stop bouncing. There, on the front porch --my front porch, stands a tall guy with all the features of a Greek god. Chiseled jaw, biceps that weren't too much, and green eyes.

My father shoots me a strange look when he notices how I'm looking at the guy on the -my-front porch.

"Uh,...who is that?" I try to ask without stuttering.

"My godson."

Wait. Does that mean we're like...related? I voice these thoughts to my father who laughs. I can't help but smile. I feel happy just hearing his laugh. His laughs were always the best,

and very rare nowadays.

"No, honey, you're not related." I start to ogle him again, but Dad interrupted. "But your fantasies aren't going to happen."

"What fantasies?" I ask innocently, even though I have a sneaking suspicion of exactly which fantasies he's talking about.

"Dating a guy with southern charm." he replies easily.

"How did you know that?" I manage to blurt out as he pulls the car to a stop in front of the house.

"Nothing is secret in this family."

I sigh. I bet Mom told him. "And why can't that fantasy come true?"

"According to Jim, Drew isn't like the guy you want."

What I really want to say is, Psh. Let me decide that, will you Pops? But I opt for, "We'll see." instead.

I push open the passenger door and stand on my black pumps. Yeah, I know black pumps aren't the dress code here, but I really like these. Plus, Dad wouldn't let me pack them, so I put them on instead.

My navy blue skirt bunched up during the car ride, so I pull it down and my white ruffled shirt was yanked down, so I pulled it up to make the neckline more modest than what it was, as I move to back of the car where this Jim guy, Drew and my Dad are.

"This is my daughter, Emalie." Dad introduces me and points to the guy next to Drew. "This is Jim, your mother's best friend and this is his son, Drew."

Before I can say anything, Jim pulls me in for a very unexpected hug.

"You're beautiful, sweetie." Yeah, I think I might like this guy.

He lets go of me and pushes me into the unsuspecting Drew. His hands fly to my waist to prevent us from tumbling over.

"Uh,...hi." I say awkwardly.

He smiles at me. Oh my god, I think I'm in love. "Hi, Emalie." His masculine voice makes me swoon inside and his warm breath on my face nearly makes my knees buckle. And who says he isn't my dream guy?

My hands fly to my waist when he squeezes his hands against my hipbone and I gently pry them off, giving him a smile before walking over to the back of the black Escalade and popping the truck, walking into the house with my suitcase trailing behind me and my dresses in my left hand.

"Dibs on basement!" I call over my shoulder.

Dyersburg just got more interesting.

CHAPTER ONE

I have come to a conclusion that shall revolutionize the way I pack-- unpacking all the junk is a huge bore. So now I'm only taking the bare minimum on any trip. I guess in this instance, my packing is justified though, since I did just move to a new state and all. At least I have my iPod to keep me calm while I tear off yet another piece of tape from the seemingly endless pile of boxes on the floor.

I turn my iPod onto repeat as it changes to Give Me a Sign by Breaking Benjamin. I don't know why Jesse thinks Breaking Benjamin is a "dark, scary band that has no purpose". I don't think she's very educated in music. I mean, she listens to that song about finding your love in a sea of joy and unicorns and that's just fluttery butterfly music that "has no purpose". I can't stand that stuff, which is why I stick with the head-bang stuff such as Breaking Benjamin and Three Days Grace.

Speaking of Jess, I thought, picking up my purple, rhinestone covered cell and typing in her number.

Jess and I been best friends for years now, but after she moved to California, we saw less of each other, which is why we have frequent phone calls and she carts herself where I am every couple weeks. We have close to the same personality, but not the same music taste. As you see from above, she likes the stuff I call "Fluttery Butterfly" music.

"Hello my lovely!" she answered in a chipper mood.

"Hello my psychotic friend!" I replied back.

"Hey, that was that one time and it was completely justified."

"Yeah, throwing a live monkey at a spider was "completely justified"." That was the one time I was afraid for a monkey's life. We were eight and thanks to NCIS, I thought the poor monkey would explode on contact.

"That thing was huge and it was on my pillow!" she screeched.

I laughed, "Oh how I have missed you."

"Aww," she said, melodramatically. "I've missed you too, boo."

"Boo?" I asked, "Is that my new name?"

"But of course!" She laughed. "So what's up so far in Hillbilly Land?"

I smiled. "Well, we picked up some road-kill about an hour ago and-"

"Okay!" she interrupted. "I get it! Road-kill, yum. Now get to the interesting parts...like cute guys!"

My smile grew wider. Ah, the boy-obsessed teenager she always would be. Not that I could blame her. "Well, I don't think the word cute could even be used to describe this boy."

She squealed very loudly and I quickly pulled the phone away until I knew it was okay to put it back onto my ringing ear. "What's his name? What does he look like? Does he have an accent?" she pummeled me with questions.

"His name is Drew, he had green eyes and brown hair and he has a southern accent."

She squealed again. "He's your dream guy! Ohmigod! We have to go through your wardrobe and do your nails," I let her continue on until she runs out of breath, then I interrupt.

"Does this mean you're coming to Hillbilly Land?"

"Ask your dad, ask your dad, ask your dad!" she chants and I laugh.

"Okay! Hold your horses for a sec, will ya?"

With her Dad a big-wig CEO for the world's largest supplier of appliances, she's loaded, so a private jet is what she got for her birthday and she already told me she'd be using it. I'm surprised she didn't just come with us, but then again, she'd have to ride in a car with my dad and that wouldn't happen.

"Daddy!" I call up the stairs as I walk up with the phone in one hand. The stairs creak from the pressure and I'm not sure whether to be offended that it thinks I weigh a lot, or scared that I'd crash to my impending doom. I decided on middle ground.

"Yes, honey?" he calls back. I push the door open more so I can slide through the only place not inhabited by boxes to talk to my Dad.

"Can Jess come over?" I walk into the living room where he and Jim are moving the couch to the desired position. My eyebrows furrow when I see that the 'desired position' is very undesirable. "Uh, in the middle facing the T.V." I inform them and they quickly move the couch where I instructed as Dad replies.

"Of course, baby girl."

I want to know where Drew is, but I'm not about to ask.

"Are they staying over for dinner?" I ask.

"We're gonna go Danny's Diner for dinner, sweetie." Jim replies for Dad and I smile at the use of 'D's before nodding and putting the phone the next to my ear.

"He said "yes"."

She squealed and I pulled the phone away from my ear as Dad and Jim laugh. "Gosh! Are

you eating Frosted Flakes again? I told you not to." I said as I hesitantly bring the phone to my ear again.

She scoffs. "Course not, Em! You forbade me from such cereal."

I smile, knowing she's lying. "Jessica Roberts, I can't believe you'd indulge in such a hyperactive mood inducing, artificial, food-like substance."

I can almost see her glowering at the floor good-naturedly. "Ah, ma! But it ain't fair, it's yummy!" she says like a six year old.

"Eat an apple instead." I smile wider.

She gags. "An apple?" she spits out. "Really? That fruit can't compare to Frosted Flakes!"

I laugh. "I gotta go, boo, but call me when you land, 'kay?"

"Okay, boo." She laughs. "Bye, bye."

Ah, I miss my hyperactive friend. I can't wait until she wreaks havoc on Dyersburg. It shall be a sight to see.

CHAPTER TWO

Right on time, the doorbell rang. I swear that girl thinks being late is a sin punishable by death or something. I don't know how many lectures I've gone through about that topic, and I don't wish to start counting; we could be here all night.

I run upstairs to make sure no one else gets it. As I round the corner, I see Drew lounging on the couch. I don't think the cable company had anything better to do today, so we got cable hours after we arrived. Not that I'm complaining, I love me some *NCIS* at midnight.

I see Jim going for the door and speed up, bypassing a very confused looking Dad and skidding to a spot at the door. I throw it open and immediately I'm pulled into a hug.

"Em!" my bestie squeals.

"Jess!" I squeal back good-naturedly.

I glance over her shoulder and take in the rental car she got, nearly laughing out loud when I see the branding on the front.

"You got a Ferrari for Hillbilly Land?"

She pulls back and shrugs. "It was that or a Calli, and I wasn't in the mood for a Cadillac."

I laugh, "Only you would pick the Ferrari, boo."

"Are we still on that?" she asks, frowning slightly.

I smile innocently, "Hey now, you're the one who started it."

She sticks out her tongue and hands me some of her Louis Vuitton luggage.

I raise an eyebrow, "Were you already packed?"

She mimics my expression, "Why would you think that?"

"You actually got here before midnight."

She scoffs, "I just didn't want to miss *NCIS*."

I nod, "That's understandable."

We walk through the living room, completely ignoring Dad and Jim and their curious looks, up until Drew decided to turn away from the T.V and actually look at his surroundings.

"And who's this?" he asks, a smirk playing across his lips.

A huge frown flickered onto Jess' face. "A girl who loves her boyfriend very much."

I had to hold back a smile at that; she hasn't had a boyfriend since that scumbag Josh broke her heart, and I remember the morning after well-- when I woke up, I found myself swimming in Hershey chocolate bar wrappers. I didn't complain until I found myself practically strapped to the toilet.

"I think we can change that." Well, there goes the perfect southern guy I was hoping for.

We both scoff and say, "In your dreams, pretty boy." then we march downstairs.

If you're wondering, yes, that was a very thought out process. After the fifth boy that attempted to hit on us when we were deemed "dating ready" by our very reluctant fathers and very excited mothers, we came up with a way to diss the scums and practiced quite a lot. I guess that means Drew was considered "scum". Well, as he said, I think we can

change that.

To say Danny's Diner is interesting was like saying Jess liked to shop-- it was a huge understatement.

I can't actually think of the right words to describe such a place. I think it was meant to be a town hall of fame, or something along those lines.

One wall was covered in high school football memorabilia and another was covered in hunting rifles. An odd match, you say? Well, the other two walls were covered in a mixture of hockey and golf trophies. Now you see why I said "interesting" was an understatement.

At least the walls were painted differently and had the correct colors and decor to go with the things on them. Like the football lantern hanging above a table and the hockey stick chairs. I suspect an interior decorator was put to it.

Of course, that was only the first thing I noticed when I walked into the place. The second of course being the group of hot guys in a corner booth. By the look Jess got on her face, I can tell that's what she noticed first, and by the look of disgust that crossed her face, she noticed the decor second.

Drew immediately pushed through our small crowd and made his way over to them. Then I noticed their varsity jackets. Ah, they were jocks. That explains a lot, actually.

