

## Christina

The obnoxious tone we call a bell resonates through the room from the speaker in the wall. Just like that, smelly, immature teenagers flood the halls. We are cattle being herded to our next destination. Everyone shuffles along a little more briskly as our destination is out the doors and onto our buses or into our cars. I scan the faces of the crowd looking for her. We came from the same class so I don't understand how easily I lost her. She dodges in between people with such skill. Occasionally she gets slammed up against a locker but it's never intentional. People just don't realize when she darts behind them. I spot her as she is just about to close her locker door. I make it to her in time to catch her before she turns and disappears into the sea of people once again.

"Hey Alexis, can we talk?" I put my hand on her shoulder as I say this.

"Sure, Chris, I suppose. But quickly. I can't miss my bus again."

I guess I'll just spit it out then. Deep breath and:

"Lexi, you know I love you but this bullshit you pull, it's getting old."

She stops at the end of the row of lockers and I do too. She turns to face me but doesn't look directly at me; she looks seemingly beyond me.

"I... I don't understand."

"Jesus Lex. You do too understand! You know *exactly* what I'm talking about. You need to stop being such an attention whore and just eat some goddamn food. You need to cut the crap and realize that no one is amused by this little game of yours!"

"It's not a game," she mumbles defensively, still not looking at me.

"And until you get your act together, I can't talk to you."

After I give the ultimatum, she finally looks at me. Her eyes are filled with disbelief.

“You don’t get it, do you? I can’t help the way I am. And ditching me isn’t going to help anything. If you really wanted me to get better, you’d have patience and work with me. But I guess you don’t have that virtue.”

With her final words, she turns and flees down the hallway. That was not how I intended it to go. I fish my keys out of my pocket and head to my car. I feel tears collecting at the brim at my eyes. After I get situated in my seat, I pull down the sun-visor mirror and fix me appearance. Redness surrounds my brown irises. A single tear falls from my left eye. I stare at myself longer. Another falls, this time from my right eye. I’m still staring at my reflection; a girl with brown hair and fading blue streaks and crying eyes. How attractive.

As I’m driving home, I surf through the radio stations trying to clear my mind. I just lost my best friend because of my own stupidity. She’s never done anything to wrong me and all I did was give her a hard time when she really just needed a rock. Suddenly, a song I haven’t heard in a while catches my attention. Her song.

♪ *And I told you to be patient* ♪

### **Mickel**

My heart and lungs are struggling to keep up with the demand the rest of my body has for oxygen filled blood cells. My feet thud underneath me in a steady pattern on the treadmill. I love the natural high running gives me. She told me that after we ran my eyes always seemed to be a brighter shade of green. As I run I imagine my eyes growing brighter and increasing the contrast they hold with my jet black hair. I glance in the mirror in the front of the gym. It’s too far away for me to make out details but I can easily see my athletic build creating the illusion that sprinting like this is easy for me.

I still remember how reluctant I was to start running but somehow she convinced me to try it. At first it kind of sucked but eventually she was right. We started running three times a week after school and every Saturday.

Running replaced my need for drawing lines of blood all over my body. I used to cut because I felt detached from the world; I wanted to remind myself I was alive. She made me feel alive and she showed me that everything would be fine.

She cared about me. I cared about her. She saved me from my addiction. I couldn't save her from hers. I failed her. That's why I felt it was best to leave. I would let her find someone who could better help her. As much as I wanted to ask her to be mine, I just drifted away.

As I step off the treadmill to refill my water bottle, a wave of confusion hits me. I don't recognize the song that is playing and I don't know how it got on my iPod. Then I remember. She put it on there. It was her favorite song for quite a while. Maybe it still is. I wish I knew.

♪ *And I told you to be fine* ♪

### Harmony

"All I'm saying Rachel is that I don't want you hanging around Cheyenne anymore. I don't care how straight she claims to be, put a little liquor in the girl and she'll do it with a tree." As I say this I plug in my iPod and put it on shuffle.

During third period, I went to go to the bathroom and saw Cheyenne and Rachel walking out together since they both have that period off. After school I asked Rachel about this and she said they just hung out at the mall.

"I can't believe you don't trust me! We've been together three years. THREE DAMN YEARS. All that time and I haven't even blinked at another chick, let alone a straight one. You don't see me getting my panties all in a bunch when you go out with your female friends!" Rachel slams her history textbook on my floor.

Her waist-length, red-orange hair surrounds her like fire. The usually calm, peaceful features of her beautiful face are contorted into formations of fury.

“Yeah, but the people I hang out with aren’t sluts,” I told her, my voice colder than I intended.

“We were in the mall for god’s sake! It’s not like we’re just going to do it in the middle of the food court!” Her voice rises to a yell.

“You never know with that piece of trash!” I scream back at her.

Her voice is quiet when she replies, “So, you think I’m on the same level as her? You think I’m trash too.”

“No... Damn it. Look at us. We’re as bad as we were in eighth grade. I’m sorry babe. I trust you. I don’t trust her. I’m just scared I’ll lose you. I love you too much for that.”

“We were so much better when Alexis was around. She always kept the peace. When we had a disagreement she showed us how to restore the balance in our relationship.”