Jess and I exchanged an evil smile; we knew how to deal with jocks.

CHAPTER THREE

We ended up sitting right next to the jocks, per request of me and Jess. Dad gave us a frightened look before sitting down and vaguely warned Jim which I know was because of last time we saw some jocks. I've never seen them again.

We definitely got the attention of the table over.

All part of the plan, I thought.

"Oh, hi Coach!"

Coach? My mind ran through all sorts of possible candidates, which didn't take long considering there were only two possibilities sitting nearby.

I bet Jim is the Coach. Well, I guess that makes sense.

"Hi boys," Aha! My suspicions were confirmed.

"So, what are you ladies doing here?"

Ha, seems as though they just noticed us.

But, we completely ignored them.

One thing I think just about everyone has noticed is that jocks hate to be ignored. In fact, some may loathe the feeling, which is exactly why we're doing it.

"Are they deaf?" I heard someone whisper, and I smirked, glancing at Jess, who I noticed was smirking too.

I pretended to sign, but it looked like I was flapping my arms all around. Jess nodded

enthusiastically and made flapping motions with her hands.

"Nah," someone whispered back. "They're retarded."

I raised my eyebrow at Jess, who nodded back. I glanced at Jim and Dad, who were looking at both of us in a "are you alright in the head?" way. I just smiled widely at them and me and Jess crouched down in the seat so no one could see us.

Jess counted down with her hands from three to one as we laughed silently. When all her fingers were in a fist, we popped up, earning a couple yelps from unsuspecting guys sitting right in front of where our heads popped up and weird looks from the ones on the wall seat.

"We are *not* deaf *or* retarded, you tools." I whisper-yelled, not wanting to risk gaining the attention of anyone else around us.

One of the jocks right in front of us tipped a non-existent hat and in a British accent, apologised. "My apologies, m'ladies." I guess I brought this on with my British insult.

I smiled; maybe jocks don't have to be egotistical jerks. "You are forgiven." then I glared at the rest of them, even Drew, "You, on the other hand, are not."

Drew smiled. "Aw, come on Em. You know you like me."

I gave him a flat look, even though I totally did. "Yeah, you keep thinking that, Jerky

McJerkface."

The fake British guy snorted. "Ah, Governor, I believe you've been burned."

I smiled at him again. "You're growing on me." I put my hand off of the seat by my thigh and stuck it out. "I'm Emalie Jacobson, but you can call me Em."

He took my hand and brought it to his lips, kissing it like a true English guy. "Logan Stevens. Nice to meet ya, Em."

Jess brought her hand out as well. "Jessica Smith, Jess to my friends."

Logan kissed her hand too. "Nice to meet you, Jess."

She grinned at the nickname. "You too, Loge."

I looked at her. "Totally stealing the nickname, Jess."

She looked appalled. "You wouldn't dare." She put a hand to her heart dramatically.

I smirked. "Oh, I would."

"Are ya'll fighting over lil ol' me?" Logan asked.

We both turned to him. "Nope, Loge." I said, popping the 'p' and smirking as the nickname

left my mouth.

Jess opened her mouth to speak, but was cut off by a super-chipper voice that quite frankly hurt my ears. "Hi, ya'll! I'm Sandy and I'll be serving you today. Are ya'll read to order?"

I turned my head to glare at the waitress, who looked like a prep. Aw great. A prep. I hate them with a burning passion.

I don't think the jocks, excluding Logan, liked our ignoring game, so I think they'll try to get our attention later. But right now, I'm ordering my deliciously nutritious meal.

"Hi, I'll take a bacon cheeseburger and a medium lemonade, please." Ah, bacon: the world's most delicious substance. You know, I bet I could live off of bacon. I'd weigh like four hundred pounds, but it could happen.

Everyone else ordered and, thank the lord, Sandy left without any complications.

"I don't like her." Jess announced. My Jess, always the optimist.

I laughed at her bluntness. "I don't like the prep either, but maybe she's a nice person."

"Yeah, no. You're just too nice for your own good."

I gave her a blank look. "Since when am I "too good for my own good"?"

She mimicked my expression. "Have you noticed that you always say "please", even to the

prep? Or that you must ask your Dad before you do *anything*?"

I scoffed at her, but couldn't come up with anything to say back. I actually did do all that stuff.

Maybe I was too good for my own good?

I heard the jocks, Jim and Dad start up a conversation about, you guessed it, football. Turns out, Dad was the quarterback on his high school team. I guess you learn something new everyday.

CHAPTER FOUR

By the time we were done eating, the sun had gone down and I was ready to go die peacefully in a hole. Hearing *everyone*, even Jess, talk about Tebow, Manning and Big Ben for hours can really do your head in.

Not that I have anything against football; I actually enjoy watching Steeler games and the Super-Bowl, but talking about all the moves, other than the awesome, flipping in the air ones, is really boring. Especially when you're talking about all *your* signature moves.

Jess had to go home in the morning, and it seemed that Drew's new hang-out was my house. When he brought the whole team over to talk to Dad more about all his signature plays and pointers, I ran for cover in my sanctuary, hereby known as the basement.

I cleaned all the cobwebs (after multiple squeals of disgust) and managed to Swiffer the hard wood floors so they didn't look so dull. I also unpacked all the boxes, which still seemed endless even after they were all gone, and put my bed up all by myself. I was proud of the bed.

The walls were an off-white color, so I covered them in posters of my old track team while everyone was running. All the photos I took turned out good after I converted them into posters with the help of the all-mighty Walmart, but you could tell they weren't taken by a professional. Not that it mattered when you saw all the pictures of hurdles and all the frustrated faces of the team when they were trying to beat everyone else. Those had to be

my favorites.

Track had been my sport since middle school, when I gave up soccer and put together a small team of friends together so we could run around the city. When we got into the high school track team, we grew inseparable until Mom went into a coma. That's when I stopped running all together and spent countless days and night by her bedside, talking to her unconscious form.

I decided to get back into it once we moved, so I donned on my Nikes, blue tank top and black running shorts.

I went upstairs, stretching all the way to the top and made my way into the living room, where the football team and Dad were pigging out on pizza. I really hope they wouldn't become best friends with one another; that would suck for me.

"Daddy," I said, grabbing his attention and everyone else's. "I'm going running. I'll be back in a couple hours."

He smiled at me. "Trying to beat your record?" he asked.

I couldn't help but smile back as I pulled my hair into a ponytail. "Before the day's over, I'll have ran faster than Lolo."

He laughed, picking up another piece of pizza. "Make sure to bring your phone."

"Six years of soccer has to be useful for something, Dad."

He nodded solemnly. "Jess's ex didn't know what was coming."

My eyes widened. "How'd you know about that?" I exclaimed.

He smirked, which is something I really didn't like seeing. "I've been watching you." And that's the reason why.

I glowered at him. He glowered back, then we broke into smiles. I couldn't stay mad at him for long and it was the same way around with him. "At least the ball made it into the net." All the football players choked on their pizza and I smirked at them. "So don't try anything."

Logan laughed. "Wouldn't even think about, Em."

I laughed at the expressions on everyone's faces, for once not being able to completely ignore them. "See you guys later." I said, running out the door and shutting it firmly behind me.

While I was running, I couldn't help but think that all those egotistical, arrogant football players (excluding Logan, of course) might be making Dad happy. And if that was the case, then I know I'd happily put up with all the football talk. After Mom died, he closed himself off from hard emotions like happiness and opted for silence instead. Now, seeing him smiling and joking around with the jocks, I may have to start listening to all the plays and start partaking in all the stuff I usually would never do. Like going to games and wearing jerseys.

I never knew how much I missed all the things he used to do to embarrass me in front of friends and crushes until he didn't do it anymore and now I'd do anything for him to start

doing all those things I used to find annoying again.

I don't think I managed to out-run Lolo Jones, but I think I did pretty good for not running for months. I was sticky and icky by the time I opened the door to find every one of the jocks asleep on the floor, Dad on the couch, and *Scream* playing on the TV. I shivered as I watched five seconds of the horror movie that I swore never to watch before I managed to find the remote on the automon and flip the TV off.

I pulled the blanket that was draped across the couch down to cover Dad and kissed his forehead before moving downstairs to deal with all the school supplies littering my bed. I stuffed all the necessary things for tomorrow in my zebra backpack before collapsing onto the bed and falling fast asleep.

CHAPTER FIVE

I've never really one to be asked about school-related advice. I grew up with the same people, had the same enemies, but right about now I was wishing I had some friendly advice for myself.

This morning, I woke up to the sound of feet clambering above me. Let me tell you that fifteen guys running around the house is a wee bit loud. So, I wasn't in the best of mood either.

Then I noticed Logan waiting by the entrance and sighed in relief. When he saw me waving my way through the crowd of everyone who was looking at me like I was a new species, he smiled and I couldn't help but smile back at him.

He placed a hand on my back and let me through the door and into room marked "Office" in clear, blue and white lettering. I guess that answers my question about the school colors. A cheerfully dressed lady sitting at the desk in front of us greeted us. "Hello Logan! What can I do for you?" Okay, so she greeted *Logan*.

He smiled kindly at the woman and gestured towards me. "My new buddy here is new and needs her schedule."

That's when she decided to notice me. "Hello, dear! What's your name?"

"Emalie Jakobson." I replied back.

She handed me my schedule, which she wrote and highlighted my locker number on and we turned to walk out the door before something caught my attention.

Next to the door were about twenty collages with graduation dates underneath them. That's not what caught my attention though; it was my blue eyes on the last collage.

The caption above two of the collages' graduation dates were two names, "Kayla Newmon" and "Leslie White". More specifically, my mother and grandmother's names.

Everyone in everyone of the collages were dressed in some sort of sport uniform. Even guys were in football uniforms and track suits with their teams.

"What's this for?" I asked, pointing to the two collages of my family.

"That's our school's longest running legacy." Logan replied.

I turned to look at him with wide eyes. I was part of a legacy? How could I live up to that? Oh. My. Gosh. I think I may start hyperventilating.

"A legacy?" I squeaked, not being able to find enough oxygen in the air.

He noticed my trouble breathing and grabbed my shoulder, bending over slightly to meet my eyes. "Breath, Em, breath."

I took a deep breath and nodded, this time not having much of a problem.

"Are you okay, Em?" he asked, concern lacing in his tone.

"That's my family." I whispered, fearing someone would over-hear me.

His eyes widened. "*You're* part of the legacy? Are you sure?"

I narrowed my eyes, slightly peeved at his tone. "Yeah, I am part of this stupid legacy. You got a problem with that?"