Silence. Rachel plops down onto my bed. I lay down next to her, our hair overlapping to form a mix of orange and blonde.

My voice is a whisper when I speak again. “Did you see her today? She’s gotten so small. I see her in the hall and every time someone shoves her into a locker I cringe because I think she’s going to break.”

“I know what you mean. I wonder if she’s even eaten anything today,” Rachel begins, “I remember in freshman year she would carry around those stupid TicTacs to eat whenever she got hungry. I haven’t seen her with even any of those. Then again, she keeps to herself so much lately.”

“I hope she’s alright.”

“Me too. I miss her.”

Up until this moment, neither of us has noticed that Skinny Love is playing. Her favorite song. Upon this realization we both fall silent.

♪ *And I told you to be balanced* ♪

### Joanna

Dan walks into my room unannounced. Again. I don't think he'll ever learn what "leave me alone" means. 18 years on this planet and he is still clueless.

"Hey sleeping butthead. How was your day off?" his voice is mocking but I can see in his grey eyes that he is sincere.

"Better than sch-" I sneeze. It's gross.

"Bless you," he hands me a tissue from my nightstand.

"Thanks. It's better than school. But it still sucks," I tell him. My voice sounds ridiculous and I can't tell if it actually sounds that way or if I just hear it that way because my ears are messed up right now.

Dan reaches into his navy blue backpack which is overflowing with crumpled papers and other unidentifiable objects. He pulls out a folder that doesn't look like it could have possibly been in the same bag I'm looking at right now; it is far too intact and unwrinkled. He tosses it on my bed which is already cluttered with my laptop, a book I was reading, my cell phone, and various other things I've been keeping myself entertained with when I didn't feel like I was dying.

"I got some of your work. I mean, I couldn't let you get off with a free day while I still had to put up with this bullshit. Good luck with the math. My class is doing the same thing and it's the most confusing thing I've ever seen. So you're on your own with that," he chuckles and walks out the door.

God, he's such a loser. I remember when we used to scream and fight for hours on end. Sometimes all five feet and four inches of mine would wrestle with his six feet. Except, he would always cheat and pull my hair; that's why I cut it so short.

I never asked to have a step-brother. Especially not one who is such an asshole. I thought my home life would be miserable forever. Then my former best friend Alexis suggested that if I showed him a little kindness maybe he'd show me some. It didn't work at first but now we can be jerks and joke around but at the same time, we know that we actually do love each other somewhere buried deep, deep, *deep* down inside. And now I can tolerate him. Hell, I'd even go as far as to say that I sometimes actually *like* his company.

I decide to tackle a bit of my homework before I get too tired. Dan is in his room across the hall blaring his noise, I mean *music*. To help concentrate, I turn my radio on. I turn it on just in time to catch a line that sounds vaguely familiar though I can't put my finger on why. Then the memories of my fight with her come flooding back.

♪ *And I told you to be fine* ♪

### Alexis

I walk over to my mirror and lift up my shirt. I can barely bring myself to look at the hideous girl looking back at me. She has thin, chocolate brown hair, hazel eyes, eyebrows that are too thick for her face, and pale cheeks that are chubbier than they should be. Her ribs are faintly visible but should be more defined. Her thighs touch. I hate being reminded that this girl is me. Running my hands over my stomach, I let out a sigh. Still not skinny. I wonder how long this is going to take. Determined to see if I made any progress whatsoever, I run downstairs into the bathroom and pull out the digital scale. In a few seconds, I have stripped down to only my under garments. I close my eyes, take a deep breath and as my feet come in contact with the scale, my heart stops. I look down for the moment of truth.

♪ *And I told you to be patient* ♪

The scale reads 114.5. I step off, wait a second for the scale to reset, and step back on. I always weigh in at least twice to be sure of the accuracy. Again, it reads 114.5. That's only a half a pound lost since yesterday, but at least it's a half a pound lost, not gained.

*♪ And I told you to be fine ♪*

I put the scale back under the sink where it belongs and get dressed. Instead of putting back on my clothes from school today, I put on my running attire. I contemplate eating an apple before I go but I don't dare ruin the last 31 hours of fasting. The door slams behind me as I step outside. A chilly breeze welcomes me and sends a shiver down my spine. I put my brittle hair up into a ponytail before stretching a bit. With a deep breath, I begin running.

*♪ And I told you to be balanced ♪*

With each step I take, I plunge deeper into my mind. I'm fat. I'm worthless. I don't matter to anyone. No one cares. I'll never be pretty. Everyone leaves. They all hate me. That's no surprise. I hate myself.

*♪ And I told you to be kind ♪*

My heart is pounding and my lungs are desperate for oxygen. My body is telling me to stop. I don't. I can't. She won't let me. She's the one that has my will locked up. My actions are her commands. She has consumed me. My eating disorder has taken over. A white haze fills my view and everything feels fuzzy. I'm slowing down. Suddenly the side of my head violently kisses the pavement. Warmth.

As my eyes flutter closed my iPod continues playing music and I hear the smooth, angelic voice of one of my favorite artists.

*♪Who will love you?*

*Who will fight?*

*Who will fall far behind?*

*Come on skinny love... ♪*