He shook his head, an easy smile appearing across his face. "That's great, Em! We've been hoping you'd come back."

My eyes widened with realization that I'd inevitably become the "it" girl or something. "You can't tell anyone!" I managed to whisper-yell.

Confusion crossed across his features. "Why?"

I took a deep, calming breath before continuing. "I don't think I'll be able to live up to everyone's expectations." I began, "In a couple weeks, I may be okay with all of this, but until then can this please be our secret?"

He seemed to be thinking this over, which scared me more than anything else at this moment. What if he'd turn on me and tell the tea- no. He wouldn't do that, I reasoned with myself.

He nodded slowly, a grin spreading across his face once again. "I've heard a secret is the

best way to start a successful friendship."

I laughed at that, pushing all the legacy talk to the back of my mind to deal with later. "Who told you that?"

He smirked. "A wise man."

I smirked too. "Would this wise man be George Washington?"

He gave me a blank look. "What?"

I traded my smirk for a smile. "Just wondering." I said in a sing-song voice, grabbing his wrist and skipping down the hall in a random direction, knowing he'd stop me before I went into the wrong classroom. Hopefully.

I smiled as I walked through the door to English class with Logan behind me. Sure, I was nervous, but I hoped if I pretended I wasn't that I would magically not feel the churning in my stomach, willing me to just go hide in the Girl's Bathroom until the day was over.

The teacher, who I knew was Mr. Green from my schedule, was leaning against his desk, his eyes looking at a note in his hands.

He looked up when he heard Logan close the door behind us and I tried to focus on Mr. Green instead of the dozens of eyes on me, willing me to stutter or mess up.

"Why hello!" Mr. Green exclaimed, standing up straight. "You must be the new student I've been reading about."

I guess that explains what he was reading.

I laughed lightly. "I guess so."

He looked over at Logan. "You can take a seat, Mr. Stevens."

He nodded and I realized that he was only respectful with adults. Although, I'm sure he could be respectful if he needed to. He walked over to the empty table in the corner of the room and sat down.

"Would you like to introduce yourself to the class?" Mr. Green asked.

I always wonder why teachers ask this question, since who *really* wants to introduce themselves to a classroom of teenagers who want you to screw up just so they can gossip about anything other than the latest football game and who missed the pass. Although, I've heard it was one of the guys that gave me weird looks from popping up in the seat, so maybe it's not so bad if they gossip about him.

"Sure," I answer, since I know that's what he evidently wants to hear.

He gestures for me to go ahead, and I do. "Hi, I'm Emalie, but my friends call me Em. I just moved here from and I love to run."

I look over to Mr. Green and he nods in approval.

I make my way down the aisle way and sit next to Logan. "Just so you know," he whispered.

"Mr. Green in the school's worst teacher."

I smiled at him. "Good thing English is my best class."

By the time I walked out of the class, Math just became the best class in the world. Mr. Green seems so suffocate with sweetness. It could be transferred into a form of torture, I swear to God.

Logan walked me to Math and I thanked him before he walked off to his next class.

Mrs. Metric and I repeated the whole introduction thing and I ended up sitting next to a girl who was evidently mute.

Just my luck, I thought before I could stop myself.

Then I felt guilt, so I wrote down *What's your name?* and passed it discretely to her as I completely ignored the lesson on Pi.

She smiled at me and replied. *Melissa. Want to sit with me at lunch?*

I think I'm sitting with the jocks. Although, not by choice. Haha. You can sit with me...I let

the question trail off.

She looked shocked as she read it over and quickly scribbled down an answer. *The jocks?! Of course I'll sit with you! I'm not dumb, just mute!*

I snorted to control my laughter and nodded. *Sounds good; meet you at the door?*

She nodded back and I decided to actually pay attention to whatever tonight's homework would be.

CHAPTER SIX

You know how in movies when the new girl walks into the cafeteria and everyone stops to stare? Yeah, well I always thought that was a teeny bit dramatic, but when you want in front of a mute girl and a football star, I guess all the drama goes sky high and the word "dramatization" has absolutely no meaning.

"You go first," I whisper to Logan, who flashes me a grin and bypasses me in order to get into the lunch line, which has considerably less students than my school in Cinci. Although, I guess when there's half the student body of your old school, that's fairly acceptable.

I feel self-conscious in my slightly rocker chick outfit of a jean jacket, white tank and jean capris, but I know that's not why they're staring; it's the fact that I'm new, and that implies "new meat".

I grab a salad since I'm working on my running diet, and a bottle of water. And since I want to, I grab a fudge brownie. Hey, I said "working" on it, not actually doing it.

Melissa, Logan and I linked our arms to ward off all the evil spirits who were- okay, so maybe dramatization does have a definition after all.

We arrived at the jock's table and Melissa turned red when Drew looked up. Ugh, the neverending effects of popularity. I was popular back in Cinci; I like to think it was because of my outstanding personality, but it was probably the fact that I was track captain two years running. Plus, I was nice to everyone and didn't act like a god.

I plopped down beside a very crimson Melissa, who was now in between Logan and I and smiled brightly at the astonished faces around us. My guess is that they're thinking something along the lines of *Did they seriously just sit down at our table?* But, that's just my guess.

"You guys coming over tonight?" I ask. "I think Dad's going over the Homecoming game highlights." At least, that's what I heard Dad say over breakfast, not that I really payed that much attention. I need to work on the whole "paying attention" thing.

Drew smiled and I resisted the urge to blush.

Before we go on, I believe some tips are in order. These tips are the "how to not make a complete fool of yourself in front of your crush" type.

1) If he smiles, winks or even blinks in your direction, for the love of God, don't blush!

"We'll be there. Will you be there?" he asks.

2) If he shows a sudden interest in you, don't react with a blush, stutter or even *look* affected.

I smiled once again. "I live there, don't I?"

A couple jokes laughed at my expense and Logan reached over Melissa to punch me on the shoulder playfully. Or it would have been playfully had he not been a two-hundred and fifty pound high school linebacker.

I nearly fell off of the bench, but I managed to grab onto Logan's retreating arm before I did.

"Ow," I so bluntly said.

He looked at me sheepishly, "Sorry, Em."

I motion for Melissa to trade me seats and Logan just looks scared.

"Uh, what are you up to?" he asks and I smirk, causing him to pale. Even though we haven't been friends for long, he understands how my slightly sadistic mind works.

Melissa and I trade seats and I continue on with lunch, Logan watching me hesitantly the entire time I'm chatting and eating with the football team. Just before the bell rings, and when Logan looks away, I bring my foot back, prepare for the inevitable pain, and kick his shin as hard as I can.

"Ow!" he yelped as motion in the cafeteria stops. Great, now they're all staring directly at me. I don't think I need the whole legacy thing to attract attention. "How in God's holy name did you kick me that hard?" he exclaims, rubbing his shin tenderly.

I hold up and flick a finger up. "A couple years in soccer," another finger, "and two years as track captain."

"What's being track captain have to do with anything?" one comments. I'm not even going to try to remember names; I'll sprain my brain, and that's a pretty vital muscle if you didn't

know.

I thought about how to explain this in football terms, aka terms the jocks would understand, and begun. "Being track captain is a lot like Drew and being a quarterback. You're expected a lot more of," I turn to face the all-star quarterback in question. "Right?" he nods and I move on. "You need higher grades, more conditioning time and you're also in charge of making sure no one gets into stupid stuff like drinking or 'roids." I pause before continuing. "I know it sucks, but people usually look at the leader before the team.

"Leaders suck it up and pretend everything's okay. Take my sophomore year for example; I got my team to state, but that was the most stressful year of my life. I know it may not matter in terms of how I can kick hard," I laugh lightly at the way my speech is completely irrelevant to what I started off with, "but it is relevant to the amount of endurance, mental and physical, that goes into being captain of something you love. As soon as you see the faces of your peers and their self-satisfaction, as well as the looks of pride on your coach and parent's faces when they look at you, you know everything's worth it; all those nights fretting over if you'd be fast enough, all the times you doubted your leadership abilities is worth it."

Now everyone's clapping. I didn't notice everyone was still looking at me while I was pouring everything out. A man comes up to me dressed in a coach's uniform and I pale. Coach uniform? Crap. Did I attract the attention of a coach?

Yeah, you'd think I wanted to attract the attention of a coach when I was giving a *speech*

about being track captain, but I also included some stuff you don't exactly want your coach to hear. Like the whole "doubting your leadership skills" bit.

"I'm Coach Dublin," Well, that explains the red hair. "and I'm this year's track coach," I think I went for an even more vampire like skin-tone. "It turns out last year's captain moved over summer and we're looking for a new captain." Huh? Was I being offered a position on track when I haven't been here a whole *day*? And wait. I was still in front of the whole cafeteria. "Will you be this year's track captain?" I guess that answers *that* question.

I opened my mouth to answer "Yes!" but stopped, closed my mouth and asked, "Can I ask *why*?"

He smiled, "Cautious; another leadership quality I look for." then his face turned serious. "You may doubt your leadership skills at some point," Oh, so he did hear that. "but that's normal, and being able to admit how you felt, inspire a whole cafeteria," he gestured around my silent pupils for effect as one became un-silent and *woot*-ed. "and still love what you do is something that is rare. You have everything this school needs in a captain. Also, you already brought a team to state, and we need state. So are you willing to be captain?"

I nodded quickly, afraid he'd change his mind. "Thank you, Coach."

He turned to the near-full cafeteria. "Give it up for this year's track captain, Emalie Jacobson!"

There was a roar and I couldn't help but smile.

When everyone calmed down, it was time to go to class. "How does she draw that much attention?" a jock asked Drew.

"Maybe it's hereditary," he replied, sharing a meaningful look with me.

I suck in a shaky breath and stare, wide eyed at Drew; he knows.

CHAPTER SEVEN

I've been thinking about it all day. "*Maybe it's hereditary.*" It's like my thoughts are on repeat.

And it's really annoying.

I tried very hard to concentrate on class, but it seemed like everything was going in one ear and out the other. At least I wrote notes down so I wouldn't be *completely* in the dark while I do tonight's homework.

Speaking of tonight, I was going to make sure to talk to Drew. Maybe then my repeat button would cease to exist. I worked out a plan to get him alone, since, with the exception of Logan, I didn't want anyone else to find out. I may seem like an invincible girl to the school's pupils, but I really didn't want to have to live up to everyone's expectations.

If they knew I was part of *the* legacy, they'd pick up on everything I did and dissect every syllable that comes out of my mouth so it meant something I didn't intend it to mean.

I know I may be taking my paranoia to the level it shouldn't be and I'm probably procrastinating or over-analysing the situation, but I'm not the invincible girl everyone thinks I am. And even though I admitted that in my mini-speech in the cafeteria, I don't think they'd believe me if they found out about this stupid legacy.

Yup, I think I am the perfect stereotype of a girl with no self confidence.

I groan softly when Coach Jim, aka my gym teacher, football coach and mother's best friend, tells me we'll be playing dodgeball. Now I'll be forced to find out if anyone hates my guts, which I'm sure there's a club for by now. There has to be at least one. Plus, I really hope it's no one on my team. I don't want to be in charge of people who hate me; that's just really unappealing.

Jim divides us up into teams to avoid favoritism and I'm nearly jumping with joy that I'm paired up with Logan and Melissa.

I notice Jim giving me a meaningful look and I realize with a start that he purposely did that. I smile at him in thanks and the corner of his lips lift up in a smile back.

"How'd you get him to do that?" a girl on my team, known as "Kick-Butt People" (I played no part in that immature --yet awesome-- name; it was Logan's doing, not mine.) asks.

I look at her. "Do what?" You can hear the completely obvious confusion laced into my tone, but I really don't care.

"Get Jim to smile, even if it was a poor excuse for one. He hasn't smiled much since his wife died. It was hard on him."

I was shocked. Jim seemed so full of life when he was around me. Maybe it's like Dad and how he's happy around the jocks. Maybe he's happy around people who knew my mother...or maybe it's me. I chill my thoughts; I can't believe I thought something like that.

Why would he smile because of me? Of course, he did *just* smile at me. Maybe that's proof.

Great, now my head hurts. After Math today, I really shouldn't be doing any hard thinking (Other than about the legacy, which I'm starting to notice is the one exception to that rule.)

I realize that I'm keeping the poor girl waiting while I've been thinking about how I shouldn't think (My head now hurts more. *Awesome.*).

"My parents and him are close," is the vague answer I give. I know if I give her anything more than that, than she might piece together the equation I was hoping no one would--
legacy + me = truth.

Turns out, there is a club planning my untimely demise. They consist of five cheerleader and I seriously wouldn't put it past them to to make a tee-shirt.

Later that night, after I've ordered pizza and am anxiously awaiting it's arrival, I'm sitting on the couch, eating popcorn while I'm trying really hard not to scream at the TV while *Jaws* is playing. God, I'm never going to the beach again.

Finally, I do scream and end up cowering into Dad and everyone starts laughing like it's the funniest thing in the world. Even Dad is laughing. Traitor!

"It's not funny!" I yell, peeved. "Have you ever been to the beach? Have you read the statistics?" I don't give them any time to answer and continue on. "I thought not, you thug wannabes!"

Everyone stops laughing at the insult and turns to glare at me. I give out a high *eep!* noise and press myself even further into Dad's side. He laughs at my antics and puts an arm around me.

"Alright," he laughs. "That's enough ridiculing for one night."

Erg. He manages to stop the "ridiculing" and still make me peeved *at the same time*. It must be a gift that I don't have.

The doorbell rings everyone makes a mad break for it. Thankfully Drew happened to be sitting next to Logan, who was sitting next to Dad and me, so I just grabbed his jersey and kept it bunched in my hands until everyone leaves.

I turn to him quickly, knowing we don't have much time until everyone stampedes back into the living room.

"You can't tell anyone." I said fiercely.

He smirks at me, "I can't tell anyone what?"

I *really* want him to feel pain. "You know what I'm talking about, you big oaf!"

His smirk falters a bit, but he manages to make it look like he's trying to convert it into a

smile.

"On one condition."

Yup, the pain needs to come.

I sigh, "What would that be?"

His smile is still there.

"I want you to make my guys faster."

I sit there in silence for a couple seconds, thinking about this. "You want me to train your guys in speed?" I ask.

He nods as everyone comes barreling in. I grab a slice of pizza just before it's gone and sit back.

I turn to Drew and nod, knowing I've made a deal with the devil, who also doubles as my secret crush.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Logan is a genius.

He proved this when he came up with what he called "The Epic Prank of Awesome". I don't know *how* he comes up with these things. Note the sarcasm.

I'm not quite sure what this "Epic Prank of Awesomeness" entails, but Logan gave me a list of things to bring to Jim's office by the end of school. As soon as I read the list, I feared for the revenge I was inevitably going to get after this.

45 Labels

Blue Sharpie

Silver Sharpie

White Flag

Yes, I fear for my mental and psychological well-being.

"So, what exactly are you going to do?" I asked warily as I placed the bags from Walmart on Jim's desk. Apparently, Jim wanted to help. Yeah, he has a spot in my heart for wanting to do this.

Logan spun the chair around so I could see him and I burst out laughing at the sight before me.

He was wearing a white lab coat, probably stolen from the science classroom, and was holding a stuffed cat, petting it slowly while he laughed like the evil mastermind he looked like.

I was holding my sides, tears streaming down my cheeks as he stopped doing his evil mastermind laugh and started laughing for real.

My knees buckled and I fell to the ground clutching my stomach. I now understood the meaning of "rolling on the floor laughing".

"What are you wearing?" I asked once I was able to talk without dissolving into a fit of laughter.

He stood up straight and resumed petting the stuffed animal once he wiped the tears from his eyes. "I am Count Wunder Strudel." he said in a German accent.

I looked at him skeptically. "*Wunder Strudel?*"

He nodded stiffly, "Yes, Wunder Strudel. Is there a problem with my family's name?"

I crossed my arms over my chest and glared at him. "Yes. Yes, there is a *problem*." I said, emphasising the word problem.

His eyebrows knitted. "Huh?" he asked, dropping the act.

"My evil mastermind name is like a gazillion times awesomer than yours." I state, getting rid of any grammar rules I've ever learned.

Now he looked skeptical. "And what would that be?"

"Madame Malum." I stated matter-of-factly.

He scratches the back of his head, obviously trying to find out what that translates too.

"Don't you take Spanish?" I asked, incredulous that he couldn't translate such a simple word.

He nodded and I laughed. The words were almost identical.

"*Malo...*" I trailed off.

His eyes brightened. "It means bread!"

What? How did he get *pan* and *malo* messed up? They sounded nothing alike.

"*Malo* means bad or evil in Spanish. And *malum* is the same, only in Latin." I chuckled softly as his mouth turned into a small 'O'.

He straightened up, "I knew that." He scoffed. "I was just testing you."

I gasped. "That's my line!"

We dissolved into laughter once again and after we were able to stop, my thoughts came back to me.

"What are you gonna do?" I asked, gesturing towards the bags still on the table for the second time.

He grinned. "Various things," he stated vaguely.

I chuckled. "Way to be vague, Loge."

His grin widened. "Ready to see what I'm going to do with them?" He started petting his cat again.

I snorted when he turned the chair back again so he was facing the wall. "Sure."

Logan gave me specific instructions and I became intrigued with what exactly his plan could be. His specific words were "*Stand by the Locker Room door and get ready, then put it into my locker.*" He gave me the combination to his locker, but his words also scared the crap out of me. Get ready for what? Put *what* in his locker?

Then my thoughts were answered as Logan ran out of the bathroom with one of the generic

Walmart bags. He threw it into my hands and ran back in.

Now one question bugged me, *What was in this bag?*

I remembered his earlier words and took off in the direction of Logan's locker.

When I reached it my hands moved on their own accord in record speed, practically flying over the lock and turning the knob all which ways until the lock popped and I stuffed the bag into the locker. Then I clicked the lock into place and high tailed it out of there.

It wasn't until the end of school that I found Logan's handy-work.

Melissa ran up to me, coming out of Mr. Wicks classroom, who is the Drama teacher, and yanked me out the front door. Then I noticed the line of boxers going down the flagpole.

I dropped to my knees, laughing the whole way. "Oh...my...haha!" I couldn't even say what I wanted to, 'cause then I realized what the white flag was for. It was a list for who's boxers were whose. Number one, of course, was Drew's.

More people streamed through the door then, including the enraged football team and a hysterical hyena named Logan. I was pointing and laughing so hard I didn't notice Drew come up and grab my arm.

Only when he pushed me up against the wall on the opposite side of the school did my

laughter subside.

"Hello, how are you doing?" I smirked, but my smirk dropped from my face when his hands rested on my waist and I realized the position we were in.

"You're going to pay for that." he whispered in my ear.

I got my wits back as he moved his head back to look into my eyes. "I don't think I will be." I against his own ear.

I pulled back and was able to wiggle free of his grip.

I grinning as I walked away, leaving Drew to contemplate his vendetta.

CHAPTER NINE

I walked up to the football field with my gym bag in hand and a water bottle in the other. I wasn't sure how my teammates would react to me being their captain, since I'm nearly positive someone else wanted the position, but hopefully they showed mercy.

I walked to the middle of the field where I noticed everyone seemed to be and placed my things on the ground, rising to meet my teammates. I stuck out my hand.

"I'm Emaile, but you can call me Em."

The girl next to me grasped my hand, "I'm Valerie, nice to meet you." she said cheerfully.

We both retracted our arms and everyone went on to introduce themselves.

Nina was a tall, Hispanic girl with spunk.

Joe was a tan, lanky freshman who seemed nice enough.

Sarah was the shy, withdrawn one.

Ruby was a pale and short sophomore who was always cheerful.

Dawn was a bubbly bottle of ringing ears.

Jay was the type that seemed like he should be a jock.

The last one to introduce themselves was a blonde haired, blue eyed girl that seemed like she should be a cheerleader instead.

"I'm Christina. Just leave me alone, don't talk to me and we'll be *fine*." Her voice seemed too high-pitch for a human being's vocal cords. I'm guessing she was the one girl who was going to get the captain position had I not given my little speech.

Coach Dublin walked up behind me and smiled at everyone. "Hello guys! It's good to see some old faces this year. Are you ready to start?"

As I jogged home, my legs were begging for a rest, but I continued on. The feeling of tired legs was familiar to me, and I was happy to welcome the feeling back into my life. I guess you could say I missed it. It was the feeling of a good workout. And it also meant I would sleep like a log, which was also a good thing.

As soon as I walked through the door, I collapsed on the couch, not caring that I sat on any jocks or punched someone in the face. My legs *hurt*.

"Well hello there," Logan muttered through my hair.

"I am not moving." I grumbled.

He laughed, "I wasn't asking you to. I was simply greeting you."

"Then hello to you too." I say as I move my head to the side and rest it on his shoulder. "So. Tired." I mumble, closing my eyes.

"So," Logan says cheerfully. "When are we going to go for the speed?"

I want to glare at him, but I can't bring myself to open my eyes.

My vocal cords couldn't do anything higher right now, so I whispered quietly.

"Tomorrow,"

When I woke up, I was in my bed, curled under the comforters into a ball like usual. I seem to think this is a strange way to sleep, but honestly, it's really comfortable.

I wasn't sure who put me in my bed, nor when but all I knew is that I was hungry.

I walked upstairs to the kitchen, hoping Dad made his way to the store and didn't watch *NCIS* all day. Yes, we share the same favorite TV show. It's our "father-daughter bonding" time, not like we need it anymore with him and I being the only people in the family now.

I opened the cabinet and grabbed the first thing I found, which is inevitably the unhealthiest, the *Quaker* Chocolate covered granola bars. I think this classifies as a midnight snack. At

least, that shall be my answer if Dad catches me.

"Emalie?"

I just jinxed myself, didn't I?

I sighed, hiding the evidence behind my back as I turned around to face Dad, who was rubbing his eyes sleepily. "You can go back to bed, Dad. I'm fine."

He ignored my suggestion to leave. "What are you doing down here?" he asked me, moving forwards.

"I was hungry," I mumbled.

He smiled at me, the sleep still noticeable on his face. "You found the chocolate granola bars?"

I laughed lightly. "Yeah, I guess I did."

He held out his hand and I stared at it, really not wanting to give up the chocolatey goodness. He laughed at my expression. "Hand me one."

A sigh of relief left my lips, knowing I could still eat the delicious chocolate.

I took the box out from behind me and passed him one, tearing the wrapper on mine. I took a bite and sighed in content. Ah, I've missed chocolate. I haven't had it in...two days, give or

take. That's a lifetime in chocolate world, you know.

"Can you buy some Hershey's?" I asked hopefully, finishing my granola bar and missing the taste of chocolate.

He nodded. "Sure, but you have to make sure to clean the kitchen when you get home from school."

I scowled. I hate cleaning. But...there *was* chocolate involved. "Fine." I said crossing my arms. "But only for the chocolate."

He laughed. "I love you, Pumpkin."

I smiled at him and gave him a hug. "I love you too, Daddy."

I walked down to my room and plopped down on my bed, nearly falling asleep before I pulled the covers on. Then I noticed movement in the corner of my eye. I pulled myself up and screamed.

A spider, the child of Satan, was on my pillow.

I did the only thing a girl could do-- I yelled for my daddy.

"*Daddy!*" I shrieked. "Kill the spider!" Then I scampered off the bed and ran to my desk chair, putting my feet up as I stared in horror at the *thing* on my pillow.

Then I heard laughing. My initial thought was, "*What the heck?*" The laughing was followed

by footsteps coming down the stairs.

I turned my head to see Drew smirking like he was king of the entire universe and Logan barely containing his laughter. But right now, all I wanted was the devil child killed.

"Kill it!" I shrieked.

Drew was laughing the whole time he took my pillow off of the bed and smashed the spider, killing it for good.

"You *idiots!* Why in the *world* would you put Satan's child on my *pillow?!!*" and so began the yelling. I finally stopped when I noticed Drew put a hand up. "What?" I asked irritably.

"Revenge is sweet." was all he said before he and Logan left my room.

I grumbled, "Sadist."

CHAPTER TEN

I practically dragged myself outside at noon to begin what the jocks would come to know as Speed Practice, but I'm sure they'd come up with more, uh, creative names for it too.

I saw everyone in their football uniforms and snorted. Did they think those would *help*? It's just going to slow them down.

"What are you imbeciles wearing?" I asked as I approached them.

"Our uniforms, blind person." one of the imbeciles commented.

"That has to be the best comeback I've ever heard. Obviously, you are a genius and I shouldn't question you." I said, sarcasm laced into my tone.

He grinned. "Thank you. I like to think that my F's stand for fantastic."

Great, we have a idiot. I smiled and nodded, my smile too wide to be real.

After we ran a warm-up lap, I sat down my coffee mug on the porch and clapped my hands together enthusiastically. "Now the *real* fun begins."

"Oh. My. God." Logan moaned, dropping on the ground. "I will never trust your "fun time" ever again."

I smiled at his pain. "I thought that was fun. I don't know how you people are tired already."

The rest of the team dropped on the ground next to Logan.

"Sadist," Drew rasped.

I grinned. "Take's one to know one."

"You *still* mad at us for that?" Logan asked, since everyone else was pretty much crawling towards their water bottles.

I huffed. "You put Satan's child on my pillow, yes I am still mad."

Logan look curious now, and I could tell what he wanted to ask before the question came out of his mouth. "And what's up with this "Satan's child" stuff anyways?"

I took a dramatically deeper breath than needed. "Well," I began. "Spiders are *obviously* meant to scare the crap out of anyone in a million mile radius, and, quite frankly, Satan would too if he appeared out of the fiery pits. Hence the "Satan's child stuff". I shrugged, "Plus, it sounds cooler than "he who scares me"."

Logan and Drew both looked thoughtful. "Actually, "he who scares me" sounds way better." then Logan saw my face and, knowing I could cause him even more pain than he was currently in, he hastily added. "But that's just my opinion."

I nodded. "Well, keep your opinions to yourself, slave. I wouldn't want it to get you in trouble." I smiled at him, letting him know that it did in fact get him in trouble.

He sighed. "Great," he mumbled. "Punished by the Punisher."

I cocked an eyebrow in his direction, then considered. "Thanks," I said seriously.

He looked at me like I'd grown a third head, and even Drew, who was previously sitting quietly with his eyes closed, opened his eyes to give me a skeptical "are you sure you're not a loon?" look. "What?" Logan managed to sputter out.

"I said thanks." I replied. "I think I like that name; the Punisher."

He shook his head in disbelief. "Only you, Em. Only you."

I smiled again. "Now get going! March around the field and make sure to get your knees high up!" Truth be told, it wasn't a field we were on, it was my backyard, but a girl could imagine.

Drew opened his eyes once again when Logan grudgingly got up and went to march.

"What about me?"

I smiled at him widely. "I thought you wouldn't want your reputation to get in the way when you beg for forgiveness after completing various tasks."

He frowned. "You really are sadist, huh?"

I smirked. "Take's one to know one." I repeated, then got serious. "But seriously, I admire how you completed the punishment for backsassing along with your team. You actually seem like a pretty good leader." I sat down next to him and he managed to sit up.

He smiled slightly at me. "Thanks, Em. That's nice of you to say. And you seem like a pretty good leader as well. But you can be pretty harsh when you want to; like a Drill Sergeant."

I laughed. It was a relief to see the serious and sweet side of Drew and not the sarcastic, arrogant part. "You act like a Drill Sergeant sometimes too, Drew. Did you notice how you got on their hides before I did?"

He snorted. "I don't like backsassers. They know that too," He shrugged. "So I had to do something."

I nodded. "I'm the same way, as you could tell." I laughed, thinking back to my friends back in Cinci. "One time I didn't talk to my team-slash-friends for five days when they got snappy with me. The guilt trip I put them through made them buy me each a chocolate bar." I smiled. "They knew the way to my heart." I got sad thinking about them and decided to call them all later tonight. Maybe I could call Coach Josh and have him put it on speaker; I'm sure he wouldn't mind me disrupting practice. I did it all the time back in Cinci.

He bumped shoulders with me. "Hey," he said, interrupting my sad thoughts. "Don't look so down. I'm sure you can go visit, or they can come visit."

I smiled at him sadly. "It was so hard leaving them. You know, they threw me the biggest party I've ever been to. The whole school, including staff, was there. And it was in the school gym. I never knew how many appreciated me until we all the girls, and even some guys, had a cry fest with us." I shook my head. "God, the floor was so wet that we had a man-made slip-n'-slide too." I laughed. "That was fun."

Drew was looking at me intensely now. Did I say something wrong? I wondered. Then he broke into a smile. "You know, Em, you're a very complicated girl. First you're a fearless Drill Sergeant-slash-Sadist, then you're a sap and now you're all sad." He laughed. "All under five minutes. Is that a record?"

I put my hand on my chin and thought about the question seriously. "Maybe," I shrugged and laughed. "I've never timed my mood swings."

Drew nodded. "I don't think many people do."

We both laughed, then were interrupted by a grunt and a thud. I looked over and Logan was sprawled across the ground, clutching his shin.

Drew cursed, immediately jumping up and running over. I followed, of course, concerned and also a tad bit curious.

"What's wrong?" I asked, kneeling next to Drew and Logan.

Logan moaned as Drew poked his shin lightly. "He hit it pretty hard on something." He turned to look at one of his teammates. "Someone go get my Escalade." he threw the keys

at the one he was in-directly talking to and turned back around to look at me. "Call my Dad and let him know we're going to the hospital and tell him to meet us there." His attention was caught on Logan as he moaned in pain yet again. "And tell him it looks serious."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

If hospitals got rid of their smell and sterile white everything, I think they'd create a more welcoming feeling to the general public. But, it's not like I know anything.

"Any news?" I asked Drew, who came back after talking to the doctor with the clipboard.

"It seems like he just bruised it really bad, but they can't be sure 'til they get an X-Ray."

I nodded. "I figured. Has he broken anything before?"

He looked thoughtful. "Yeah, he broke his ankle a couple years back."

"Did he say he thought his leg was broken when you spoke to him?" I asked.

He shook his head. "Nah, but he said it hurt close to how his ankle was."

I laughed, relieved. "He knows best; it's probably just bruised up pretty badly."

He sat down in the chair next to me.

Everyone else on the team was in the cafeteria, getting dinner. Although I'm not sure what all is actually edible down there.

"How do you know all of this?" he asked.

I sobered almost immediately. I figured I might as well tell someone, and knowing his Dad was my Mom's best friend helped me. Plus, it really wasn't a secret, just something I didn't

want to shout from the rooftop. "My Mom." I answered. He looked confused, which I guess is normal since he knows that it was only me and my Dad. "She got into a car accident and was declared brain-dead. Dad couldn't say goodbye though, so we kept her on a respirator for six months until he finally decided to take her off." I took in a shaky breath. "During that time I learned a lot about the medical industry. More than I'd have liked to know at the time, but I learned it nonetheless."

He put an arm around my shoulder and my heart sped up. Just because I try not to notice it, I know my heart speeds up on a regular basis when Drew's around. The Power of the Crush, I guess.

"I'm sorry to hear that, Em. I can't believe you had to go through that."

I felt a tear in the corner of my eye from thinking about Mom and quickly wiped it away. "I guess people need to go through things to find their true self." I shrugged. "The bright side is that I know I want to become a doctor. You'd think after seeing all that I had that I'd want to stay far away from doctors, but the thing is that I saw so much good while I was with my mom. I saw little girls smiling when they saw their new baby brother, mothers laughing when they noticed their husband's cast was pink, parents so overjoyed their jaws hurt from smiling when their son or daughter came out of surgery. I saw heart transplant patients and people who had a kidney removed just so their friend could live." I smiled and turned around to look at Drew. "So much good. I knew what I wanted to do since then."

He looked surprised. "Wow. Like I said before, you are one complicated girl, Em."

I laughed and smiled. "That way no one really knows anything. It's all a part of a bigger plan."

The doctor came out from a room beside us and walked over to us. He smiled. "It's just bruising. He'll be able to play football in a couple weeks."

I smiled and nudged Drew, who looked beyond relieved. "See? I told you I knew a lot about the medical industry." I turned to the doctor, who was looking at me curiously. "Thank you, Doctor. We appreciate it."

He smiled, looking pleased to have been rewarded for his work. "You're welcome, miss. It's good to know young people are interested in the practice."

I laughed lightly and nodded. "I want to become a doctor. Maybe I'll be your co-worker some day."

He laughed too. "I'm looking forward to the day." He walked away and into the room again.

Drew looked at me again. "Well, we know your people skills are skyrocketing all of a sudden."

I looked at him weirdly. "All of a sudden? What?"

He laughed at my face. "I'm just kidding. Rephrase! Well, we know your people skills are at the same level as Doc Jones."

I snorted. "Doc Jones?" He nodded and I shook my head slowly. "Poor guy."

That's the time Logan decided to be wheeled out of the X-Ray room by Doctor Jones. Yes, I refuse to call him "Doc" since I don't think the poor guy deserves such a name.

"Hey, Loge." I said, waving like a crazy person.

He shot me a look. "Why must psychos be in the universe?"

I smiled widely. "We're everywhere."

He shivered. "Creepy."

I laughed. "So how are you doing, buddy?"

He was wheeled in front of me by Doctor Jones, who knew where he wanted to go and shrugged. "It's iffy right now, but after I get a couple doses of pain meds, I'm sure I'll be good."

I nodded. "I heard that sometimes the pain is so much that it doesn't register in the brain until after the trauma is over. Is that what happened?" Okay, now I was just curious. I've heard the saying "curiosity killed the cat" but I don't have the overwhelming urge to become a panther or house cat. And anyways, satisfaction brought him back.

He nodded. "Yeah, but only for about thirty seconds."

I narrowed my eyes, "Huh. Interesting." Then I un-narrowed my eyes, which were slits, and

smiled. "I'll have to write that in *Blau*."

His eyebrows furrowed, but Drew was the one to ask the question. "*Blau*? What's that?"

I laughed. "*Blau* is my Medical Observational Findings Notebook. But I call him *Blau*."

"Why don't you just call him M.O.F.N?"

I shot him a knowing look. "Now does that sound cool?"

He thought about it and shook his head sadly. "No, not really."

"What does *blau* mean anyways?" Drew asked.

I snorted. "*Blau* is a blue notebook, and *blau* is blue in German. Don't ask why I used German and not Spanish, since I have no clue myself. The Powers That Be wanted to name," I shot Logan a look. "My M.O.F.N *Blau*."

They both snorted. "The Powers That Be?"

I held my head up indigilantly. "Is there a problem with that?"

Logan got his pain meds and Drew drove us both home. The ride was uneventful, which I really didn't think could be possible with Logan and I in the same inclosed area, but he fell asleep, so my fun was cut short. I'm sure Drew was relieved though, I can tell when he whisper-yelled "Thank god he fell asleep!" I *must* be psychic.

At home, I went downstairs after grabbing one of those yummy granola bars that keep me at least relatively sane and called Coach Josh.

He answered on the third ring, just like I knew he would. "What?" he barked.

I *tsked* him. "Now, now, Joshie. That's not the way to greet your favorite girl, now is it?"

He laughed, his mood already brightening. "Hi, Em." At those words, I could hear shouting, screaming and the thumping of feet.

"Is it a bad time?" I asked with a silent snicker.

"No!" everyone but Coach Josh exclaimed immediately.

"Oh, well, if you're sure, I can go into details about everything that's happened here. But you know, I could just hang u-"

"Don't you dare, Emalie Marie!" Navis exclaimed. She was the type of girl to get into your face and not get out of it until she got what she wanted.

"That okay with you, Joshie?" I could hear snorting, which made me laugh. Only I could get away with calling him that.

"Yeah," he replied. "I guess for our favorite girl we can have a Gossip Day."

I smiled. It was good to talk to everyone again.

CHAPTER TWELVE

I figured that if I stayed around all the boys for any longer, I'd either catch the attention of the Powers That Be and they'd turn me into a guy, or I'd go even more wacko. So, I called Melissa. Let's just say I realized that talking over the phone with a mute isn't very...effective.

"Uh,...snap your fingers once if you can come. Twice if you can't." I told her, trying to come up with things to do in order to understand her answer.

Snap.

"Awesome!" I exclaimed. "I'll meet you there?"

Snap.

"Alright, see ya."

Click.

Well, that was an interesting phone call.

I quickly got ready in a pair of skinny jeans and a pink tank. I wasn't sure how long we'd be out, but I figured I could bare some heels for the occasion. I picked out a pair of nude pumps and did my makeup, then I was on my way.

The mall wasn't as crowded as I thought it would be on a Friday evening. In fact, it was

almost deserted.

"Why is no one here?" I wondered out loud. A piece of paper was thrust into my face and I squealed.

Drew is having a party. It read.

I sighed. "Well, at least we have the place to ourselves."

She smiled and pointed to the store closest to us. *Build-A-Bear Workshop.*

I laughed and shrugged. "No one's gonna see us. Plus, I want a bunny."

We looped arms and skipped through the door.

I shoveled another spoonful of Orange Chicken into my mouth and took a sip of my lemonade.

"So," I say after I swallow, trying to make conversation. "Do you like anyone?"

Okay, so maybe I was trying to dish some juicy things out of her, but I'm only a girl!

She smiled and quickly scribbled down something, passing it to me before taking a bit out of her cheeseburger.

Yes.

I sighed, "Are you going to make me beg?"

She smirked and nodded.

"Please, please, please tell me who you like." I did as she asked.

She smirked and scribbled down a name. I closed my eyes and brought it to my face. As soon as I positioned it in front of my eyes, I opened them.

Logan

I squealed. Loudly. "Oh my gosh! You'd be so cute together!" I cried.

She put a hand over her ears and put a finger to her lips, silencing me.

I scowled and crossed my arms. "I was just being happy for you, yeesh."

She smiled and shrugged, then her expression changed and scribbled something down and pushed it to me.

Don't you dare tell him, Emalie.

Dang it! Foiled again. I sighed, "Fine." *I'll just hint it*, I silently added.

She looked at me skeptically, but I didn't give. Instead I stared at her too. After a couple of

seconds she nodded, satisfied and I asked where we should go next.

When I arrived home, it was quiet for once. I think this may be the first time since we moved here that the jocks weren't over.

Dad was sitting on the couch, drinking a Pepsi and eating chocolate cake. I swear, sometimes we're crave the same things. I grabbed a snack from the kitchen too and went to go sit down.

"What are we watching?" I asked warily, noticing the tell-tale sign night vision on the screen.

"Destination Truth." He replied.

I nodded and got comfortable. "What are they trying to catch?"

"A Vampire. They're in Romania."

Of course they are, because that's where all the vampires live nowadays.

I was happy with father/daughter time though, so I decided to watch and eat. After all, he was happy again, and that's all I wanted.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

was almost late for track practice. That just doesn't happen. I do believe I will blame Mark, or whatever his name is, for this impossibility.

I bet you're now wondering who this Mark Whatever person is, right? Well, he's the idiot who wouldn't stop hitting me so I could go get my track clothes on. Yup, you guessed right, he's one of Drew's boys.

But now I'm here with my people. Yes, I did say *my* people. After all I am the captain, but I'm not going to say they are "my" people out loud, since I have the slightest hunch that they wouldn't appreciate that. It's just a hunch though.

"Today we are going to do the same training I'm doing with Drew's boys." I don't think the jocks would mind being called "Drew's boys". In fact, I think they'd take pride in it. Stupid cavemen.

"Yes!" Valerie cheered, and I could already tell she was my favorite; yet another thing I'd never tell anyone.

I smiled, "What's up with the enthusiasm? I thought for sure I'd be getting collective groans."

She grinned at me and laughed. "I have no idea. I thought I'd be weird."

I snorted. "Well, on *that* note, I think we'll begin today's practice. First thing's first, does anyone have any medical conditions I should know about?" I know it may seem weird to ask this on the second day of practice, but all we really did last time was talk and introduce ourselves. Other than Christina, who went and sulked in a corner. Party Popper.

Joe raised his hand, blushing slightly. "I have type two diabetes."

"So I won't bring any donuts." I snapped my fingers in mock disappointment. "Dang it, there goes my group snack." I smiled then waved him off when he turned more red and opened his mouth to apologize. "I had a cousin like that; no biggie." I looked around at everyone. "Anyone else?" The rest of my team shook their heads and I nodded. "Okay then, let's start training. Warm up lap!" I shouted at the end, making them all flinch, including Christina. Hm, maybe I was a Drill Sergeant like Drew suggested.

We all quickly ran our lap, which was more like a wake up jog than a run. Whatever definition it needed to be granted with, it definitely woke me up.

"Let's march!" I yelled, starting to go around the field while picking my knees up as high as they could go.

"What is this, Basic Training?" sneered Christina.

Something snapped inside of me and I stopped abruptly, moved to the side and motioned for everyone else to continue. I waited for Christina to try and go past me then jumped in front of her.

"Look," I began. "I can be your best friend, or your worst enemy. Whichever one you decide, you need to keep your snide remarks and sarcastic quips to yourself." She looked slightly taken back, and I knew she was very taken back but was trying to hide it. Not well, I might add. But I went on. "I've been nothing but nice to you, and I don't appreciate your attitude with me or with my techniques. Obviously, they work or I wouldn't use them and they wouldn't have gotten my team in Cinci to nationals two years in a row, so if you could keep your opinions to yourself I'd be greatly appreciative." This is the only place that I can truly be myself, and she wasn't about to make my confidence about this sport dissipate. Not if I had anything to do about it.

She seemed to get her wits back after my outburst and managed to sneer out, "I know about your little secret, wannabe, and I plan on taking your spot." before flipping -yes, *flipping*- her hair over her shoulder and walking briskly away.

Then something occurred to me. Oh god, she knows about the Legacy.

I put on my brave face, when I'm really pacing around in my head and continue practice with

no problem.

Jay asked about Christina and what I said to her, and I wouldn't be surprised if they were together or something. He was another one of the jocks essentially, and she was a typical blond. Although, she is smarter than she originally let on.

"She got a migraine," I lied vaguely. He seemed to find out after the third time he got the same answer that I wasn't going to tell him anything else.

After practice though, my brave face broke and I kneeled in the grass and cried. Everything I've been holding in, every tear I didn't shed for Mom because I wanted to be strong for Daddy, every sob I wanted to let out when I got a sympathetic look from people who knew me my whole life, every single moment where I thought about something Mom did that made me want to break down like I was doing now, everything I've been holding in.

I felt a hand on my shoulder and looked up into soft blue eyes that make my heart flutter. When he saw the mascara ridden tear tracks down my face, he pulls me to him. I grab onto him like he's my lifeline.

When every tear that I could shed comes out of my tear ducts, he pulled back to look me in the face. "What's wrong?" he asks, his voice full of concern for me.

I give out a sad excuse for a laugh. "Everything" I reply.

He looks at me curiously and I figure I have nothing left to lose. He knows about the Legacy, my mom, my dreams and he still wants to help. So I told him everything else that has been bothering me, specifically the Christina incident.

He nodded at the appropriate times and kept his arms around me, like a security mechanism showing me that I could not worry about anything other than right now.

After I was done, he pulled me in for another hug and I noticed he was crouched down to hold me while I was still kneeling on the ground. "Aren't you uncomfortable?" I asked. "You're crouching down next to a seemingly emotionally unstable girl, who just broke down and told you her every insecurity."

He smiled. No sarcastic after tone or sardonic smirk, but a real smile. "You're not just any emotionally unstable girl, you're the girl who I want to know every insecurity about so I can hold you when you get uncomfortable. Why would I be uncomfortable?"

I felt myself tearing up. Honestly, that's the nicest, most sweetest thing that any guy has ever said to me.

I wrapped my arms around his shoulders and looked up to meet his eyes. "Thank you," I tell him, putting every whirling emotion going through me into my words.

He met my gaze too. "No, thank you. You've shown me that not every girl needs to be perfect; that imperfections make some people perfect."

I couldn't say anything to top that, so I just remained silent. Then he managed to do something to fill in the silence.

He brought his lips to mine.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

As soon as his lips met mine, I melted into his arms yet again. He cupped my cheeks tenderly and pulled back. "I want to do this the right way." he stated, "Emalie, will you be my girlfriend?"

I grinned at him gave him a light kiss. "Yes." I answered and we both smiled at each other and leaned in.

Half an hour later, I knew that the guys were waiting at my place for Speed Training and I pulled back.

"Drew, it's time for Speed Training." I informed him.

He nodded solemnly and gave me a light kiss, then he grabbed my hand and we walked to his car.

Wolf whistles could be heard as me and Drew walked through the patio door hand-in-hand.

"What happened while we were gone?" Logan asked, emphasising the we.

Drew smiled lightly. "A lot, actually." He replied cheekily, then his smile turned into a smirk.

I slapped his shoulder lightly.

"I gotta go call Jess." I informed them, calling them out of their very important conversation.

I hadn't called Jess in a long while, but I knew that she'd love to talk about everything in my life. It'd be like a soap opera or something, and Jess loves her soap operas.

Drew nodded and kissed my cheek as I walked past him, emitting snickers from the jocks.

I resisted the urge to say something to them to make them shut up and walked around the house, looking for my cell phone. Considering that I brought it to school everyday, I should be able to find it quite easily, but the little bugger was hiding from me.

Finally, I found it underneath the couch. I'm not quite sure *how* it got there, but at least I found it, right?

"I can't believe you!" she answered without a hello. "You haven't called me in *forever!*"

Guilt washed over me. "Sorry, boo. But I do have a wonderful story for you."

I could almost see her thinking his over. "Tell me." she demanded.

I smiled. "Drew and I are together."

She squealed very loudly and I was forced to tear the phone from my ear. "Details!

Details!" she shrieked.

I laughed. "You're so very impatient."

She sighed in annoyance. "Just tell me the story already!" she screeched.

"Well, I was crying in the middle of the football field." I began. "And he came."

Many squeals and countless interruptions later, we hung up with the promise to call each other soon.

The next week past quickly. I trained my team and Drew's boys and watched *NCIS* with my dad every night after my run.

Drew came up to me by my locker, which is what usually happens. He walks me to class, then practice and anywhere else he can. We haven't gone out on a date yet, but we were

still together.

"Hey," he began. "I'm having a party this weekend. Will you be my date?" His suave talk faltered on the last sentence, and he looked venerable.

I smiled and put my arms around his neck. No one looked our way; they were used to our relationship by now, but there was an article in the newspaper about the new "golden couple". Other than that though, everything was relatively normal.

"Of course." I smiled and kissed him lightly. "I have to go to my boyfriend's party, you know."

"I love it when you call me your boyfriend." He leaned in to kiss me and I let him.

Then I pulled away and released my hold on his neck, instead grabbing hold of his hand.

"Will my boyfriend walk me to my class?"

He smiled and entwined our fingers together. "Of course. I have to walk my girlfriend to class, you know."

I smiled. I loved him calling me his girlfriend.

The night of the party, Melissa helped me get ready while Jess was on Skype. Apparently, technology was a new thing to Melissa and she was fascinated with my computer. I seriously suspect people here were living in the time of the caveman. Well, if cavemen had cell phones and dial-up.

I was outfitted in a dark blue dress that helped make my blue eyes pop, my black pumps that I worked so hard to bring to Dyersburg and an onyx necklace and bracelet.

The party was in full swing by the time I made my way to Jim and Drew's house. I was ready

to party, but Drew obviously had another idea and he grabbed me as soon as I walked in the door. He dragged me into a hallway and let me down it, opening a door on the end and pulling me through.

"I have an idea." he stated.

I looked at him with a raised eyebrow. "An idea for what exactly?"

He smiled at me, and only then did I notice what he was wearing. The tight dark blue shirt made his muscles more known and with the dark jeans that hung low to his waist and black vans on his feet. Oh yeah, he looked *good*.

The room was what you'd expect from a seventeen year old quarterback; it was blue and filled with football memorabilia.

"An idea to deal with the Christina issue."

All the sad emotions started floating back with her name, and Drew must have seen it because he crushed me against him. "It's okay, babe. Remember, I have an idea."

I nodded, the wetness of my eyes disappearing. "What's your oh-so-brilliant idea?"

He grinned widely. "You tell everyone, that way she doesn't have anything against you. We just gotta work on how you feel about it."

I pressed my face into his neck, going onto my tip-toes to reach him. "I don't think I can live up to everyone's expectations of what it means to be the legacy." I say, knowing it's the truth.

He wrapped his arms around my waist and pressed me against him. "You are everything that they're looking for. You're strong, brave, polite, you put everyone before yourself; you're

perfect."

"Then what imperfections do I have?"

"What do you mean?" he asked curiously.

"You said that imperfections make people perfect, so what are my imperfections?"

He pulled me back to look into my eyes. "You were already perfect, you have no imperfections. You. Are. *Perfect*."

I nodded, trying to believe him. "So you'll do it?" he asked.

I bit my lip, thinking hard. Then I nodded. "Okay, I trust you."

He kissed me hard on the lips. "Thank you for your trust." he smiled. "We'll continue this later."

I smiled back. "I'd like that. By the way, we match." I kissed him quickly, then walked away and snickered at his groan of annoyance.

I walked to the DJ's station, and talked briefly with him. He was suspicious of my idea, but then I told him I was Drew's girlfriend and he reluctantly handed me the microphone. I could still see his strange look though.

As soon as the music was turned off, everyone's head spun to the DJ's station and a few shouts of "what the heck?" echoed around the room.

"Hi everyone," I began. "I am here to tell you something that concerns all of you." I heard a few sentences and questions jumbled up in the many other sentences and questions.

"I *am* the Legacy."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

I got home late and was hoping for the light to be off. Yeah, obviously I'm not the most important person to my fairy god-mother since the lights *were* on. There goes the very unrealistic hope of mine.

I tried to be quite walking in. Emphasis on *tried*. Hey, I'm new to this house! I can't know every squeaky spot within a month.

Dad was waiting, as I suspected, on the couch. I could hear the unmistakable voice of Gibbs and Abby in the background, but Dad's gaze was focused on me.

"Do you know what time it is?"

"Time to get a watch?" I replied feebly.

A dry laugh escaped his lips. "Wrong answer. It's eleven thirty."

I know you probably think that eleven thirty is *nothing*, but my Dad can get pretty overprotective, especially when it's dark out.

I sighed. "Sorry Dad, I had something I have to do." I'm not sure why I'm keeping this whole legacy thing to myself, but I just don't want to bring any painful memories back about Mom, and that's what I'd do if I mentioned it, even if he didn't already know.

He narrowed his eyes. Not a good sign. "What were you up to?"

I gulped nervously. "I was with friends." Yeah, I'm the master at beating around the bush.

He nodded, "Uh-huh, and I'm Rumpelstiltskin."

My eyes widened, "Really? Why didn't you tell me?" I asked seriously.

Dad sighed. "Now's not the time to joke around, Emalie."

I looked at the ground. *Ooh, the full name. I'm in for it. There goes thirty years. Might as well hang up some posters and hope I can keep my iPod while I'm staring at my wall as Dad goes on with his merry life, forgetting about his grounded daughter, who-*

My thoughts were interrupted by Dad. "I know it was about the Legacy."

I whipped my head up. "What?" I asked, not quite believing my ears.

He laughed, this time a real laugh and not a *"I'm serious, but that was slightly amusing"* laugh. "I wondered when you'd tell me, but it looks like I'll have to be the first one."

My eyes widened, this time I wasn't trying to get out of this conversation through humor; this time I wanted him to tell me what he knew. "You *knew*?" I asked incredulously. I didn't think he'd really keep this from me all my life.

He nodded, and motioned for me to sit down beside him. As I sat down on the couch, I picked up the remote and turned the TV off, then focused my attention on Dad. He sighed like he knew this would be a long conversation and began. "I grew up in Dewmont," My eyes widened again. Technically, he was from the enemy team. Dewmont was Dyersburg's enemy in every sport and competition there is. The Panthers and the Jackals were like cats and dogs-- ha, the irony of that sentence. "Dewmont?" I sputtered out. "Dewmont." he confirmed, then continued. "I was the quarterback for the Panthers all the years your mother was Head Cheerleader."

I raised an eyebrow. I can tell when the plot thickens, and it was about to get carmel-y.

"We met after a game and we were both upset. Kayla was because she got a B on a test

and her mother, your grandmother, was furious. Me because my position was being threatened by another quarterback, who just moved to Dewmont.

"We decided to try and defy our parents, who were both mad for separate reasons, and get together. Of course, we were the middle of our town's gossip chain and when word got out that we were dating --for real by then-- both of our rivals, the one who wanted my position and the one who wanted your mother's position, got together and came up with a plan.

"They came up with rumors about pregnancy, marriage and all sorts of things. It got so bad that we packed up and left our towns together. We were in love, and everything else didn't matter when we left. That's when we moved to Cincinatti and got married."

I was silent throughout the entire story, hanging on to every detail, but now it looked like Dad was waiting for me to say something. So, being my awesome self, I decided to confess. "I have a boyfriend." I blurted out, immediately cursing myself for being so dumb. His eyes narrowed. "Who?" he ground out.

"Drew," I squeaked.

He raised an eyebrow, but kept his eyes narrowed. "From what I heard from Jim, it wouldn't seem you were his 'type'."

I gulped. Now's the time to be grilled for information. "Actually, he's sweet, and sensitive," I got lost in thinking about Drew and I didn't think about how Dad was listening, I just listed things about him. "Sure, he seems like a class-A jerkface, but he comforts me, tells me everything's okay, does the sweetest things to make me smile. Teases me and lets me

tease him back. Goes out of his way to make me happy-" I then noticed Dad was still in the room and stopped talking, finally noticing his expression wasn't at all angry; it was happy.

"Do you love him?"

The question caught me off-guard, and my eyes widened. "I-I don't kn-know." I stuttered out, thinking it over. I thought about his laugh, the way he smiled, all the good things he's done to help me and I came up with my answer. I lifted my head from where it fell to look at my hands while I was thinking and answered in a strong voice.

"Yes, I do love him."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

I met Drew at the football field. This seemed to be our special meeting spot, since everything about our relationship seemed to occur here.

He was laying down with his body on the ground when I crept up on him.

I'm a ninja. No, a spy. Yeah, I'm like Jane Bond or something. Oh yeah, go Em!

"It's not nice to sneak up on people, you know." I jumped, his thoughts brought me out of my self-praising.

I stomped my foot childishly. "Seriously? I was completely quiet the whole gosh darn time!"

He propped his head up and pivoted it to look at me. He was smiling and chuckling as he looked at my disappointed face. "Why do you want to sneak up on me so bad?" he asked.

I smiled, his smile alone bringing me out of my annoyance. "I want to be able to gloat constantly." I replied honestly.

He chuckled again, his deep, masculine voice sending pleasant shivers down my spine.

"Only you, Em. Only you."

My smile remained on my face as I layed down beside him.

"I know you were praising your 'awesome ninja skills' too."

My jaw dropped. How did he know that?

"You're easy to read." he explained, obviously noticing my flabbergasted face.

He wrapped an arm around my waist and I leaned into him.

"You know," he says. "These are the moments that film directors would love to catch on film."

I smiled, but I was really nervous. "I bet you're right. Ready to make it even more movie ready?" I asked.

He laughed, "How?"

I tilted my head up and captured his lips in a kiss. It was just a small kiss and I pulled back quickly. "Like that." I replied, willing myself not to stutter on this next moment.

I'd been thinking about how to tell him all afternoon. I ran through dozens of scenarios; good and bad, but figured I'd just go with the flow, that way it wasn't a completely planned moment.

And now seemed like that perfect time.

He grinned like an idiot and looked down on me. His face then got serious and he cupped my cheek in his large, calloused hand gently. "Emalie?" he asked.

"Yes?" I replied, slightly annoyed at the way he ended the perfect moment, but also confused at why he did.

"I love you."

Those three words. The three words that I wanted to say to time, and he beat me to it. At least I knew he felt the same way though, and he took care of all my nervousness.

"I love you, too, Drew."

He kissed me firmly. "This is definitely a scene from a movie."

I laughed. "A book, at least."

EPILOGUE

When I woke up, I uncurled myself from around my blanket and rolled over on top of the person laying next to me. At that moment, said person decided to move and I somehow ended up on the ground. That is skill, my friends.

"Ow," I managed to mumbled to the floor which my nose was now connected to.

"Sorry, babe," Drew grunted, then shifted, fell off the bed and onto me.

"Get off!" I moaned, his chin digging into my back.

"Wha...?" he asked sleepily.

I sighed in destain. Of course he wouldn't remember what happened, he's only a two hundred and fifty pound college quarterback. It's good for the back to get hit by one every once in a while.

"You fell on top of me." I explained impatiently.

He nodded in acknowledgment, then shifted once again, this time to my side, crushed me against him and pulled the blanket, which I grabbed on the way down, around us.

I wasn't about to complain to more sleep, and I almost did fall asleep until my phone rang. I was about to ignore it before I noticed it's familiar ring tone. I begrudgingly picked it up and

put it to my ear, sliding it up like a pro. "Hello?" I answered irritably.

"Why weren't you in class?" Jess impatiently asks on the other line.

I sat up quickly. Albeit, too quickly. "What?"

She sighed. "Do you know what time it is?"

I glanced at the clock on the bedside stand. Sure enough, it was noon; directly after my English class.

"I decided to skip." I lied.

"Right." she laughed. "The future doctor decides to skip for the day. Totally believable, boo."

Yup, the nickname stuck and now that's the only thing we'll call each other. Most people look at us in those moments, not that I can really blame them.

"Can you cover for me?" I asked hopefully, knowing she caught me.

She pretended to think for a moment. "Yeah, I'll tell Melissa, Logan and Professor Dumbledore that you had the stomach flu."

Explanation time! Dumbledore is everyone's nickname for our English teacher, whose

actual name eludes me now, since he has the bearded, Dumbledore look from the Harry Potter series. Explanation number two: Melissa and Logan finally got together the last week of Senior year. I guess everyone's pestering finally got to them, but they seemed extremely happy. All of my friends made it into Tennessee State University, so I got to see Jess, Melissa, Logan, Drew and even some of the other jocks frequently.

I smiled gratefully, knowing she couldn't see me and not caring since I was still tired.

"Thanks, boo! You're the best!"

I could nearly hear her smile from the other end of the line. "Yeah, I know. Now go cuddle with your quarterback!"

"M'kay! See ya!" Then I promptly hung up and lay my head down on Drew's arm.

I woke up to the feel of movement on my cheek, which interrupted my dream.

Opening my eyes, the first thing, which you really couldn't miss, was Drew's green eyes three inches from my own. I was too tired to even jump.

He was absentmindedly stroking my cheek . That's what made my dream fade away and it was also all it took to make the corner of my lips tilt up. "Good morning." I whispered.

"Evening." he corrected automatically. "It's about eight."

I looked at him confused. "And you woke me up because...?"

He smiled at my expression and kissed my lips. I was still too tired, no matter if my dream was now in the back of my mind, to respond. Luckily, he broke away a couple seconds later. Then he stood up, taking me with him.

My legs weren't working right, but he caught me by the waist before I could topple to the floor.

"C'mon." he urged me, practically dragging me with him as he made his way into our kitchen. Yes, I did say *our*. After a couple months of living in a dorm, Drew and I decided to just buy an apartment just off campus. And when I say 'just off campus', I mean it. You could hear the student body rushing around and the sounds of traffic in the late afternoon, but we usually weren't home until the evening so it didn't bother us.

He unceremoniously dropped me into a chair at our dining room table. The air *whooshed* out of me and I lifted my head to glare up at Drew, only he wasn't standing.

He was kneeling. In his Tennessee State tee and black pants with his hair in the careless fashion it was always in.

His hand dived into his pocket and he produced an onyx engagement ring. I gasped, my hands rising to cover my mouth and I drew out a shaky breath. The ring was exactly how I imagined my engagement ring to be. Maybe he looked at her computer's history...she had been looking at rings for a while now.

"Em," he began. "I know this probably isn't the right time," he ran a shaky hand through his hair, which I noticed a while ago was a nervous habit of his. "But I wasn't sure when would be the right time and when I thought about it, I knew I couldn't wait anymore. I also know we haven't talked about it, but..." He drew in a shaky breath, so similar to mine that it was uncanny. "Will you marry me?"

Tears filled my eyes and I nodded quickly. I knew I wanted to marry him.

He grinned, slipped the ring onto my finger and kissed me. "Good. Now let's go back to sleep."

I laughed.

"Only you, Drew. Only you."

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

Hey, guys!

If you haven't heard, I'm planning on publishing the rewrite on Amazon and Smashwords.

Here's a copy of the message I sent to all my followers:

I'm determined to edit and rewrite Southern Charm. This version of Southern Charm will include the elusive One-Shot that I promised you all about a year ago as well as a chapter in Brody and Kayla Jacobson's point of view. Yes, that means you'll be reading about Em's parents' story. Like I said, I'm hoping to put it on Smashwords and Amazon before the summer is over and I've only just started, so we'll see where I'll be in about two months. Even with Southern Charm though, I WILL still be posting Celebrity Interview and Alpha. Like I said, they'll just be paced out longer. Sorry!

Yup, you heard right. This version will include the elusive one-shot AND another chapter from Kayla and Brody Jacobson's point of view.

I have the prologue and most of chapter one done already, and I started yesterday so we'll see what happens then. And, the entire thing is rewritten and not just edited. So, you'll pretty much be reading a new and improved version of your favorite story!

I'm going to be posting the prologue and chapter one and two before school starts so you guys can get an idea of what the story is about before I finally publish it!

Also, the day I started rewriting it (June 15th 2013) I actually reached 10,000 views on this

rough draft. I can't tell you how extremely happy I was!

Meg Queenz